



Strategies of maintaining Immigrant Language in a Mega Cosmopolis: The Case of Idoma in Lagos State, Nigeria

OSITA GERALD NWAGBO
University of Lagos, Nigeria

Abstract. As a result of the presence of numerically dominant languages in mega cities in Nigeria, such as Lagos, maintenance of minority home languages is a huge challenge. Several studies have been carried out on maintenance of native languages in urban centers, but none has been undertaken on Idoma in Lagos, Nigeria. Consequently, this study examines the state of Idoma language in Lagos where the Idoma are a minority group with a view to estimating the strategies adopted by Idoma to maintain their language. This is with a view to evaluating home-based strategies, culture-based strategies, community-based strategies, network-based strategies and entertainment-based strategies. Through snowball sampling, a total of 200 families were selected for the study, and the questionnaire was used to elicit information from respondents, in addition to interviews. The result shows that few participants utilized home-based, culture-based strategies and entertainment-based strategies, while more participants adopted community-based and network-based strategies. Generally, it was found that the Idoma participants in the study were not taking proactive steps towards maintaining their heritage language, even when it was evident that their children had already shifted to English and Yoruba, the host community language. The result provides the need for holistic and sustained effort towards preserving Idoma, especially in multilingual spaces such as Lagos where its existence is precarious.

Keywords: Idoma, Heritage language, Heritage language maintenance, Yoruba, Lagos State,

1. Introduction

With over 450 ethno-linguistic groups, Nigeria is the most multilingual country in Africa, second in the world, after Indonesia. One of the effects of this scenario is the over-concentration of millions of people in big cities such as Lagos, Kano, Abuja, etc.

from different ethnic groups. Among the lot, Lagos enjoys the prestige of accommodating people from virtually every ethnic group in the polity, in addition to foreigners of Franco-phone and Anglo-phone extractions across Africa. With the population of Lagos, as high as 20 million and above, the city is seen as the largest market in Africa. Coupled with the fact that it is the former political capital of Nigeria, as well as being the headquarters of various corporate, industrial and expatriate firms and corporations, it is perceived by many as a dream land or land of opportunity. Consequently, migrants (national and international) are pulled to Lagos in search of economic advancement in relation to jobs, trade, business contacts, etc. The teeming population of Lagos is a mish-mash of majority and minority groups; the most dominant majority groups are the host community (Yoruba), the Igbo, followed by the Hausa. Aside the majority groups, there are hundreds of minority ethnic groups that litter the Lagos city terrain, such as the Efik/Ibibio, Edo, Ijaw, Urhobo, Tiv, Nupe, Itshekiri, Igala, etc. All are designated as internal migrants and speak different languages, in addition to English which is the second language of most Nigerians, not to forget Nigerian Pidgin (NP).

Consequently, in the external spaces, such as the malls, markets, offices, schools, factories, transit systems, streets, etc, it is the majority tongues, plus English and NP that are loud; minority tongues such as the Idoma are hardly heard or rather they are stifled by the cacophony of the dominant tongues. It is this concern that provides justification for this study. The study seeks to investigate how Idoma in-migrants in Lagos State are keeping their heritage tongue alive amidst the din of other more sonorous voices in their environment.

1.1 The Idoma

Along with Ukaan, Igede, Akweya, Yatye and Etulo, Idoma is a language in the Idomoid sub group of the West Benue-Congo phylum of African languages. (Williamson and Blench 2000:31). Idoma is a nomenclature used to designate the people and their language. 'Idomoid' is one of the principal branches of South-Central Niger Congo and forms a co-ordinate branch with the Nupe language (Williamson and Blench, 2000). In terms of geographical cum political location and categorization, Okpe (2000 cited in Ogah-Adejoh, 2016) states that the Idoma are predominantly found in the south senatorial zone of Benue State, although clusters of them are found in three States namely: Afu in Nasarawa State, Ete in Enugu State and Yalla in Cross River State. In Benue State, they are found in seven local government areas namely: *Apa, Ado, Agatu, Okpokwu, Ogbadibo, Ohimini and Otukpo*.. According to Armstrong (1983), these groups including those in Benue state migrated from Wukari area of the present Taraba state which is identified as the ancestral home of all Idoma speaking people. They are the second largest ethnic group in Benue State next to Tiv and the language is the second major language in the state, with their population estimated at about a quarter of a million in 1955 but are presently about more than half a million (Ogah-Adejoh, 2016) . The State news is broadcast in the language on both the radio and television networks.

2. Heritage Language and Maintenance

The term heritage language (HL) is used to designate languages other than the dominant language(s), particularly in the context of immigration. Yearwood (2008: 62) conceives the term as a “non-majority language spoken by an individual or group considered to be a linguistic minority”. Heritage Language Maintenance is a term used to delineate the efforts heritage language speakers make to maintain their ethnic or indigenous languages in the immigration context. Generally, Mesthrie, (1999:42) defined Language maintenance as “the continuing use of a language in the face of competition from a regionally and socially powerful or numerically stronger language”. In support, Habtoor (2012) maintains that, as an outcome of language contact, language maintenance is practice whereby a linguistic minority such as immigrants, or a marginalized ethnolinguistic group is successful in keeping its native language despite the pressure exerted on it by the dominant linguistic group. A significant factor responsible for the deliberate efforts in maintaining the heritage language is to avert language shift to the dominant language, which is the converse of language

maintenance. Language shift usually occurs when heritage or minority language speakers fail to use their language, over time, for one reason or another. The shift is usually to the dominant language in the region, or in the immigration context, the shift is to the mainstream or dominant host community language (Fishman, 1970; Holmes, 2008; Guardado, 2006; Lanza & Svendsen, 2007; Kopeliovich, 2011; Lee, 2002). One of the reasons commonly advanced for efforts in heritage language maintenance is the bidirectional relationship between language, culture and ethnic identity. Language is considered the most prominent and vital aspect of culture, which plays a pivotal role in communicating values, customs and beliefs, and forming self and ethnic identity. Consequently, the loss of a language is correlated to the loss of cultural heritage (Alshehri, 2016).

Several studies (Clyne and Kipp, 2006; Garcia, 2003; Park, 2013) have maintained that the most crucial domain or setting to maintain the heritage language is the home, and the onus of maintenance is squarely laid on the shoulders of parents. Clyne and Kipp (2006) are of the view that the role of the family in this regard is so vital that if a language is not used in the home domain, then it cannot be maintained elsewhere. In separate studies, García (2003) and Park (2013) concur that family is a significant factor to children’s language development, due to the fact that, the language beliefs of family members and related practices have a profound impact on children’s language preference and use. The maintenance of the native language at home means actually using it in daily interactions and deliberately, systematically and consistently passing it on to the next generation of speakers.

2.1 Strategies of promoting the Heritage Language

There are several strategies which have been adopted to maintain the home language particularly in the immigration context. These strategies comprise of both internal or external approaches. The internal methods are those deployed by concerned parents in the domestic setting towards boosting interest in the home language. Some of such measures include adoption of heritage-language-only policy in the home (Leung & Uchikoshi, 2012), “only mother tongue at home” rule, (Arriagada, 2005), watching TV programs in the heritage language, reading books written in the heritage language, singing native songs (Lao, 2004; Park & Sarkar, 2007), actual parental support and involvement (Arriagada, 2005; Suarez, 2002). The external approaches are those methods that are deployed in the environment to achieve same purpose such as the following: establishment of community-

based Sunday Heritage Language school and weekend heritage language school (Park & Sarkar, 2007), availability of state or private schools where the heritage language is taught (Baker, 2003; Garcia, 2003), making trips to the home land (Holmes, 2008; Guardado, 2006), etc.

Evidently, much research has been carried out in the realm of language maintenance in the immigration context. However, in Africa, particularly in Nigeria that boasts of as many as 400 to 500 languages, so many language groups have not been attended to by researchers. In this paper, the focus is on evaluating language maintenance strategies of Idoma, (a regional language) in multilingual and multiethnic state of Lagos. This is with a view to examining the strategies (if any) adopted by the in-migrants to maintain their heritage language.

Methodology

The mixed approach was adopted in this study for both numeric and subjective considerations, considered necessary for the research. While the quantitative approach was used to gather data from a considerable number of participants for reasons of generalization, the qualitative data served to provide reasons for certain inquiries that could not be elicited from the former approach.

3. Study Area and Sample Size

The locale of the Idoma in Lagos is not restricted as they did not operate a nucleated settlement pattern; consequently, the sample for the study was drawn through cluster sampling, from three areas in Mainland Lagos State in Nigeria. These areas are *Orile*, *Oshodi* and *Ajeganle*, each area representing a cluster. The three areas are home to so many minority ethnolinguistic groups in Nigeria, with *Orile* and *Ajeganle* being more unique in terms of their residential status. The peculiarity of *Oshodi* is that it is a transit hub through which other angles and points in Lagos State can be accessed, as well as being a big

market swarming with non-indigenous groups from different parts of the country.

The population of the Idoma in Lagos is indeterminate. Through snow-ball sampling, a total of 200 respondents comprising 80 from *Orile*, 60 from *Oshodi*, and 60 from *Ajeganle* were sampled. The sampling technique ensured that no non-Idoma participated in the study. Although the distribution seems fair, the slight imbalance in the number of participants was as a result of convenience and not necessarily that more Idoma lived in *Orile* than *Oshodi* and *Ajeganle*. The selected participants were all native Idoma and who spoke Idoma as natives. A major criteria for participating in the study was that the participant must be a parent with at least one child.

3.1 Data Collection and Instruments

Two instruments were used to elicit data from participants in the study; a structured questionnaire and face to face interview. The questionnaire was in seven parts; the first part contained questions soliciting information on the participants' personal profile such as age, sex occupation, and marital status. The second part contained questions about the languages in the participants' repertoire. The other five sections were concerned with inquiries on strategies of maintaining the heritage language, specifically home-based, culture-based, community-based, network-based and entertainment-based strategies, all comprising of three questions, making a total of fifteen questions. In addition, face to face interviews were carried out with five participants in each cluster making a total of fifteen participants. The interviews were conducted in English as the researcher did not have much proficiency in Idoma beyond greeting routines. The interviews were carried out at convenient places at the discretion of the participants and they were recorded with the aid of a midget and field notes. The data were later categorized and analysed descriptively using simple percentages.

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

The demographic profile of the respondents, as well as their linguistic orientation is hereby presented.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

		(N = 200)	
Variable	Characteristics	Num.	%
Age Group (years)	25-30 years	56	28
	31-40 years	64	32
	41 years +	80	40
	Total	200	100.0
Sex	Male	72	36
	Female	128	64
	Total	200	100.0
Occupation	Trading	112	56
	Working	88	44
	Total	200	100.0
Marital Status			
	Married	192	96
	Divorced	8	4
	Total	200	100.0

Source: Field Survey 2025.

The demographic data reveals that, out of the total number of respondents, those who were 41 years + accounted for the majority. In terms of sex, the females were more in number than males. The data on occupation shows that traders had a slight numerical advantage over workers, while married respondents accounted for the majority. The discrepancy in the numbers with respect to age, sex, occupation and marital status was the result of the sampling method used in data collection which restricted study population to only those who were available at the time. There was no pre-determined plan to achieve symmetry in the number of respondents across the demographic variables.

The language profile of respondents indicates that Idoma is the first language and heritage language of all the respondents and English is their second language. Other languages reportedly spoken by an insignificant minority are Yoruba and Igbo. Yoruba is the language of the host community, Lagos with dominance in population. Though Igbo are an internal in-migrant group in Lagos like the Idoma, they represent the most dominant group in population apart from the host community. On the whole, this data shows that all the participants were bilinguals mainly in their indigenous language and English which is a second language to majority of Nigerians.

5. Findings and Discussion

The initial finding in this study is that, language shift had already taken place, with a majority of the children speaking English and Yoruba at the expense of Idoma. The strategies examined here represent the reaction of the parents to revert language shift. The strategies investigated comprise of five categories: home-based strategies, culture-based strategies, community-based strategies, network-based strategies and entertainment-based strategies. The options or items provided for the participants were pooled from empirical results obtained in the literature on heritage language maintenance. The data is presented below

Table 2: Home-based strategies

The in-house resources are the direct steps taken by parents to stimulate the speaking of the home language among the children in the family. The options include verbal motivations, reward system and language restrictions. The data is presented below:

No.	Items	Responses	Number	%
1	I verbally encourage my children to speak Idoma	Yes	108	54
		No	92	46
		Total	200	100.0
2	When speaking to me, I restrict my children to Idoma only	Yes	20	10
		No	180	90
		Total	200	100.0
3	I offer rewards to my children to encourage them to speak Idoma	Yes	24	12
		No	176	88
		Total	200	100.0

In regards to verbal encouragement, the data shows that a simple majority of parents (54%) verbally motivated their children to speak Idoma, while a considerable number (46%) did not. Verbal encouragement is an overt way of boosting the use of a language; it makes the child to understand that they are expected to speak the language in question. It is tantamount to mounting pressure on the child to make efforts to use the language. It also shows that the parents who adopt this strategy are concerned about the fate of their children’s non facility in their indigenous language, which is naturally a prelude to efforts to correct the linguistic deficiency. Notably, the implication of verbally encouraging the children to speak their heritage language is that they (children) were not speaking it due to insufficient proficiency.

A second strategy on which inquiry was based is the measure whereby parents restricted their children to the indigenous language during interaction with them. In this strategy, the children may be free to use any other language, such as English, among themselves, but they were not permitted to use any other language except Idoma while interacting with a parent. The result shows that an insignificant minority (10%) used this strategy while a significant majority (90%) did not use it. The limiting of children to the heritage language during parent-child interactions may appear punitive, but it is one of the quickest ways of boosting their proficiency in the heritage language. When children understand that interactional premises such as making requests, reports, complaints, or taking instructions and directives from parents can only be facilitated in their heritage language, they will naturally double efforts to realize it.

The reward system is the third strategy on which the inquiry was based; this system involves offering gifts to children to motivate them to speak the heritage language; the gifts or rewards listed in the questionnaire comprised of snacks (meat pies, ice cream, buns, sweets, etc), visiting eateries, holiday treats, etc. The data revealed that an insignificant minority (12%) resorted to this means, while a significant majority (88%) did not adopt it. The reward system is a great way of boosting children’s adventure into the heritage language; the understanding that, using the language will earn gifts would naturally motivate children to make more efforts towards improving or mastering their heritage language. It may be an indirect extra-linguistic means, but it serves the linguistic purpose.

In sum, it is evident that the Idoma parents in this study were not doing enough overtly to save their home language, in terms of home-based strategies to promote verbal expression in Idoma. This result aligns with earlier ones that found parents playing nonchalant attitude towards the linguistic welfare of their children with respect to the heritage language. Lee (2013) as well as Li (2006) found in their separate studies that Korean and Chinese immigrant parents were not doing enough to encourage their children to speak Korean and Chinese respectively in their foreign settings believing that their children will learn it later in life one way or another.

The importance of parental input and involvement in promoting the home language is supported by scholars (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2009; Cummins, 2005; Báez, 2013; García, 2003; Park, 2013). DeCapua & Wintergerst (2009) state that opinions and parents’ language practices are pivotal to the attitudes of their children towards the heritage language and the language of the host community. Cummins (2005: 585) avers that: “native language practices are often embedded within family life...”. In support, Kennedy and Romo (2013) contend that if children are encouraged to use the heritage language at home with family members, they would be more likely to use it with other kin outside the home. Yao’s (2020) research in Canada showed that immigrant Chinese parents were all proactive in supporting their children to learn Mandarin while in Canada, through the use of in-house resources such as teaching children at home by various means.

Table 3: Culture-based strategies

Cultural resources are those indirect extra-linguistic efforts made by parents to expose their children to the home language. Such resources include the use of folk songs, folk tales and use of cultural foods. The data is presented below:

No.	Items	Responses	Number	%
4	I sing my native folk songs in the house	Yes	152	76
		No	48	24
		Total	200	100.0
5	I tell my children our native Idoma stories	Yes	16	8
		No	184	92
		Total	200	100.0
6	We cook our native Idoma food in the house	Yes	200	100
		No	0	0
		Total	200	100.0

The first cultural resource is folk songs that make use of the heritage language. The data reveals that, out of the total number, a minority (24%) did not sing their folk songs in their homes in Lagos, while the majority (76%) did. Singing folk songs at home do not translate to teaching or transmitting it to the offspring; rather, it is a means of exposing the children to the culture and language. Within folk songs are the world view, belief system, and social norms of a people. Due to the attractive nature of music, singing the folk songs is an indirect means of pulling the children into the culture and into the language that expresses it. According to the parents, their children had learnt the songs, over time.

The second cultural resource on which inquiry is based is folk tales. Folk tales represents the experiences of the culture with respect to myth, legend, ideology and philosophy. This is a cultural resource that is directly related to the moral upbringing of children. Through tales, children become more familiar with their group and more rooted to their heritage culture and language. Although tales can be narrated in English, there are certain aspects such as choruses, songs, and names of characters (human or animal), and setting that cannot be translated to English, as explained by the parents. Incidentally, an insignificant minority (8%) reported using folk tales with their children, while the majority did not. Due to the disparity in the response, an inquiry was posed to ascertain the reason behind the non-use of folk tales by parents in their homes in Lagos. The reason pooled from interview reveals that: time and the new technology was at the base of non-utilization of tales as a resource in the home. A majority of parents reported that “there is no time in Lagos” while a minority reported that “the children watch television in the night”. Thus, the quest to make ends meet in Lagos coupled with technology leaves parents in the study with no choice to introduce tales in their homes. The collateral effect is that the children were denied access to their cultural world and by the same token access to a means of acquiring their heritage language, even if partially.

The third cultural resource on which inquiry was based is food. In this case, all participants reported cooking their native food in Lagos. One of the markers of ethnic identity is cuisine as each ethnic group in Africa has a peculiar type of food for which they are known. The foods reported by respondents include soups such as *Okoho* and *Okpehe* rice. According to the participants, the *Okoho* soup is the main traditional soup of the Idoma. The soup is eaten with pounded yam which is called *Onihi* in Idoma tongue. The soup is prepared with the stem of a plant (*Okoho*) from which the soup derived its name, in addition to egusi balls known as *abahi*. Evidently, as reported by the participants, their children used the names of the native foods during interaction bordering on food matters, despite not being proficient in the language. Cultural resources have been found to be a vital means of boosting children’s proficiency in their heritage language. This is what Yao, (2020) termed cultural immersion; it is a means of exposing the children to the culture, and due to the symbiotic link between language and culture; as the children contact the culture, they correspondingly contact the language.

Table 4: Community-based strategies

Community resources represent the efforts made by the community to foster the acquisition of their language by their children. These resources include language nests, Community religious hubs, and social events such as parties. The data is presented below:

No.	Items	Responses	Number	%
7	My children attend holiday programmes where they are taught Idoma	Yes	0	0
		No	200	100.0
		Total	200	100.0
8	My children attend Idoma-medium Church in Lagos	Yes	20	10
		No	180	90
		Total	200	100.0
9	I encourage my children to attend parties hosted by Idoma kin in Lagos	Yes	200	100
		No	0	0
		Total	200	100.0

The first community resource on which inquiry was based is language nests; language nests are usually arranged by minority migrant communities during holiday periods to enhance and foster the acquisition of the heritage language by the children. In the nest, the heritage language is prioritized, and in addition, they sing the native songs, play the native games and the organizers (adults) tell them native folk stories. Incidentally, no participant reported sending their children to a language nest in Lagos during holidays. Based on the interview result, it was found that the participants were not aware that migrant groups can form such nests during school holidays to help their children acquire their heritage language. According to Pasanen (2010: 95). Language nests work in the same way as early total language immersion. Parker & Gessner (2014) state that the reason children are in the nest is that they are not getting their native language anywhere else. Rather, they are getting English everywhere they go—from their parents, family members, friends, television, radio, internet, games and books. This aspect of the findings is in dissonance with earlier findings. In Liang’s (2018) literature study, the prevalent practice found in varying studies is for immigrant parents to maintain their children’s heritage language by sending them to a heritage language schools or programs. Some of the driving force for this include giving children opportunity to mingle with other co-ethnic children than just studying heritage language, hoping their children could read in heritage language and finding it very challenging to handle their children’s language use at home by themselves.

The second community resource on which inquiry was based is religion; churches usually run services in either English or an indigenous language or both. Migrant groups with a considerable population in cities often have churches where their heritage language is used in services. The result is negative as very few respondents (10%) reported sending their children to Idoma-based churches. The implication is that the religious resource was exploited by few respondents in helping the acquisition of Idoma by their children. This is in contrast with Al-Sahafi’s (2006) study where the use of Arabic in religion was a factor that aided Arabic maintenance among Arabic immigrants in New Zealand. Although there are divergent positions about the effectiveness of the church in promoting heritage language as found in Park and Sakar (2007), there was consensus that such measures helped, as the church presents a platform where co-ethnic children could gather, hence granting them opportunity to share their heritage language and enhance their proficiency to some degree.

The third community strategy is birthday parties either organized by the respondents or by their kin in Lagos where their children gather to share in one another’s joy. It is viewed that such gatherings provide opportunities for Idoma children to meet and interact; since such gatherings are organized by an ethnic kin, there are strong indications that the language will be used, even if minimally, hence exposing the children to the language. For both inquiries, all the participants responded in the positive, meaning that their children receive such exposure that might affect their tendency to use their heritage language.

Table 5: Network-based strategies

The aspect of visitation comprises of strategies used to expose the children to the heritage language in the migrant setting. Such strategies include visiting the ancestral land, receiving guests from the ancestral land, as well as making visits to kin in Lagos. The data is presented below:

No.	Items	Responses	Number	%
10	I take my children to our Idoma home town once in a while	Yes	168	84
		No	32	16
		Total	200	100.0
11	I receive visitors from the home town in Lagos	Yes	200	100
		No	0	0
		Total	200	100.0
12	My children and I visit our kin in Lagos	Yes	160	80
		No	40	20
		Total	200	100.0

The inquiry on visitation as a strategy revealed that a majority of participants were engaged in visitation activities with their kin, both in the homeland and within the city. A significant majority (84%) were positive with respect to visiting the home land, while 100% indicated that they received visits from kin from the homeland. Additionally, 100% reported receiving kin guests while 80% reported visiting kin with their children. This is a demonstration that there is constant contact between the migrants and their homeland and kin which have implications for home language use. When people visit the homeland, they have more opportunity to use Idoma more than in the city; their children are exposed to a native environment where Idoma is the default language of communication, thus enhancing their exposure to the heritage language. In converse, when they receive guests from the homeland, such guests come to the city with their cultural baggage, including Idoma, which alters the dynamics of language use in the home, as clarified by the participants.

This finding is consistent with Lee (2002) who found that, among 40 second generation Korean-American university students those who had visited Korea more often achieved a higher level of proficiency in the Korean language than their class mates who rarely visited Korea. Similarly, Kung, (2013) found that children who accompanied their parents to the homeland achieved higher proficiency levels in the heritage language than those who did not. It is summed that such journeys was a boost to learn the heritage language, since they are immersed in a partial monolingual environment throughout their stay.

Table 6: Entertainment-based strategies

Entertainment resources comprise of indirect means of exposing children to their indigenous language. These strategies involve the use of films, music and internet resources. The data is presented below

No.	Items	Responses	Number	%
13	I encourage my children to watch Idoma-medium films	Yes	40	20
		No	160	80
		Total	200	100.0
14	I play Idoma highlife music in the house	Yes	172	86
		No	28	14
		Total	200	100.0
15	I encourage my children to download Idoma music in their phones	Yes	32	16
		No	168	84
		Total	200	100.0

The entertainment resources investigated in this study are films, modern music and the internet. In terms of films, there were few participants (20%) who encouraged their children to watch ethnic-medium films. In contrast, a significant majority (86%) were positive with respect to using Idoma music at home. The use of highlife music by the parents may be an indirect means of exposing children to the heritage language, but it is a no mean strategy. Naturally, music is a major entertainment resource that all human beings align with. A good piece of music has the power to captivate the audience, and to an extent link them with the language of the music, over time. Incidentally, only an insignificant fraction of parents (16%) encouraged their children to use internet

resources in respect to playing Idoma music in their phones. In sum, it is evident that only a few participants utilized entertainment strategies to encourage their children to speak their heritage language. This result is in contrast with other studies with respect to use of entertainment resources to boost heritage language proficiency. Scholars (Lao, 2004; Li, 2006; Park & Sarkar, 2007; Kung, 2013) in separate studies have found that aside verbally speaking the heritage language with children, the use of other indirect means are as important in exposing children to the heritage language. Such resources, as found in their studies include listening to radios/video tapes, watching television programs in the native language, and reading story books in the language. It

was found that these were deliberate and intentional efforts made by parents to ensure that their children encountered their languages in multiple platforms and settings, with the confidence that such contacts will leave their mark in their children's linguistic repertoire.

6. Conclusion

This study has examined various strategies adopted by Idoma internal migrants towards maintaining their heritage language in multi-ethnic and multi-lingual Lagos. Generally, it was evident that the participating families were not taking active steps and measures towards the maintaining of their heritage Idoma in Lagos State. Since migration is a major factor in language maintenance as it renders immigrants' languages vulnerable to extinction in that setting, it behoves the immigrants to take proactive steps to safeguard their languages. More imperative is the need to transmit the heritage language to the subsequent generation since the children born in the new country/city are more predisposed to adapting or adjusting to the language of the host community or the mainstream language. If parents fail to utilize every opportunity at their disposal, with respect to home-based strategies, culture-based strategies, community-based strategies, network-based strategies and entertainment-based strategies, the second generation are bound to shift loyalty to the language of the host community or language of wider communication, with all its implications for identity projection. Since regional languages such as Idoma is not used in the education system, either as a subject or instructional tool, particularly in the immigration context, the onus is on Idoma parents (and parents of other regional languages who live in major cities in Nigeria) to re-strategise by first becoming purveyors and ambassadors of Idoma, and by extension models of Idoma identity and culture that the future generation will find irresistible.

References

- Al-Sahafi, M. (2016). Living with two languages: Arabic-speaking immigrant children's bilingual proficiency development. *The Internet Journal Language, Culture and Society*, 39(3), 1-10
- Armstrong, R. G. (1983). *The Idoma languages of Benue and Cross River valleys* Ibadan: Crosswell.
- Arriagada, P. A. (2005). Family context and Spanish-language use: A study of Latino children in the United States. *Social Science Quarterly*, 86(3), 599-619
- Baez, G. P. (2013). Family language policy, transnationalism, and the diaspora community of San Lucas Quiaviní of Oaxaca, Mexico. *Language Policy*, 12(1), 27-45
- Brown, C.L. (2011). Maintaining Heritage Language Perspectives of Korean Parents. *Multicultural Education*, 7(2), 34 – 43
- Clyne, M., & Kipp, S. (2006). Australia's changing language demographics. *People and Place*, 14(1), 52–62.
- Fishman, J.A. (1970). *A brief Introduction*. London: Newbury House Publishers
- García, M. (2003). Recent research on language maintenance. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 23(1), 22-43.
- Habtoor, H. A. (2012). Language Maintenance and Language Shift among Second Generation Tigrinya-speaking Eritrean Immigrants in Saudi Arabia. *Theory & Practice in Language Studies*, 2(5), 54 - 67
- Kopeliovich, S. (2011). How long is 'the Russian street' in Israel? Prospects of maintaining the Russian language. *Israel Affairs*, 17(1), 108-124
- Kung, F. W. (2013). Bilingualism and the second generation: Investigating the effects and methods of heritage language maintenance and second language acquisition. *英語教學期刊 English Teaching & Learning*, 37(3), 107-145
- Lanza, E. & Svendsen, B.A. (2007). Tell me who your friends are and I might be able to tell you what language(s) you speak: Social network analysis, multilingualism, and identity. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 11(3), 275-300.
- Lao, C. (2004). Parents' attitudes toward Chinese-English bilingual education and Chinese-language use. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 28 (1), 99-121
- Lee, S. K. (2002). The significance of language and cultural education on secondary achievement: A survey of Chinese-American and Korean-American students. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 26(2), 213-224.
- Leung, G., & Uchikoshi, Y. (2012). Relationships among language ideologies, family language policies, and children's language achievement: A look at Cantonese-English bilinguals in the U.S. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 35(3), 294-313
- Li, G. (2006). Bilingual and trilingual practices in the home context: Case studies of Chinese-Canadian children. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 6(3), 355-381

- Liang, F. (2018). Parental perceptions toward and practices of heritage language maintenance: Focusing on the United States and Canada. *International Journal of Language Studies* 12(2), 65-86
- Mesthrie, R. (1999). Fifty ways to say 'I do': tracing the origins of unstressed do in Cape Flats English, South Africa. *South African Journal of Linguistics*, 17(1), 58-71.
- Montrul, S., & Potowski, K. (2007). Command of gender agreement in school-age Spanish-English bilingual children. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 11(3), 301-328.
- Ogah-Adejoh, M. (2016). The Basic Clause Structure in Idoma, *JOLAN: Journal of the Linguistic Association of Nigeria SUPPLEMENT 1: Juxtaposition in Nigerian Languages*
- Park, C.Y. (2007). *Maintaining Korean as a heritage language*, Ph.D. dissertation, Arizona State University, AAT 3287994, <http://proquest.umi.com>, accessed on April 12, 2011
- Park, S. M. (2013). Immigrant students' heritage language and cultural identity maintenance in multilingual and multicultural societies. *Concordia University Working Papers in Applied Linguistics*, 4(1), 30-53.
- Park, S. M., & Sarkar, M. (2007). Parents' attitudes toward heritage language maintenance for their children and their efforts to help their children maintain the heritage language: A case study of Korean-Canadian immigrants. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 20(3), 223-235
- Parker, A & Gessner, S. (2014). *Language Nest Handbook*. First People Cultural Council
- Pasanen, A. (2010). Will language nests change the direction of language shifts? On the language nests of Inari Saamis and Karelians. In H. Sulkala & H. Mantila (Eds.), *Planning a new standard language – Finnic minority languages meet the new millennium*, *Studia Fennica Linguistica* 15, pp. 95-118.
- Polinsky, M., & Kagan, O. (2007). Heritage languages: In the 'wild' and in the classroom. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 1(5), 368-395
- Schwartz, M. (2010). Family language policy: Core issues of an emerging field. *Applied Linguistics Review*, 1(1), 171-192.
- Spolsky, B. (2004). *Language Policy: Key Topics in Sociolinguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Suarez, D. (2002). The paradox of linguistic hegemony and the maintenance of Spanish as a heritage language in the United States. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 23(6), 512-530
- Valdés, G. (2001). Heritage language students: Profiles and possibilities. In J. K. Peyton, D. A. Ranard & S. Mc Ginnis (Eds), *Heritage languages in America: Preserving a national resource* (pp. 37-77). Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.
- Valdes, G. (2005). Bilingualism, heritage language learners and SLA research: Opportunities lost or seized? *The Modern Language Journal*, 89(3), 410-426. doi: 10.1111/j.1540
- Williamson, K & Blench, R. (2000). *Niger Congo in* Hein, B & Nurse, D. *African languages: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Yao, S. (2020). *Chinese Immigrant Parents, Their Children's Language Learning, and Parent-Child Relationships*, Electronic Theses and Dissertations. 8495
- Yearwood, E. (2008). Psychosocial implications for heritage language maintenance. *JCAPN*, 21(1), 62-63