

Language Ecology in Yobe State

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Abstract

This paper reports the findings of a sociolinguistic survey conducted in respect of language ecology in Yobe State. The study – which was supported by the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) – aims to establish the numerical strength of the ‘local’ languages of Yobe State and how they interact among one another and other languages. In addition, it intends to find the consequences of such interactions. To achieve the objectives of this study, the researchers administered paper-and-pencil questionnaire and conducted focus group discussion schedules as well as participatory observation across the seventeen Local Government Areas in Yobe State. It was observed by the researchers that the interactions among the languages have exacerbated language shift, language borrowing etc. Whilst all the languages are endangered by Hausa – an emerging cross-border language – there are some potentially endangered ‘local’ languages that endanger other ‘local’ languages that have large population in the State. This is inimical to language vitality and preservation. However, of interest in the study is language loyalty amongst speakers of languages that have seemingly few speakers and relatively few communities. As a result, the study recommends that extant language policies that encourage language spread and development should be implemented to the letter in Yobe State.¹

Keywords: Ecology, loyalty, endangerment, policy, predator.

1. Introduction

Of interest in this study is the inadequate level of research in respect of language ecology in Yobe State. Thus, this study was designed to collect data on the languages of Yobe State with the intention of investigating how the languages interact and the consequences of such interactions. Secondary observation by the researchers reveals that there is no Local Government Area in Yobe State that is monolingual. Furthermore, Hausa which is not necessarily an indigenous language in most of the local governments has a pervasive predator power. This is despite the existence of the use of English as an official language and Arabic as a language of religion and language of education in some cases. In spite of the fact that northern Yobe State shares common border with Niger Republic (a Francophone country), it is observed that the use of French language appears to be absent in the state. Thus, it was concluded that Yobe State provides prospects for further linguistic research on how the languages used in the state co-exist and influence one another.

Suffice it to say that at present, researchers in the fields of Geography, History, Economics and Political Science have indicated interest in research related to language ecology. According to Wendel (2005:51): “The ecological approach of language considers the complex web of relationship that exists between the environment, languages and their speakers.” Such contacts are not without consequences. One of the results of the interaction of languages via their respective users is language shift (Ugwuoke, 1999; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2002). Other results of the contact include language mutation, positive language borrowing, and other forms of word formation. Yobe State, just like Nigeria, is a heteroligual society. Thence, languages (indigenous and non-indigenous) are bound to come into

¹ This study was conducted with support from Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund).

contact as a result of the interaction of members of the distinctive speech communities resulting into positive and negative linguistic consequences.

Grenoble and Whaley (2006:17) identify four types of language attrition viz; sudden, radical, gradual and bottom-to-top. Of interest in this paper is gradual attrition which they describe as “... the relatively slow loss of language due to language shift away from the local language to a language of wider communication whether that be a regionally dominant language or a national lingua franca.”

Yobe State as a heterolingual society has so many languages that are indigenous to it. Lavers (1980:207) reports that:

... the speakers of Chadic languages were the original inhabitants of the Borno area most of whom were either assimilated or driven away to the marsh areas where many formed small states that later came under the protection of the Mais. The Kotoko peoples south of Lake Chad have retained their languages and customs while being strongly influenced by Kanuri culture. The BeddeNgizim peoples who were almost certainly driven up the Komadugu by the immigrants from Kanem left representatives near the shores of Chad in towns such as Arege. The main body became separated into the Beddes and Ngizims, most of the former settling in the inaccessible swamps south of Nguru.

Kanuri, Bade and Ngizim are languages spoken in Yobe State. Other languages of Yobe State include Bole, Duwai, Kare-Kare, Fulfulde, Maga, Ngamo, Babur, etc. It is also pertinent to investigate whether Shuwa Arab, Tera, Marghi etc can be called languages of Yobe State. For instance, according to Archibong (2006:62), Bole as a language interacts with other languages in Yobe State and states that: “The alteration in the linguistic pattern of the Kare-Kare, Ngizim, Ngamo and Bole languages was not in any way due to the overlordship of the Bolewa.” Stenning (1959:94) underscores that Damaturu District had both Fulani and non-Fulani headships thus: “Of the non-Fulani headships, six (Bulturi, Dabugu, Damaturu, Gabai, Shegau, and Zogodo) were non-Fulani settlements of long standing in which Fulani pastoral interest were minimal.” In the case of Fune District, he reports in page 95 that: “Three of the non-Fulani headships (Alleguerno, Kayeri and Daura) were non-Fulani centres before the Wodaabe immigration...” It is pertinent to identify the linguistic status of the non-Fulani centres through this study.

Scholars do attribute ecological and political factors as some of the reasons why languages spread. For instance, Abubakar (1980:329) states that: “... Wadai further east continued its westward expansion thereby setting in motion a series of migration by various elements of Teda, Kanembu and Shua Arabs into Kanem and ultimately into the metropolis at a time of great political weakness.” Given that the Shuwa Arabs are pastoralists and considering the fact that Mukhtar (2002:2) reports that: “Since their advent in Kanem and later in Borno, the Arab (called Shuwa Arab by the Kanuri) had for long maintained their nomadic pastoral way of life ...”, can one conclude that they have also sojourned into Yobe State? This can be established via empirical study.

The exposition made so far notwithstanding; one hardly finds a single compendium that explicitly exposes the language situation in Yobe State. Furthermore, lack of a clear cut language policy has impeded the right of some languages to recognition. It is apposite to underscore that every language has some rights (Brann, 1993). For a language to exercise its right to education, law, religion, political and socio-economic participation, science and technology, literature among others, it must be a living language. As such, every language has the fundamental right to survival. Any attempt to deny any language its rights will engender language extinction.

According to Ndimele (2010:473), “it is quite depressing that more than half of the languages spoken today in the world will disappear before long.” A major cause of this foreseen linguistic catastrophe is language attrition which is characterized by language shift. More depressing is the fact that lip service, rather than proactive language revival and language engineering, has been prioritized. This is because a lot of research has been conducted on language endangerment. For instance, Williamson (1987) reports “... more

recently, Hausa has spread and speakers of some Platoid languages have shifted to speaking Hausa.” A cursory observation by these researchers also reveals that the same is obtainable in Yobe State thus the need to establish the intensity empirically. In his submission, Kuju (1999) agrees that Hausa serves as a threat to many languages in northern Nigeria. A typical example of a language threatened by Hausa in northern Nigeria is Gurduṅ.

Haruna (2010:813) conducted research on gradual language shift from Gurduṅ to Hausa and reports: “The informants that claim to be most fluent speakers of the language had serious problems in using the language in narrating stories.” The stories they narrated were interwoven with Hausa expressions. In his study on potentially endangered Kanuri in Nguru Township, Gbeyonron (2010:172) found that even in situations where Kanuri is used “... code-mixing and code-switching are making the language to undergo some sort of linguistic mutation.” The mutation in this case is a hybridized Kanuri that concatenates Kanuri and Hausa lexical items thus indicating some changes in respect of Standard Kanuri.

It should be noted that Kanuri is a sub-major Nigerian language and one of the languages of Yobe State (Bulakarima, 2010). But then, it is threatened by Hausa. This is considering the emerging language shift from Kanuri to Hausa (Kuju, 1999). Another sub-major Nigerian language that is bedeviled by attrition is Fulfulde. Daudu (1991:55) reports “...Fulfulde in Nigeria especially is fast becoming relegated to cattle rearers only. This has been largely due to the deliberate action of the strayed Fulbe who unashamedly agreed to be assimilated into other languages that are not theirs.” Fulfulde is also one of the languages of Yobe State. Reporting on the perceived endangerment status of Igala, Abuh (2013:63) submits: “Results of the study showed, among others, that 42.3% of the respondents are competent speakers of Igala language. It was concluded that, Igala language in spite of the population of its users is endangered.” Even though Abuh’s study reveals lack of communicative competence in Igala among most of his respondents, the study was not explicit on the language propelling the attrition of Igala. It is therefore apt to find the vitality and spread of languages likes Bade, Kare-Kare, Bole, Ngamo, Ngizim etc. in Yobe State.

Commenting on the findings of Blench (1998), Grenoble and Whaley (2006:37) provide the major factors for language loss in north-central Nigeria as:

- i. assimilation to a larger more powerful group nearby,
- ii. assimilation to small but culturally dominants groups,
- iii. assimilation to English, the national language,
- iv. demographic crises caused by labour migration/urbanization.

Despite the submission made by Grenoble and Whaley, it should be noted that Nigerian language users are also shifting towards Nigerian Pidgin English. However, it would be of interest to authenticate whether this situation is also applicable to Yobe State. Except for recent events where Nigerian English causes attrition in Nigeria (Adegbite, 2010), most African languages have Pidgin English or other African languages as their predator languages (Mufwene, 2001). Suffice it to say that, in Nigeria, sub-major languages and sometimes minority Nigerian languages and not necessarily major Nigerian languages, Nigerian English or Nigerian Pidgin English; do serve as predator languages. In some cases, the predator language is also potentially endangered. This may be as a result of language suicide. According to Aitchison (2001:236) language suicide becomes evident when two languages are fairly congruent thus “... it is extremely easy for the less prestigious one to borrow vocabulary, constructions and sounds from the one with greater social approval. In the long run, it obliterates itself in the process entirely.” Sometimes the two languages may not be fairly similar. But then, given that Grin (2003:3) reports that “the conflictual nature of linguistic diversity stems from the fact that groups using language often compete for access to material and symbolic resources”, gradual attrition from a weaker language to a stronger language may occur. This will thence result in language murder despite the fact that they are not necessarily linguistically akin.

A minority language that serves as a predator language in Nigeria’s Taraba State is Jukun. Fakuade (1999:63) reports that “Jukun language... has constituted a threat to other minority languages particularly in

Donga, Ussa and Takum local government areas. The case in point is the language shift from mother-tongue towards Jukun by the Kuteb, Chamba and Ichen...” Most of the older Kuteb, Chamba and Ichen are multilingual. Thus, the older ones have contributed to the attrition given the fact that at a point in time they no longer consider it necessary for the children and other young people to communicate with them in Kuteb, Chamba and Ichen which they consider as less prestigious in comparison with Jukun. In the case of Yobe State, it is pertinent to identify what is happening to Bade, Bole, Duwai, Fulfulde, Kanuri, Kare-Kare, Ngamo, Ngizim, Babur etc. In view of the above, the counsel of Pugh (1996) which provides that negative attitude towards so-called minority or less-prestigious languages can have disastrous effect upon the languages and the linguistics minority becomes apt. One of such effects is language murder. We have earlier reported the potentially endangered status of Fulfulde. Conversely, Fakuade (1999:64) reports that in Adamawa State “... some ethnic groups such as Yungur, Mboi, Bata, Chamba, Vere, Tambo, Bura, Ga’anda, Lala etc. do not only speak Fulfulde, but they also often claim they are Fulani.” Similarly, in Yobe State, Archibong (2006:65) reports that “... a good number of the Ngamo call themselves Kare-kare.” This indicates that potentially endangered sub-major languages also serve as predator languages. This study attempts to verify whether other languages in Yobe State are shifting towards Kanuri, Fulfulde, Bole etc.

Several strategies have been postulated in respect of the revival of languages threatened by attrition (Grenoble & Whaley 2006, Geary, 1997). While some of the strategies challenge the original owners to exhibit language loyalty and patriotism, some obligate linguists, and functional cum applied linguists in particular, to see advocacy, research and documentation of the language in question as part of their social responsibility. Thus, it would be apposite to add that language policies that enhance language maintenance, vitality, revival and engineering should be prioritized. In tandem with the strategies, Emenanjo (1988) contends: “... the major languages of a given community should be given pride of place over and above any other African language no matter its importance on the African continent.” This will in a sense facilitate the vitality of every language.

Some linguists did not only suggest that every native user of a particular language transmits the language to their children but also suggest the study of every Nigerian language at educational institutions close to the places of domicile of each of the languages. Some suggested policies that encourage the use of languages in both the print and electronic media. However, Grin and Vallincourt (2000:13) caution that: “Moreover, making television or radio programmes available in a given language is no guarantee that these programmes will be watched [and listened to].” As such, for the programmes to be accessed by the target audience – for the purpose of language vitality – the target audience should be made to have positive attitude. Furthermore, Grin (2002:13) underscores the place of education in language revival and revitalization stating that: “... education is the single most important channel of government intervention in the sphere of language... and as such remains the most important vehicle of language policy.” In the case of Nigeria, the National Policy on Education gives all Nigerian languages the right to education. However, observation made by the researchers revealed that the policy is under-implemented in Yobe State. The impact of government policy on the language ecology has been on for a long time. Section 46 of the Yobe State Education Edict provides that at the primary school Kanuri shall be used as language of instruction for pupils in the first three year in predominantly Kanuri speaking local government areas viz: Bama, Damboa, Gujba, Kaga, Geidam, Kukawa, Monguno, Ngala, Nguru, Damaturu, Konduga and Maduguri Metropolitan Council. Conversely, Hausa shall be used for the same purpose in Gwoza, Askira/Uba, Biu, Fika, Bade and Fune (Yobe State of Nigeria, 1994). It would be pertinent to state that this edict was directly lifted from the old Borno State Education Edict without considering that some of the local government areas listed are not part of Yobe State. Despite the provisions in the edict, the implementation is not done to the letter, the effect of the policy on the survival of indigenous languages notwithstanding.

2. Problem Statement/Justification

Yobe State is one of the heterolingual societies in Nigeria. This has engendered language contacts. The consequence of this is language endangerment – potential, gradual and severe. However, there is paucity of documents that reveal the current language situation in Yobe State. In fact, some languages which are in reality languages of Yobe State are not given the deserved recognition in so many existing literatures. Conscious of the fact that every language has right to recognition and survival, it is apposite that an empirical research is conducted to reveal the linguistic map and, the spread and vitality of languages; in Yobe State. This research is germane because it will engender overall corpus and status language planning, stir further research, documentation and implementation and sustainability of its findings.

3. Objective of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to identify the numerical strength of the languages of Yobe State, how they interact among one another and with other languages non-native to Yobe State and the consequences of such interactions. As a result, the following are the specific objectives:

- i. Identify the number of native languages spoken by members of speech communities in each of the local government areas in Yobe State;
- ii. Establish which of the languages are endangered by native or non-native languages of Yobe State;
- iii. Delineate the respective domains each of the languages is used in the state – parliamentary business, judiciary, education, media, official government business, commerce etc.

4. Methodology

The population of the study is the entire seventeen (17) local government areas in Yobe State. Yobe State has a population that is more 2.4 million (National Population Commission, 2016). There is no one single document that captures the entire languages of Yobe State and the population of each. However, Oruonye (2009) listed Bade, Bole, Fulfulde, Kanuri, Kare-Kare, Manga, Ngamo and Ngizim as the indigenous languages found in Yobe State. This is not all-encompassing as far as the preliminary survey made by these researchers is concerned. Despite the fact that one rarely finds literatures that recognize Babur/Pabur as one of the languages in Yobe State, Usman (2014, p.25) asserts that:“There were equally quite a number of villages, namely Gulani, Bumsa, Doksa, Daushi, Bara, Bantimi, Gabai, GarinTuwo, Bularafa, Kukuwa, Sakdiya, Yadi, Telle, Table, Buni Gari, BuniYadi, Boltram, which were largely inhabited by Babur-speaking people ...” All these places are in the present-day Yobe State.

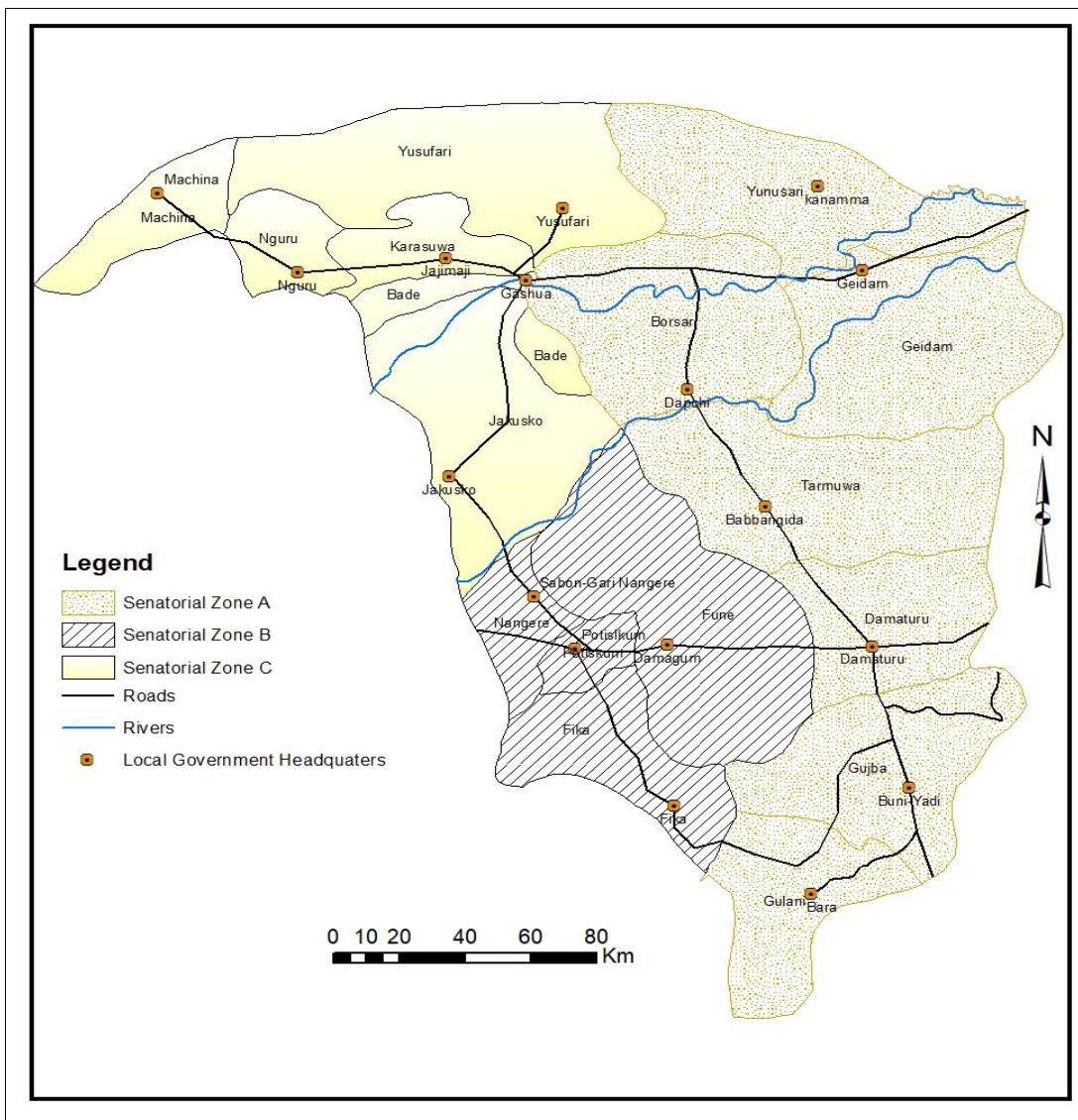
To achieve the objectives of this study, survey research design was adopted. Survey is effective where one’s intention is to ascertain what is obtainable synchronically (Koul, 1997). Despite being synchronic linguistic research, some elements of diachronic linguistic research was applied so as to identify the historical evolution of the respective languages in the areas they have spread to.

Because the researchers cannot cover the whole of Yobe State, sampling was adopted for the administration of the research instruments. According to Brewer (2004:4), “... sampling is all about using resources efficiently.” Since the entire size of the population of this study is very large and given that the time and resources available for this study are limited, one can consider sampling (Hite, 2001; Nwana, 2005). For this reason, details of all the towns, villages and hamlets in Yobe State were obtained by the researchers from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the National Population Commission (NPC). Pre-administration questions in respect of the language situation in the localities were raised for key informants by the researchers. Pre-administration mapping was done so as to group localities according to congruence in language. This thus led to purposive sampling in respect of the areas where the instruments were administered. According Koul (1997:114) purposive sampling technique is “...convenient in the

situations where the sample to be selected is very small and the researcher wants to get some ideas of the population characteristics in a short time.”

The researchers used focus group discussion, paper-and-pencil questionnaire and participatory observation as research instruments. This study thus followed a “multimethod research approach” (Blatchford, Bassett, Goldstein & Martin, 2003). The multiple data collection method was used deliberately by the researcher so as to enable the study achieve its objectives. According to Dornyei and Taguchi (2010:16), “Because the essence of *scientific research* is trying to find answers to questions in a systematic manner, it is no wonder that the *questionnaire* has become one of the most popular research instruments applied in the social sciences.” They further provide that questionnaire has been used by researchers in two broad senses: interview schedules and self-administered paper-and-pencil questionnaire. This research therefore developed two sets of questionnaire. One was used in focus group discussion schedules and the other was in a paper-and-pencil form administered to the target participants. The researchers-constructed questionnaires were validated by subject matter experts in sociolinguistics and language ecology. The validated tools were subjected to reliability test before their adoption for administration. 51 focus group discussion sessions (3 in each LGA) were held during the course of the research. There are seventeen (17) LGAs in Yobe State: seven (7) in Zone A viz.: Bursari, Damaturu, Geidam, Gujba, Gulani, Tarmuwa and Yunusari; four (4) in Zone B viz.: Fika, Fune, Nangere and Potiskum; and six (6) in Zone C viz.: Bade, Jakusko, Karasuwa, Machina, Nguru and Yusufari. Each session was made up of 20 participants. The authorities in each of the LGAs and the traditional leaders were used as gate keepers to get to the target participants. 1700 persons (100 in each LGA) were asked to respond to the paper-and-pencil questionnaire. The data were analyzed quantitatively (using simple percentage) and qualitatively in response to the objectives of the study. The major findings of the study were validated through a validation schedule that was made up of 170 participants in Damaturu the state capital. The validation participants were made up of 10 indigenes of each of the LGAs in the state resident in Damaturu.

Figure 1: The three Senatorial Zones of Yobe State indicating the 17 LGAs of the State



5. Results

The major findings of the study are presented below.

5.1 Numerical Strength of the Languages of Yobe State

There are seventeen (17) languages native to Yobe State. They are Babur, Bade, Bole, Duwai, Fulfulde, Hausa, Kanuri, Kare-kare, Maga, Marghi, Mohoida, Ngamo, Ngizim, Shuwa, Tera, Tubu and Zabar. Of all the languages, Fulfulde happens to be the language with the widest spread given the fact that it has speech communities in each of the seventeen (17) LGAs. This may not be unconnected with the pastoralist and nomadic nature of the Fulbe. Hausa, one of the three major languages of Nigeria, occupies a significant

position in the linguistic behaviour of the people of Yobe State. It is used in all the seventeen (17) LGAs of the state by native speakers of the language in addition to speakers of Hausa as a second language.

Table 1: Languages of Yobe State and the LGAs they have speech communities

S/No.	Language	LGA where there are speech communities	Number and % of LGAs spoken
1	Babur	Gujba, Gulani	2 (12%)
2	Bade	Bade, Bursari, Jakusko, Karasuwa, Nguru	5 (29%)
3	Bole	Fika, Potiskum	2 (12%)
4	Duwai	Bursari	1 (6%)
5	Fulfulde	Bade, Bursari, Damaturu, Fika, Fune, Geidam, Gujba, Gulani, Jakusko, Karasuwa, Machina, Nangere, Nguru, Potiskum, Tarmuwa, Yunusari, Yusufari	17 (100%)
6	Hausa	Bade, Bursari, Damaturu, Fika, Fune, Geidam, Gujba, Gulani, Jakusko, Karasuwa, Machina, Nangere, Nguru, Potiskum, Tarmuwa, Yunusari, Yusufari	17 (100%)
7	Kanuri	Bade, Bursari, Damaturu, Fune, Geidam, Gujba, Gulani, Jakusko, Karasuwa, Machina, Nangere, Nguru, Tarmuwa, Yunusari, Yusufari	15 (88%)
8	Kare-kare	Damaturu, Fika, Fune, Nangere, Potiskum	5 (29%)
9	Maga	Gulani	1 (6%)
10	Marghi	Gujba, Gulani	2 (12%)
11	Mohoida	Yusufari	1 (6%)
12	Ngamo	Fika, Potiskum	2 (12%)
13	Ngizim	Fune, Jakusko, Karasuwa, Potiskum	4 (24%)
14	Shuwa	Damaturu, Fune, Gujba, Tarmuwa	4 (24%)
15	Tera	Gulani	1 (6%)
16	Tubu	Yusufari	1 (6%)
17	Zabar	Nguru, Yusufari	2 (12%)

Table 2: The Languages of the LGAs of Yobe State

S/No.	Local Government Area (LGA)	Languages	Number and % of languages spoken
1	Bade	Bade, Fulfulde, Hausa , Kanuri	3 (18%)
2	Bursari	Bade, Duwai, Fulfulde, Hausa , Kanuri	5 (29%)
3	Damaturu	Fulfulde, Hausa , Kanuri, Kare-kare, Shuwa	5 (29%)
4	Fika	Bole, Fulfulde, Hausa, Kare-kare, Ngamo	5 (29%)
5	Fune	Fulfulde, Hausa , Kanuri, Kare-kare, Ngizim, Shuwa	6 (35%)
6	Geidam	Fulfulde, Hausa , Kanuri	3 (18%)
7	Gujba	Babur, Fulfulde, Hausa , Kanuri, Marghi, Shuwa	6 (35%)
8	Gulani	Babur, Fulfulde, Hausa , Kanuri, Kare-kare, Maga, Marghi, Tera	7 (41%)
9	Jakusko	Bade, Fulfulde, Hausa , Kanuri, Ngizim	5 (29%)
10	Karasuwa	Bade, Fulfulde, Hausa , Kanuri, Ngizim	5 (29%)
11	Machina	Fulfulde, Hausa , Kanuri	3 (18%)
12	Nangere	Fulfulde, Hausa , Kanuri, Kare-kare	4 (24%)

13	Nguru	Bade, Fulfulde, Hausa , Kanuri, Zabar	5 (29%)
14	Potiskum	Bole, Fulfulde, Hausa , Kare-kare, Ngamo, Ngizim	6 (35%)
15	Tarmuwa	Fulfulde, Hausa , Kanuri, Shuwa,	4 (24%)
16	Yunusari	Fulfulde, Hausa , Kanuri	3 (18%)
17	Yusufari	Fulfulde, Hausa , Kanuri, Mohoida, Tubu, Zabar	6 (35%)

Table 3: Languages of Yobe State and the Senatorial Zones they have speech communities

S/No.	Language	Senatorial District(s) where there are speech communities
1	Babur	A
2	Bade	A & B
3	Bole	B
4	Duwai	A
5	Fulfulde	A, B & C
6	Hausa	A, B & C
7	Kanuri	A, B & C
8	Kare-kare	A & B
9	Maga	A
10	Marghi	A
11	Mohoida	C
12	Ngamo	B
13	Ngizim	B & C
14	Shuwa	A
15	Tera	A
16	Tubu	C
17	Zabar	C

Table 4: The Senatorial Zones of Yobe State and Languages spoken in their speech communities

S/No.	Senatorial District	Language	Number and % of languages spoken
1	A	Babur, Bade, Duwai, Fulfulde, Hausa , Kanuri, Kare-kare, Maga, Marghi, Shuwa, Tera	11 (65%)
2	B	Bole, Fulfulde, Hausa , Kanuri, Kare-kare, Ngamo, Ngizim, Shuwa	9 (53%)
3	C	Bade, Fulfulde, Hausa , Kanuri, Mohoida, Ngizim, Tubu, Zabar	8 (47%)

Figure 2. Linguistic map of Yobe State Senatorial Zone A

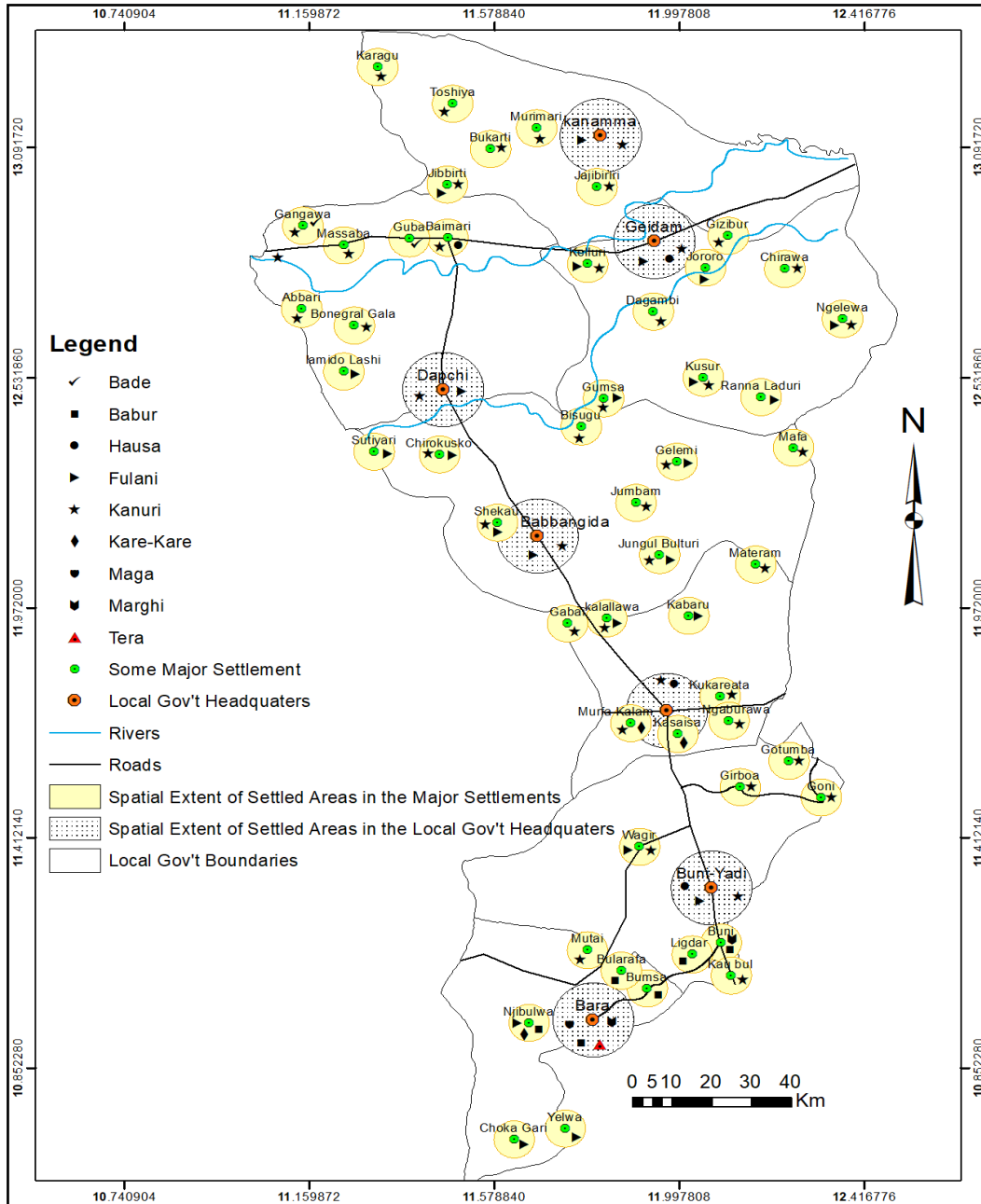


Figure 3. Linguistic map of Yobe State Senatorial Zone B

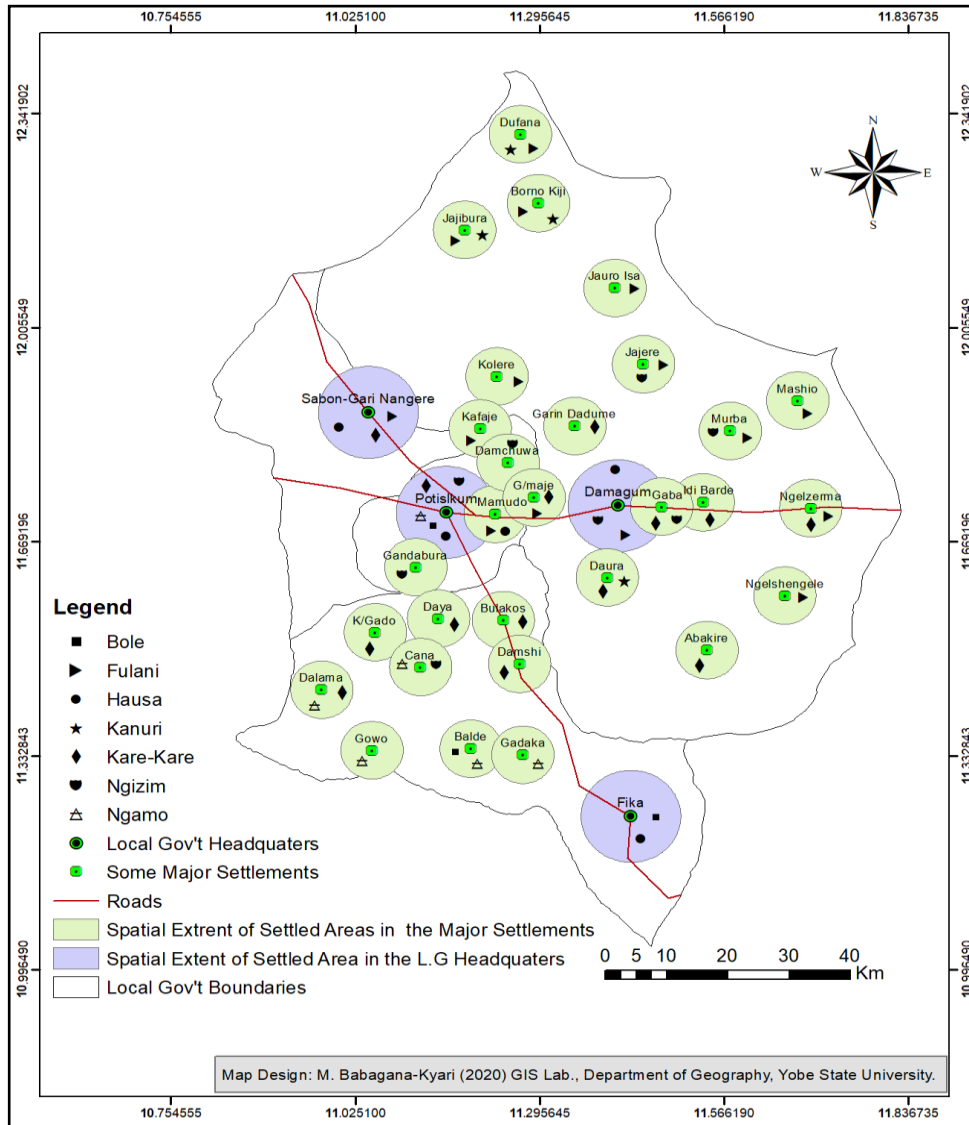
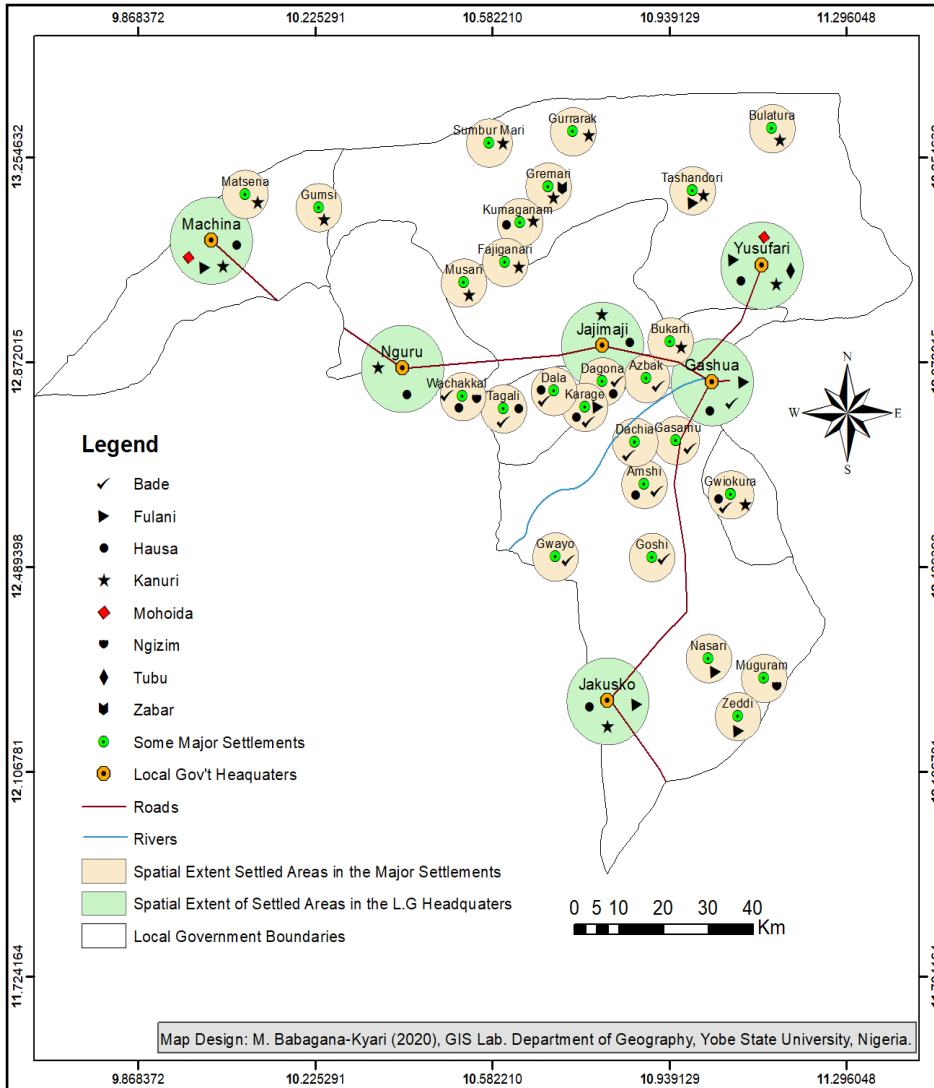


Figure 4. Linguistic map of Yobe State Senatorial Zone C



5.2 Language endangerment, vitality, and loyalty in Yobe State

This study found that Ngamo is severely endangered. The Ngamo ethnic group has a population of over ten thousand households predominantly found in settlements like Gadaka, Garin Goge, Gashinge, Zadawa, Janga Siri, Janga Dale, Garin Dauya, Lolijo etc. in Fika LGA and Potiskum Township in Potiskum LGA. However, only an indicative 30 to 35% of the members of the ethnolinguistic group speak the language – with inadequate communicative competence in most cases. Ngamo is endangered by Bole and Kare-kare (which are incidentally potentially endangered) in addition to Hausa.

Another language that is severely endangered in the state is Marghi. It was found that it is endangered by Kanuri and Hausa. Only an indicative 13 – 15% of the members of the ethnolinguistic group resident in Damaturu and Gujba LGAs speak the language. In Damaturu, LGA, almost all the persons whose ancestry was traced to Marghi have apparently assimilated with Kanuri. Similarly, it was found that many

persons whose ancestry was traced to Ngizim in Damaturu, Tarmuwa and some parts of Fune LGAs have apparently assimilated with Kanuri.

Babur is potentially endangered by Kanuri and Hausa. Incidentally, Maga is shifting to Babur, Kanuri, and Hausa. Duwai is at the verge of extinction. Duwai had earlier shifted to Bade and Kanuri.

Of interest in this study is language loyalty among languages that have less than five thousand (5000) speakers in the state. They are Mohoida, Shuwa, Tera, Tubu and Zabar. Mohoida and Tubu speakers are found in Yusufari LGA. All Mohoida and Tubu irrespective of age and gender speak the language. Tubu is a Chadic language. Their concentration is found in Chad, Niger, Libya and Sudan (Cotula, 2006). Their migration into Yobe State is dated to 1973 as a result of the adverse drought of that year (Fage & Oliver, 1975). On the other hand, the Mohoida are originally from Fezzan in Libya (Blench, 1996). They are camel breeders. They had earlier migrated to Niger in the 1930s and later to Chad in the 1960s. Their migration to the Hadejia-Nguru wetland started in the 1980s as a result of the intensity of the Chadian civil strife. Similarly, Shuwa is spoken by all the residents of the Shuwa speech communities in Damaturu, Fune, Gujba and Tarmuwa LGAs. All residents of the Tera speech community sharing border with Gombe State in Gulani LGA speak Tera. In like manner, Zabar is spoken by all the residents of the two Zabar speech communities (Zabarmari I and Zabarmari II) in Nguru LGA and the only Zabar speech community (Gremari) in Yusufari LGA. The Zabar speakers are originally from Doso in Niger Republic. They first migrated to Nguru LGA in the 1940s for the purpose of Islamic scholarship. The Zabar are also found in at least three (3) LGAs in Kebbi State.

Despite their vitality in the rural areas of Yobe State, Bade, Bole, Kare-kare and Ngizim – and in some cases Fulfulde and Kanuri – are potentially endangered by Hausa as a result of the cosmopolitan nature of urban and semi-urban areas as well as inter-ethnic marriage.

5.3 Domains where the Languages of Yobe State are used²

The below table presents the various domains where the languages of Yobe State are used:

Table 5: Language utility domains in Yobe State

S/No.	Language	Education	Judiciary	Parliament	Commerce	Media	Home
1	Babur	•	▪	•	▪	▪	✓
2	Bade	•	▪	•	▪	▪	✓
3	Bole	•	▪	•	▪	▪	✓
4	Duwai	•	•	•	•	•	•
5	Fulfulde	✓	▪	•	▪	✓	✓
6	Hausa	✓	✓	•	✓	✓	✓
7	Kanuri	✓	•	•	▪	✓	✓

²Keys:

- ✓ Used
- Partially used
- Not used

8	Kare-kare	•	▪	•	▪	▪	✓
9	Maga	•	▪	•	▪	•	✓
10	Marghi	•	▪	•	▪	•	✓
11	Mohoida	•	•	•	▪	•	✓
12	Ngamo	•	•	•	▪	▪	✓
13	Ngizim	•	▪	•	▪	▪	✓
14	Shuwa	•	•	•	▪	•	✓
15	Tera	•	•	•	▪	•	✓
16	Tubu	•	•	•	▪	•	✓
17	Zabar	•	•	•	▪	•	✓

Except for situations where there is language shift even within families, each of the languages is used at home. Hausa has taken over as the language of commerce in all the major markets in the state. This is because it is the only indigenous language that apparently serves a language of communicative unity among speakers from different ethnolinguistic groups.

Three global languages are used in education. They are Arabic, English, and French. Arabic is a school subject in conventional schools and a school subject and the medium of instruction for some subjects in Arabic-medium schools. English is not only a school subject but also a language of instruction. French is only a school subject and not used for any informal communication even though the state is sharing international boundary with a Francophone country – Niger Republic.

As for the judiciary, Hausa is the language of Yobe State used by trial judges. However, all other languages have right to law. As such, interpreters are commissioned to interpret for persons standing trial who lack communicative competence in the language of trial.

Fulfulde, Hausa and Kanuri are the languages of Yobe State used as languages of news broadcast by the radio and television stations in the state. However, other languages like Bade, Babur, Bole, Ngamo and Ngizim are used for the broadcast of some radio programmes other than news by the state radio station (Yobe Broadcasting Corporation).

6. Conclusion

The findings of this study have revealed the linguistic situation in Yobe State from the perspectives of the numerical strength of the languages of the state and the interactions that exist among the languages in different linguistic environments and the consequences and implications of such interactions on language vitality, diversity and survival. It was found that there are seventeen languages that can be considered languages of Yobe State. Hausa and Fulfulde are found in all the LGAs. While Hausa is a predator language endangering all the languages of Yobe State including Fulfulde, there is no evidence that Fulfulde is endangering other languages in the state. Despite the shift by some languages to Babur, Bole, Kanuri and Kare-kare thus making them some sort of predator languages, these languages are potentially endangered by Hausa especially in urban settlements. Maga, Marghi and Ngamo are severely endangered. Duwai is at the verge of extinction. However, languages with small population like Mohoida, Shuwa, Tera, Tubu and Zabar are vibrant given that a significant percentage of people whose respective ancestry is traced to the respective languages speak them.

This study therefore recommends that linguists and anthropologists in Yobe State should consider it their social responsibility to embark on strong advocacy that would lead to a policy brief that would engender the vitality of the languages of Yobe State. The language provisions in Nigeria's national policy on education should be implemented to the letter in the state. This study also recommends that the ministry in charge of planning should consider all the language dynamics in the state during budget and overall development planning. Further research that would expose dialectal varieties, hybridization and trajectories should be conducted. The ministries in charge of education, information, home affairs, local government, and chieftaincy affairs, should commission the elaboration and documentation of the languages of Yobe State. In consequence, Yobe State University, Damaturu should serve as the fulcrum for the stimulation of purposeful, full-scale, and sustainable research in respect of language ecology in Yobe State. In this vein, it should liaise with relevant language studies and development centres, professional associations, government agencies, multinational organizations, private individuals and non-governmental organizations for capacity building, collaboration, funding etc. to research, document and sustain research on the language ecology of Yobe State thus preserving and revitalizing the languages of Yobe State.

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