The Sociolinguistic Context of Multilingualism and Language Maintenance in a Border Suburb, Southwest Nigeria

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Abstract

This study observed the maintenance or otherwise of the languages in use in Saki, a border suburb in southwest, Nigeria. A total of 1200 questionnaires were administered at home, markets, schools, religious gatherings and offices and 1179 were retrieved. The theoretical framework adopted for the study is the Domain of Language Behaviour propounded by Fishman (1972). To find out the maintenance or otherwise of the languages in use in Saki, analyses of the pattern of language use in different domains were conducted. The result confirmed the words of some other previous scholars that the language situation of multilingual communities cannot be predicted as the result showed that despite the conglomeration of different languages in Saki, Yoruba the in-group language of the people extended its utility in all the domains of language use. The result showed that historical, cultural, and social factors contributed to the maintenance of Yoruba in this area. Other researchers should study sociolinguistic features such as code-mixing, code-switching and language variation in the selected border town, especially among the immigrants.

1. INTRODUCTION

Every nation or state is expected to have a definite geographical boundary. Wherever these borders exist, there are people from different countries or ethnic backgrounds who reside in such areas for various purposes. As a result of this, the language contact exists in such areas. Many scholars have argued that multilingualism is commonly observed in border areas and such areas are found worldwide. Language shift and maintenance are predominantly by-products of language contact situations. They both can occur in a bilingual/multilingual environment. According to Fishman (1991), "Language shift is a situation where a population gives up their heritage language for another language which becomes their vernacular language." It is a situation in which a new language replaces an old one in a society. Many scholars have discovered its existence in their area of study. For example, Dada (2006), studies the degree of bilingualism among Erushu-Yoruba bilingual speakers. His investigations reveal that Erushu language is less spoken in the family domain. He discovers that their children are not sufficiently exposed to the Erushu language as such they are not proficient in the language.

Language shift is an inevitable linguistic phenomenon. When a community moves to another community, there is a tendency for them to shift to the language of the new community they have migrated into sometimes because of various reasons. "Language shift is the process by which a speech community in a contact situation (i.e. consisting of bilingual speakers) gradually stops using one of its two languages in favour of the other" (Ravindranath 2009, p.33). Fishman (1991, p.23) defines it as a "process whereby intergenerational continuity of the heritage language is proceeding negatively, with fewer 'speakers, readers, writers, and even

understanders' in every generation". Language shift is motivated by factors which may be cultural, psychological, historical, and social. "Language shift gradually proceeds from domain to domain. Once the domain of home has been affected, a language becomes endangered" (Heinrich, 2015, p.613).

Romaine (1994, p.50) states that "Language shift generally involves bilingualism as a stage on the way to eventual monolingualism in a new language". Brenzinger (1998, p.16) clearly states that 'Language contact is a prerequisite for language shifts." When two or more languages operate simultaneously in one society for a longer period, one language group may be compelled to abandon their language and use another's. If one language is eventually replaced by a new one, then there is language death. "A shift from one language to another may not fully reflect a shift from one culture to another, but it shows that, a critical aspect of the culture has suffered isolation or that the culture has lost its prime means of expression" (Nwagbo, 2016, p. 145).

Furthermore, "Language, like people, may or may not succumb to an onslaught from one another" (Dada, Owoeye and Ojo 2015, p.38). A language may maintain its level of usage despite its contact with another language. The result of a language contact situation is not always predictable. Instead of language shift, language maintenance may arise. Language maintenance refers to a situation in which a group of people tries to keep and continue to use a language they have always used even in the face of the influx of new languages. According to Adams, Matu and Ongorora (2012, p.99), "language maintenance refers to language-contact situations where a minority group continues to use its language even under conditions that might support a language shift". **Language maintenance** denotes the continuing use of a language in the face of competition from a regionally and socially more powerful language. Baker (2011, p.72) says, "Language maintenance is a relative language stability in the number and distribution of its speakers, its proficient usage by children and adults, and its retention in specific domains (e.g., home, school, religion)". According to Benrabah (2004, p.56), "language maintenance is the continuous use of the mother tongue, regardless of the cultural pressures from a more prestigious or politically more dominant language".

Language maintenance is a complex area of sociolinguistic studies, and was first propounded by Fishman in the 1960s. "Language maintenance is one of the ultimate issues in language contact in the sense that when two languages or more come into contact, it is believed that, the minority language struggles, more often than not, to maintain itself in the face of the more dominant language" (Okpanachi and Abuh 2017, p.15). Fishman (1989, p.177) explains that "Language maintenance is the process and pursuit of intergenerational linguistic continuity". "It also suggests that when two or more languages are in contact, three alternatives can occur. First, the languages may be maintained without any change. Second, there may be shift of some forms in the languages. Third, one of the languages may be leading to a form of non-use, called language loss or language death" (Fishman, 2001, p.152). Hornberger and Coronel-Molina (2004, p. 9-67), claim that language maintenance "refers to relative stability in domains of use, number, distribution, and proficiency of speakers in a speech community". On the other hand, Fase, Jaspaert and Kroon (1992, p.4) define language maintenance as" the retention, use and proficiency in the language".

Wherever a language shift is about to occur, there is a need for language maintenance. To combat the threat of language shift, there is a need for language maintenance.

1.1.Factors Affecting Language Maintenance

The following factors can affect language maintenance positively or negatively:

- **Language Domain Factor**: The language domain encompasses the family/home, education, media, friends, neighbours and religion. The language choice or preference of a community in the domains earlier listed has a great influence on language maintenance. Domains of language use are certain institutional contexts in which one language or language variety is more likely to be considered appropriate than another.

The domain of language use is found to be significant for language maintenance. Holmes (2013, p.65), rightly argued that the minority language is more likely to be maintained and preserved by its speakers if it is used in multiple domains. According to Abdelhadi (2017, p.111), "the dynamic use of the minority language in multiple domains is a sign that language maintenance is inevitable. However, the limited use of the minority language in private domains such as the home is an indicator of the shift to the majority language (Holmes, 2013).

- **Demographic Factor:** Demographic factor also has an impact on language. It refers to a situation when a large number of speakers of the same L1 live together. A speech community that stays together are likely able to easily maintain their language than those that are dispersed**.** Lee (2013, p.2) also said "the geographical concentration of the community in one area allows for the increase of daily interaction and use of the community language outside of the private domain, unlike the dispersed community where the community language was associated with the home domain only". Mesthrie, Swann, Deumert and Leap (2009, p.250) pointed out that, "the smaller the size of a community, the stronger the threat of language shift and death".

- **Cultural Factors:** Ethnic identity is strongly tied to language. Cavallaro (2005, p.561), argues that 'language is the key factor representing ethnic identity in multilingual and multicultural contexts". In fact, "the destruction of a language is the destruction of a rooted identity" (Fishman, 1991, p.4). He further stated that, "the loss of the language may also lead to a loss of identity". Apart from the ethnic identity, the family also has a role to play in language maintenance. "

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1.2. Research Objectives
The objectives of this research are to.

1) identify the languages in use in Saki town
2) reveal the pattern of language use in different domains of Saki town
3) discuss the implications of the pattern of language use and choice on language maintenance and shift in Saki town.

1.3. The Study Area
This study focuses on Saki, a border town in Southwest Nigeria. Saki is a cosmopolitan area located in Oyo state. Geographically, it is a border town, leading to another state in Nigeria and other countries such as the Republic of Benin, Ghana, and Togo. Saki also shares a boundary with Ilesha-Baruba, which is located in kwara-State. It is about 40 miles (60 km) away from Benin border" (Wikipedia, 2019, p.1).

The languages in use in Saki are: Yoruba, Bariba, Somba, Tangita, Kotokoli, English, and French. The multiplicity of languages is a result of migration and the fact that Saki shares a border with the Republic of Benin. The researcher is therefore interested in investigating the pattern of language use in Saki to determine language maintenance and shift in the border town.

1.4.Theoretical Framework
The study hinges on the domain of language behaviour propounded by Fishman 1965. Fishman (1965, p.2) posits that different divisions of domain are needed for language for different purposes. Onadipe (2016) observes that "this concept is imperative in the study of bilingualism in as much as language behaviour of people changes according to situations.

2. Research Design and Methodology
This study is descriptive and survey-based in nature. The target population for this study consists of the people residing in Saki. The questionnaire was administered to a total number 1200 in Saki. 1179 copies of the administered questionnaire were retrieved. Some of the

respondents were contacted in the markets, schools, homes and offices. In addition, households within the selected geographical zone were purposively selected and from each household the husband, the wife and one or two of their children were given the questionnaire to complete. This is to ensure a good representation of the study population. This research is interested in finding out the pattern of language use and choice in Saki since there are more than two languages in use in the town. The respondents that were used in this study were selected based on the purposive sampling technique so as to have a good representation of the respondents. There are three local government areas in Saki as such 400 hundred questionnaires were distributed per local government area. The researcher with the help of the research assistant purposely visited the homes of immigrants in order to administer the questionnaires.

3. Data Analysis

This section focuses on the presentation, analysis and discussion of data collected from Saki, Oyo-State, Nigeria. The data were processed and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 25.0 version. Since one of the main objectives of the study is to find out the pattern of language use and choice in Saki, the researcher analysed the data by looking at five different domains of language use. The analyses were done in line with the responses to the questions on language use in different domains. The five domains that were employed are; Home, Work, Market, Religion, and School. Data obtained were analysed by using descriptive statistics involving frequency counts and percentages. Results obtained were presented in tables and bar charts.

3.1. Language Background of the Study Participants

Table 1

Language Background	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
What is your native language?	Yoruba	604	51.2
	Bariba	154	13.1
	Somba	61	5.2
	Kotokoli	160	13.6
	Tangita	200	17.0
	Any other	0	0.0
Which other language/languages do you speak?	English	313	26.5
	French	244	20.7
	Yoruba	412	34.9
	Bariba	184	15.6
	Kotokoli	26	2.2
	Tangita	-	-
	Any other	-	-
How many languages are in use in Saki?	Two	459	38.9
	Three	601	51.0
	Four	69	5.9
	Five	44	3.7
	Any other	6	0.5
How many languages/dialects do you speak?	Two	123	10.4
	Three	522	44.3
	Four	175	14.8
	Five	273	23.2
	Six	80	6.8

Any other	6	0.5

Table 1 presents the language background of the study participants. The result shows that the predominant native language of the study participants was Yoruba (n=604; 51.2%), followed by Tangita (n=200; 17%), Kotokoli (n=160; 13.6%) and Bariba (n=154, 13.1%) while Somba (n=61, 5.2%) was the least. About one-quarter of the study participants (34.9%) indicated Yoruba as another language spoken by them while 26.5%, 20.7% and 15.6% could speak English, French and Kotokoli languages respectively. Regarding the number of languages spoken by the study participants, about half of the respondents (n=601; 51%) indicated three languages, more than one-third (n=522, 44.3%) affirmed that there were three languages currently in use in Saki while 123 (10.4%), 175 (15.7%) and 273 (23.2%) reported two, four and five languages respectively. This confirmed that border towns are largely multilingual communities.

Table 2: Which Language Dominates Your Community?

Response	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yoruba	790	67.0	67
Bariba	104	8.8	75.8
Kotokoli	56	4.7	80.6
Tangita	50	4.2	84.8
English	179	15.2	100.0
Total	1179	100.0	

Table 2 reveals that about two-third of the total sample (n=790, 67%); representing the majority reported Yoruba as the dominant language/dialect in Saki community, closely followed by English (n=179, 15.2%), Bariba (n=104, 8.8%), Kotokoli (n=56, 4.7%) while Tangita (n=50, 4.2%) was the least.

Table 3: Level of proficiency of children below 13 years in speaking any of these languages

	Level of proficiency in speaking			
	Poor	**Fair**	**Good**	**Very Good**
English	411 (34.9)	178 (15.1)	152 (12.9)	438 (37.2)
French	461 (39.1)	234 (19.8)	218 (18.5)	266 (22.6)
Yoruba	275 (23.3)	234 (19.8)	302 (25.6)	368 (31.2)
Bariba	705 (59.8)	110 (9.3)	116 (9.8)	248 (21.0)
Any other	610 (51.7)	214 (18.2)	111 (9.4)	244 (20.7)

Table 3 presents the level of proficiency of children below 15 years in speaking any of the languages. The result shows that more than one-third of the children below 15years demonstrated very good (n=438, 37.2%) and poor (n=411; 34.9%) levels of proficiency in speaking the English language. However, only 368 (31.2%) respondents demonstrated a good level of proficiency in speaking Yoruba language and 610 (51.7%) of the participants demonstrated a very good level of proficiency in speaking other languages. Less than one-

quarter; 234 (19.8%) and more than one-third; 461 (39.1%) indicated fair and poor levels of proficiency in French respectively. The majority of the study participants (n=705; 59.8%) had a poor level of proficiency in speaking Bariba language. About one-third of the total respondents (n=411, 34.9%) exhibited a poor level of proficiency in speaking English language. The result revealed that English takes the lead in the level of proficiency among children below 13 years while Yoruba follows.

Summary of Language Use at Home (Saki)

Table 4 Which language do you normally use at home when talking to your

	English	French	Yoruba	Bariba	Tangita	Kotokoli	Somba	Others
Husband/wife?	149 (12.6)	130 (11.0)	600 (50.9)	104 (8.8)	79 (6.7)	106 (9.0)	5 (0.4)	6 (0.5)
Children?	425 (36.0)	140 (11.9)	450 (38.2)	78 (6.6)	34 (2.9)	42 (3.6)	5 (0.4)	5 (0.4)
Other relations?	83 (7.0)	78 (6.6)	615 (52.2)	204 (17.3)	41 (3.5)	100 (8.5)	6 (0.5)	6 (0.5)
Helpers?	349 (29.6)	160 (13.6)	458 (38.8)	102 (8.7)	53 (4.5)	50 (4.2)	4 (0.3)	3 (0.3)
Neighbours?	319 (27.1)	135 (11.5)	535 (45.4)	125 (10.6)	36 (3.1)	20 (1.7)	5 (0.4)	4 (0.3)

Table 4 presents the language used by study participants when talking to husband/wife, children, other relations, helpers and neighbours. The result clearly shows that the dominant language used by the respondents at home was Yoruba language. The majority of study participants used Yoruba when communicating with spouses (50.9%), helpers (38.8%), Children (38.2%), other relations (52.2%) and neighbours (45.5%). It is important to note here that the indigenous languages of the immigrants were not so much in use during parent/child discussions, compared to husband/wife discussions. This is because there is a decline in the number of respondents who use Kotokoli, Tangita, and Bariba while discussing with their children.

Figure I presents the summary of language use in the home domain. The result shows that the respondents indicate that the home domain enjoys effective use of Yoruba language with a 5.1739 mean score compared with other languages which constitute other variables in the sample. This is closely followed by English with a 2.830 mean score, then French with a 1.2595 mean score, followed by Bariba with a 1.1832 mean score. Kotokoli comes next with a 0.8278 mean score, then Tangita with a 0.6539 mean score, other languages with a 0.056 mean score and finally Somba language with 0.039 mean score. Clearly, Yoruba, English and French dominate the language ability and language use pattern in the home domain.

Table 5: Language Frequently Used in School by Students

	English	French	Yoruba	Bariba	Tangita	Kotokoli	Any other (specify)
a. Formally with your teachers from different ethnic groups outside classroom lectures?	678 (57.5)	20 (1.7)	433 (36.7)	25 (2.1)	8 (0.7)	10 (0.8)	5 (0.4)
b. Formally with your teacher from the same ethnic groups outside classroom lectures?	528 (44.8)	28 (2.4)	550 (46.6)	35 (3.0)	10 (0.8)	26 (2.2)	2 (0.2)
c. Informally with teachers from a different ethnic group?	503 (42.7)	36 (3.1)	553 (46.9)	37 (3.1)	20 (1.7)	30 (2.5)	2 (0.2)
d. Informally with teachers from the same ethnic group?	383 (32.5)	44 (3.7)	586 (49.7)	65 (5.5)	42 (3.6)	50 (4.2)	9 (0.8)

e.	During break time with your schoolmates from the same ethnic group?	406 (34.4)	52 (4.4)	605 (51.3)	40 (3.4)	52 (4.4)	26 (2.2)	4 (0.3)
f.	During break time with schoolmates from different ethnic groups?	524 (44.4)	96 (8.1)	400 (33.9)	45 (3.8)	59 (5.0)	47 (4.0)	8 (0.7)
g.	When discussing academic matters with school mates from the same ethnic groups?	493 (41.8)	87 (7.4)	477 (40.5)	36 (3.1)	46 (3.9)	40 (3.4)	2 (0.2)
h.	When discussing academic matters with schoolmates from different ethnic groups?	513 (43.5)	90 (7.6)	412 (34.9)	34 (2.9)	82 (7.0)	42 (3.6)	6 (0.5)

Percentage responses are enclosed in parentheses.

Table 5 presents the language use and choice by students. The result shows that majority of the respondents used English language to communicate formally with teachers from different ethnic groups (57.5%) outside classroom lecture, formally with teachers from the same ethnic group outside classroom lecture (44.4%), during break time to communicate with school mates from different ethnic groups (46.6%), when discussing academic matters with school mates from the same ethnic groups (41.8%), when discussing academic matters with school mates from different ethnic groups (43.5%). However, more than one-third of the study participants used Yoruba to communicate: informally with teachers from a different ethnic group (42.7%), informally with teachers from the same ethnic group (49.7%) and during break time with schoolmates from the same ethnic group (51.3%). This result shows that English is the language used for instruction in school.

Table 6 Summary of Language Use in School Domain

	Languages	N	Sum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Language Ability and Language Use in the School Domain	English	1179	4028	3.4165	0.035
	French	1179	453	0.3842	0.039
	Yoruba	1179	4016	2.1458	0.041
	Bariba	1179	317	0.2689	0.054
	Tangita	1179	319	0.2706	0.045
	Kotokoli	1179	271	0.2299	0.000
	Somba	1179	0	0.0000	0.000
	Junkun	1179	38	0.0322	0.016

Table 6 presents the summary of language use in the school domain. The summary of the school domain reveals that the use of English overwhelmingly dominates with 3.4165 mean score, followed by Yoruba with 2.1458 mean score. Next is the use of French with 0.3842 while 0.2706, 0.2689, 0.2299, 0.0322 and 0.0000 are recorded for Tangita, Bariba, Kotokoli, Junkun and Somba respectively. Hence, English dominates the language ability and language use pattern in school domain.

Table 7 Mean Scores of Language Use in Religious Domain (Christian Religion)

	Languages	N	Sum	Mean	Standard Deviation
	English	484	357	0.7376	0.064

	Languages	N	Sum	Mean	Standard Deviation
	Yoruba	484	800	1.6529	0.048
	French	484	150	0.3099	0.064
	Tangita	484	64	0.1322	0.028
	Bariba	484	44	0.0909	0.064
	Kotokoli	484	72	0.1488	0.000
Language Use in Religious Domain (Christianity)	Yoruba & Bariba	484	5	0.0103	0.004
	French & English	484	70	0.1446	0.121
	English & Yoruba	484	208	0.4298	0.004
	English & Hausa	484	4	0.0083	0.016
	Yoruba & Tangita	484	86	0.1777	0.064
	Yoruba & Kotokoli	484	4	0.0083	0.012
	English & Bariba	484	32	0.0661	0.107
	Jukuru	484	7	0.0145	0.091

The table above presents a summary of language use in the religious domain. In the religious domain, the use of Yoruba dominates the language used in various churches indicating the fact that the majority of the churches are Yoruba-oriented. This is closely followed by the English language use pattern with 0.7376. Next to this is the use of English and Yoruba, French, Yoruba and Tangita, Kotokoli, French & English, Tangita, Bariba, English and Bariba, Yoruba and Bariba and Junkun with mean scores of 0.4298, 0.3099, 0.1777, 0.1488, 0.1446, 0.1322, 0.0909, 0.0661, 0.0103 and 0.0145 respectively while the use of English & Hausa, Yoruba & Kotokoli comes last with 0.0083 mean score in each case. Hence, Yoruba dominates the language ability and language use pattern in the religious domain.

Table 8: Mean Scores of Language Use in Religious Domain (Islamic Religion)

	Languages	N	Sum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Language Use in Religious Domain (Islam)	English	690	348	0.5043	0.151
	Yoruba	690	1177	1.7058	0.156
	French	690	134	0.1942	0.051
	Bariba	690	62	0.0899	0.000
	Kotokoli	690	102	0.1478	0.003
	Tangita	690	71	0.1029	0.000
	Arabic	690	120	0.1739	0.000
	Tangita & Yoruba	690	44	0.0638	0.011
	Jukuru	690	12	0.0174	

Table 9 presents the summary of language use in the religious domain. In the religious domain, the use of Yoruba dominates the language used in various mosques with a 1.7058 mean score indicating that the majority of the mosques are Yoruba-oriented. This is closely followed by the English language use pattern with 0.5043. The use of French, Arabic, Kotokoli, Tangita, Bariba, Tangita Yoruba and Junkun followed with 0.1942, 0.1739, 0.1478, 0.1029, 0.0899 and 0.0638 respectively while Junkun comes last with 0.0174 mean scores on the language use pattern in the religious domain. Hence, Yoruba dominates the language ability and language use pattern in the Islamic religious domain.

Table 10: Mean Scores of Language Use in Religious Domain

	Languages	N	Sum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Language Use in Religious Domain (Others)	English	5	2	0.4000	0.0251
	Yoruba	5	5	1.0000	0.0015
	French	5	1	0.2000	0.0157

Bariba	5	0	0.0000	0.0000
Kotokoli	5	1	0.2000	0.0030
Tangita	5	1	0.2000	0.0100
Arabic	5	0	0.0000	0.0000
Tangita & Yoruba	5	0	0.0000	0.0000
Junkun	5	0	0.0000	0.0000

Table 10 presents the summary of language use in the religious domain. In the religious domain, the use of Yoruba dominates the language use in other religions with 1.0000 mean score indicating that the majority of them are Yoruba-oriented. This is closely followed by the English language use pattern with 0.4000. The use of French, Kotokoli and Tangita followed with 0.2000 in each case while Bariba, Arabi, Tangita, Yoruba and other languages come last with no representative in the language use pattern in the religious domain. Hence, Yoruba dominates the language ability and language use pattern in other religious domain.

Table 11: Mean Scores of Language Ability and Language Use in the Office Domain

	Languages	N	Sum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Language Ability and Language Use in the Office Domain	English	1179	9926	8.419	2.074
	Yoruba	1179	5020	6.2578	0.022
	French	1179	459	0.3893	0.014
	Bariba	1179	2599	2.2044	1.074
	Somba	1179	68	0.0577	0.092
	Tangita	1179	421	0.3571	0.063
	Kotokoli	1179	433	0.3673	0.066
	Junkun	1179	37	0.0314	0.060

Table 11 presents the summary of language use in the office domain. The summary of language use in the office domain shows that the respondents recorded the highest pattern of language use for English with an 8.419 mean score, followed by Yoruba with a 6.2578 mean score. Bariba pattern comes next with 2.2044 mean scores, followed by French, Kotokoli, Tangita and Somba with 0.3893, 0.3673, 0.3571 and 0.0577 mean scores respectively while Jukun language comes last with 0.0314 mean scores. This shows that the respondents recognised the English language and perhaps Yoruba as the language to be used in an official setting.

Table 12: Mean Scores of Language Ability and Language Use in the Market Domain

	Languages	N	Sum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Language Ability and Language Use in Market Domain	English	1179	616	0.5225	0.212
	French	1179	128	0.1086	0.031
	Yoruba	1179	1028	1.8719	0.059
	Bariba	1179	304	0.2578	0.022
	Somba	1179	12	0.0102	0.002
	Kotokoli	1179	124	0.1052	0.060
	Tangita	1179	135	0.1145	0.068
	Junkun	1179	11	0.0093	0.034

The table above presents the summary of language use in the market domain. The result shows that Yoruba dominates with 1.8719 mean scores, followed by English with 0.5225,

and Bariba comes next with 0.2578. This is followed by Tangita, French, Kotokoli, and Somba with 0.1145, 0.1086, 0.1052 and 0.0102 mean scores respectively while Junkun was the least with 0.0093 mean score in the language use pattern. The result shows that Yoruba is firmly rooted in Saki especially when it comes to interaction outside very formal and highly structured settings.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In Saki, languages such as English, French, Yoruba, Bariba, Kotokoli, Tangita and Junkun were in use. This result revealed that Saki is a multilingual society. The language situation in Saki showed that many ethnic groups migrated to settle there a long time ago. These mass movements of people for different purposes have resulted in changing a homogenous community to a heteroglosic space. The reason for this cannot be far-fetched since Saki is a border town. Saki shares a boundary with Ilesha-Baruba in Kwara State. It also shares an international border with the Republic of Benin. Our findings, therefore, validate the assertion that border towns are largely bilingual or multilingual communities. The language situation in Saki is, therefore, multilingualism. This result aligned with the work of Budi et al. (2023) on "The Languages on the Border of Indonesia and Timor Leste: A Linguistic Landscape Study. Their result revealed that eight languages were in use on the border of Indonesia and Timor Leste. This result reaffirms that border towns are largely multilingual communities. The occurrence of societal multilingualism, which is the focus of this research, is vivid as not less than six languages are in use in Saki. This type of multilingualism is connected to what Aronin (2015) referred to as current multilingualism. According to her "multilingualism has developed to a stage where it is no longer just one of the characteristics of society; in many ways, it has become an inherent and very salient property of society". It is quite interesting to discover that six languages can co-exist in just one geographical area without the death of any. It is also important to note that, almost all the Togolese and Beninese who migrated to Saki live together in the suburbs of the town because the majority of them are farmers. This might have helped them to keep their languages.

This research revealed some specific factors that aided multilingualism in Saki. Apart from migration due to economic activities, colonialism was the root cause of multilingualism in our study area. The study discovered that Benin was formerly part and parcel of the Old Oyo Empire. In fact, Okerete, a border community in Saki-west Local Government Area of Oyo State, shares a boundary with Fesomu, a Yoruba community in the Benin Republic. Colonialism brought about the separation between the two nations, leading to the creation of international borders specifically along Saki. This discovery suggests a similar culture, language and background. Babatunde (2014, p.523) confirms this when he notes that multilingualism is a product of historical and political movements. Another reason for multilingualism in Saki is the importance of communication, the need to communicate with one another has necessitated the learning of a general language since many of the Beneniose and Togolese who live in the suburbs of Saki migrated to the place to farm and help some farmers who are natives of Saki to make ridges and heaps. It has been discovered that the majority of the respondents even Togolese and Beninese speak Yoruba. (See Table 4). This result is similar to that of Oyetade (1990) where he said that the Nupe immigrants have to learn the Yoruba language in order to meet up with the economic and sociological demands of their new settlements.

To determine the pattern of language use in different domains of the selected border towns, the study investigated language use across domains such as home, school, market, church, work and social events. In relation to the language spoken at home, Yoruba had a significant influence on other languages as it took the lead in all role relations in the home domain. Next to Yoruba is English. Yoruba dominated the language use among spouses from different ethnic groups. More than half of the total number of respondents chose Yoruba while speaking with people from different ethnic groups because Yoruba was seen as a general

language having wider coverage in Saki. This revealed one of the reasons for language choice. Another reason for language choice in Saki could be attributed to the usefulness of a language. Yoruba as a general language in Saki was useful for economic and social activities. Prestige might not be the reason for language choice in Saki. This was because our findings revealed that the choice of Yoruba was due to the usefulness of the language as a result of its expansive coverage. The result suggested the occurrence of language maintenance despite the influx of other ethnic groups as well as their languages in Saki. This pattern of language use revealed that Saki people have been able to sufficiently maintain their language without a shift. Yoruba language has resisted the penetration of other language despite their existence in Saki. This result confirms the position of Yoruba as a major language in Nigeria while other languages are foreign except Bariba which is a minor language in Nigeria. This pattern of language use is not always in place in every border town. The result is at variance with some other works, for example, with the report of Ogunlade (2024) on "Shift in Language and Threat to Survival in a Southwest Nigerian Border Town", where the in-group language/dialects (Ahan, Omuo and Omuooke) of the people of Omuo-Ekiti people were endangered. However, this work concurred with that of Xiengyum, Rick, and Jianwei (2022) on "Language Maintenance and Shift in a Highly Multilingual Ecologies", where the result of their study emphasized the maintenance of heritage languages amidst dominant languages like French and Dutch. Oyetade (1990, p. 300) noted that, " there are many cases where the situation is reversed in favour of such immigrants such that their language gains more prominence than their host's language. He observes that this may be in the form of language imposition".

Instead of the onslaught of Yoruba language, immigrants' languages -Tangita, Somba, Bariba, Kotokoli, French and English all cave in for the use of Yoruba in the home domain especially during discussions with children. It is important to note that the indigenous language(s) of the immigrants were not so much in use during parent/child discussions as compared to husband/wife discussions (See Table 3.). This is because there is a decline in the number of respondents that use Kotokoli, Tangita and Bariba while discussing with their children. The result depicts that the older generations used Yoruba more with their children than their native language and this is common among all the languages of the immigrants. In the same manner, our result also shows that Tangita, Kotokoli, and Bariba were not so much in use among siblings. It is noteworthy to mention that most of the children were exposed to Yoruba at home. (See Table 3). This is an indication of language shift on the part of the immigrants. As cited by Hale (1992), cited in Fakuade (1999, p.59) in the introductory section, an endangerment situation occurs when a language is being dominated by a more powerful language. This means that such a language tends to reduce domain coverage because of the presence of a dominant and powerful language. In this instance, a gradual decline of the native languages of the immigrants while discussing among children is a sign of language shift and endangerment. This situation in Saki is in line with what Adewale and Oshodi (2013, p.31) who reported that the majority languages in the eastern and western parts of Nigeria, Igbo and Yoruba respectively, have endangered the continued use of the minority languages in those areas. In their study of very small languages in use in Niger State, Nigeria, all the minor languages in the area were endangered many of which were affected by the use of Hausa and English especially in the major domains of language use. The so-called languages were affected because of the population of their users compared to Hausa and English. This discovery is, therefore, comparable to what operates in Saki where Yoruba has almost overshadowed all other languages particularly at home.

Sociolinguists agree that the transmission of language from one generation to another is vital to language maintenance. Our result, therefore, revealed that the immigrants have not been able to transfer the use of their local languages to the upcoming generations. We also

observed that the immigrants could also speak Yoruba, the general language in use in Saki, as Yoruba overwhelmingly dominates the pattern of language use in almost all the domains.

The dominance of Yoruba in Saki and its use by the majority of the immigrants suggested an adaptable domain. It is a revelation of the attitude of the people towards their host. The Togolese, Benenoise and Bariba who reside in Saki have assimilated Yoruba language. This portrayed a gradual language shift from the immigrant languages to Yoruba. Our study reflected that there is a gradual decrease in the use of other languages such as Kotokoli, Bariba, Tangita and in the home domain as Yoruba and English overshadowed every other language at home. This pattern of language use is similar to what is obtained in Onadipe (2013) where she noted that the Egun people as immigrants in Badagry have assimilated the Yoruba language and culture. 'This affirms the popular assertion with reference to immigrant-host relationship which revealed that the immigrants, on settling down, acquire the language of the host community both for integrative and instrumental purposes, assimilate language and sometimes the culture of the host community" (Oyetade, 1990). Our investigations in Saki have confirmed this assertion. However, it should be noted that Yoruba was able to sufficiently stand because of its economic benefits, the numerical strength of its users and because it is a major language in Nigeria (See Table 4). Other indigenous languages are foreign languages that have limited users. These factors and many more contributed to the maintenance of Yoruba despite the influx of other ethnic groups into Saki.

Furthermore, it is appropriate to note that while immigrants in Saki learned Yoruba, the natives of Saki did not learn other indigenous languages in use in Saki. This result matched Oyetade's (1990) discovery in Saare and Tsaragi communities in Kwara State where the Nupe people had to learn Yoruba because they had the need to do so more than their Yoruba counterparts. This result clearly depicts the fact that the Yorubas have a great satisfaction from the use of their language, as such, they do not see any need to learn their immigrants' language. This is a reflection of ethnolinguistic vitality among the Yoruba ethnic group because language loyalty is not always displayed in every multilingual community.

We proceed to discuss language use in the education domain. The questionnaire was designed to gather data on respondents' choice when discussing with different interlocutors outside and inside the classroom. Expectedly, English overshadowed all other languages when discussing formally in and outside the classroom. This confirmed English as the official language in schools. The students gave massive support to English since it is the language of instruction in schools. It is also important to note that Yoruba dominated the pattern of language use when discussing informally in and outside the classroom (see Table 4). Additionally, we observed that during break time, Yoruba dominated the pattern of language use among the students, closely followed by English. These results showed that English and Yoruba dominated language use pattern in the school domain. The choice of Yoruba as the second widely used language in the school is predictable since it is a major language in Nigeria, the lingua franca in the western part, as well as the language of immediate environment.

The pattern of language use in the church in this area clearly reveals that the majority of the study participants indicated English and Yoruba as the language in use in the religious domain. This depicts that these churches preach in English but interpret the sermon to Yoruba. (See Table 8). Next to English and Yoruba is pure Yoruba without interpretation. The use of pure English is not so much in place while other languages were relegated to the background. We also observed that the majority of our respondents were Muslim, as such, Arabic and her combination with Yoruba overshadowed all other languages in the mosque (4.4.8b). Unlike other domains, language loyalty is displayed when study participants were asked to indicate the language used for private prayers because, in table (8), all the indigenous languages were well represented here. Although Yoruba dominates the language used during private prayer, the result suggests that the people have a preference for their local language but may have no

choice during church or mosque services since Arabic is the language of Islamic religion while Yoruba is a general language in Saki.

Feasibly, the use of English clouds all other languages in the work domain. The number of respondents who indicated the use of English when discussing official matters with every category of workers outweighs those who use Yoruba for private matters with colleagues. Notwithstanding, Yoruba language overshadowed all other languages when discussing unofficial matters with those from the same ethnic group. Followed by Yoruba are other indigenous languages such as Tangita, Kotokoli and Bariba. We observed that respondents competently shifted from the English language to their local languages depending on the situation. This language pattern coincides with Ronnlof (2014) who worked on language practices in the workplace: ethnographic insights from two multilingual companies in Sweden. His findings show that there seems to be a relatively strong correlation between formality and language; English is used for formal and imperative business communication whereas Swedish is used for less formal meetings and small talk. English is, thus, a chief part of the discourse when discussing multilingualism in white-collar workplaces (Angouri & Miglbauer, 2014; Ehrenreich, 2010). Although the use of English does not entail that other languages disappear or become redundant, parallel language use is often seen as potentially problematic in management studies (Ehrenreich, 2010) and this the situation in our study area where English is predominantly used for official purposes and Yoruba together with other languages are used for social interactions. This result affirms that "Language is negotiated through a set of variables or factors and is thus determined by the people who are involved in the interaction, the function of the interaction and the medium of communication" (Ronnlof 2014, p.20). The result of the pattern of language use in this domain is not a surprise since English has attained the position of the official language in Nigeria and its use may also be a rule in the workplace of our study participants.

Nevertheless, some studies in some other areas especially in Nigeria contradict our results. For instance, Dada (2006) reports in his work in Erushu, a community in Ondo State, Nigeria, that "It is surprising to note that among the adults; Yoruba is still the main language of communication even during official hours at work. This language use pattern is opposed to our result in Saki where English chiefly dominates the language used in the office, especially when discussing official matters. Dada (2006) added, "The kind of patterning we have here (Erushu) with regard to language use in the community simply reveals the kind of rural location within which the study is pitched". The language pattern in Saki tilted in the direction of urban location which has currently influenced her language pattern. The implication of this pattern of language use reflects the linguistic situation of Indigenous languages in urban centers. For rural areas, major languages tend to usurp the position of minority languages; however, the picture gets worse for urban centres where both majority and minority languages have little or no place at all in almost all the domains of language use. The result reveals that despite the widespread nature of multilingualism in our study area, the community is gradually becoming bilingual or in more years to come a monolingual community. This means some languages, especially the ones belonging to the immigrants, may soon disappear in Saki, although majority of the speakers of these languages are in the Republic of Benin.

Language use in the market depicts that (Table 14) on a larger scale, Yoruba dominates the language use pattern in the market domain while discussing with a customer who speaks the buyers' native language and otherwise. Specifically, Yoruba overshadowed all other indigenous languages in our study area. Predominantly, respondents were in favour of Yoruba. Even in a situation of inter-ethnic communications where one would think English would lead, Yoruba spearheaded this context also. This pattern of language use suggests that the immigrants have imbided their hosts' language. They must have gone through the process of assimilation. The languages of the immigrants were assimilated by Yoruba. Our probe into the reasons for assimilation of these languages by Yoruba shows that these immigrants, mostly

farmers, sell their farm produce on market days. At such times, they speak Yoruba whenever they engage in buying and selling because the Yoruba people do not understand their language. We should be reminded that the official language of most of our immigrants is French, not English, thus, their choice of Yoruba, the (general language in Saki) above English. As earlier mentioned in chapter one of this study most of our respondents were illiterate (farmers) who lived in the suburbs of Saki town, as such, many of them do not understand the English language. This observation sheds more light on our respondents' language choice in the market.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research work which focuses on the pattern of language use at the different domains of our study locations has contributed to the existing knowledge on language use, language shift, language endangerment and language maintenance. This study serves as a pioneering effort of sociolinguistic documentation of the language use of Saki dwellers coupled with that of the immigrants. The research has shed more light on the linguistic situation in Saki borders. It reveals that English and Yoruba are more prestigious languages as such they are threats to the survival of minority languages/dialects in use in Saki. Again, we have examined the linguistic situation of the border town in order to show the nature of the pattern of language use in the community and also consider the impact of multilingualism on minority languages. The researcher has discovered that the in-group language (Yoruba) of Saki people was preserved despite the threat from the incursion of several ethnic groups into the border town. Rather than having an onslaught of the peoples' language, the immigrant languages were the ones severely endangered in the area. In fact, the pattern of language use here revealed that the immigrants' languages were relegated to the background in every domain except at home when talking among spouses and grandparents. During an interview with some of the immigrants from the Republic of Benin, many claimed that their children cannot speak their language. In order to be accommodated in the speech community they stay, they have shifted to the Language of the immediate environment which is Yoruba. This confirms that, language maintenance of minority languages is almost impossible in the face of a dominant/majority language in a multilingual society. A close observation in the market revealed that buyers and sellers which involve people from Benin Republic, Togo, Cameroon, Fulani, and Hausa speakers use Yoruba as a means of communication.

This study has confirmed the words of some other previous scholars that the language situation of multilingual communities cannot be predicted. The research revealed that despite the conglomeration of different languages in Saki, Yoruba the in-group language of the people extended its utility in all the domains of language use. However, the immigrants' languages were severely endangered because of the lack of intergenerational transfer of the language in Saki. The researcher therefore suggests that these minority languages should be taught in schools. Migrant primary and secondary schools can be established in order to give the children of the immigrants the opportunity to learn in their own language since our study has revealed that the immigrants in Saki are many. Language schools can also be established in order to revive the endangered languages. That is, community language schools are apparently one of the best places to provide huge opportunities for bilingual or multilingual children to learn their native language.

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