

The Endangerment Status of Gwari: A Case Study of Gbagyi in Niger State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Endangered languages are not solely defined by the number of speakers; the size of the speaker community is not necessarily the determining factor. This research on the endangered status of Gwari, a Benue-Congo language of the Nupoid family, specifically examined the speakers' attitudes towards Gwari, in order to identify the need for language maintenance efforts and inform strategies for preserving this linguistic heritage.

The data for the study were collected through structured questionnaires administered to One hundred and fifty (150) randomly selected natives of Gbagyi in Niger State. The participants comprise twenty (20) adults (60years and above) and One hundred and thirty (130) students (6-18 years). The data were subjected to statistical and descriptive analysis.

It was observed that in Gbagyi, particularly among the younger generation, there preference for speaking Hausa (being the language of wider communication in the North and North-central zones) and English or Pidgin. The number of Gwari speakers is reducing as a result of migration, urbanization/westernization and commerce. Among the adult respondents in high domain, 27% of the respondents use Gwari, 15% use Hausa, 42.5% use English/NP, and 12.5% of the respondents use Gwari and Hausa. In the low domain, 33% of the respondents use Gwari, 16.8% use Hausa, 43% use English/NP and 7.2% use Gwari and Hausa. Among the students' respondents, in the high domains, 21.1% of the respondents use Gwari, 41.5% use Hausa, 23.5% use English/NP and 7% use Gwari and Hausa while in the low domains, 40% of the respondents use Gwari at home, 42% use Hausa, 13% use English/NP and 8% use Gwari and Hausa at home.

The study recommended a collaborative effort involving the native speakers, language researchers, and government agencies, in order to promote a positive attitude towards Gwari, document its usage and integrate it into the school curriculum.

Keywords: Endangerment, Gwari, Language attitude, Intergenerational transmission, Language documentation

1. Introduction

Language, as an element of culture, is the hallmark of every human speech community. It encapsulates a people's worldview, customs, ways of life, and history, effectively serving as a repository of their collective identity. Ethnologists put the living languages of the world at seven thousand with a sad list of three thousand five hundred that are endangered and may be out of reach at the end of the twenty first century (Lewis, M. Paul, Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fennig 2019). Nigeria as a multilingual country is said to have over five hundred (500) languages, although the National languages officially recognized by the government are Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo.

The exact number of languages spoken in Nigeria is not quite certain as there are some languages which are yet to be discovered. Hoffman (1974) identifies 396 in language families in Nigeria excluding dialects that are recognized, while Hansford, Bender and Stanford (1976) recognize 395 languages in Nigeria. Blench and Dendo (2003) record 550 languages spoken in Nigeria.

2. Historical Background of Gwari/Gbagyi Language

Gbagyi people speak Gwari language which belongs to the Nupoid language family of the Niger-Congo phylum. Gwari has two principal varieties: Gwari Yamma or West Gwari and Gwari Genge or East Gwari. The Gbagyi people are primarily located in the Eastern part of the Middle Belt, specifically in Nasarawa and Kogi states. Those in Nasarawa speak Gwari Genge, while those in Minna, Niger speak Gwari Yamma. Historically, the speakers of the dialects were loosely called Gwari by both the Hausa/Fulani and Europeans during pre-colonial Nigeria, but the people prefer to be known as Gbagyi (Omotoso 2017).

The Gwari people, despite sharing cultural similarities, exhibit slight variations in their traditions due to differences in their residential communities and states. These variations reflect in their language and dialects. Not all Gbagyi are indigenous to the areas inhabit, since they were not the first settlers. They are predominantly found in the Niger, Kaduna states and the Federal Capital Territory, with additional settlements in Nasarawa and Kogi States within the North-Central geo-political zone. The Gbagyi are the most populous indigenous ethnic group in Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria and their primary occupation is agriculture. According to the 2006 National Population Census, the estimated Gbagyi population is 5.8 million, spread across Niger, Nasarawa and Kaduna states, and the FCT, with a presence in thirty (30) local government areas. According to Greenberg's (1963) classification of African languages, Gwari belongs to the Nupoid group of the West Benue-Congo family, which also comprises Ebira, Nupe and Gade.

Fig. 2: Map Showing the Classification of Languages



The map in fig. 2 shows the linguistic family that each language belongs, with emphasis on indigenous languages. Gwari as shown on the map is a Nupoid language of the Niger-Congo family. Nupoid languages are spoken in places like Kaduna, Abuja, Lokoja and Niger state.

3. Statement of Problem

Hausa, the dominant language has become the language of commerce, and a widely accepted means of communication. It is even taught in schools located in communities with huge Gbagyi populations, exacerbating the situation. In some cases, parents speak the dominant language to their children, even at home. This phenomenon is a stark indicator of threats to the survival of the Gwari language, particularly in its immediate communities. The scenario described above, provides the impetus for this study.

4. Objective of the Study

The study intends to:

- xv. investigate the status of Gwari among its speakers;
- xvi. examine the attitude of the people towards Gwari; and
- xvii. assess the need for maintenance efforts towards the Gbagyi language.

5. Literature

Emenanjo and Bleambo (1999:80) defines endangered languages as those languages in speech communities 'where native speakers are threatened because their intergenerational continuity is proceeding negatively with fewer and fewer users'. Ndimele (2006) claims that more than half of natural languages are severely endangered, and many of them may go into extinction in the next few decades. According to Haruna (2006:7), a language is potentially endangered if the children start to prefer the dominant language and learn the obsolescent language imperfectly.

According to Crystal (2000), only 600 of the 6,000 or so languages in the world are 'safe' from the threat of extinction; that means one language is dying out somewhere in the world, on average, every two weeks. He defines endangered languages as being "spoken by enough people to make survival a possibility, but only in favourable circumstances and with a growth in community support" (Crystal 1992:20). Crystal states emphatically that, 'only a community can save an endangered language'. According to him, 'the first thing that must be done to save an endangered language is that the people themselves must want the language to be preserved; the second thing is the powers-that-be must want the language to be preserved. They must have a respect for the minority languages that are in their care, and the third thing that has to be there is cash. It costs quite a lot of money to preserve an endangered language, without money, endangered languages do not have a positive future' (Crystal 2000).

Endangered languages are not necessarily languages with few speakers; the size of a group hardly matters. The viability of a language is determined first and foremost by the general attitude of its speakers with respect to their traditional culture, of which their language is considered one of the most important exponents (Bamigbade 2018).

According to UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages (2012), three main criteria are used as guidelines for considering a language 'endangered':

1. The number of speakers currently living.
2. The mean age of native and/or fluent speakers.
3. The percentage of the youngest generation acquiring fluency with the language in question.

UNESCO's Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages offers this definition of an endangered language: '...when its speakers cease to use it, use it in an increasingly reduced number of communicative domains, and cease to pass it on from one generation to the next. That is, there are no new speakers, adult or children'.

According to Batibo (2005), ‘the term endangered language denotes a language that is threatened by extinction. Bamigbade (2018) posits that the threat may come because the pool of speakers is declining rapidly to small numbers, because the younger generations are not learning to speak it, or because the domains in which the language is used have shrunk so much that it is not used regularly in the language community. The other situation would be that the linguistic structures of a language are so eroded and simplified that the language is progressively becoming non-functional’.

6. Methodology

The data for the study were collected using structured questionnaire from randomly selected population of One hundred and fifty (150) natives of Gbagyi in Niger State. The researcher personally visited the locale and administered the questionnaire to them physically. The consent of the respondents was sought and clarifications were made on the use and significance of the data they are providing; that the data will strictly be used for research purpose. This includes twenty (20) adults (60years and above) and one hundred and thirty (130) students (6-18 years). The data were subjected to statistical and descriptive analysis.

7. Data Presentation

a. Adult Informants

i. Demographic Data

Table 1: Sex

	No of Questionnaires	Frequency	Percent %
Male	20	15	75
Female	20	5	25
Total	20	20	100

Table 2: Age

	No of Questionnaires	18-25	%	25-30	%	30-35	%
	19	3	16	11	58	5	26
Total	19	3	16	11	58	5	26

Table 2 shows the distribution of the age of the respondents; 16% of the respondents are between the ages of 18-25 years, 58% are between the ages of 25-30 years and 26% are between the ages of 30-35 years.

Table 3: Religion

No of Questionnaires	Christianity	%	Islam	%
16	8	50	8	50

Table 3 shows the distribution of the religion of the respondents; 50% of the respondents are Christians and 50% are Muslims.

Table 4: Occupation

	Frequency	Percent %
Teaching	10	50
Civil servant	2	10
Student	2	10
Trading	2	10
Clergy (Imam)	1	5
Clergy (Pastor)	1	5
Not Represented	2	10
Total	20	100

Table 4 shows the occupation of the respondents; 50% are teachers, 10% are civil servants, 10% are students, 10% are traders, 5% indicates Imam and Pastor respectively, while 10% are Not Represented.

7.1 Language Use in Various Domains

Table 5: Home Domain

	Gbagyi		Hausa		English/ NP		Gbagyi+ Hausa		Total		Average	
	Fre q	%	Fre q	%	Fre q	%	Fre q	%	Fre q	%	Fre q	%
1. What language do you speak at home with your family?	12	63	0	0	4	21	3	16	19	100	6	33
2. What language is used when discussing important family matters?	16	89	0	0	2	11	0	0	18	100	6	33
3. What language do you speak when chatting with family members?	16	84	0	0	3	16	0	0	19	100	6	33

Table 5 shows the language use in the home domain; 79% of the respondents use Gwari at home, Hausa is not used solely at home according to the respondents, 16% use English/NP at home, and 5% use Gwari + Hausa.

Table 6: Occupational Domain

	Gbagyi		Hausa		English/ NP		Gbagyi + Hausa		Total		Average	
	Fre q	%	Fre q	%	Fre q	%	Fre q	%	Fre q	%	Fre q	%
1. Which language is most commonly used at your place of work?	2	11	1	5	13	68	3	16	19	100	5	25
2. Which language do you use when discussing official matters with a senior/junior colleague at work?	2	11	1	6	14	78	1	6	18	100	4.5	25
3. When discussing private matters with a colleague from the same ethnic group, which language do you use?	10	56	1	6	6	33	1	6	18	100	4.5	25
4. Which language do you use when discussing official matters with friends at work?	3	17	1	6	14	78	0	0	18	100	4.5	25

Table 6 above reveals the statistics of language use in different occupational domain; 16% of the respondents use Gwari in their work places, 6% use Hausa, 64% use English/NP while 7% use Gwari and Hausa.

Table 7: Religious Domain

	Gbgagi		Hausa		English/ NP		Gwari + Hausa		Total	Average	
	Fre q	%	Fre q	%	Fre q	%	Fre q	%	Fre q	Fre q	%
1. Which language is primarily used in your church/mosque?	3	19	3	19	4	25	6	38	16	5	33
2. Which language do you prefer to be used in your church/mosque?	8	44	4	22	3	15	3	15	18	6	33
3. Which language do you use in your private prayers?	10	50	6	30	4	20	0	0	20	7	33

Table7 above illustrates language use in the religious domain, 38% of the respondents use Gwari for religious purposes, 24% use Hausa, 21% use English/NP while 18% use Gwari and Hausa in their place of worship.

Table 8: Economic Domain

	Gbaggi		Hausa		English/ NP		Gbaggi + Hausa		Total	Average	
	Fre q	%	Fre q	%	Fre q	%	Fre q	%	Fre q	Fre q	%
1. Which language do you often use to discuss market transactions and prices?	3	18	2	12	11	66	1	6	17	9	50
2. Which language do you prefer to use in the market?	5	26	3	16	9	47	2	11	19	9.5	50

Table 8 shows language use in the economic domain; 22% of the respondents use Gwari in the economic domain, 14% use Hausa, 56% use English/NP and 9% use Gwari and Hausa.

Table 9: Social Domain

	Gbaggi		Hausa		English/ Pidgin		Gbaggi + Hausa		Total	Average	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	Freq	%
1. Which language do you consider the primary language of	5	26	4	21	10	53	0	0	19	6	33

socialization in your area?												
2. Which language do you typically use when communicating with a friend you have not seen for a long time?	2	10	1	5	15	75	2	10	20	100	6.6	33
3. Which language do you use when you meet a stranger for the first time?	3	15	1	5	15	75	1	5	20	100	6.6	33

Table 9 shows language use in the social domain; 17% of the respondents use Gwari in the social domain, 10% use Hausa, 68% use English/NP and 5% use Gwari and Hausa.

Table 10: Health Domain

	Gbagyi		Hausa		English/NP		Gwari + Hausa		Total	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1. What language is primarily spoken at the hospital in your area?	2	11	4	22	9	50	3	17	18	100

Table 10 shows that 11% of the respondents use Gwari in the health domain, 22% use Hausa, 50% use English/NP and 17% use Gwari and Hausa.

Table 11: Political Domain

	Gbagyi		Hausa		English/NP		Gwari + Hausa		Total	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1. What language is mostly commonly used in political campaigns in your area?	6	38	6	38	4	25	0	0	16	100

Table 11 shows that 38% of the respondents use Gwari in political domain; 38% of the respondents use Hausa in the political domain, 25% use English/NP while code-switching between Gwari and Hausa is not observed in the political domain.

Table 12: Language Attitude

	No of Questionnaires	Yes	%	No	%	Total	%
1. Do you think that speaking English has more advantages than speaking your mother tongue?	20	6	30	14	70	20	100
2. Do you encourage your children to speak Gwari at home?	20	16	80	4	20	20	100
3. Do you prefer Gwari to other languages?	20	12	60	8	40	20	100

Table 12 indicates that majority (70%) of respondents disagree with the notion that speaking English has more advantages than speaking their indigenous language. Also, 80% of respondents encourage their children to speak Gwari at home, and 60% prefer Gwari to other languages.

Table 13: High Domain

High Domain	No of Questionnai	Gbagyi	%	Hausa	%	Eng./ NP	%	+ Hausa	%
Occupational	18	4	16	1	6	12	64	1	7
Religious	18	7	38	4	24	4	21	3	18
Total	36	11	54	5	30	16	85	4	25
Average	18	5.5	27	2.5	15	8	42.5	2	12.5

Table 13 shows the distribution of languages in the high domain; 27% of the respondents use Gwari in the high domain, 15% use Hausa, 42.5% use English/NP, and 12.5% use Gwari and Hausa.

Table 14: Low Domain

Low Domain	Gbagyi		Hausa		English/ NP		Gwari + Hausa	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Home	15	79	0	0	3	16	1	5
Economy	4	22	2	14	10	56	1	9
Social	3	17	2	10	13	68	1	5
Political	6	38	6	38	4	25	0	0
Health	2	11	4	22	9	50	3	17
Total	30	167	14	84	39	215	6	36
Average	6	33	2.8	16.8	7.8	43	1.2	7.2

Table 14 reveals the distribution of languages in the low domain; 33% of the respondents use Gwari, 16.8 use Hausa, 43% use English/NP and 7.2% use Gwari and Hausa.

7.2 Students' Questionnaire Analysis

Table 15: Sex

No of Questionnaires	Male	%	Female	%
125	54	43	71	57
Missing: 5				
Total: 130				

Table 15 reveals the distribution students by sex; with 43% being male, 54% female, and 3% unknown or missing.

Table 16: Age

No of Questionnaires	Below 10	%	10-15	%	16-20	%
126	3	2	44	35	79	63

Table 16 shows the age distribution of students; 2% are below the age of 10, 35% are between the ages of 10 to 15, and 63% are between the ages of 16 to 20 years.

Table 17: Religion

No of Questionnaires	Christianity	%	Islam	%
124	74	60	44	36
Missing: 6 (4%)				

Table 17 shows that 60% of the students are Christians while 36% are Muslims, 4% are missing.

7.2 Language use in various domains

Table 18(A): Educational Domain

	Gbagyi		Hausa		English/ NP		Gwari + Hausa		Total		Average	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1. Which language is used for teaching in the class?	15	13	39	34	55	47	7	6	116	100	58	50
2. Which language do you understand better and prefer to be taught with in school?	29	23	48	38	42	33	7	6	126	100	63	50

Table 18(B)

	Yes	%	No	%	Total	%	Average	%
1. Is that the language used by your teacher?	36	35	66	65	129	100	43	33
2. Is Gwari taught as a subject in school?	26	27	72	74	98	100	49	33
3. Is Gwari used as a medium of instruction in class?	18	18	83	82	101	100	34	50

Table 18(C)

	Gbagyi		Hausa		English/ NP		Gwari + Hausa		Total		Average	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1. Which language do you use among your friends in school?	26	20	47	36	42	33	14	11	129	100	43	33
2. Which language do you use when talking informally with your teacher from the same ethnic group?	45	35	53	41	28	22	2	2	128	100	43	33
3. Which language do you speak when talking to your seniors and juniors in school?	8	6	56	43	59	46	6	5	129	100	43	33

Table 18 illustrates language use in the educational domain, with Hausa being the most widely used at 38%, followed by English/NP with 36%, Gwari 19% as well as Gwari and Hausa 6%.

Table 19: Home Domain

	Gbagyi		Hausa		English/ NP		Gwari + Hausa		Total		Average	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1. Which language do you speak with/among your friends at home/in the neighborhood?	41	33	53	42	22	18	10	8	126	100	32	25
2. Which language do you speak at home with your parents?	54	42	53	41	13	10	10	8	130	100	33	25
3. Which language do you use when talking with your grandparents?	54	42	60	47	12	9	3	2	129	100	32	25
4. Which language do you speak when talking to your brothers and sisters?	55	44	46	37	19	15	6	5	126	100	32	25

Table 19 shows language use in the home domain, 40% of the respondents uses Gwari at home, 42% uses Hausa, 13% uses English/NP, while 8% uses Gwari and Hausa.

Table 20: Religious Domain

	Gbagyi		Hausa		English/ NP		Gwari + Hausa		Total		Average	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%

1. Which language is used in your church/mosque?	23	19	64	53	23	19	11	9	121	100	40	33
2. Which language do you prefer to be used in your church/mosque?	33	28	50	43	22	19	11	10	116	100	39	33
3. Which language do you use in private prayers?	29	25	44	38	29	25	4	4	106	100	35	33

Table 20 reveals language use of the respondents in the religious domain; 24% of the respondents use Gwari, 45% use Hausa, 21% use English/NP and 8% use Gwari and Hausa.

Table 21: Social Domain

	Gbagyi		Hausa		English/ NP		Gwari + Hausa		Total		Average	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1. Which language do you use when you meet a stranger for the first time in your area?	16	14	38	33	56	49	5	4	115	100	58	50
2. Which language would you consider as the language of socialization in your area?	21	18	47	41	41	36	6	5	115	100	58	50

Table 21 illustrates language use of the respondents in the social domain; 16% use Gwari, 37% use Hausa, 43% use English/NP and 5% use Gwari and Hausa.

Table 22: Health Domain

	Gbagyi		Hausa		English/ NP		Gwari + Hausa		Total		Average	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1. Which language is used in the hospital in your area?	22	19	42	37	39	34	12	10	115	100	115	100

Table 22 shows language use of the respondents in the health domain, 19% of the respondents use Gwari, 37% use Hausa, 34% use English/NP and 10% use Gwari and Hausa.

Table 23: Language Attitude

	NP		Gbagyi		Total		Average	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1. Do you prefer to speak NP or Gbagyi?	30	49	31	51	61	100	61	100
	Yes	%	No	%	Total	%	Average	%
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
2. Do you prefer Gwari to other languages?	59	61	38	39	97	100	23	25
3. Do you feel shy when speaking Gbagyi?	22	27	61	73	83	100	21	25

4. Do you think that studying English has more advantage than studying your mother tongue?	12	52	11	48	23	100	5	25
5. Do you think that making effort to read and write in your mother tongue is meaningless?	20	50	20	50	40	100	10	25

	Gbagyi		Hausa		English/ NP		Gwari + Hausa		Total		Average	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
6. Which language do you prefer to listen to on the radio?	40	35	44	38	28	24	3	3	115	100	57	50
7. You prefer to watch a play in which language?	32	28	46	41	28	25	7	6	113	100	56	50

Table 24: High Domains

High Domains	Gbagyi		Hausa		English/ NP		Gwari + Hausa	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1. Religious	28	24	53	45	25	21	9	8
2. Educational	25	19	49	38	45	36	7	6
Total	53	43	102	83	70	57	16	14
Average	26.5	21.1	51	41.5	35	23.5	8	7

Table 24 illustrates the distribution of language in the high domains; 21.1% of the respondents use Gwari, 41.5% use Hausa, 23.5% use English/NP and 7% use Gwari and Hausa.

Table 25: Low Domains

Low Domains	Gbagyi		Hausa		English/ NP		Gwari + Hausa	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1. Home	51	40	53	42	17	13	7	8
2. Social	16	16	23	37	49	43	5	5
3. Health	22	19	42	37	39	34	12	10
Total								
Average								

Table 25 shows the distribution of language use in the low domains; 40% of the respondents use Gwari at home, 42% use Hausa, 13% use English/NP and 8% use Gwari and Hausa at home.

8. Discussion of Findings

Among the linguistic variables, the language under consideration, Gwari, is used in various domains, but its usage varies in degree. Notably, Gwari is used alongside dominant languages such as Hausa, English and NP. For adult respondents, Gwari is predominantly used in the home domain (79%). In contrast, English/NP is the preferred language in the occupational domain (64%), in the religious domain (21%), English/NP is predominantly used in the economic domain (56%). In the social domain, English/NP dominates with 68%, in the political domain, code-switching between Gwari and Hausa is

the dominant language pattern (38% each). Lastly, in the health domain, English/NP dominates with 50%.

Among student respondents, English and Hausa dominate the educational domain, with Hausa at 38% and English/NP at 36%. In the home domain, Hausa dominates with 42%. Hausa also dominates in the religious and health domains at (45%) and (37%) respectively, while English/NP dominates with 43%.

Market women communicate using Gwari, Hausa, NP and sometimes Nupe. They use sign language to communicate with customers who do not understand any of these languages by bringing their palms together to indicate #100, which they refer to as *Muritala Watun* (#100), *Jigangbari* for #20, and *Deri yeatun* for #500.

In the mosques, Imams preach using Arabic, Hausa, Gwari and rarely use NP. In churches, pastors preach in Gwari and English, sometimes using Hausa. Gwari does not enjoy absolute loyalty or exclusive use. Every Gwari speaker, including the children, speaks at least two languages besides Gwari. Hausa and NP are widely used, and their high usage rate might eventually overshadow Gwari.

The language attitude towards Gwari is negative. Most of the people prefer to speak Hausa and NP over Gwari. Only older adults and some children predominantly speak Hausa fluently. Adults and children mostly speak Hausa or code-switch languages. Illiterates predominantly speak Gwari, while elites or educated individuals prefer to speak English and only use Gwari for accommodation purposes, such as when communicating with older or illiterate individuals who do not understand English.

9. Conclusion

Gwari is more endangered among young and adult speakers compared to the older speakers, implying a low rate of intergenerational transmission. This corroborates the findings of Omotoso (2017) that a significant percentage of Gwari youth experience lexical erosion due to the dominance of other languages and negative attitudes towards their own language.

To promote Gwari language and reduce its endangerment, intergenerational transmission must be encouraged. Adult and young speakers need to communicate effectively and demonstrate loyalty towards their language.

According to Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) proposed for describing the development status of endangered languages (Adegbiya 2001:292-304), Gwari could best be described based on the description in stage 8 of the framework:

Stage 8: Most vestigial users of language x are socially isolated old folks and language x needs to be reassembled from their mouths and memories and taught to demographically unconcentrated adults. This is the situation with Gwari as the major population of the speakers are old people and the young speakers are indifferent about the language.

In order to forestall the continued decline of Gwari language, it is recommended that further research be conducted and sponsored by the government and well-meaning Gbagyi natives to document the language. Additionally, the government should implement language policies that favour the use of Gwari in local contexts, particularly as a school subject and/or medium of instruction at the initial literacy level.

This aligns with Section 1, Paragraph 8 of the National Policy on Education (NPE) of the Federal Republic of Nigeria first published in 1977 and revised in 1981, which stipulates;);

- i. That in Primary school, which lasts six years, each child must study two languages: one; his mother tongue (if available for study) or an indigenous language of wider communication in his area of domicile, and two; English language (Awobuluyi 1998).

The government can also establish indigenous language literacy programme with incentives for youth to learn Gwari.

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