

Reversing language shift in Nigeria: Akoko languages of the South West as a case study

Solomon Oluwole Oyetade

University of Ibadan - Nigeria

Reports from fieldworks in different parts of Nigeria indicate an alarming rate of language shift and death. This derives from a myriad of factors: historical, political, socio-economic and psychological. For instance, in the south west, the Akoko languages of Ondo State are seriously threatened by Yoruba, as their speakers are gradually shifting from them in preference for Yoruba. This paper, therefore, reports specifically the incidence of incipient language shift in Oke-Agbe, the headquarters of Akoko North West Local Government, where four dialects of Arigidi clusters are spoken. With data on language ability, use and attitudes, it is confirmed that the various dialects are giving way to the pressures from Yoruba. So also, the dialects borrow extensively from Yoruba. To reverse this trend the paper recommends a symbiotic relationship between linguists, the communities and government. Among other recommendations, the native speakers themselves should promote the vitality of their languages by sponsoring community broadcast in them on radio and television, and co-operate with linguists on efforts aimed at standardising or at recording them in different forms by electronic means to be able to benefit from the new information technology.