

LANGUAGE ENDANGERMENT: THE CASE OF THE IGBO LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

The present study has the objective of making a case study of Igbo as an endangered language. It sets out to identify the factors leading to the endangerment of the Igbo language, the immediate and long-term effects of this linguistic phenomenon of Igbo language endangerment. Two methods are applied: descriptive and historical. It is established, in this study, that the Igbo language is an endangered language. It is in a dying state and many of the younger generation (Igbo children and families) no longer speak Igbo. Also, they no longer learn it as a mother tongue (MT) informally and imperceptibly at home. Speaking Igbo is left generally at the hands of the generation of some Igbo parents. Factors of endangerment of Igbo found include undesirable language attitudes and disloyalty to the Igbo language and the marginalization of the Igbo language, a majority language. One long-term negative consequence of the Igbo language endangerment discovered is that the Igbo language runs the risk of becoming extinct forty to fifty years from now if no drastic measures are taken to curb the ugly trend. Another long-term effect is the death of Ndigbo (linguistic and symbolic death). Some recommendations are proffered, notably: changing undesirable attitudes to the Igbo language; sensitization of Ndigbo both young and old to the display of great loyalty to the Igbo language, socio-linguistic readiness for literacy in Igbo and development of Igbo to become a language of science and technology through more thorough work on its metalanguage. The speedy and effective implementation of the recommendations will, hopefully, avert for the Igbo language and the Igbo nation the impending doom.

KEYWORDS: *Language Endangerment Discovered, Language of Science and Technology, Endangerment of the Igbo Language*