

Language Maintenance Mechanisms of Kigiriyama Language in Ganze Sub-County, Kilifi County, Kenya



Fredrick Kombe Charo¹, Dr. Anashia Nancy Ong'onda²

¹Department of languages and humanities, School of social sciences Mount Kenya University

²Department of Languages and Linguistics, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Machakos University, Kenya

ABSTRACT: Global figures and reports by UNESCO indicate that 90% of the world's languages are endangered. Kigiriyama not being a minority language may attract little or no attention in terms of language shift and maintenance investigation. However, in spite Kigiriyama having an estimated number of 600, 000 speakers and the trend at the moment is that many of its speakers and especially the youth are shifting to the use of Kiswahili language in many domains raises questions on the concept of language shift and maintenance. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate on language maintenance mechanisms of Kigiriyama language. The study employed Fishman's Domain theory and Holmes' theory on language maintenance. The study employed descriptive survey research design. Data was collected using questionnaires and interviews. The findings of the study reveal that language maintenance in Kigiriyama language is done at family domain, community domain, and media domain and through language planning policy. The study concludes that language the use of Kigiriyama language in both formal and informal will enhance language maintenance efforts of indigenous languages.

KEY WORDS: Language Maintenance, Kigiriyama Language, Giriama people, Strategies of Language Maintenance.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is a social aspect of human life and a fundamental part of human life in society. According to Brown (2007) a language is a tool for expressing ideas or relating information and messages to other people. Thornborrow (2004) states that language is a fundamental way people have in establishing identity and of shaping other people's views of who they are. Therefore, language cannot be separated from human life. Global figures and reports by UNESCO indicate that 90% of the world's languages are endangered hence the need for strategies of maintaining languages.

Language maintenance is the continuing use of a language in the face of competition from a regionally and socially more powerful language (Mesthri and Leap, 2000). It also refers to a situation where a speech community, under circumstances that would seem to favor language shift, holds on to its language (Coulmas, 2005). Batibo (2005) observes that maintenance of a language occurs when a language retains its vitality even when placed under pressure. Language maintenance is the promotion or protection of the native language of an individual or of a speech community (Baker and Jones, 2008). Basing on the above definitions language maintenance from a sociolinguistic perspective is about language use as the notion of competition from a more powerful language conveys. The more powerful language is typically the language spoken by the majority in society, while the language being "maintained" is a minority or home language. Language maintenance denotes the continuing use of a language in the face of competition from a regionally and socially more powerful language. Language maintenance is thus the preservation of the use of a language by a speech community under conditions where there is a possibility of shift to another language.

Various studies have shown different strategies of language maintenance; Aitchson (1991) argue that old speakers are likely to use the old language (mothertongue) but they import features of other languages into it. The young generation continues shifting to the dominant language to an extent of expressing the old language (mother tongue) which may more socially and economically relevant. Fishman (1991) argue that a language spoken within the family is tied to its cultural self-identity; it is often parents who make a decision on whether to teach their mother tongue to their children, or not. Clyne and Kipp (1999) state that home domain is a key element in language maintenance. They observe that if a language is not maintained in the home domain, then it cannot be maintained elsewhere. Edwards and Newcombe (2005) study show that the speakers who use the heritage language with their parents at home tend to repeat the similar process with their children later. Myers-Scotton (2006) states that societal factors such as demographic factors in terms of

Language Maintenance Mechanisms of Kigiriyama Language in Ganze Sub-County, Kilifi County, Kenya

large numbers of speakers of the same L1 living together are likely to maintain their language and occupational factors where members working with fellow speakers of the L1 are likely to maintain it, with restrictive socio-economic mobility, educational factors. Lee (2013) found an issue of language maintenance and shift among the Chilean community in Auckland. She concluded that the participants not only showed an awareness of the advantages of speaking more than one language, but also identified Spanish as an important and useful language on the world stage.

Kigiriyama language is a language spoken by Giriama people in Kenya. Giriama people are one of the nine ethnic groups that make up the Mijikenda the others being, Kauma, Chonyi, Jibana, Kambe, Ribe, Rabai, Duruma and Digo. Giriama and the Digo are the most well-known, most populous, and therefore, most dominant along the Kenyan coast. The mijikenda people occupy the coastal strip extending from Lamu in the North to the Kenya/Tanzania. The Giriama people inhabit the area bordered by coastal cities of Mombasa and Malindi and towns such as Mariakani and Kaloleni. Giriama people having been surrounded by Kiswahili people are slowly shifting from the use of Kigiriyama language to Kiswahili language. According to Gordon (2005) Kigiriyama has an estimated 600, 000 speakers, while Kiswahili has an estimated 700,000 monolingual speakers in Kenya and 33 million speakers across Eastern and Central Africa. Giriama speakers are currently shifting from speaking Kigiriyama to Kiswahili which may affect the vitality of Kigiriyama language in the future.

Kigiriyama not being a minority language may attract little or no attention in terms of language maintenance investigation. However, in spite Kigiriyama having an estimated number of 600, 000 speakers, the trend at the moment is that many of its speakers and especially the youth are shifting to the use of Kiswahili language in many domains and English when at school. This worrying trend is the reason United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has designated the 21st day of February as International Mother Language Day. This designation is encouraged by the fact that there have been many of mother tongue/local languages that come into extinction in the last century.

The locality in which Kigiriyama language is spoken is surrounded by Mombasa and Malindi city and Kaloleni town where is Kiswahili is spoken. Thus, the shift from Kigiriyama to Kiswahili is prone. Therefore, this paper investigates the possible language maintenance strategies of the Kigiriyama language. The study has one main quest which is to:

- i. Establish factors that support language maintenance of Kigiriyama language

The focus of the study is on the strategies in maintaining Kigiriyama language. It is hoped that the study is going to be a springboard for further studies on Kigiriyama language in Kenya. Secondly, the government of Kenya in the new constitution insists on the promotion of 'indigenous' languages, to make them recognized and used in the curriculum, communication, technology and research. The study of language shift and maintenance in Kenya is important since it might be insightful to language planning and policy makers and consider Kigiriyama language to be used as a medium of instruction in primary or secondary schools in Kenya. This therefore, means that this study is useful for language policy law makers in Kenya.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper was anchored within the framework of Fishman's (1964, 1968, 1972, 1991) domain theory and Holmes theory on language maintenance in (2006). According to Fishman (1964) speech situations can be classified into broader groupings called domains on the basis of similarity of social characteristics. Fishman proposed the concept of "Domain" in order to specify the larger institutional role-contexts within which habitual language use occurs in multilingual settings (Fishman, 1968). Some of the relevant domains for describing language use in relatively complex multilingual societies include family, friendship, religion, education, work sphere and government. This phenomenon is termed by Hughes (1970) as linguistic division of labour. According to Hughes (1970) in a society where two languages are used, the two languages are not used for the same purpose but in different contexts. Fishman (1991) argues that the domain theory is grounded on the maxim of: who speaks what language when and where. Fishman contents that a domain is a socio-cultural construct abstracted from topics of communications, relationships between communicators, and locales of communication, in accord with the institutions of a society and the spheres of activity of a culture, in such a way that individual behaviour and social patterns can be distinguished from each other and yet related to each other. Worth noting is that domains are defined regardless of their number in terms of institutional contexts or socio-ecological co-occurrences. They are based on the major clusters of interaction situations that occur in particular multilingual settings.

The domain theory is relevant to the study. The researcher grouped the participants into different domains of family, friendship, religion, education, work sphere and government and find out whether they use the Kigiriyama language or the Kiswahili or English language in their domains. The researcher assessed whether in some domains Giriama speakers are resistant to shift than others. The researcher also

Language Maintenance Mechanisms of Kigirama Language in Ganze Sub-County, Kilifi County, Kenya

compared the preference of the use of a given language over the other in a given domain. The researcher described the domains or contexts of language use such as home, school, church, market, among others. The maxim of who speaks what language when and where will also be instrumental in the proposed study. The *who* premise will be used to identify Giriama speakers and their speech communities. The *what* question is used to refer to the dialect(s) under study while *when* refers to the time of interaction, and *where* to the locales of interaction or domains of language use.

Holmes's theory (2001) focuses on some strategies in language maintenance such as regular social interaction between community members, frequency of contact with the homeland, resistance to mixed marriage, and institutional support. Holmes argues that If families from a minority group live near each other and see each other frequently, their interactions will help to maintain the language. More so the institutional support from domains such as education, law, administration, religion and the media can make a difference between the success and failure of maintaining of a language. Jendra (2010) argues that larger numbers of speakers have a better possibility to maintain their language. These strategies were applied in the analysis of preservations strategies of Kigirama language.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

3.1 Research Design

The design for this study is a descriptive survey design, utilizing a mixed Methodology. This type of design is used to find answers to the questions generated from the statements of the problem. Qualitative methods will also be used in the understanding of the meanings that people attach to actions, decisions, beliefs and values (Cresswell, 2012). Qualitative methods were used as an important part in developing, maintaining and improving survey quality. A survey can assess personality variables such as attitude and opinions about events, individuals or procedures (Wiersman, 1985; Gay (1992). Surveys were used in collecting data on language use, choice and attitudes in different language domains of Kigirama speakers.

3.2 Participants

The respondents of the study were drawn from Giriama speaking areas in Ganze Sub-county, Kilifi County in Kenya. The respondents were selected using a convenience sampling technique. 100 speakers of Kigirama language participated in the current study. Through stratified sampling the participants were grouped into strata's of age groups, and gender. Out of 100 respondents who participated in the study, 50 (50%) were males and 50 (50%) were females. This indicates that there was a fair gender balance and representation among respondents who participated in the study. The age range of the respondents was between 9 and 84.

3.3 Data collection

The data was collected through questionnaire for parents, questionnaire for children, unstructured interviews for teachers and participant observations. These three methods were used to complement each other. The questionnaire for parents covered several areas including general background such as surname, sex, age, marital status, socio-economic status; educational background; patterns of language use; language fluency rating scales; and linguistic attitudes. The questionnaire for Giriama children and youths sought information on language preference in education domain and language use among the youth.

The questionnaire included a list of items asking interviewees to indicate which language they use in a series of communicative situations. The latter have been subsequently gathered in seven major domains in order to define those promoting the maintenance of the Kigirama language. Language maintenance factors are framed within an examination of language use within Fishman's (1965) sociolinguistic domains: home/family;personal/intimate; leisure/social life/religion; media; workplace/shopping/neighborhoods; education; spouse/partner; (future) children and a value cluster of overt language attitudes.

3.4 Data analysis

Data was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Quantitative measures and qualitative formulas were used to analyze the data. Items in the questionnaire were analyzed quantitatively by analyzing the rate of languages relevance to domains in their lives. The responses were expressed as percentages of the survey sample. These percentages were necessary to determine language preferences among the young and older Kigirama speakers. Data from interviews and observation schedule were analyzed descriptively to complement data from questionnaires.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Factors that support language maintenance of Kigirama language

4.1.1 Language use in family domain

The study established the maintenance of Kigirama language would first be in-home and family domain. The results show the use of the Kigirama language is still dominant in intimate and informal situations. The family, in particular, still remains rampart in

Language Maintenance Mechanisms of Kigiriama Language in Ganze Sub-County, Kilifi County, Kenya

preservation of the native language, as the vast majority of the interviewed subjects declared that they use Kigiriama mostly at home. When the parents were asked which language they use at home the results were shown in figure one below:

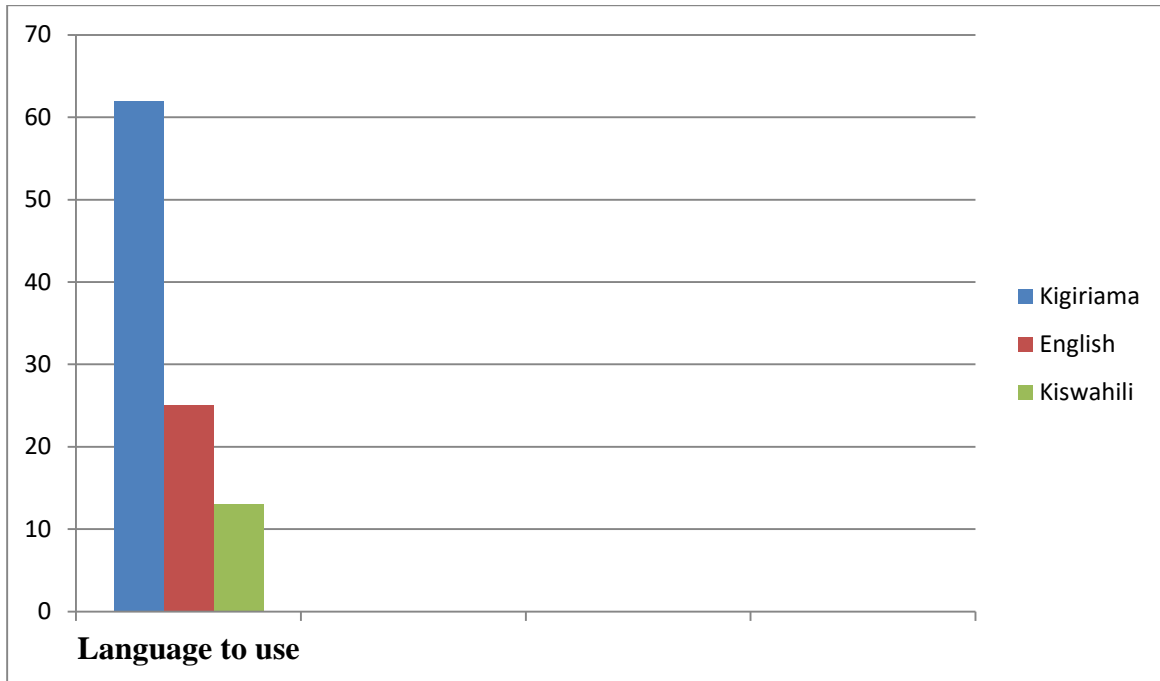


Figure 1: Language preference at home

The majority of Kigiriama parents think they should speak Kigiriama (62%) at home to their children this is followed by others who think that they should speak English Language (25%) while (13%) thought they should speak Kiswahili. The majority of speakers of Kigiriama language (62%) noted that they should Kigiriama language for social identity purposes and away of teaching their children. They stated that it was the only way they could maintain their culture. 25% of participants who felt that they should speak the English language stated that in Kenya English language is considered us a language of the educated and as an international language. This was in line with Choudry (1993) who observed that factors like motivation, prestige, identity, language loyalty and the importance of their relationship to attitude influenced language choice.

The study shows that the home domain represents the last defense against the influence of the language of the majority. Fishman (1965) states in many studies of multilingual behavior the family domain has proved to be a very crucial one. The participants reported that loyalty towards the use of the Kigiriama language within the mixed family structures seems to guarantee – at least in the short-medium term – its intergenerational transmission. In other words if Kigiriama language is used in family domain and home it will lead to language maintenance.

Table 1 below further show language use within family domain:

Table 1: Frequency of Kigiriama use in family domain

Dyads	Level of use	No of respondents
Mother and father	High use	33
	Moderate use	3
	Low use	1
		N=37
Mother and children	High use	32
	Moderate use	3
	Low use	2
		N=37
Father and children	High use	38
	Moderate use	2
	Low use	2

Language Maintenance Mechanisms of Kigiriama Language in Ganze Sub-County, Kilifi County, Kenya

		N=42
Children with each other	High use	1
	Moderate use	2
	Low use	18
		N=21
Parents with relatives	High use	70
	Moderate use	5
	Low use	4
		N=79
Parents with friends	High use	63
	Moderate use	10
	Low use	6
		N=79

Table 1 shows that Kigiriama language use in the family domain is a particularly an important factor of language maintenance in Kenya. The findings reveal that parents' language use patterns have substantial impact on children's overall acquisition and maintenance of home language. Majority of the older speakers predominantly use Kigiriama to speak to their children, siblings and relatives. Parents in the society play an important role in intergenerational transmission of Kigiriama and by comparing levels of Kigiriama usage in the respondents childhood home and their present home, it is possible to analyze whether this transmission has been successful and to what extent parents are prepared to bring up their children through Kigiriama. Table 1 however shows that children rarely use Kigiriama language when speaking to other children which is dangerous trend. However, family and home domain still plays a crucial role in the maintenance of Kigiriama language. These findings are in line with Cartwright (1987) and Barnes (1990) who points out that the family plays a crucial role in maintaining a language.

4.1.2 Language use of kigiriama in the domain of community

Through questionnaires older speakers noted that continued use of Kigiriama in the following domain within the community would lead to maintenance of the language. When the older speakers (parents) were asked which language they mainly use in given community domains, they responded as shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Language Use in the community domains among Giriama parents

Language	Shopping Domain	Social Functions	School Domain	Public Health	Ritual Ceremonies
Kigiriama	80%	83%	33%	27%	97%
English/Kiswahili	20%	17%	67%	73%	3%

This study was carried out in the rural setting therefore the use of Kigiriama language was likely to be dominant among parents. During shopping in Ganze sub-county 80% of the older speakers (Parents) indicated that they use Kigiriama while 20% indicated that they use either Kiswahili or English. This case was likely to be since the parents encounter vendors who are Kigiriama speakers in the market. This then implies the Market place is a ground where language maintenance is experienced especially in the rural setting. Within Ganze sub-county 83% of parents also reported that they use Kigiriama language in social functions such as marriages, weddings and funerals while 7% reported that they use English or Kiswahili. This was the trend in the performance of rituals where 97% of parents reported that they use Kigiriama while 3% reported the use of English or Kiswahili. Therefore, the results of table 1 shows that language maintenance of Kigiriama language is at local levels such as shopping centers (high use), social functions and rituals that recorded high use too which are informal interaction.

The school domain recorded low use of Kigiriama language 33% while use of English and Kiswahili was at 67%. This was precipitated by the cases where parents are interacting with the teachers, school workers, and other parents in school, their own children and other students while in school. These results were almost similar to the use of Kigiriama in Public health sectors where English and Kiswahili (73%) dominated over Kigiriama (27%). Table 14 therefore shows Kigiriama language lacks institution support in formal settings such as public health, media, government offices and education sector. This implies that Kigiriama language is not used in formal interaction. Formal interaction refers to language use with public officers and other categories of speakers that imply formal interaction, i.e. Public

Language Maintenance Mechanisms of Kigiriyama Language in Ganze Sub-County, Kilifi County, Kenya

health, Education and government offices etc., while informal interaction refers to all those domains in which the use of language is not influenced by one-sided or power relationships (church, social welfare and in shopping centers).

However through questionnaires the older speakers reported that providing government and administrative services in the mother tongue can stimulate maintenance. This could be enhanced by having representatives that can interact with parents or speakers in the language they know best. The data show low use of Kigiriyama language in public health and public sectors that threatened the existence of Kigiriyama language in formal setting. The study concludes that the use of Kigiriyama language in both formal and informal will enhance language maintenance efforts of indigenous languages.

4.1.3 Media and Language maintenance

Through interviews and questionnaires the data revealed the importance of media as a tool for language maintenance. There are four radio stations that support the use of Kigiriyama language in media: Pilipili FM, Msenangu FM, Bahari and Kaya FM. Both parents and teachers reported that the use of Kigiriyama language in media would enhance language preservation and maintenance. The respondents noted the functions of Kigiriyama language should be advanced to use in media in order to increase its prestige.

When the teachers were asked why Kigiriyama should be used in media they also pointed out that the use of Kigiriyama in the media increases the exposure of the language itself and the awareness of the language. Thus, mass media supports the use of indigenous languages. More the use of Kigiriyama language in an institution like media would give the language more vitality which enhances language maintenance. The uses of indigenous languages through media such as TV or radio maintain the native language.

The use of local languages will also enhance socialization and the utilization of local mass media that is both printed mass media and electronic mass media, to make a column or announcement about. Moreover, language shift tends to be slower among communities where the minority language or an indigenous language is highly valued. Thus, the use of Kigiriyama in media would help it resist the pressure from the majority group language such as Kiswahili.

4.14 Language planning in maintaining indigenous language

Language planning is a deliberate effort to influence the function, structure or acquisition of languages or language variety within a speech community. Planning or improving effective communication can also lead to other social changes such as language shift or assimilation. The data collected clearly show that 67% percent of the parents cited the education system as a cause of language shift. This then implies that language classes should be the starting point for a language maintenance program which should be well articulated in language policy through language planning. Kenya being a multilingual society is faced with the problem of language maintenance due to language choice which eventually leads to language shift.

The teachers gave the following strategies as maintenance of Kigiriyama language:

- Teaching poems, drama, songs in Kigiriyama
- Government building museums
- Motivating cultural events
- Asking authors to write Kigiriyama books
- Use local language while teaching
- Support program for cultural events
- More books to be printed in Kigiriyama
- Encourage Musicians to make Kigiriyama songs
- More Kigiriyama stations and channels to be introduced
- Kigiriyama to be appreciated like Kiswahili
- To teach Kigiriyama as a subject to the learners especially in the lower classes

The language policy states that the child's first language either Mother Tongue (MT) or the language commonly spoken in the school's catchment area (usually Kiswahili or English) should be used as the Language of Instruction (LOI) in lower primary up to end of Grade Three. The policy further states that English and Kiswahili should be taught as subjects in lower primary and English should be used as the LOI from grade four onwards. The policy therefore states that in lower primary it is official for children to be taught in English, Kiswahili or any of the vernacular languages. This policy aims at maintaining the use of Kigiriyama language and any other indigenous language.

In an interview schedule the researcher sought to find out the language that the pupils were expected to use in school. 92 % of the interviewed teachers reported that pupils were expected to speak English in school and all (100%) again reported that despite this expectation, pupils spoke other languages in school. The teachers agreed that speaking other languages affected pupils' achievement in

Language Maintenance Mechanisms of Kigirama Language in Ganze Sub-County, Kilifi County, Kenya

English. The findings above show that the school language may be a cause of language shift yet in the language planning policy it should enhance language maintenance.

85% of the teachers agreed that they often used Kiswahili during English lessons while 83.3% reported that pupils did not use Mother Tongue during English lessons while 16.7% of the teachers agreed that pupils used MT during English lessons. The teachers agreed that majority of the teachers (97%) did not use MT during English lessons. Only 3% agreed that teachers sometimes used MT during English lessons.

A working language planning thus is designed to solve language's problems in order to use it properly in communication for social intercourse and to maintain language from death. Thus, once language planning and policy works in Kenya it can enhance the maintenance of Kigirama language. This observation corroborates with Wiley (2009) who argue that language planning entails formation and implementation of a policy designed to influence the languages and varieties of language which will be used and the purposes for which they will be used. Language planning for maintenance of local languages also requires the government to resources in terms (teachers, classrooms, textbooks, etc.).

Thus, the study concludes that as much as the Kenyan government has made language policy to maintain indigenous language in schools, the problem is that this policy seems to not be planned properly especially at the implementation stage. It is true that language maintenance can be achieved through education if the language is reflected in school curriculum so that children can learn to read and write in it.

The teachers reported that lack of resources such as course books on the Kigirama language were also lacking. Therefore, full government support was lacking. The findings also show that the language policy on the use of indigenous languages in schools is not well-planned enough yet school and education play an important part in human life especially in acquiring language. It is through education that people acquire a better understanding about their first or second language acquisition.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper sought to establish language maintenance mechanisms of Kigirama language. The results of the study show that the maintenance of Kigirama language would first be in-home and family domain. The results show the use of the Kigirama language is still dominant in intimate and informal situations. The family, in particular, still remains rampart in preservation of the native language, as the vast majority of the interviewed subjects declared that they use Kigirama mostly at home. The study reveals that the home domain represents the last defense against the influence of the language of the majority. Another domain that could lead to maintenance of Kigirama language is the domain of community. This study was carried out in the rural setting therefore the use of Kigirama language was likely to be dominant among parents. The data show low use of Kigirama language in public health and public sectors that threatened the existent of Kigirama language in formal setting. The study concludes that the use of Kigirama language in both formal and informal will enhance language maintenance efforts of indigenous languages. The study also recommends the actualization of language policy in schools especially at the implementation stage that would enhance the use of Kigirama language among children.

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Language Maintenance Mechanisms of Kigiriama Language in Ganze Sub-County, Kilifi County, Kenya

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