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+234 (0) 803 633 1942

macronetnigent@gmail.com

## **EDITORIAL**

Every academic environment is sustained by learning through rigorous methods. Research is one and the focal point for assessment. A serious member of the academic community is measured by the quality and number of academic articles.

In spite of the desire to acquire many research reports, this edition has insisted on standards and quality. It is important to note that many articles have been rejected for not meeting our requirements.

The first and most obvious task of our journal is to provide a level playing field for researchers all over the globe in language-related disciplines, which is the vehicle for conveying knowledge. In this edition, seventeen (17) articles have undergone academic scrutiny from our blind reviewers.

To our esteemed contributors and readers, thought-provoking articles are expected and we are ready to publish them in the next volume.

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### **Manuscripts Submission**

Three hard copies of the article with text, charts, tables, figures, plates or any other original illustration should be sent to the editor-in-chief JAJOLLS, Taraba State University, Jalingo, Taraba State Nigeria. Submission should either be in English, French, Hausa, or Arabic languages. Articles should be typed in double line spacing with a wide margin on each side only on A4 sized paper not exceeding 15 pages including abstract with not more than 6-7 keywords. Articles are to be submitted with Five Thousand Naira (N5,000) assessment and handling charges. By submitting an article to JAJOLLS, the author(s) agree that the exclusive rights to produce and distribute the articles to the publisher.

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All correspondences on editorial matters should be sent to:

### **Sumayyat Ibrahim Gambo (Ph.D.)**

Department of Languages & Linguistics

Taraba State University

P.M.B. 1167, Jalingo, Taraba State

**Email:** jajolls022@gmail.com

**Phone:** +234803132245, +2348182312149 & +2349045724091

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Sa'adu Inusa<sup>1</sup> &  
Aishatu Nana Muhammad<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Department of African Languages and Linguistics, Yobe State University, Damaturu. Yobe State, Nigeria.

<sup>2</sup> Department of Hausa, School of Languages, Aminu Saleh College of Education, Azare. Bauchi State, Nigeria.

## Language Endangerment: Focus on Maka/Maga Language of Yobe State of Nigeria.

### Abstract

The study is an attempt to investigate the effects of language endangerment on Maka/Maga language with the aim of finding out the extent or level on which it is endangered. The research employed the Ethnographic Research approach that involves observing variables in their natural environments or habitats in order to arrive at objective research outcome, which, at the same time uses observation and distribution of questionnaires. The study also adopts the work of UNESCO expert committee on language endangerment (2003) as its model of approach. As part of its findings, the research discovered that the factors that cause language endangerment are: Inter Community Marriage, Lack of Research on the Endangered Languages, Globalization, Lack of Institutional Support, Cultural Background and Migration. However, the research also confirmed that Maka/Maga language is under serious threat of endangerment especially when discovered that the language suffers a case of language shift.

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+23408036768267

**Corresponding Author:** Sa'adu Inusa **Email:**  
[saadgash@gmail.com](mailto:saadgash@gmail.com)

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### 1.1 Introduction

Languages are often seen a symbol of ethnic and national identity. Many endangered language complainers claim that when a language allies out, a vague way of looking at the world also disappear (Fishman, 1989). Language diversity is essential to human heritage each and every language embodies the unique cultural wisdom of a people. The less of any language is thus a less for all human unity. Though according to UNESCO, approximately six thousand languages still exist, many out of them are under threat. Therefore, there is an imperative need for language documentation, new policy initiative and new materials to enhance the vitality of these languages. In almost every part of the world, minority languages are seriously under threat of extinction. At the same time, some dedicated efforts are being made to document, revive and maintain the endangered



languages from the verge of extinction or totally disappearing from the globe for not having the desired attention. Language endangerment is a very common phenomenon in Africa and the world at large. Therefore, Nigeria or Yobe state will never be an exception. Yobe state is located in northern part of Nigeria which was carved out of Borno state in 1991 by the then military government of General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida. The dominant linguistic and cultural force, until the mid of 20<sup>th</sup> century, was Kanuri. But in recent years, Hausa has become the universal lingua franca for all parts of northern Nigeria including Yobe state. Nonetheless, numerous minority languages remain in active use where they all have a substantial community of first language speakers. Therefore, lack of interest plus documentation in the communities in seeing their languages developed through publication in and on them make Yobe state an ideal place for a broad linguistic project.

Maka/Maga as the name of the language alternates is a member of Chadic languages under the Afro-Asiatic phylum. It is spoken in northern Nigeria particularly in Yobe state in some of its local government areas like Gulani and Gujba. Its close linguistic relatives are Bole, Angas and Tangale. Their population is 10,000 speakers with two different dialects, that of Bara and Gulani, (Ethnologue, 2016).

## 1.2 Chadic Overview

The Chadic Language family comprises about 150 languages that lie in a band south of the Sahara Desert, stretching across southern Niger, northern Nigeria, northern Cameroon, and south-central Chad Republic. A single Chadic language, Hausa, constitutes the entire western end of the Chadic area. Hausa is the overwhelmingly largest Chadic language with well over 20 million native speakers, whereas most other Chadic languages have fewer than 100,000 speakers. The Hausa native-speaking area covers most of the northwest quadrant of Nigeria and most of southern Niger. It is the lingua franca for all of northern Nigeria and most of Niger. Chadic languages at one time probably formed a block from near the Niger River in the west to their current eastern extent in Chad Republic. Hausa has absorbed many of its cousins in the west, Kanuri has replaced Chadic languages west and southwest of Lake Chad, and Kanembu and Chadian Arabic have cut through the original Chadic area of Chad Republic.

In the 1930s, Johannes Lukas presented the first comprehensive classification of languages of the Lake Chad basin, proposing a ‘Chado-Hamitic’ group and a ‘Mandara’



or ‘Chadic’ group (Lukas 1936). A principal criterion for this categorization was the presence or absence of grammatical gender. Greenberg (1950) set the stage for the modern classification of Chadic. On the basis of lexical resemblances and shared patterns in morphology, Greenberg proposed a unitary group of ‘Chad’ languages with nine subgroups, which included all Lukas's ‘Chado-Hamitic’ and ‘Chadic’ languages and was itself a branch of the larger Afrasian (= Afroasiatic) family.

In the first true comparative Chadic publication, Newman and Ma (1966) proposed a subgrouping that unified Greenberg's two largest groups of Chadic—group 1 at the western end and group 9 at the eastern end—into a 'Plateau- Sahel' branch, with the remainder of Greenberg's groups united in a 'Biu-Mandara' branch. They identified a number of sound changes that united or differentiated the various subgroups and reconstructed a list of 150 items for a proto-Chadic lexicon.

Newman and Ma's Plateau-Sahel group soon became untenable. Newman (1978) noted that counts of lexical similarities did not justify a special linkage between the western branch (Greenberg's group 1) and the eastern branch (Greenberg's group 9). Moreover, a major criterion for Newman and Ma's classification was a putative correspondence of Plateau-Sahel to Biu Mandara. Research in the late 1960's revealed that many of the Plateau-Sahel languages of Nigeria also have lateral fricatives, thus ruling this out as a criterion for sub grouping.

Drawing on a large amount of Chadic research and publication in the 1960s and 1970s, two reclassifications of the Chadic languages emerged about the same time in the late 1970s. Newman (1977) updated what was known about sound changes among the Chadic languages and presented a new list of 150 proto-Chadic reconstructions. Newman proposed a four-way division of the Chadic languages into West (= Greenberg's group 1, all spoken in northern Nigeria and including Hausa), Biu-Mandara (= Greenberg's groups 2-7, spoken in northeastern Nigeria and northern Cameroon), Masa (= Greenberg's group 8, spoken mainly in western Chad, extending into eastern Cameroon), and East (= Greenberg's group 9, all spoken in Chad Republic). The map above reflects this classification, lighter to darker shades of gray distinguishing the groups from west to east. The second reclassification is that of Jungraithmayr and Shimizu (1981), repeated in Jungraithmayr and Ibriszimow (1994). This classification has West and East branches identical to those of Newman (1977). Both reclassifications also recognize 'Masa' as a unitary group. However, unlike Newman's distinct high-level groups of Biu-Mandara and Masa, the Jungraithmayr et al. classification has a single Central Chadic branch. This branch, in turn, has three sub-branches, with the languages of Newman's Masa branch included within one of those sub-branches. It may well be that Masa is linked to the other 'Biu-Mandara'/'Central Chadic' languages, but a low-level classification of Masa within Central Chadic is questionable. Shryock (1989) morphological change was unable to find evidence for a link between the Masa languages and the Biu-Mandara/Central Chadic languages as opposed to any other branch of Chadic. The conservative Newman (1977) classification, with four- high level branches, thus seems to be the most plausible among current proposals. Branch affiliations of languages cited below will be indicated by [W], [B-M], [M], and [E] following the language name.

### **1.3 Aim of the Study**

The main aim of this study is to investigate the effects of language endangerment in Maka/Maga language and ascertain the level of endangerment and also establish the reasons that lead to the endangerment.

### **1.4 Statement of the Problem /Justification**

In July 2005, Yobe Language Research Project (YLRP) has shown that, in addition to being genetic sisters/cousins, the indigenous Chadic languages of Yobe state constituted an interesting linguistic area i.e., an area which is full of linguistic research opportunities. In spite of this, there is very little published documentation of any of these languages, yet they have substantial communities of first language speakers. This has made Yobe state an ideal place for broad linguistic projects. In addition, some linguistic experts, Crystal 2000, for example, established that only 600 of the 6000 or so languages in the world are

‘safe’ from the threat of extinction.

Based on the above linguistic expert’s assertion, this study come across very little academic research that works on language endangerment phenomenon. Therefore, this has made it necessary for the researchers to make a thorough investigation on the devastating effect of language endangerment on Maka/Maga language.

## **1. 5 Scope and Limitation of the Study**

This study limits its scope within the areas where on Maka/Maga language is spoken only which includes Bara, Damaturu, Gujba and Gulani towns of Gulani, Damaturu and Gujba local government areas, all in Yobe state.

### **2. 1 Literature Review**

Bamghose, (1993, p. 3) claims that, even though the concept of language endangerment has no uniform definition, the most obvious definition is by number of speakers. Obviously, a language with fewer speakers is more likely to be endangered if compared with larger languages. Speakers of such languages tend to learn another language (more widely spoken) for purpose of interaction outside their immediate community, where language loyalty is not strong; it is a short step to language shift and eventually language death. He further said that endangerment is a structure which comes as a result of incidence of domination by a more powerful language. In this sense many African languages will, in varying degree, qualify as endangered either by widely spoken national language such as Swahili or by official language of a wider communication such as English, French or Portuguese.

Machinyanse, (2018, p. 2) argues that, the most widely affected languages by language endangerment are minority languages as a result of certain factors like; globalized economies and media are most prominent social factors that successfully change the culture landscape of the entire globe affecting negatively the languages human speaks. It is clear facts that indigenous languages whose speakers are affected directly by these modern global trends are on the verge of extinction. Other factors are cultural/political/economic marginalization and hegemony, this happen when political and economic power is closely linked to a particular language and culture so much that there is strong incentive and benefit for individuals who use the privileged language, this compels speakers of minority languages to abandon their languages in favour of another more prestigious one.

Simon and Charles, (2020) maintained that language endangerment is a serious concern to linguist and language planners. Language planners have turned their attention in the last several decades for a variety of reasons, speakers of many smaller less dominant language stop using their heritage language and begin to use another. Parents may begin to use only the second language for their children and gradually the intergenerational transmission of the heritage language is reduced and even cease. As a consequence, there may be no speakers who use the language as their first or primary language and eventually the language may no longer be used at all. A language may become dormant or extinct, existing only in recordings or written records and transcription. Languages which have not been adequately documented disappear altogether.

UNESCO, (2003) stress that, a language endangerment is simply refers to a situation when the language is on a path towards extinction without adequate documentation. A language that is extinct can never be revived. A language is said to be endangered when its speakers cease to 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, adults or children. About 97% of the world’s people speak about 4% of the world’s

languages, and conversely, about 96% of the world’s languages are spoken by about 3% of the world’s people (Bernard, 1996, p, 142). Most of the world’s language heterogeneity, then, is under the stewardship a very small number of people.

Even languages with many thousand speakers are no longer being acquired by children; at least 50% of the world’s more than six thousand languages are losing speakers. We estimate that, in most world regions, about 90% of the languages may be replaced by dominant languages by the end of 21<sup>st</sup> century. Therefore, language end may be as a result of external forces such as military, economic, religious, cultural, or educational subjugation, or it may be caused by internal forces such as a community’s negative attitude towards its own language. Internal pressures often have their source in external ones, and both halt the intergenerational transmission of linguistic and cultural traditions. Many indigenous peoples, associating their disadvantaged social position with their culture, have come to believe that their languages are not worth retaining. They abandoned their languages and cultures in hopes of overcoming discrimination, to secure a livelihood, and enhance social mobility, or to assimilate to the global market place.

### 3.1 Methodology

The study entitled ‘Language Endangerment: Focus on Maka/Maga Language of Yobe State of Nigeria’, employs Ethnographic Research approach that involves observing variables in their natural environments or habitats in order to arrive at objective research outcome, which, at the same time uses observation, interview and participation, (cf. Chamo, 2015, p. 272).

The target audiences for the research were native speakers of Maka/Maga language from the age of 10 years above irrespective of their gender variation. The data obtained through the interview were recorded for further transcription, translation and final analysis. The data were analyzed based on the outlined determining factors by UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages. Under each factor there was adoptable grades from 0 to 5, where 0 represents complete shift to another language (termed as extinct), whereas 5 represents vitality of a language (which termed as safe). The remaining indices (1 to 4) represent the percentage on which a language is endangered.

### 4.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

The data obtained and presented below for general analysis, are classified and analyzed based on 0-5 indices scale adopted by the research as earlier stated. However, under each item there was adoptable grades from 0-5, where 0 represents complete shift to another language (termed as extinct), whereas 5 represents vitality of a language (which termed as safe). The remaining indices (1-4) represent the percentage on which a language is endangered.

*i. Item One in the Questionnaire: In what domain do you use your language?*

- a. Home                      b. School                      c. Market                      d. Office                      e. Place of Worship
- f. All of the above                      g. None of the above

**Table 1**

Language	Home		School		Market		Office		Place of Worship		All of Above		None of Above		Total
Maka/Maga	45	51.13%	2	2.27%	6	6.81%	0	0%	0	0%	26	29.54%	9	10.22%	88

In the first instance, the data presented on table 1 above showed the percentage on the specific domain in which the native speakers of Maka/Maga language are mostly using the language. For this therefore, 51.13% of the respondents clearly stated that they are using the language at home which emerged as the highest percentage recorded on that

particular item. This percentage showed that, the language is placed on indices 3 of the research measure; i.e the language is definitely endangered.

ii. *Item two on the questionnaire:* How frequent do you use your language?

- a. Always      b. Sometimes      c. Never

**Table 2**

Language	Always		Sometimes		Never		Total
	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Maka/Maga	37	42.05	42	47.73	9	10.22	88(100%)

Furthermore, with regards to the level of frequency on the usage of Maka/Maga language by its native speaker as an item 2 on the questionnaire, another percentage figure also recorded as shown on table 2. This shows that only 42.05% of the responses recorded are frequently using the language always. By such a percentage, the language seems to be placed on indices 3 of the research measure. This means that, Maka/Maga language is definitely an endangered language here.

iii. *Item Three in the Questionnaire:* To what extent do you currently speak your language?

- a. Always      b. Sometimes      c. Never

**Table 3**

Language	Always		Sometimes		Never		Total
	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Maka/Maga	30	34.09	47	53.41	11	12.50	88(100%)

An item 3 on the questionnaire was design to determine the extent to which the native speakers of Maka/Maga are currently speaking the language among themselves or to the younger generation. Here, the percentage recorded in table 3 above shows that, only 34.09% of the respondents are found to be speaking the language to their children or parents. This means that Maka/Maga language is marked to be placed on indices 2 of the research measure which vividly make it to be severely endangered.

iv. *Item Four in the Questionnaire:* How will you rate your attitude towards your language?

- a. Very good/I speak it always      b. Fair/I speak it sometimes      c. Poor/I speak it only bilingual      d. Very poor/I don't speak it totally

**Table 4**

Language	V/Good		Fair		Poor		V/Poor		total
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Maka/Maga	39	44.31	40	45.45	2	2.27	7	7.95	88(100%)

On the other hand, item 4 of the questionnaire series that was set to determine the attitude of native speakers of Maka/Maga language towards their language. For this, the percentage recorded in the table (4) shows that only 44.31% have very good attitude and are speaking the language always. By this proportion, the language is placed on indices 3 of the research measure indicating that the language is definitely endangered.

v. *Item Five in the Questionnaire:* What language(s) do you currently speak apart from your mother tongue?

- a. Hausa      b. English      c. Bapur/Bura      d. Kanuri.

**Table 5**

Language	Hausa		Kanuri		Bapur/Bura		English		total
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Maka/Maga	28	31.82	24	27.27	19	21.59	17	19.32	88(100%)

While item 5 of the questionnaire series which enquired on the languages the native speakers of Maka/Maga are speaking apart from their mother tongue. As recorded on the

table 5 above, those speaking Hausa language with 31.82% are the highest number of respondents followed by Kanuri, Bapur/Bura and English with 27.27%, 21.59% and 19.32% respectively. This indicates that, Maka/Maga language here is marked to be placed on indices 3 which termed it as definitely endangered language.

vi. *Item Six in the Questionnaire:* How comfortable are you when speaking your second language more than your mother tongue?

- a. Very comfortable    b. Comfortable    c. Not comfortable

**Table 6**

Language	Very Comfortable		Comfortable		Not Comfortable		Total
	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Maka/Maga	40	45.45	37	42.05	11	12.50	88(100%)

Moreover, when how comfortable the native speakers of Maka/Maga language they are as enquired in the questionnaire series, another percentage figures also recorded in table 6 above. This means that only 12.50% are not comfortable when speaking the other language more than the Maka/Maga language. This indicated that the language is placed on indices 1 for the fact that there is a case of language shift to those languages mentioned above. Therefore, by implication it shows that, the language Maka/Maga is critically endangered.

vii. *Item Seven in the Questionnaire:* What is your level of proficiency in your language?

- a. No proficiency    b. Basic/Elementary    c. Limited    d. Bilingual    e. Intuitive

**Table 7**

Language	N/P		B/E		LTD		BG		IT		Total
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Maka/Maga	13	14.77	25	28.41	15	17.05	20	22.73	15	17.05	88(100%)

Items 7 of the questionnaire series is designed to find out the level of proficiency of the native speakers of Maka/Maga language in their mother tongue. For this, only 17.05% of the respondents, as recorded in table 7 above, claimed to have an in-built mastery of the language. Therefore, the percentage is quite insignificant enough to place the language on an appreciable level of being far from endangerment. To this extent, the research measure indices indicated that, Maka/Maga language is placed on indices 1, i-e critically endangered language.

viii. *Item Eight in the Questionnaire:* Have you ever seen any written document in your language or not?

- Yes [ ]    No [ ]

**Table 8**

Language	Yes		No		Total
	F	%	F	%	
Maka/Maga	28	31.82	60	68.18	88(100%)

Meanwhile, when the native speakers of Maka/Maga were asked on whether they have ever seen or heard about a written document in their language as designed in item 8 of the questionnaire series, they responded thus, as shown in the table 8: only 31.82% of the native speakers of Maka/Maga language claimed to have seen or heard about a written document in the language. However, by this insignificant proportion recorded here, the language witnessed a lesser degree of language documentation. Therefore, the language termed to be placed on indices 2 of the research measure which indicated that it is severely endangered.

ix. *Item Nine in the Questionnaire:* Can you read/write in your language?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

**Table 9**

Language	Yes		No		Total
	F	%	F	%	
Maka/Maga	28	31.82	60	68.18	88(100%)

Items 9 of the questionnaire series designed to investigate if the native speakers of Maka/Maga can read or write in their language. The responses recorded here in table 9 showed that, only 32.96% of the respondents claimed that they can read and write in their language. Therefore, the percentage indicated that the language (Maka/Maga) is placed on indices 2 of the research measure which marked it as severely endangered.

x. *Item ten in the questionnaire:* Is your language taught in schools?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

**Table 10**

Language	Yes		NO		Total
	F	%	F	%	
Maka/Maga	5	5.68	83	94.32	88(100%)

However, when Maka/Maga language is enquired as whether or not it is being taught in the schools of the speech community as designed in item 10 of the questionnaire series, the research recorded in table 10 the responses thus: only 5.68% found to attest that, the language is taught in their schools. Therefore, by this meager percentage, the language (Maka/Maga) is hereby placed on indices 1 which is nearly in moribund stage.

xi. *Item eleven in the questionnaire:* Is your language used in your places of worship?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

**Table 11**

Language	Yes		No		Total
	F	%	F	%	
Maka/Maga	5	5.68%	83	94.32%	88(100%)

Item 11 of the questionnaire series was set to investigate the status of Maka/Maga language in the places of worship of the speech community. The native speakers of the language to this regard responded that, 5.68% believed that the language is used in either mosques or churches as shown in table 11 above. This showed that, the language is seriously threatened; as such it is placed on indices 1 of the research measure indicating that it is critically endangered.

#### 4.2 The Endangerment Level of Maka/Maga Language Based on Percentage Analysis

Therefore, based on the data obtained from the native speakers of the language and later analyzed, it has been discovered that Maka/Maga language is critically endangered. The scores recorded here shown that, out of the eleven (11) items designed on the questionnaire and administered on the native speakers of the language, Maka/Maga have scored only 27 out of the 55 basic marks obtainable to mark the language as safe. To this extent therefore, the scores obtained ultimately placed the language (Maka/Maga) as critically endangered.

#### 5.1 Conclusion

According to UNESCO (2003:4) language endangerment simply refers to a situation where its speakers cease to use it in an increasingly reduced number of communicative domains and cease to pass it on from one generation to another that leads to the total

absence of new speakers, whether adults or children. A language is said to be endangered when it is on a path towards extinction without adequate documentation even if the language has many thousand speakers if at all they cannot pass it to the younger generation, that language in question is said to be seriously endangered or at the verge of extinction.

Therefore, this paper has drawn its conclusion based on the designed aim earlier mentioned. For instance, the study discovered the causes of language endangerment which include Inter Community Marriage, Lack of Research on the Endangered Languages, Globalization, Lack of Institutional Support, Cultural Background and Migration. More so, the research also confirmed that the language under study is under serious threat of endangerment. Also, the study ascertained the level of endangerment of Maka/Maga language. Moreover, as part of its findings, the paper discovered a lot of effects in line with language endangerment of Maka/Maga language which however include a case of language shift. For instance, only 12.50% of native speakers of Maka/Maga language are not comfortable when speaking the other languages like Hausa, Kanuri, Bapur/Bura and English, more than the Maka/Maga language. In addition, only 17.05% of the respondents of Maka/Maga claimed to have an in-built mastery of their language which is quite insignificant to place the language on an appreciable level of being far from endangerment. Moreover, as an effect of language endangerment on Maka/Maga language as unveiled by this paper was an interruption on intergenerational transmission in the language (Maka/Maga). Here, the percentage recorded shows that, only 34.09% of the respondents are found to be speaking the language to their children or parents which clearly shows that, the ability to pass their language on to their children was quite insignificant. Likewise, it is among the findings of the paper that, Maka/Maga language suffered the effects of language endangerment because of its poor or inadequate documentation. To this regard, only 31.82% of the native speakers of the language claimed to have seen or heard about a written document in the language (Maka/Maga). However, by this insignificant proportion recorded, the language witnessed a lesser degree of documentation.



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