

The Vitality Status of the Anaañ Language of
Akwa Ibom State¹

By

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Abstract

This work examined the linguistic situation in Anaañ language speech communities of Akwa Ibom State, southern Nigeria, with a view to establishing the language's level of vitality or endangerment. Using a UNESCO-designed structured questionnaire which addresses nine issues on language endangerment, data for the study were gathered from collaborators in selected households using the multi-stage sampling method, comprising the systematic and stratified sampling methods. Data were analysed with reference to the 9-factor framework for language vitality and endangerment proposed by UNESCO (2003), and it was discovered that Anaañ language is safe regarding intergenerational transmission, actual population, proportion of speakers and attitude of community members towards their language. However, further examination of five factors, namely: trends/functions in existing language domains, response to new domains and media, materials for language education, government policies and amount/quality of documentation, revealed that the language is at the risky stage, and even risks disappearing in some aspects if nothing is done. From the findings, it is concluded that, though definitely endangered, the linguistic situation in Anaañ speech communities of Akwa Ibom State puts the language in the gradual attrition category,

¹This report is part of a project funded by the TETFUND Research Project Intervention on *Linguistic Vitality and Endangerment: A UNESCO-Scale Survey of the Akwa Ibom State languages* (awarded in October 2019).

where revitalisation is possible and the trend of language shift can potentially be halted. The information from this work would certainly help to appreciate the urgency required to put up language maintenance and vitality programmes for the definitely endangered Anaañ language.

Key words: Language vitality/endangerment, revitalisation, attrition, language domains, UNESCO

1. Introduction

The roles of language as a vibrant cursor of identity for man and a repository of a people's heritage and history, make it a vital tool in the life of humankind. By implication, the importance of language to man cannot be treated with levity. In as much as every language symbolises a people's unique cultural acumen, no language has a right to exist over and above another. In that case, every speech form has a right to exist and be used for various purposes, no matter the size of its speakers' population. Language is as important to man as water and other essential communal amenities; therefore, language engineers and other stakeholders (especially government) have the onus to handle linguistic issues with the same robustness used to develop infrastructure. This could be done by digging for linguistic information/data about our languages because we need linguistic information to find out things about the history of a people, the lives of the speakers of a particular language, the status of that language, and by extension, the life of the language.

A language on a steady march to extinction is an endangered variety; and a language is in danger when its speakers either cease to use it in a reduced number of communicative domains or even stop using it. Worst still, some languages are so endangered that, the existing speakers fail to pass them on from one generation to the next. There are more than six thousand (6,000) languages in the world, and about five hundred and fifteen (515) in Nigeria (www.ethnologue.com). Studies have shown that even languages with hundreds of thousands or millions of speakers are no longer being acquired by children; at least 50% of the world's over six thousand languages are steadily losing speakers (Bernard 1992, 1996). Considering this scenario, there is this forecast that, by the end of the twenty first century, about 90% of the world's languages may be replaced by dominant languages (Villalón, 2003).

Language endangerment is usually conditioned by both internal and external forces. The internal forces may include a community's negative attitude towards its own language while the external forces may be economic, religious, cultural, or educational suppression. Internal pressures often have their source in external ones, and both halt the intergenerational transmission of linguistic and cultural traditions (Hale, 1998). Wurm (1998) and Crystal (2000) had identified that language endangerment is in stages, namely:

- i. Potentially Endangered: These are languages with no political, economic, and educational power. They are under heavy pressure from a larger language as they also do lose children speakers.
- ii. Endangered Languages: These have few or no children learning the languages and the youngest good speakers are young adults.

- iii. Seriously Endangered Languages: These languages have the youngest good speakers aged 50 (fifty) and older.
- iv. Moribund Languages: These languages have only a handful of good speakers, mostly old people.
- v. Extinct Languages: These languages have no living speakers left.

Akwa Ibom State has three dominant languages: Ibibio, Anaañ and Ọrọ. In addition to these three dominant languages, others exist which are spoken in specific local areas. They include, Obolo, Itu Mbonuso, Nkari, Ibuoro (Iwerre), Ekit, Ibino, Uda, Enwang, Ebughu, Iko, Efai, Ilue, Warife (Khana), Efik, Ibani, Etebi and Okobo.

Ibibio is the dominant (or state) language and is spoken in fifteen, out of the thirty-one Local Government Areas that make up the state, including Uyo, the state capital. Anaañ is the second dominant language spoken in eight Local Government Areas while Ọrọ is the third, spoken in five Local Government Areas of the State. Even these dominant languages have their own levels of endangerment. For instance, Ibibio is taught in less than 30% of the schools in the state while Anaañ and Ọrọ are not taught at all; and the non-dominant languages are oppressed by one or two languages in their domains.

Following the fact that every language has a right to survive (no matter how small its speaking population might be), one of the basic principles of UNESCO's constitution is the maintenance and perpetuation of language diversity (UNESCO Constitution Article 1). Based on this principle, this research work strived to gather information on the vitality status and degree of urgency for undertaking research in the Anaañ language of Akwa Ibom State.

2. Justification for the Study

Every language embodies the unique cultural wisdom of a people (Villalón, 2003). In as much as each language uniquely expresses the human experience of the world, it is believed that knowledge of any single language may be the key to answering fundamental questions of the heritage and future. Following this fact, the extinction of each language leads to the irrecoverable loss of unique cultural, historical and ecological knowledge. It is based on this, that the 2003 UNESCO Convention on safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage recognised the importance of language as an expression of cultural diversity and its connection to sustainable development.

At the UNESCO Experts Meeting (2003) on 'Safeguarding Endangered Languages', Brenzinger and others proposed a framework that uses 9 factors of vitality and endangerment in measuring the level of endangerment of the world's languages. These are:

1. Intergenerational language transmission;
2. Absolute numbers of speakers;
3. Proportion of speakers within the total population;
4. Loss of existing language domains;
5. Response to new domains and media;
6. Materials for language education and literacy;
7. Governmental and institutional language attitudes and policies;
8. Community members' attitudes towards their own language;
- and 9. Amount and quality of documentation.

To make these factors operational, the Brenzinger's team suggested that, for each language, a 5-point score should be assigned to each of the factors (except factor 2). From a summation matrix of the scores from the scale, a measure of the level of endangerment together with a sense of the level of urgency for revitalization efforts can then be determined.

It has already been mentioned that Akwa Ibom State has about twenty languages, and none of these languages is listed as a majority language (cf. National Policy on Education, 1981). Not being part of the majority languages implies that these languages might not have the needed attention from Government especially in the areas of education, literacy and mass communication. Therefore, they stand the risk of endangerment. From the foregoing, and with the fact that this is just a part of a large project on the languages of Akwa Ibom State, this work strived to describe the Anaañ language of Akwa Ibom State by using the UNESCO (2003) framework to give first-hand information about its specific linguistic situation with reference to vitality/endangerment. At the back end, the results of the 5-point score summation matrix per endangerment factor have assessed the level of urgency needed to do a revitalisation or maintenance programme for the language.

The justification of this project is its alignment with The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992), Resolution 47/135, which states in Article 4 (4) that: “States should, where appropriate, take measures in the field of education, in order to encourage knowledge of the history, traditions, language and culture of the minorities existing within their territory ...” The Declaration is commendable and in fact a suitable one for a multilingual society like Nigeria.

3. Objectives of the Study

This work is only part of research on Akwa Ibom State as a whole. Primarily, the study strived to assess the vitality status of the Anaañ language spoken in Akwa Ibom State and its specific objectives include:

1. To ascertain the vitality/endangerment status of the Anaañ languages using the UNESCO scale.
2. To establish the attitudes of Anaañ speakers towards their indigenous language.
3. Based on the findings in (1), to provide concise information concerning the degree of urgency for undertaking research on the Anaañ language.

4. Literature Review

The literature is replete with facts about language vitality and endangerment. A vital language is that which is used in the various domains of governance, education, *et cetera*. The most commonly used factor in evaluating the vitality of a language is whether or not it is being transmitted from one generation to the next (Fishman 1991). A viable language is that which is used across social networks and in a wide range of contexts (Grenoble and Whaley 2006). In that case, a language is termed non-vital or endangered if it is used in a restricted domain and fails to pass the intergenerational transfer test.

Apart from the endangerment levels proposed by Fishman (1991), Wurm (1998), Crystal (2000) and Villalón (2003), Lewis and Simons (2009) had put together a 13-level model called Ethnologue's Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS) with the help of which all of the world's languages can be classified. From the scale, a language can be evaluated by answering 5 key questions regarding its identity function,

vehicularity, state of intergenerational language transmission, literacy acquisition status, and a societal profile of its generational use. Lewis' and Simon's (2009) EGIDS is basically an expanded version of Fishman's (1991) GIDS model. The only difference is that its fine-grained levels have been made to correspond to UNESCO's (2003) evaluative system, taking care to cover Ethnologue's categories as much as possible.

In as much as language survey and documentation are meant to reverse the trend of a language's steady march to extinction, a few studied scenarios would suffice, to show the need for continued practice in the enterprise. These scenarios (cf. Udoh, 2010) also show the position of each illustrated language in the models already mentioned here.

a. A report published by Times Magazine (cited in Kuju, 1999 p.38) revealed that “there is hard evidence that the number of languages spoken in the world is shrinking; of the roughly 6,500 languages now spoken, up to half are already endangered or on the brink of extinction. Linguists estimate that a language (gradually) dies somewhere in the world every two weeks”.

b. Connell (1997, p.27) is quoted thus:

During fieldwork in the Mambilla region of Cameroon's Adamawa province in 1994-95, I came across a number of Moribund languages ... for one of these languages, Kasabe, only one remaining speaker, Bogon, was found (he himself knew of no other). In November 1996, I returned to the Mambilla region ... to collect further data on Kasabe. Bogon however died on 5th November 1995, taking Kasabe with him. He is survived by a sister, who reportedly could understand Kasabe but not speak it, and several children and grandchildren, none of whom know the language.

c. Anderson (1998, p.3) said this:

The West Caucasian language, Ubuh ... died at day break, October 8th 1992, when the last speaker, Tevfik Esenc, passed away. I happened to arrive in his village that same day, without appointment to interview this famous last speaker, only to hear that he had died just a couple of hours earlier.

d. Down home here, the Efai language, spoken in Mbo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom state, Nigeria, as at 2010, had just one elderly speaker left².

e. In late April 2008, Etim had planned to collect data from the only surviving aboriginal speaker of the seriously endangered Medefaidrin language of the Oberi Okaime religion³ in Ibiono, Akwa Ibom state, Nigeria. Unknown to him, Margareta Abony had

¹This information is courtesy of a colleague, Golden Ekpo, who stumbled on this seeming serendipity while gathering data on languages of the Orò extraction.

²Oberi Okaime, which means 'freely given', is an indigenous Christian movement of the Ibibio stock which Abasiattai (2008) calls an Ibibio-centric religion. It started in 1927 (Etim, 2010:5-7). Members use a spirit language called Medefaidrin language to communicate with God and among themselves.

already died (with the originality of the language) in January, 2008, and was to be buried a few days before his arrival in May, 2008 (Etim, 2010). Today, as rightly put by Urua (2010, p.9), “less than a score of fluent literate members of the Medefaidrin script are alive...”

f. In August 2008, during a field trip to Ika and Etim Ekpo Local Government Areas of Akwa Ibom state (where Anaañ language is spoken), it was discovered that children no more perform the moonlight play where one could have indigenous songs/dances, rhyming riddles and other oral literary art forms. Children of this present generation may not even know that such plays exist (Udoh, 2010). This is a dangerous trend because the loss of any aspect of a language is prelude to a loss, in installments, of a language and culture.

g. During linguistic fieldwork in 2008, Ukpong (2008) discovered that even the elders of Ilue (a community in Mbo L.G.A.) were at sea as to the pronunciation of many lexical and phrasal items in the Ilue language. This is largely because all of them more frequently use Ọrọ, a dominant language in the area, as well as Efik and Ibibio – the languages of trade; thus rendering their own language non-vital. The worst has however happened to this language because, more than a decade after (as at 2020), during fieldwork for this study, nobody in Ilue community laid claim to such language. They all spoke Ọrọ and/or Efik.

h. Fakuade (1999) reported that Geranci (spoken in Gerewa ethnic group of Bauchi L.G.A, Bauchi state) is dying because more than 70% of its indigenes communicate in Hausa, not Geranci.

i. Kuju (1999) observed that the phenomenon of code switching, or code mixing is most prevalent amongst the Igbo especially the lettered ... the phenomenon is considered a status symbol but unfortunately, it is reducing the status of the language as it is adversely affecting the vitality of the Igbo language. Anyanwu (2015) corroborates this fact in a study which showed that a good percentage of English lexical items either do not have their Igbo forms, or the speakers do not know them.

The above scenarios can only be addressed through documentation of the linguistic situation of the various speech communities in a local area, state or nation. Apart from the afore-stated works, there have been related works on the documentation of the languages of Nigeria (cf. Udoh, 2001; Udoh, 2003; Udoh 2004; Udoh 2005; Udoh & Okon 2005; Udoh & Adeniyi 2014). These works, which are about the geo-political profile of some Nigerian languages, mainly deal with the documentation of these languages to know where they are spoken, the number of speakers, the local government area(s) where a language is spoken, and some major towns in the local government area. The difference between these earlier works and this study is that those works did not examine the vitality/endangerment status of the languages, which is the main focus of this project.

Apart from the five stages of language endangerment by Wurm (1998), we adopt for discussion in this work, the six rankings of language status in terms of relative vitality/endangerment by Grenoble and Whaley (2006) thus:

- i *Safe*: A language is said to be safe when all generations use it in (nearly) all domains. It functions as the language of government, commerce and education with a large speaker base compared to other languages spoken in the same region.
- ii *At risk*: A language is at risk when it is spoken in a limited number of domains or has a smaller number of speakers than other languages in the same region. It may not have any observable pattern of a shrinking speaker base, but lacks some of the properties of a safe language.
- iii *Disappearing*: A language with an observable shift towards another language in the communities where it is spoken, is termed a disappearing language. Such language has an ever decreasing proportion of intergenerational transfer, used in a restricted set of domains, while a language of wider communication begins to replace it many homes.
- iv *Moribund*: Not transmitted to children.
- v *Nearly extinct*: A language is seen as nearly extinct when only very few speakers of the oldest generation are left.
- vi *Extinct*: A language with no remaining speakers is certainly extinct.

5. Methodology

The study adopted the survey method of research where investigation was carried out on the linguistic situation of different speech communities of Anaañ local government areas of Akwa Ibom State. One (1) village per local government area was randomly selected from the eight local government areas of Anaañ, giving a total of eight villages to study. The research procedure is discussed under the following subheadings:

Sampling procedure: To conduct the research, the multi-stage sampling method was adopted. Members of various households were studied. These households were selected using the systematic sampling method. Here, every tenth compound on the left of any street in a designated speech community was selected. Inside the selected compound, the stratified random sampling method was adopted to select competent speakers of the Anaañ language for data collection. During the research, public opinion concerning the following key issues was canvassed from the studied collaborators:

- i. Whether Anaañ language enjoys intergenerational transmission from parents to children.
- ii. The proportion of Anaañ language speakers within the total population.
- iii. Whether there are cases of loss of existing language domains.
- iv. Whether the Anaañ language does respond to new domains and media.
- v. Whether the Anaañ language has materials for language education and literacy.
- vi. The policies of government and institutions concerning Anaañ language.
- vii. The attitude of community members towards their own language.
- viii. The amount and quality of documentation Anaañ language has enjoyed

Using a 5-point scale for each issue, the responses from this survey are used to make some descriptive assessment of the linguistic situation in Anaañ speech communities.

Data collection procedure: Data for the study were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to address the issues on language endangerment raised by UNESCO. The questionnaire, which is downloadable at <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg-00144>, has a section for metadata (data about the speech community, the language and informants); a column for the key issues raised, 5-point scale score; reliability index and comments. The reliability index for each issue has a 3-point scoring system which include evidence from field work and direct observation (3); evidence from other reliable sources (2); Very little evidence – a 'best guess' (1); and no data available (0).

Data analysis procedure: To analyse the collected data, the researchers coded in tables, the items raised according to the responses on a 5-point grade. For instance, to test the extent of intergenerational language transmission, responses were coded according to the grades of response: (5) The language is used by all ages, from children up; (4) The language is used by some children in all domains; (3) The language is used mostly by the parental generation and up; (2) The language is used mostly by the grand-parental generation and up; (1) The language is used mostly by very few speakers, of great-grandparental generation; (0) There exists no speaker.

Only the responses from the collaborators and their corresponding grades are represented in the table for analysis. These grades are represented in the respective cells where each language domain (office, territory, church, market, family, media) intersects with the speech community/local government area (example, Nto Edino (Obot Akara), Midim (Abak), *et cetera*). In a particular domain, where we had more than one response for an item, the one with majority response is placed first, then the second placed next. For example, 4|5 where Midim (Abak) intersects with office, signals that more consultants in the office domain of Midim (Abak) spoke in favour of the item coded 4 than the one coded 5.

In the speech community/local government area row, the grade with the highest frequency is, in the intersecting result column, represented in bold face (with its corresponding item) while other items with their grades (represented in normal fonts) follow in order of frequency. This is made clearer in the data presentation and analysis section.

4. Data Presentation and analysis/discussion

Table 1: Intergenerational language transmission

	Intergenerational language transmission	Office	Territory	Church	Market	Family	Media	Result
1	Nto Edino (Obot Akara)	4	4	4	4	4	-	4. The language is used by some children in all domains.
2	Urua Inyang (Ika)	5	5	5	5	5	-	5. The language is used by all ages, from children up.
3	Ikot Akpan Nkuk (Ukanafun)	5	5	5	5	5	-	5. The language is used by all ages, from children up.
4	Utu Etim Ekpo (Etim Ekpo)	5	5	5 4	5	4	-	5. The language is used by all ages, from children up. 4. The language is used by some children in all domains.
5	Uruk Uso (Ikot Ekpene)	5	4	5	5	5	5	5. The language is used by all ages, from children up. 4. The language is used by some children in all domains.
6	Afaha Ikot Ebak (Essien Udim)	4	4	4 5	5	5	-	5. The language is used by all ages, from children up. 4. The language is used by some children in all domains.
7	Ikot Ibritam (Oruk Anam)	5	5	5	5	4	5	5. The language is used by all ages, from children up. 4. The language is used by some children in all domains.
8	Midim (Abak)	4 5	5	5	4 5	5	-	5. The language is used by all ages, from children up. 4. The language is used by some children in all domains.

Facts from Table 1 show that majority of Anaañ indigenous speakers are of the opinion that their language is used by all ages, from children up to the great-grandparental generation. Even though a few consultants from all local government areas (except Ika and Ukanafun) also pointed out that the language is used by some children in all domains, the linguistic situation is still good enough, as it could be considered safe (or worst case scenario, at risk), but certainly not a disappearing or moribund language in this regard.

The next table examines the number of speakers of the Anaañ language. The UNESCO's list of factors in language vitality lists this as **absolute** number of speakers. However, we do not treat these numbers as absolute since we could not rely on such statistical information from the consultants. We therefore made use of the figures of the 2006 National Population Census (cited in Ituen and Uzoma, 2020), and take these to be an estimated number of speakers of the language per local government area:

Table 2: Number of speakers of Anaañ language

	Number of speakers of Anaañ language	Estimated Number of Speakers
1	Obot Akara	192,453
2	Ika	95,088
3	Ukanafun	163,951
4	Etim Ekpo	138,406
5	Ikot Ekpene	184,773
6	Essien Udim	252,522
7	Oruk Anam	224,536
8	Abak	139,090
	TOTAL	1,390,819⁴

Table 2 shows that Anaañ has an estimated speaker population of one million, three hundred and ninety thousand, eight hundred and nineteen (1,390,819). When put side by side the estimated population of over 2.6 million⁵ Ibibio language speakers (which is a more widely used language in the state), Anaañ could be termed a safe language (or worst case scenario, language at risk) in terms of the speaker population. This is not a bad case for the language as it may not be termed disappearing or nearly extinct based on speaker population.

The next table highlights the proportion of Anaañ speakers within the total population.

Table 3: Proportion of speakers within the total population

	Proportion of speakers within the total population	Office	Territory	Church	Market	Family	Media	Result
1	Nto Edino (Obot Akara)	4	5	4	4	4	4	4. Nearly all speak the language. 5. All speak the language.
2	Urua Inyang (Ika)	3	5	4 5	5	5	5	5. All speak the language. 4. Nearly all speak the language. 3. A majority speak the language
3	Ikot Akpan Nkuk (Ukanafun)	4 5	5	4 5	4 5	5		5. All speak the language. 4. Nearly all speak the language.
4	Utu Etim Ekpo (Etim Ekpo)	4 5	4 5	4	4	4	4 5	4. Nearly all speak the language. 5. All speak the language.
5	Uruk Uso (Ikot Ekpene)	3 4	3 4	3 4	4	4 3	3	3. A majority speak the language. 4. Nearly all speak the language.

⁴We believe that this number had since increased, as the figure here is from the last national population census conducted since 2006.

⁵This figure for Ibibio, from the last National Population census conducted since 2006, had since increased but we cannot rely on any other document for this, except from the National Population Commission.

6	Afaha Ikot Ebak (Essien Udim)	3	4	4	4	3 5	-	4. Nearly all speak the language. 3. A majority speak the language. 5. All speak the language.
7	Ikot Ibritam (Oruk Anam)	4	4	4	4	4	-	4. Nearly all speak the language.
8	Midim (Abak)	3	3 4	3 4	3 4	3 4	-	3. A majority speak the language. 4. Nearly all speak the language.

Facts from Table 3 show that majority of the studied consultants are of the opinion that the proportion of actual speakers of the Anaañ language almost matches the actual population in each of the local government areas. In that case, majority of them see nearly all inhabitants of the Anaañ land as speaking the language, while some view a majority of these inhabitants speaking the language. Yet another set – a not-so-negligible few – see the language as spoken by all inhabitants of the Anaañ land. By way of offering some explanation to the situational scenario in Table 3, it could be said that these responses seem to be along the lines of the speech community or local government area in question, and may not be sweeping for all speech communities of Anaañ. For instance, it could be observed that, Ika and Ukanafun have a majority response that ALL inhabitants speak the Anaañ language. This may be due to the fact that, the indigenes of these communities are intact and they rarely have visitors/strangers who speak other languages around them. In contrast, Ikot Ekpene and Abak communities, which surely have strangers/non-indigenes (since they are more cosmopolitan than many other Anaañ communities), are of the view that not all and not nearly all speak the language – as submitted by speakers in other speech communities. Rather, they are of the view that majority of inhabitants of the Anaañ land speak the language.

The next table highlights the trends of the Anaañ language in existing language domains.

Table 4: Trends/functions of the language in existing language domains

	Trends/functions of the language in existing language domains	Office	Territory	Church	Market	Family	Media	Result
1	Nto Edino (Obot Akara)	4	4 5	4	4 3	4 5 3	4	4. Two or more languages may be used for some functions in specific language domains. 5. The language is used on the streets and the homes for all functions. 3. The language is in home domains and for many functions, but the dominant language begins to penetrate even home domains.

2	Urua Inyang (Ika)	4	5	4	4	4 5	4	<p>4. Two or more languages may be used for some functions in specific language domains.</p> <p>5. The language is used in the home for all functions.</p>
3	Ikot Akpan Nkuk (Ukanafun)	4	4 5	4	4 5	4 5	4	<p>4. Two or more languages may be used for some functions in specific language domains.</p> <p>5. The language is used on the streets, in the market and in the home for all functions.</p>
4	Utu Etim Ekpo (Etim Ekpo)	4 3	4	4	4	4 5	4	<p>4. Two or more languages may be used for some functions in specific language domains.</p> <p>5. The language is used in the home for all functions.</p> <p>3. The language is in home domains and for many functions, but the dominant language begins to penetrate even home domains.</p>
5	Uruk Uso (Ikot Ekpene)	4	4 3	4 3	4	4 3	-	<p>4. Two or more languages may be used for some functions in specific language domains.</p> <p>3. The language is in home domains and for many functions, but the dominant language begins to penetrate even home domains.</p>
6	Afaha Ikot Ebak (Essien Udim)	4	4 3	4	4	4 3	3	<p>4. Two or more languages may be used for some functions in specific language domains.</p> <p>3. The language is in home domains and for many functions, but the dominant language begins to penetrate even home domains.</p>
7	Ikot Ibritam (Oruk Anam)	4	4	4	4	4	4	<p>4. Two or more languages may be used for some functions in specific language domains.</p>
8	Midim (Abak)	4	4 3	4 3	4	4 3	-	<p>4. Two or more languages may be used for some functions in specific language domains.</p> <p>3. The language is in home domains and for many functions, but the dominant language begins to penetrate even home domains.</p>

On a general note, the trend of language use and function in Anaañ land, according to Table 4, is that Anaañ language may be used with one other, or more languages to function in specific language domains. This suggests that English and neighbouring Ibibio or Igbo could be used alongside Anaañ in domains like the church, market, office and even the media. It could be observed that, in domains like market and church, the response with grade (4) - *two or more languages may be used for some functions in specific language domains* – is a recurring decimal in all local government areas. This implies that Anaañ and (any) other language(s) are used functionally in these domains.

Collaborators in Ikot Ekpene, Essien Udim and Abak speech communities responded with grade (3) as closely following grade (4). Grade number (3) says that *the Anaañ language is in home domains and for many functions, but the dominant language begins to penetrate even home domains*. This observation may be due to the mixed nature of these communities; therefore, a dominant language (perhaps Ibibio or English) is spoken alongside Anaañ in these speech communities and is even beginning to penetrate the homes. More worrisome is the fact that all family domains in these three local government areas (and even Obot Akara, to some extent) consistently attested to this penetrating trend (notice the entry, 4|3 in each family column for Ikot Ekpene, Essien Udim and Abak). Local government areas like Ukanafun and Oruk Anam look more conservative and do not really experience the penetrating trend observed in Ikot Ekpene and the rest.

The linguistic situation of Anaañ speech communities does not look good in this aspect. The Anaañ language seems to be between *safe* and *at risk*, considering the number of domains it is spoken or being used as an alternate language. Moreover, there is some threat to the safety of this language as four out of the eight Anaañ-speaking local government areas vociferously say that the dominant language (Ibibio or English) penetrates even the homes of Anaañ land even though Anaañ is used in the homes, and for many functions. If not checked, this trend could cause the Anaañ language to saunter into the disappearing stage (recall that, as put by Grenoble and Whaley (2006), a language is disappearing when there is an observable shift towards another language in the community where it is spoken).

Table 5: Response to new domains and media

	New domains and media accepted by the language	Office	Territory	Church	Market	Family	Media	Result
1	Nto Edino (Obot Akara)	1 3	0	0 1	0	0	0 3	0. The language is not used in any new domains. 1. The language is used only in a few new domains. 3. The language is used in many domains.
2	Urua Inyang (Ika)	0	0	0 1	0	0	1	0. The language is not used in any new domains. 1. The language is used only in a few new domains.

3	Ikot Akpan Nkuk (Ukanafun)	0	0	0 2	0	2	2 0	0. The language is not used in any new domains. 2. The language is used only in a few new domains.
4	Utu Etim Ekpo (Etim Ekpo)	1 0	0	0	0	0	0 1	0. The language is not used in any new domains. 1. The language is used only in a few new domains.
5	Uruk Uso (Ikot Ekpene)	1 3	0 1	0	3 1	1 0 3	1	1. The language is used only in a few new domains. 0. The language is not used in any new domains. 3. The language is used in many domains.
6	Afaha Ikot Ebak (Essien Udim)	0 3	0	1	1 0	1 3	0	0. The language is not used in any new domains. 1. The language is used only in a few new domains. 3. The language is used in many domains.
7	Ikot Ibritam (Oruk Anam)	0 1	0	0	1 0	0	0 1	0. The language is not used in any new domains. 1. The language is used only in a few new domains.
8	Midim (Abak)	1 0	0	0 1	0	0	1 0	0. The language is not used in any new domains. 1. The language is used only in a few new domains.

Facts from Table 5 show that almost all speech communities agree that the Anaañ language is not used in any new domains. This implies, based on findings already established in Table 4, that Anaañ language is used in the home, market and street domains for all functions as well as other domains like the office and church, but does not respond to new domains and media. The new domains and media referred to here are those outside the traditional, stereotyped domains already mentioned. They may be new ones like educational and advocacy groups, digitised domains like digital story-telling applications, animated folktales applications, computer games, cartoons, *et cetera*.

This scenario is not a safe signal for the Anaañ language and her existence because it puts the language in between the *risky* and *disappearing* stages. If, in the next one to two decades, nothing is done about getting the Anaañ language to new and emerging media, especially to target the young, growing generation of speakers, the language might lose some of its children speakers as well as essential domains of existence; and this would not be a good augury for a language that needs to be maintained or revitalised.

The next table showcases facts about materials available for Anaañ language education and literacy.

Table 6: Materials for language education and literacy

	Materials for language education and literacy	Office	Territory	Church	Market	Family	Media	Result
1	Nto Edino (Obot Akara)	0	0	0	0	0	0 3	0. No orthography is available to the community. 3. Literacy is not promoted through print media.
2	Urua Inyang (Ika)	0	0	0	0	0/2	0 2	0. No orthography is available to the community. 2. Literacy education in the language is not a part of the school curriculum.
3	Ikot Akpan Nkuk (Ukanafun)	0 1	0	0	0	0	0 1	0. No orthography is available to the community. 1. A practical orthography is not known to the community and some material is being written.
4	Utu Etim Ekpo (Etim Ekpo)	0 1	0	0 1	0	0	0 3	0. No orthography is available to the community. 1. A practical orthography is not known to the community and some material is being written. 3. Literacy is not promoted through print media.
5	Uruk Uso (Ikot Ekpene)	2 4	4	4	2	2 4	2	2. Literacy education in the language is not a part of the school curriculum. 4. Writing in the language is not used in administration and education.
6	Afaha Ikot Ebak (Essien Udim)	0 1	0	0 2	0	0	0 1	0. No orthography is available to the community. 1. A practical orthography is not known to the community and some material is being written. 2. Literacy education in the language is not a part of the school curriculum.
7	Ikot Ibritam (Oruk Anam)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0. No orthography is available to the community.
8	Midim (Abak)	2 3	3	2	2	2	3	2. Literacy education in the language is not a part of the school curriculum. 3. Literacy is not promoted through print media.

Concerning the availability of literacy materials in Anaañ language, Table 6 shows that almost all collaborators in the speech communities affirmed that no orthography is available to the community. That is the sweeping claim throughout Anaañ speech communities. The next sweeping response to this is the fact that *literacy education in the language is not a part of the school curriculum*. In the real sense, there is no way literacy education can thrive or be part of a school's curriculum when an orthography is yet to be officially developed for the Anaañ language, and put to use by the indigenous speakers and language teachers. Therefore, the lack of a literacy education in the Anaañ language is a corollary of the lack of an orthography for the language.

Following these two responses is the fact that *a practical orthography is not known to the community and some material is being written*. This claim is true because even though there is no practical orthography for the Anaañ language, there exist some written material that could aid learning. Linguists and non-linguists have written books on the language among which are two versions of the Anaañ language orthography, grammar books, works on Anaañ proverbs, story books and primers in Anaañ. With the availability of these books, interested persons are learning the language on personal capacities. This has to be made more practical and official through the development and publication of a standard/official orthography for the Anaañ language. Orthography development is the first step at standardisation of a language because, as put by Wardhaugh (1998, citing Bell, 1976), standardisation refers to the process by which a language has been codified in some way; and this process usually involves the development of such things as grammars, spelling books, dictionaries and some literature. We here agree with Wardhaugh (1998) that, once these efforts at standardisation and elaboration of the Anaañ language are achieved, it becomes possible to teach it in a deliberate manner.

There are other responses in Table 6 like “*writing in the language is not used in administration and education*” and “*literacy is not promoted through print media*”. These can, in no way, be done without a deliberate standardisation, nay codification process for the Anaañ language. The afore-discussed scenarios show that Anaañ language is at a big risk of critical endangerment and may saunter into the disappearing stage if this *status quo* is maintained in the coming years/decades.

Table 7: Governmental and institutional language policies, including official status and use

	Governmental and institutional language policies, including official status and use	Office	Territory	Church	Market	Family	Media	Result
1	Nto Edino (Obot Akara)	4 3	4	3	4	4 2	2	<p>4. Minority languages are protected primarily as the language of the private domains. The use of the language is prestigious.</p> <p>3. No explicit policy exists for minority languages; the dominant language prevails in public domain.</p> <p>2. Government encourages assimilation to the dominant language. There is no protection for minority languages</p>
2	Urua Inyang (Ika)	4 3	4 3	4	4	4	4 3	<p>4. Minority languages are protected primarily as the language of the private domains. The use of the language is prestigious.</p> <p>3. No explicit policy exists for minority languages; the dominant language prevails in public domain.</p>
3	Ikot Akpan Nkuk (Ukanafun)	4	4	4 3	4	4	4 3	<p>4. Minority languages are protected primarily as the language of the private domains. The use of the language is prestigious.</p> <p>3. No explicit policy exists for minority languages; the dominant language prevails in public domain.</p>
4	Utu Etim Ekpo (Etim Ekpo)	4 2	4	4 2	4	4	4	<p>4. Minority languages are protected primarily as the language of the private domains. The use of the language is prestigious.</p> <p>2. Government encourages assimilation to the dominant language. There is no protection for minority languages.</p>
5	Uruk Uso (Ikot Ekpene)	4 3	4 2	3	4 3	3	3 4	<p>3. No explicit policy exists for minority languages; the dominant language prevails in public domain.</p> <p>4. Minority languages are protected primarily as the language of the private domains. The use of the language is prestigious.</p>

6	Afaha Ikot Ebak (Essien Udim)	4	3 2	4 3	3	4 3	2	<p>3. No explicit policy exists for minority languages; the dominant language prevails in public domain.</p> <p>4. Minority languages are protected primarily as the language of the private domains. The use of the language is prestigious.</p> <p>2. Government encourages assimilation to the dominant language. There is no protection for minority languages.</p>
7	Ikot Ibritam (Oruk Anam)	5 4	5	5 4	5 4	4 5	-	<p>5. All languages are protected</p> <p>4. Minority languages are protected primarily as the language of the private domains. The use of the language is prestigious.</p>
8	Midim (Abak)	4 3	3	3 4	2 4	4 3	3 2	<p>3. No explicit policy exists for minority languages; the dominant language prevails in public domain.</p> <p>4. Minority languages are protected primarily as the language of the private domains. The use of the language is prestigious.</p> <p>2. Government encourages assimilation to the dominant language. There is no protection for minority languages.</p>

Facts emerging from Table 7 show that government and institutional policies do not really favour the safety of Anaañ language, as only one negligible minority in Ikot Ibritam – Oruk Anam Local Government Area attested that *all languages are protected*, while most of the speech communities affirm in a sweeping manner that, *minority languages are protected primarily as the language of the private domains. The use of the language is prestigious*. The implication of this almost across-the-board affirmation is that, even though attempts are being made to protect the minority languages and make them prestigious, it is within a restricted or private domain like the home/family. There is no conscious or resolute effort by government and her agencies to get the minority languages into the classrooms or more frequently in the media.

Compared with the dominant English language which is the state's *lingua franca*, and Ibibio language, which government has made a compulsory subject in our Primary and Secondary schools, Anaañ stands as a minority language without a definite policy to have it spoken or heard in formal settings outside the homes. Little wonder why the consultants in all studied Anaañ speech communities almost generally attested that *no explicit policy exists for minority languages; the dominant language prevails in public domain*; and this stand is the prioritised attestation by speech communities in Ikot Ekpene, Essien Udim and Abak. This is

not a favourable or safe linguistic scenario for the Anaañ language. The scenario keeps the language in restricted domains and gives it a smaller number of speakers, with a continuously shrinking base, when compared with Ibibio and English. By implication, Anaañ language is at risk and may remain that way, or even stroll into the disappearing stage because, as put by Grenoble and Whaley (2006), consequent upon the shrinking of the speaker base (which results from lack of replenishment), disappearing languages are “used in a more restricted set of domains, and a language of wider communication begins to replace it in a greater percentage of homes” (p.18).

This fear of graduating the Anaañ language from the “At Risk” stage of endangerment to the “Disappearing” stage is also registered by consultants in more than half of the studied Anaañ speech communities. They attested to the fact that *government encourages assimilation to the dominant language. There is no protection for minority languages*. Government may not intentionally or overtly encourage assimilation to the dominant language, but the policies and programmes are doing this. There is, therefore, a need to change some policies of language use for the safety of Anaañ and other languages of Akwa Ibom State.

Table 8: Community members' attitude towards their own language

	Community members' attitude towards their own language	Office	Territory	Church	Market	Family	Media	Result
1	Nto Edino (Obot Akara)	5 3	5	5	5	5 2	5	5. All members value their language and wish to see it promoted. 3. Many members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss. 2. Some members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss.
2	Urua Inyang (Ika)	5	5	5	5	5	5	5. All members value their language and wish to see it promoted.
3	Ikot Akpan Nkuk (Ukanafun)	5	5	5	5	5	5	5. All members value their language and wish to see it promoted.
4	Utu Etim Ekpo (Etim Ekpo)	5	5	5	5	5	5	5. All members value their language and wish to see it promoted.
5	Uruk Uso (Ikot Ekpene)	5 3	5 2	5	5	5 3	5	5. All members value their language and wish to see it promoted. 3. Many members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss. 2. Some members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss.

6	Afaha Ikot Ebak (Essien Udim)	5	5 4	5	5	5	5	5. All members value their language and wish to see it promoted. 4. Most members support language maintenance.
7	Ikot Ibritam (Oruk Anam)	5	5	5 4	5	5	5	5. All members value their language and wish to see it promoted. 4. Most members support language maintenance.
8	Midim (Abak)	5 4	5 4	4	5 4	5 4	-	5. All members value their language and wish to see it promoted. 4. Most members support language maintenance.

Data from Table 8 show that majority of Anaañ speaking indigenes do value their language and wish to see it promoted and used beyond their borders. This disposition is a good one for the language because the speakers would support any strive at language maintenance and do anything to put the Anaañ language in the league of vital and standardised languages. Even though some Anaañ speakers may feel indifferent towards language maintenance, or may even support language loss, the responses in Table 8 show a disposition of massive concern and support for maintenance and standardisation over and above indifference towards the language.

Table 9: Amount and quality of documentation

	Amount and quality of documentation	Office	Territory	Church	Market	Family	Media	Result
1	Nto Edino (Obot Akara)	2	2 1	2	1	1	2	2. There are some grammatical sketches, word-lists, and texts useful for limited linguistic research but with inadequate coverage. Audio and video recordings may exist in varying quality, with or without any annotation. 1. Only a few grammatical sketches, short wordlists and fragmentary texts. Audio and video recordings do not exist, are of unusable quality, or are completely un - annotated.
2	Urua Inyang (Ika)	0	1	1	1	1 2	2	1. Only a few grammatical sketches, short wordlists and fragmentary texts. Audio and video recordings do not exist, are of unusable quality, or are completely un annotated.

								2. There are some grammatical sketches, word-lists, and texts useful for limited linguistic research but inadequate coverage. Audio and video recordings may exist in varying quality, with or without any annotation. 0. No materials exist.
3	Ikot Akpan Nkuk (Ukanafun)	1	0	1	1	1 0	1	1. Only a few grammatical sketches, short wordlists and fragmentary texts. Audio and video recordings do not exist, are of unusable quality, or are completely un-annotated. 0. No materials exist.
4	Utu Etim Ekpo (Etim Ekpo)	0	0	0	0	1	1	0. No materials exist. 1. Only a few grammatical sketches, short wordlists and fragmentary texts. Audio and video recordings do not exist, are of unusable quality, or are completely un-annotated.
5	Uruk Uso (Ikot Ekpene)	1	1	1	2	2	1	1. Only a few grammatical sketches, short wordlists and fragmentary texts. Audio and video recordings do not exist, are of unusable quality, or are completely un-annotated. 2. There are some grammatical sketches, word-lists, and texts useful for limited linguistic research but inadequate coverage. Audio and video recordings may exist in varying quality, with or without any annotation.
6	Afaha Ikot Ebak (Essien Udim)	0	1	1	1	1	1	1. Only a few grammatical sketches, short wordlists and fragmentary texts. Audio and video recordings do not exist, are of unusable quality, or are completely un-annotated. 0. No materials exist.
7	Ikot Ibritam (Oruk Anam)	1	0	1	1	1	0	1. Only a few grammatical sketches, short wordlists and fragmentary texts. Audio and video recordings do not exist, are of unusable quality, or are completely un-annotated.

8	Midim (Abak)	2	1	1	1	2	1 2	<p>1. Only a few grammatical sketches, short wordlists and fragmentary texts. Audio and video recordings do not exist, are of unusable quality, or are completely un-annotated.</p> <p>2. There are some grammatical sketches, word-lists, and texts useful for limited linguistic research but inadequate coverage. Audio and video recordings may exist in varying quality, with or without any annotation.</p>
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The responses from collaborators as shown in Table 9 is not an encouraging one as far as the amount and quality of documentation for the Anaañ language is concerned. This particular issue in the study questionnaire has items (4) and (5) as suggesting the availability of comprehensive grammars, dictionaries, extensive texts, abundant annotated high quality video and audio recordings and constant flow of language materials. Quite sadly, not even one Anaañ collaborator made reference to either point (4) or (5) on the grading scale. Even point (3) which states that *there may be an adequate grammar or sufficient amount of grammars, dictionaries, and texts, but no everyday media*, was not referred to, by any of the collaborators in the Anaañ speech communities. They only chose to respond to the facts in points (0) to (2) which range from the non-existence of materials, to the existence of sketchy and few grammatical sketches and texts, wordlists, fragmentary texts, varying quality of video and audio material without (proper) annotation.

The response and scenario painted in Table 9 corroborate what we have in Table 6 where the availability of materials for language education and literacy was addressed. With the fact that the standardisation of a language is best done through codification and an avalanche of written materials, texts, audio-visual and audiolingual material, there should be conscious efforts to standardise and elaborate the Anaañ language in order to take it out from the risky stage that it is, in this regard.

5. Overall vitality/endangerment index of Anaañ language

The foregoing analysis and discussion can help to ascertain the vitality/endangerment status of Anaañ language. This is done by weighing each of the nine factors of vitality and endangerment against Grenoble's and Whaley's (2006) six-way endangerment categorisation scheme: *safe, at risk, disappearing, moribund, nearly extinct* and *extinct*.

On factor 1 (whether Anaañ language enjoys intergenerational transmission from parents to children), the analysis and discussion following Table 1 gives a vivid claim that the language is safe as it is used by children as well as the elderly.

On factor 2 (the absolute number of speakers of Anaañ language), the language, with over one million speakers is viable enough to be termed safe. However, Ibibio language (with almost three million speakers) in the same region, and English as a *lingua franca*, pose a threat to the continued safety of the Anaañ language as it may lose some of its speakers to

these languages if nothing is done to stem the tide of their dominance over Anaañ language in some domains of usage.

On factor 3 (the proportion of Anaañ language speakers within the total population), the worst response was that a majority speak the language, meaning that the language is quite safe.

On factor 4 (trends in the existing language domains), the responses show that the Anaañ language is between safe and risky because it is not used in all domains and for all functions. This trend is more worrisome in urban areas like Ikot Ekpene and Abak.

On factor 5 (whether the Anaañ language does respond to new domains and media), most of the consultants said that the language is not used in any new domains or used in a few new domains. This is an index of risk (and possible disappearance) for the language because, if it does not evolve alongside the trend in the society, it would certainly lose its children speakers as well as some functions.

On factor 6 (whether the Anaañ language has materials for language education and literacy), the responses show that the language is really at risk because of dearth of these literacy materials.

On factor 7 (the policies of government and institutions concerning Anaañ language), the responses by Anaañ language consultants show that the language stands at a great risk and may get into the disappearing stage if nothing is consciously done to reverse the trend.

On factor 8 (the attitude of community members towards their own language), the responses show that Anaañ language indigenes value their language and wish to see it promoted, while many others support language maintenance, even though a few are indifferent about that. This puts the language on the safe pedestal.

Concerning factor 9 (the amount and quality of documentation Anaañ language has enjoyed), evidence from the consultants show that the language stands at risk because there are no comprehensive grammars, annotated materials, audio and video recordings, *et cetera*, in the language.

From the foregoing, the overall vitality/endangerment index for Anaañ is that it is definitely endangered. Considering factors 1, 2, 3 and 8, the language could be termed as unsafe/vulnerable; but factors 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9 are more demanding as far as language standardisation, elaboration and vitality (even autonomy) are concerned. Therefore, the Anaañ language, which is nowhere near the safe category, could be said to be definitely endangered and a lot needs to be done to take it high up to at least, the “unsafe/vulnerable” stage on the scale of vitality/endangerment.

6. Conclusion

The discussions in sections 4 and 5, especially from Tables 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9 do suggest without any modicum of ambiguity that certainly, forces abound that are behind the shift and endangerment of the Anaañ language, and (maybe) by extension, other languages of Akwa Ibom State. This has shown beyond any doubt that the Anaañ language, which is not really safe, but majorly at risk (and peeping into the disappearing stage in some aspects), is a definitely endangered language. No hope is lost as a glance at the cause of attrition for the

language could help fashion out ways to get it revitalised.

Campbell's and Muntzel's (1989) taxonomy of language endangerment situations, which is relevant in showing how realistic or feasible a revitalisation programme could be, categorises language attrition into sudden, radical, gradual or bottom-to-top. Sudden and radical attrition are attributed to warfare, diseases, natural disaster or repression/genocide; gradual attrition is attributed to language shift from a local language to a language of wider communication; while bottom-to-top attrition signals losing a language in family settings and many other domains, but retaining it in religious and ritual practices. The linguistic situation of Anaañ speech communities of Akwa Ibom State puts the language in the gradual attrition category. One assurance about this category of attrition (unlike sudden and radical attrition, where revitalisation is much more difficult, if not impossible) is that revitalisation is very possible and the trend of language shift can potentially be arrested. Therefore, there must be pleated and augmented efforts to counterpoise the forces working against the vitality of Anaañ language, nay other languages of Akwa Ibom State.

7. Recommendations

Having established the feasibility of revitalising the Anaañ language, the following recommendations are pertinent:

- i. Given the fact that the trends/functions in existing language domains show Anaañ as being at risk because, even though the language is used in home domains for many functions, the dominant language begins to penetrate even home domains; it could be recommended that there should be aggressive advocacy programmes to talk to people about this direction of threat to the language. These programmes could spell out the need to use the language more frequently than any other in the homes, beginning from giving our children only native names.
- ii. The Anaañ language stands at a big risk because it is only used in its traditional, stereotyped domains but not in new domains and media. Since children are more interested in tech things, and are the major target of language revitalisation programmes, it would be helpful to produce electronic gadgets that can inform, educate and engage the younger generation to use, and be interested in the language. Creating digital storytelling gadgets in Anaañ language, animated folktales in Anaañ, cartoons, computer games, and many other electronic and tech things in Anaañ can take the language into new domains and media, thus increasing the frequency of usage at home and even outside the homes.
- iii. Written materials in Anaañ should be produced massively and made available to members of the speech community who would want to learn, while making frantic efforts to promote literacy in the language through print media. To achieve this, literacy education in Anaañ language should be part of the school curriculum.
- iv. Government should make policies to promote and protect the minority languages by getting them placed side by side with the dominant languages in

- some public domains.
- v. Government should also provide facilities for teaching the Anaañ language in public schools by first helping in the production of dictionaries, grammars, extensive texts, annotated high-quality video and audio materials, and lots more. That is, government needs to do more to see to the development and strengthening of the Anaañ and other minority languages.

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