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Choice and Use of Sangu Language among Sangu Speakers of Mbarali Mbeya Region, Tanzania

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Swahili.*

This article aims to analyse the domains of language choice and use of the Sangu language among Sangu speakers of Tanzania in relation to its endangerment. The study used quantitative approach to assess the four domains of Sangu language; the home/family, religion, market and traditional functions. The study was guided by domain analysis theoretical framework by Fishman (1972). Data were collected through questionnaire method from 50 Sangu speakers and were computed and analysed quantitatively by the assistance of SPSS programme. The research outcomes indicate that Swahili, the national language is dominant in almost all domains of Sangu language use. The choice and use of Sangu language have turned out to be minimal in almost all domains. The research results imply that, Sangu language is in danger of disappearing because the dominance of Swahili in the important domains of home/family indicates that Sangu young generation will always choose the dominant and national language and abandon Sangu language as a result the Sangu speech community will lack intergeneration language transmission and being threatened to extinction.

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INTRODUCTION

According to Muthoka (2017), a language is in danger of disappearing when its speakers cease to choose it as their language of communication

or use it in an increasingly reduced number of communicative domains, and do not pass it to next generation that is, there are no new speakers, adults, or children. Language

endangerment alludes to the situation whereby a language is threatened by disappearance. Adams, Matu and Ongarora (2012) indicate that, the successful and effective human communication is always necessitated by a language. To their view, whenever speakers allow their language to diminish they automatically lose a certain part of their culture, prestige, and integrity.

According to Mei et al. (2016), in multilingual and multicultural situations, speakers of a language speak at least two or more languages. To their views, this situation may make a speaker make decisions about which languages are to be used for different purposes in different domains as a result some languages may not be used effectively. Fishman (1964) contents that, language choice and use may depend on the speaker's experiences situated in different settings, different language repertoires that are available to the speaker, different interlocutors, and different topic.

Tanzania is a multilingual country and diverse in nature with about 150 ethnic languages used along with Swahili, the national language (Muzale & Rugemalira, 2008). Sangu language is one of the 150 languages used in Tanzania. Legère (2007) affirms that the informal and formal spread of Swahili as a language of wider distribution/*lingua Franca*, the national and co-official language has increasingly limited the use of all other Tanzanian languages. Swahili is dominant in almost all domains of language use and it is affecting linguistic situation in a different way for example; it is causing language shift and endangerment to some of the languages as portrayed by (Gibson, 2012, Gabriel, 2018, David, 2020).

Language Policy of Tanzania recognises Swahili as an official and a national language which is used in formal and informal domains. Being a national language, Swahili is widely spoken within the country as a result Bro-Utne and Holmarsdottir (2004) affirms that there is a rapid growth of number of people having Swahili as the first language and this assertion is confirmed by Puja (2001) on her study which found that

over 63% of all respondents (University of Dar es Salaam female students) who were asked about their language use, speak Swahili most of the time in their homes irrespective of the parental level of education, type of occupation, racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds. This situation could be thought to be a possible cause of language endangerment of most of the ethnic languages of Tanzania which brought about this study.

Petzell (2012) assessed the situation of languages of Tanzania and pointed out that, most of the Ethnic languages are threatened by Swahili language and their domains of use are also dominated by Swahili language. In that regard, Marten and Petzell (2016) on their study affirm that, Tanzanian ethnic languages are restricted in their domains of use; often show contact effects, mainly from contact with Swahili and experience more or less language shift and language endangerment. Because of such situation, most of these languages have undergone endangerment situations.

It is mentioned in Legère (2007) that, the language competency and proficiency in the young generation is essential for the future of small languages. In Legère's opinion, this young generation shapes language use and in the case of language choice, its decision for or against first language which may be often stimulated by external factors could be a death of a first language. With this fact, Legère (2007) investigated the vitality of Vidunda language basing on inter-generational language transmission among other factors and pointed out that, the Vidunda vitality heavily depends on a positive approach to first language maintenance. To his views, whenever first language is losing ground in formal and informal domains and threatened, the chances of that language to be transmitted in the future generation diminish considerably. With that regard, the study shows that Vidunda is neither used in any formal domain nor it is expected to be assigned to a particular formal domain as this will diverge from the government language policy (Legère, 2007).

Adams, Matu and Ongarora (2012) based on their study concerned with the choice and use of Kinubi language in Kibera (a multilingual community) affirm that, the multilingual linguistic situation can best be explained and understood by the aspect of language use. On their views, when people have command of two or more languages, they make choices as to when and where to use a certain language. According to them, the choices speakers make of when to use what language is determined by their attitude concerning the language of choice. The impact could be that languages that is not chosen and used effectively might find itself an endangerment zone.

Sangu language is an ethnic language spoken in the southern-west part of Tanzania mainland. It is classified by Lewis (2009) as G. 60 Bena-Kinga group. According to Sangu people, Mbarali District is said to be a Sangu area. The area used to be almost exclusively inhabited by the Sangu. Nevertheless, the socio-economic activities have made the area include other language speakers as well. Many other people groups have moved into it. There are no villages anymore where the Sangu live completely separate from other groups.

The wards of Mbarali District with the highest concentration of Sangu inhabitants are Utengule and Rujewa. Rujewa town still belongs to traditional Sangu area, although currently contains a linguistically mixed population with other languages such as Safwa, Kimbu, Gogo, Hehe, Bena, Kinga, Nyakyusa, Nyiha and so many others. Also, quite a lot of Sangu people live in the Igurusi, Chimala and Mapogoro wards. All other wards of the Mbarali District have Sangu inhabitants too, but they are much more mixed with other people.

According to Adams, Matu and Ongarora (2012), the presence of more than one language in the same country and in most of the speech communities in a country may have an impact on the linguistic situation of each language, especially when there is one official language, regardless of the languages of other minorities.

To this regard, it is assumed that different languages used along with Sangu in its area in addition to Swahili are sociolinguistically affecting the domain of use of Sangu language and threatening the language. On this basis, this study assesses the domain of language choice and use of Sangu language by basing on the questions; is Sangu language effectively used in the four domains of use? What is the status of Sangu language basing on domain of language use? In regard to these questions, this paper aims at assessing the home, religion, tradition, and village meeting domains of Sangu language choice and use and their impact on its vitality.

THEORETICAL FRAME WORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Frame Work

This study is guided by domain analysis theoretical frame work by Fishman (1972) which look at different areas of language use in multilingual societies relevant for language choice. The frame work centres on the description of the use of language in domains with regard to the question; “Who speaks what language to whom, and when” by Fishman (1972). According to Fishman, “Who” refers to the bilingual or multilingual speaker, “what” refers to the language (s) of that speaker’s linguistics repertoire, “whom” refers to the interlocutors in different specific domains and “when” refers to the contexts or the domains of language use.

The assumption with this theoretical framework as proposed by Fishman is that domains are the theoretical phenomenon that can explain language choice and use by considering factors such as topic, place (setting) and interlocutor. With this regard, this frame work is adopted in this study to explaining the language choice and use of Sangu language which is exercised in multilingual speech Community.

The domain analysis theoretical framework has been used by various researchers in the linguistic arena. These researchers include Mei et al, 2016; Adams, Matu, & Ongarora, 2012; Muthoka

2017; Nancy, 2011; Genemo, 2021; Namei, 2008 and Mushtaq, 2016.

Literature Review

According to Genemo (2021), a domain of language is an idea that each language or variety of language is assigned to a specific purpose, space, or group of people in society, such as the work domain, family domain and religious domain. Based on that fact, Fishman (1972) and Spolsky (2012) see domain as a useful idea in investigating individual and community language use.

Petzell (2012) found out that Language speakers in the speech community may relate certain languages with specific domains due to socio-political and economic strength of that domain. This may happen that a certain speech community may choose to use a certain language more predominantly in all domains of language use than other languages it co-exists with as it is the case in Tanzania whereby Kiswahili language is predominantly used because it is associated with socio-political and economic strength (Petzell, 2012). Therefore, it has won across most of the domains including even home domain of most of Tanzania ethnic languages.

Genemo (2021) asserts that, domain may determine language use of a speech community as a result; the extent/frequency of using a certain language may differ from one domain to another. On his view, Language use and choice can be used as route through which a definitely endangered language is transmitted.

Xu, Tao and Xie (1997) define a domain of use as the venue, in which a language is used in the society, the persons who communicate in that language and the scope of the topics discussed with the language. Being a venue, language use may be exercised differently.

Fishman (1972) sees domains as institutional context in which one language variety is more likely to be appropriate than another. To Fishman's views, domains include location, activities, and participants. With that fact,

Fishman suggests five typical domains of language use: families, friendship, religion, education, work, and the media. The suggestion of the domains by Fishman is based on the fact that they are more connected to peoples' everyday lives hence, the choice and use of language will be much connected with the peoples' activities. The domains may have different status although they are inter-related and affect each other. Suhua (2010) on the other hand posits five domains of use such as the family, education, religion, and media.

According to Mushtaq (2016), Language use in the home domain is investigated in almost every research concerning language maintenance and vitality. Greenfield (1972) on the other hand has labelled family/home as a low domain in contrast with a high domain, while some treat it as an informal domain contrast with a formal domain and thus refer to it as an intimate domain vs. non-intimate domain. When the language is not effectively used in other domains, the home domain often remains the last stand. Hence, the language lives if the domain is strong enough to survive, while losing the domain may mean dying of the language.

Domain Effects on Language Choice

Kandler, Ungler, & Steele (2010) have explained the situation in which a speech community with more than one language is used, that some members tend to abandon their original vernacular language in favor of another. This is necessitated by the fact that speakers in multilingual societies usually make choice of the language varieties that exist in their speech communities in different domains depending on different factors such as topic, context and interlocutors who have different linguistic background.

According to Mei et al (2016), the choices of language by speakers may be influenced by the features of the interlocutor, such as ethnicity, age, gender, educational level, proficiency level and domains in which the particular communicative event takes place. Based on this information in their study, Mei et al 2016 have

confirmed and concluded that Kinubi speakers encourage the use of Kinubi and their language choice is influenced by the way people use their language.

Genemo (2021) asserts that, other situational factors that have been found to influence language choice to some communities include audience, setting, occasion, and purpose which may also not be relevant to other communities. Therefore, the language choice and preference in different domain of language use in a speech community always are determined by different factors as discussed above.

Coulmas (2005) says that, the choices of languages made by individuals in the domestic domains may consequently result to language shift. This is due to the fact that in home domains parents and grandparents have good time to teach the youngster to choose and use their ethnic languages, therefore the trend of the language use and choice of the parents and grandparents at home may affect the children's general acquisition and maintenance of the family/home language and this is confirmed in the study by Muthoka (2017) on Kikamba language that majority of the older speakers predominantly use Kikamba to speak to their siblings and relatives at home. Older generation also uses Kikamba and Kiswahili to speak to their house help(s) as a result Kikamba is maintained at home and there isn't an trend of language shift.

Concerning domain distribution of language use, Wallwork (1981) says that, in some domains there may be contact with other people with whom there is a potential choice of two or even three languages. According to Coulmas (2005) the decision by speakers may be focused on the function of the two speakers in relation to each other, or the topic of the conversation who both view domain in the same ways.

METHODOLOGY

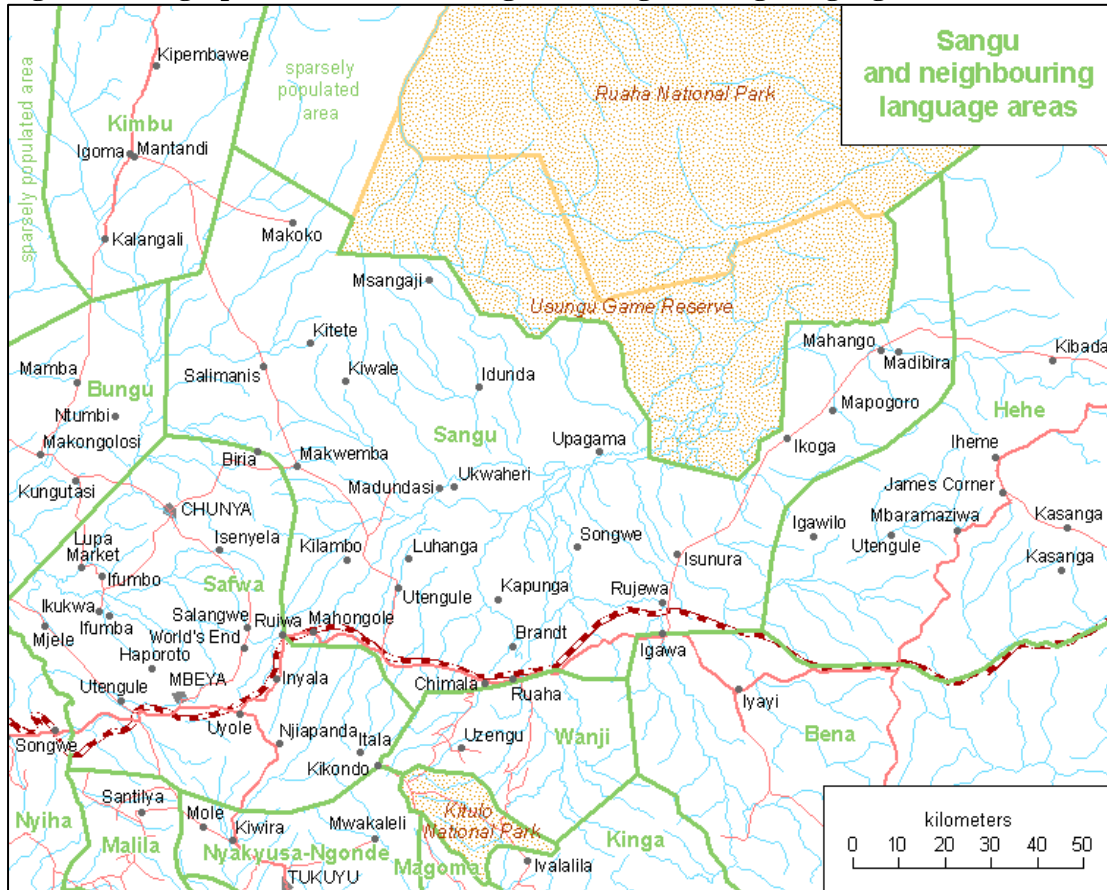
This study was guided by quantitative approach and was conducted within Mbarali district in Mbeya region. The choice of the district for

study was due to the availability of origin Sangu language speakers and that the speakers are majorly inhabited in that area. The population for study was Sangu speakers from the selected district who provided data about the choice and use of Sangu language among Sangu speakers in four domains. The study employed purposive sampling technique. A sample of four villages (Rujewa, Chimala, Utengule and Igurusu) from Mbarali district and 50 Sangu speakers were purposively selected for the study. The selection of the villages based on the accessibility and availability of Sangu speakers. The purposive sampling was used to select respondents who were considered to provide necessary information about the phenomenon under study.

The questionnaire for this study was prepared and reviewed by the two peer scholars to ensure that it was not containing content or typological mistakes and was in line with the needs of the researcher before the final piloted questionnaire. The reviewed questionnaire therefore, was translated from English to Swahili language a familiar language to most of the respondents that enabled them comprehend the questions easily. Their Swahili responses were also translated to English in the course of data analysis and report writing. The research was also preceded by pilot study to test the question of the questionnaire before the actual study in order to ensure consistency and accuracy of the results and methods (reliability). The pretest (pilot) was done at Ukwaheri village in Mbarali district in Mbeya by distributing ten questionnaire papers to a total of ten respondents being five Sangu children and five parents. The pilot study proved that, the technique for data collection was valid and reliable.

The collected data in this study were analysed by the use of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) in which the responses were analysed to find out the Sangu speakers' patterns of language choice and use in four domain of Sangu language use. Subsequently, the research results were presented in figures according to occurrence in percentage.

Figure 1: Geographical Location of Sangu and Neighbouring Language Areas



Taken from: Kaajan, 2012

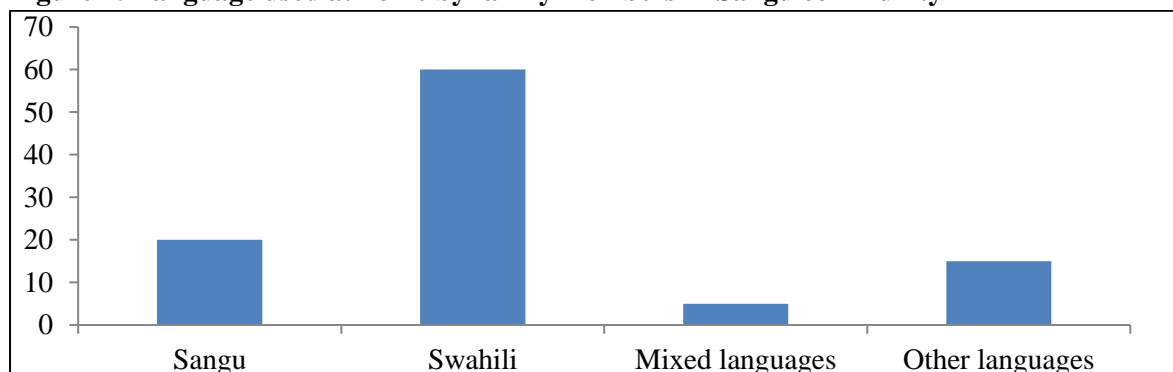
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Home Domain (Family)

Home is the most important domain of use in all languages. Most cases of language endangerment start with the loss of domains of use at home. In

assessing Sangu language choice and use in home domain, data were analysed and presented in the figure below;

Figure 2: Language used at home by family members in Sangu community



Source: Field Survey 2022

The research results in Figure 2 shows that the choice and use of Sangu language in home domain is very low by 20.0% of all 50 respondents compared to Swahili and those

which co-exist with Sangu language (other languages). Swahili language is used at home by 60.0% compared to Sangu and other languages. On the other hand, other languages such as Bena,

Bungu and etc are used by 15% of 50 respondents at home and there is a mixture of languages at home by 5%. According to the research result, in the family (home) domain, Sangu language is not effectively used compared to Swahili and other languages and that Swahili language has penetrated the home and taken Sangu's functions.

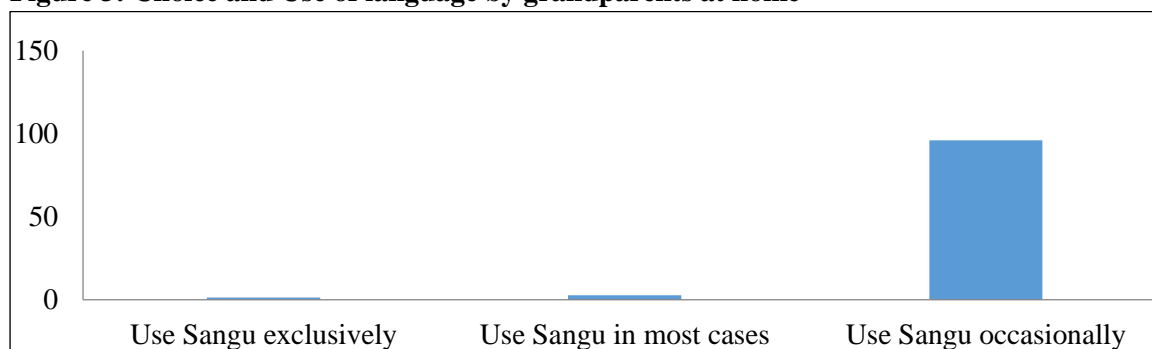
This research result can be analysed in the light of the study by Batibo (1992) on Kwere language endangerment in Tanzania which shows that, Kwere language is highly endangered because its usage and competence are restricted at home as speakers almost do not use it in the family domain and there is mixture of languages. In Sangu community, if a member of the family is not using Swahili language, they may be mixing

Swahili and Sangu languages. This research results have confirmed that, as for Kwere language, Sangu is also restricted at home. This situation indicates that without frequent use of Sangu language in this domain, there is a possibility that Sangu language proficiency would begin to decline.

Choice and Use of Language by Grandparents at Home

The study also assessed the choice and use of Sangu language for inter-generational communication by the family members. The study was structured into the survey questionnaire for family members. The research result is presented in *Figures 3,4* and *5* below;

Figure 3: Choice and Use of language by grandparents at home

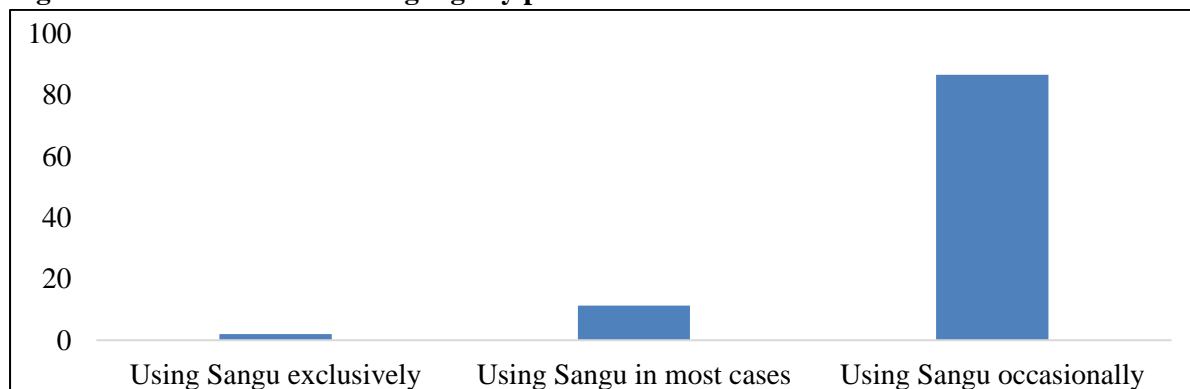


Source: Field Survey 2022

Figure 3 above indicates that, 2 (1.3%) of 50 respondents said that Sangu grandparent generations choose Sangu language exclusively to communicate with children. 4 (2.7%) of them said that grandparents often choose Sangu language to communicate with children, and 44 (96%) said that grandparents choose to use Sangu occasionally with them.

The research results in *Figure 3* indicate that Sangu language is almost not chosen and used by family members because grandparents occasionally choose and use it to the young generation. This research result is related to the research results by Gabriel (2018) on Kimbu intergenerational language transmission which found that Kimbu grandparent generations are less concerned with the use of Kimbu language

to their grandchildren and argued that it would be important the grandparent generation be champion in teaching youngsters the language of their culture in order to preserve, protect it from disappearing and ensure its continued existence. However, According to the current research findings, this argument goes against the situation of Sangu speech community that has grandparents who do not teach their grandchildren the language; that their communication with younger generation has declined and so whenever they die, they will leave no generation speaking the language because children who could have grown and developed the language or transmitted to the next generation have not taught and acquired their language.

Figure 4: Choice and Use of language by parents at home

Source: Field Survey 2022

Figure 4 indicates that 30 (86.7%) of 50 respondents said that, the choice and use of Sangu language by parent generation to the younger in the family domain is very occasional. 17 (11.3%) of them said that parents' generation choose to use Sangu language in the family in most cases and only 3 (2%) said that in the family domain, the parent generation choice to use Sangu language exclusively. This research result indicates similar situation with Kimbu language (Gabriel, 2018) which justifies the way parents do not choose and use the language to their children. As in Kimbu language, it is evident from the data that Sangu parents are less concerned with teaching of the language to the younger generation that they rarely choose to speak it with their children. Because of this situation, children have found themselves no longer choose and use Sangu language as mother tongue at home since their parents choose it very occasionally.

As shown in *Figures 2, 3 and 4* above on an average, over 90% of the respondents indicated that the choice and use of Sangu language is not frequent in the home domain by the family members. The vast majority of the Sangu speakers choose Swahili to use at home with members of the family. This may indicate that the Sangu speech community is losing their ethnic language in one of the most important domains of language use which is the home/family domain.

Domain of Traditional Functions

Sangu community as other Tanzanian communities practice various traditional functions such as ancestral worships and rituals. In these functions especially rituals, the Merere is the executor of the rites whereas the wisest grandparents in the community are the priests who initiate prayers in rituals when the function is on progress. *Figure 5* illustrates the study results of assessing language choice and use in this domain.

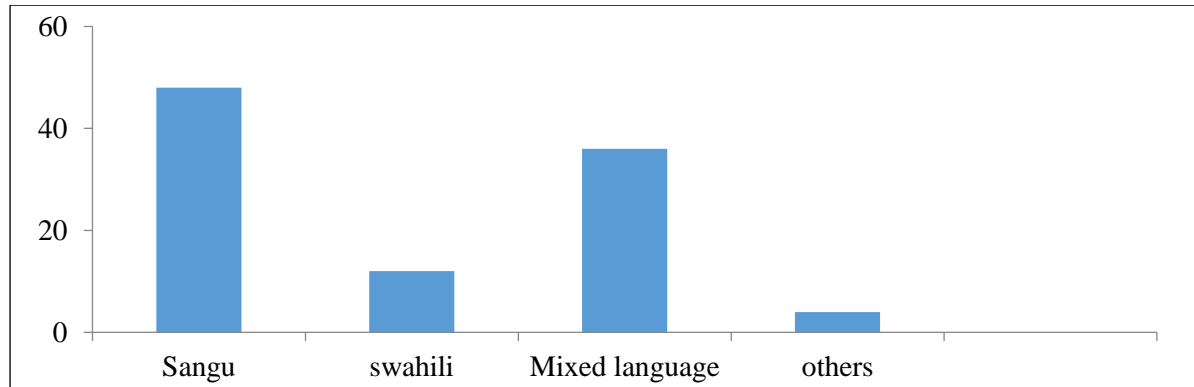
Figure 5 shows that, 24 (48%) of 50 respondents said Sangu language is used in the domain of traditional functions. 18 (36%) of them said that, there is the use of mixed languages, 6 (12%) said that Swahili language is used in this domain, 2 (4%) said that other languages are used as well. This implies that Sangu language was used more than any other language in the domain of tradition function.

On the other hand, questionnaire was used to married Sangu speakers to find out the kind of marriages they engage. It was revealed that among 37 (74%) of 50 Sangu speakers who are married, 20 (40%) of them are exogamy whereas 17 (34%) of them are endogamy. This implied that, most of Sangu speakers married people from other ECLs speakers used along with it. This had obliged them to use and choose Swahili language and other languages in traditional functions so that they could not exclude any from those functions.

It is clear that in Tanzania, the most important domain where the indigenous language can be used and preserved in its complete and purest form is the traditional ceremonies. However, the

study found that other languages and Swahili language are also used in this domain by 4%, which is a threat to the vitality of Sangu language.

Figure 5: Language used in domain of traditional functions



Source: Field Survey 2022

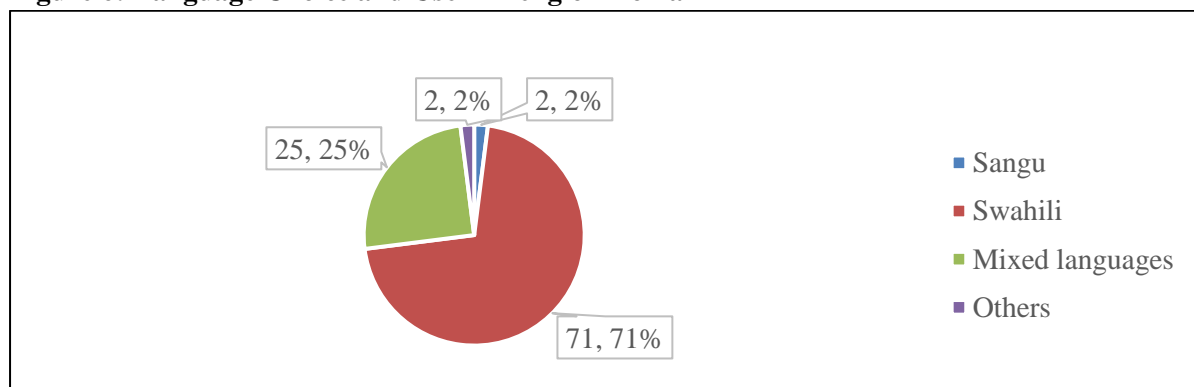
Language Choice and Use in Religion Domain

The pattern of Sangu Language choice and use was also investigated in the Religion domain. Figure 6 below represent the research results from this domain.

The presentation in *Figure 6* shows that, 35 (71%) of 50 respondents said Swahili language is used in this domain, 13 (25%) said mixed languages (Sangu and Swahili) is used. Also, 1 (2%) indicated that other languages are used and 1 (2%) said Sangu language is used. From this

presentation, it is evident that the extent, to which Sangu language is used in this domain, is much smaller than other languages it co-exists with. The study has indicated that the use of Swahili language ruled over Sangu and other languages in this domain. A question asked the respondents to specify if any other languages apart from Sangu and Swahili languages were used in this domain. Those who said that other languages were used as well added that Safwa, Bungu and Nyakyusa are used too.

Figure 6: Language Choice and Use in Religion Domain



Source: Field Survey 2022

These findings imply that, religion is the domain in which Sangu language is almost not used. In Sangu community, the religion consists of Christianity and Islamic. In Christianity there are holy masses in which priests and Bishop’s conduct preaches. Also, there are songs and

prayer books used during the mass. Most of the priests and bishops in this community are non-Sangu speakers. Therefore, preaches by the priests are basically in Swahili language, in few cases they use mixed languages (Swahili and Sangu) and in a very rare cases they use only

Sangu language. There are no songs sang in Sangu language in churches. Also, there are no prayer books in Sangu language. It was only one prayer book in Sangu language which was obtained from a grandparent of 70 years which was not used at all. The book was just kept in the house. In Islamic religion, the prayers are in Arabic with sometimes Swahili translation. Preaches are pure in Swahili language. Sangu language is not effectively used in this language domain, Swahili is dominant in this domain.

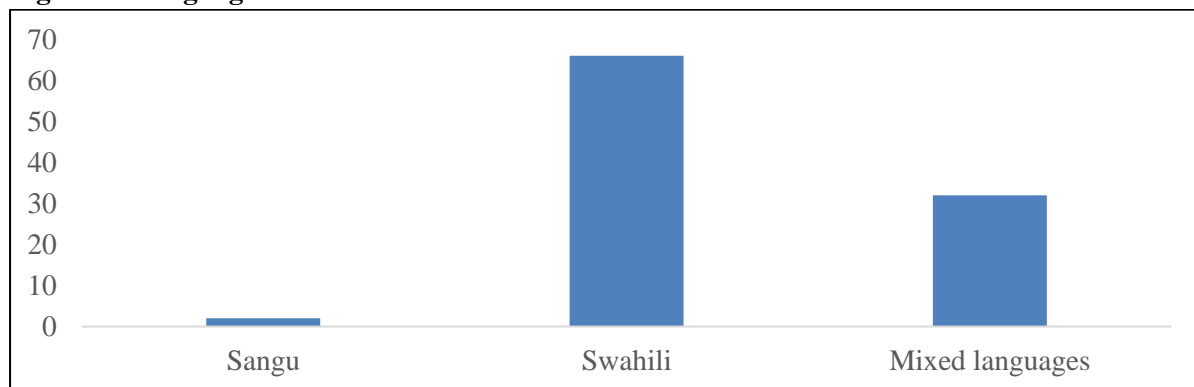
Market Domain

Market place in Sangu Community is an informal place where members of the community socialize and that ethnic language can highly be maintained. In Sangu community, there is a market day which is conducted twice a month in a specific place at the village. During that day, people come from different places in and outside the Sangu community with small businesses. *Figure 7* below present the field result on the languages used in market place in Sangu community:

Figure 7 shows that, 33 (66%) of respondents said that Swahili language was used in this

domain. 16 (32%) said that people used mixed languages (Swahili and Sangu) and 1 (2%) stated that, there was the use of Sangu language. This proves that, people in this community speak Swahili language more than other languages. With respect to Sangu language, it is clear that the language is inadequately used. Considering mixed languages (Sangu and Swahili), it implies that sometimes people at the market who do not use Swahili language completely mix Swahili and Sangu language. It was also observed that, in the market, other activities were taking place apart from business. These activities included getting together and having some local alcoholic drinks. It was observed that when they were in groups for drinks, they used Safwa and Nyakyusa as well as mixing Swahili and Sangu language. Moreover, when they were in business issues like buying and selling some goods, they used Swahili language. This situation is due to the fact that most of the people who engage in selling goods came from outside Sangu community. Therefore, they had no ability to speak Sangu language

Figure 7: Language choice and use at market



Source: Field Survey, 2022

CONCLUSION

This paper has presented a research results on assessment of Sangu language choice and usage in the four domains; home, traditional, market and religion. With regard to an overall perspective, the study results show that the use of Swahili language in Sangu speech community is

dominating over Sangu language and others in three domains of Sangu language use; home/family, market and religion and minimally used in traditional domain. Swahili has seen to have a very prominent interference in the mentioned above three domains as a result Sangu speakers have ceased to choose and use their language in their daily life. Generally, Sangu

language in its speech community is not a priority language in comparison to the Swahili and other languages.

This research results generally implies that; Sangu language will lose ground in a very important domain of home/family because the parents and grandparent generation use Swahili language with children more frequently than Sangu language. This situation may subsequently cause children lack proficiency of their own language as a result Sangu language may lose intergenerational language transmission and be threatened to extinct (become endangered).

The recommendation is made that, Sangu speakers should be told of the sociolinguistic status of their language and the importance of maintaining and preserve their language as a very important cultural identity and national cultural heritage in general. Besides, Sangu speakers should be inspired to improve their Sangu language usage in the important domains of home/family in their speech Community so that the language can be transmitted to the young generation.

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