



## ASSESSING THE LEVEL OF ENDANGERMENT AND REVITALISATION OF THE GURE LANGUAGE OF KADUNA STATE, NIGERIA

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**ABSTRACT:** *The study aims at assessing the level of endangerment and revitalisation of the Gure language spoken in Lere Local Government Area of Saminaka District of Kaduna State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, with a structured questionnaire administered to three hundred and eighty-one (381) native speakers of the Gure, selected through simple purposive random sampling technique. The findings of the study indicate that the Gure language is actually endangered and in the verge of extinction. This is evident in the size of Gure language native speakers and its restricted domains of use. The study recommends the standardisation of the language so that adequate provision for its use in pre-primary and primary school would go a long way in revamping and revitalising the Gure language from total extinction and death.*

**KEYWORDS:** Endangerment, Extinction, Death, Revitalisation, Documentation, Domains.



## INTRODUCTION

It is evident that Nigeria is one of the frontline multilingual countries of the world. As a result of the multilingual nature of Nigeria, it becomes necessary and imperative that all languages need to be studied to facilitate the know-how of the speakers. The most remarkable implication of multilingualism is the fact that it leads to the endangerment of some of the languages involved in the process, which, in turn, gives birth to language extinction (Akujobi & Samuel-Enogwe, 2024; Gordon & Ogbu, 2025). The Gure language spoken in the Lere Local Government of the Saminaka district of Kaduna State belongs to the category of endangered minority languages in Nigeria.

Endangerment, a concept used when a language is faced with the threat of existence and is on the verge of extinction (Babalobi, 2020; Nzeaka & Ehondor, 2021; Chukwu & Ugwu, 2023; Akujobi & Samuel-Enogwe, 2024). Therefore, a language is said to be endangered when the youngest speakers are young adults and there are no or very few child speakers (Emeka-Nwobia, 2019). Put in different words, when there are no child speakers of a language, such a language is at the brink of extinction. In Africa, most indigenous languages are faced with endangerment and the threat of being subsumed by larger linguistic groups (Agyeman, 2019), which have left the indigenous languages docile. Despite the fact that Nigerian languages attain an in-depth experience of intensive and extensive multiple write-ups, and though the languages directly or indirectly host several publications, only a negligible number of them have been described (Abdul, 2024; Gordon & Ogbu, 2025). In Nigerian linguistic terrain, Ezeaka & Ehondor (2021) note that the scenario is actually becoming pathetic and, unfortunately, that most of the young people that are living mostly in urban centres of our society contribute drastically to language endangerment and subsequently language death in their inability to communicate effectively in their mother tongue. Lamenting on the state of endangerment of the Gure language, Pikawi (2016: 8) sadly notes that “the Gure language in the Saminaka area of the Lere Local Government of Kaduna State is one of these endangered languages; it is struggling to live, its vitality dwindling, maybe because amidst the endangerment, the speakers are originally few”. It is on this background that this empirical study casts a searchlight on the level of endangerment and revitalisation of the Gure language.

### Statement of the Problem

Many linguists and language scholars have worked on language endangerment and revitalisation across the world (Hornsby, 2013; Landweer, 2013; Abdul, 2024), among others. Some Nigerian linguists and language scholars (Bamgbose, 2011; Sarvi, 2016; Haruna, 2017; Akujobi & Samuel-Enogwe, 2024; Gordon & Ogbu, 2025) have made valuable and recognisable contributions on the notion of language endangerment. However, aside from Pikawi (2016), who did scant literary work on the preservation of the Gure language, to the best of our knowledge, none treated the Gure language endangerment from an empirical viewpoint, which is the focus and concern of the present study. Hence, the study was set to fill this academic gap in an attempt at documentation of the Gure language.

### Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to assess the level of endangerment and revitalisation of the Gure language of Kaduna State, Nigeria. However, the specific objectives of the study are to:



1. assess the level of the Gure language endangerment;
2. examine the linguistic factors initiating and hastening the endangerment of the Gure language;
3. determine the level of intergenerational use of the Gure language; and to
4. recommend linguistic strategies and programmes to reverse and revitalise the Gure language endangerment.

### **Research Questions**

This study was guided by the following research questions:

RQ1 – What is the level of the Gure language endangerment?

RQ2 – What are the linguistic factors initiating and hastening the endangerment of the Gure language?

RQ3 – What is the level of intergenerational use of the Gure language?

RQ4 - What are the linguistic strategies and programmes to reverse and revitalise the Gure language endangerment?

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Sarvi (2016) considers a language to be endangered when its speakers cease to use it, 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. Hence, Bamgbose (2011) suggests six (6) characteristics of an endangered language which are:

- i. Very few speakers remaining, most of them old.
- ii. No longer used for any meaningful purpose in the community.
- iii. Not being transmitted to the younger generation.
- iv. No orthography or written materials in it.
- v. Language shift has taken place such that the language has been or is being replaced by another language.
- vi. On the verge of extinction.

The above characteristics of an endangered language as shown in Bamgbose (2011) are directly applicable to the Gure language. However, to Hornsby (2013), three major criteria are proposed as guidelines for considering a language to be endangered. Hornsby (2013: 3) refers to them as "indicators of language endangerment". These indicators are:

- i. The number of speakers currently living



- ii. The mean age of native and/or fluent speakers, and
- iii. The percentage of the youngest generation acquiring fluency with the language in question.

Moreover, Mohammad and Sangotoro (2024) and Gordon and Ogbu (2025) observe that many of the Nigerian languages are at various levels of endangerment and possible extinction. Hence, in the Nigerian linguistic terrain, the drive towards national unity, social integration and construction of national identity has led to linguistic assimilation, linguistic loss and discrimination against minorities (Senayon, 2018; Babalola, 2020; Abdul, 2024). In this regard, the National Language Policy (FRN, 2022) opines that within the Nigerian linguistic landscape, there are different Nigerian languages, some of which are at different levels of endangerment. Thus, the policy is determined to preserve Nigerian languages and save them from extinction through status recognition and inclusion in educational programmes across all levels of the Nigerian education system (FRN, 2022). In addition, a major objective of the policy is to preserve languages and save them from endangerment and possible extinction. This is exactly what this study represents and stands for, and that is why documentation is a direct step in language revitalisation. This is one of the main means to preserve and safeguard languages or dialects (Mamah, Eze, Odeh & Nwosu, 2021). Emphasising the recognition and value of minority languages in Nigeria, Isa (2023: 166) notes thus:

By recognising the value of minority languages and empowering their speakers, Nigeria can pave the way for a more harmonious and culturally enriched future, where language diversity becomes an asset rather than a hindrance to national progress. In the face of globalisation and homogenisation, safeguarding the linguistic heritage of the country becomes a collective responsibility, preserving their distinct voices that weave the fabric of Nigeria's unique identity.

In an attempt to revitalise the Gure language from endangerment, Pikawi (2016: 95) proposes some strategies in revamping the language as follows:

It is a task for Gure as a community to make every possible effort in planning the language and modernising it to meet up with the scientific, technological and global trends. More work should be encouraged, research should be financed, and the internet must be explored using the language...

The studies reviewed above are testaments to the fact of the Gure endangerment and possible linguistic strategies for revitalising the language from total extinction.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. In particular, the study engaged in a descriptive cross-sectional research design by analysing data obtained from different sections of the Gure community. Put differently, the data were obtained cross-sectionally from students, farmers, traders, religious leaders, civil servants, teachers, among many others. The justification for the adoption of this research design is its appropriateness to the realisation of the research objectives (Ledford & Gast, 2024), which is to obtain reliable data from the various sections of the Gure community. The target population for the study comprised the total number of Gure native speakers. According to the 2006 census in Nigeria, the town and its environs



have an estimated population of 339,740. A sample size of three hundred and eighty-one (381) respondents was drawn using Creswell and Creswell's (2018) formula. The sampling technique adopted is simple purposive random sampling.

The instrument for data collection in this study was a structured questionnaire which is fashioned and designed after Fakuade's (1995) for measuring language endangerment of Kuten-Jukun speakers of Taraba State and Adewale and Oshodi's (2013) for measuring the level of endangerment of Ura, Lupa, Kaami, Bangi, Gelanci, and Asu languages spoken in Niger State, Nigeria.

The questionnaire was divided into five sections to ensure comprehensive data collection. The first section, Section A: Demographic Information, collected basic demographic data, including sex and age. This information helps provide context for understanding the characteristics of the sample population. The other four sections were designed to obtain data on the level of endangerment and revitalisation of the Gure language as embedded in the four research questions formulated for the study. The items were structured on a Likert scale type. The questionnaire was further subjected to face and content validation by experts in the field of Linguistics, most especially Sociolinguistics.

The internal consistency of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha. The reliability coefficient of the instrument was  $\alpha$  0.70. The instrument was administered by the researchers with the assistance of other field and research assistants.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data obtained were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency count and mean score. A benchmark of a 2.50 mean score was considered accepted, while below 2.50 was rejected. Out of the three hundred and eighty-one (381) questionnaires administered, three hundred and seventy-two (372) were duly filled and returned by the respondents. The rate of return was 97.6%.

**Table 1: Demographic Distribution of Respondents**

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	196	52.7
Female	176	47.3
<b>Total</b>	372	100
<b>Age</b>		
18-25	81	21.8
26-35	65	17.5
36-49	101	27.1
50 and above	125	33.6
<b>Total</b>	372	100



The distribution in Table 1 shows that more male respondents (52.7%) participated in the study than their female counterparts (47.3%). The age distribution has most of the respondents (33.6%) falling in the age bracket of 50 and above years, while the least represented age bracket (17.5%) is 26-35 years.

Research Question 1: What is the level of the Gure language endangerment?

**Table 2: Level of the Gure Language Endangerment**

S/N	Statement	SD	D	A	SA	X	n	Decision
1	The Gure language is not used in schools	60	84	132	96	2.08	372	Agree
2	The Gure language is not frequently used at homes	36	72	168	96	3.0	372	Agree
3	The Gure language is used in writing textbooks	84	108	96	84	2.4	372	Disagree
4	The Gure language native speakers use Hausa language in daily communication	48	60	180	84	3.0	372	Agree
5	The Gure language is not effectively used in places of worship	60	96	144	72	2.8	372	Agree

**Source:** *Field Trip (2025)*

The above data in Table 2 show that the Gure language is not used in schools in the Gure community. The first statement shows a mean score of 2.8, indicating that many respondents agree that, the language is not used at all in schools either as a subject or a language of instruction. Similarly, the respondents note that the Gure language is not frequently used at homes in the Gure community, with a mean score of 3.0, showing agreement that this issue is widespread in the community. In sharp contrast, fewer respondents reported engaging the Gure language in book publication, with a mean of 2.4 indicating disagreement. Many respondents admit to the use of the Hausa language in daily communication in place of the Gure language in the community, with a mean of 3.0. In further support of the fact that the Gure language is endangered, the language is sparsely used in places of worship, with a mean of 2.8.

Research Question 2: What are the linguistic factors initiating and hastening the endangerment of the Gure language?

**Table 3: Linguistic factors initiating and hastening the Endangerment of the Gure Language**

S/N	Statement	SD	D	A	SA	X	N	Decision
1	The Gure language lacks appreciable orthography.	48	72	168	84	2.9	372	Agree
2	The Gure language has an appreciable degree of standardisation.	72	108	96	96	2.5	372	Disagree
3	The Gure language has limited domains of usage.	36	72	168	96	3.0	372	Agree





<b>4</b>	The Hausa and English languages pose great threat to the existence of the Gure language.	24	48	192	108	<b>3.1</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>Agree</b>
<b>5</b>	The linguistic attitudes of the Gure native speakers are not factors initiating its endangerment.	96	120	84	<b>72</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>Disagree</b>

**Source:** *Field Trip (2025)*

Table 3 above represents the linguistic factors initiating and hastening the endangerment of the Gure language. Many respondents admit that the Gure language lacks appreciable orthography, as reflected in the mean of 2.9. The majority of respondents disagree with the notion that the Gure language has an appreciable degree of standardisation, as shown by the mean of 2.5.

Furthermore, respondents agree that the Gure language has limited domains of usage, with a mean of 3.0, and due to the availability of Hausa and English in the community, many respondents believe that these two languages pose great threats to the usage of the Gure language, with a mean of 3.1. However, some respondents disagree with the idea that the linguistic attitudes of the Gure native speakers are not serious factors hastening and initiating its endangerment, with a mean of 2.3.

Research Question 3: What is the level of intergenerational use of the Gure language?

**Table 4: The Level of Intergenerational Use of the Gure Language**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Decision</b>
<b>1</b>	The Gure language is not used in daily communication with children.	60	96	<b>144</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>Agree</b>
<b>2</b>	The Gure language is not exposed to children at home.	24	60	192	96	<b>3.1</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>Agree</b>
<b>3</b>	The Hausa language is preferred to be transmitted to children in daily communication.	48	72	168	84	<b>2.9</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>Agree</b>
<b>4</b>	The English language is more prestigious to be transmitted to children.	36	60	180	96	<b>3.0</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>Agree</b>
<b>5</b>	Children cannot communicate effectively in the Gure language.	48	84	168	<b>72</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>Agree</b>

**Source:** *Field Trip (2025)*

Table 4 reveals that respondents generally agree that the Gure language is not used in daily communication with children, with a mean score of 2.6. Most respondents are also aware that the Gure language is not exposed to children at home, as shown in the mean of 3.1. The Hausa language is preferred to be transmitted to children, with a mean score of 2.9. In the same vein, many respondents believe that the English language is more prestigious to be transmitted to children, with a mean of 3.0, and some respondents note that many children cannot communicate effectively in the Gure language, as indicated by the mean score of 2.8.



**Research Question 4:** What are the linguistic strategies and programmes to reverse and revitalise the Gure language endangerment?

**Table 5: Linguistic Strategies and Programmes to Reverse and Revitalise the Gure Language Endangerment**

S/N	Statement	SD	D	A	SA	X	n	Decision
1	Kaduna State government should formulate a proactive language policy.	24	48	192	108	3.1	372	Agree
2	Encouragement in the use of the Gure language in pre-primary and primary schools.	36	60	168	108	3.0	372	Agree
3	Funds are to be provided for the documentation of various linguistic aspects of the Gure language.	24	60	192	96	3.1	372	Agree
4	Effective transgenerational transmission of the Gure language from competent parents to children.	24	72	192	84	3.0	372	Agree
5	Enhancing the language attitudes of native speakers through various incentives, motivation and language engineering.	36	60	180	96	3.0	372	Agree

**Source:** *Field Trip* (2025)

Table 5 suggests several linguistic strategies and programmes that respondents agree would reverse and revitalise the Gure language from endangerment and possible extinction. The highest agreement is for the Kaduna State government to formulate a proactive language policy with a mean score of 3.1 and provision of funds for the documentation of various linguistic aspects of the language with a mean score of 3.1. Additionally, respondents support encouragement of use of the language in pre-primary and primary schools, with a mean score of 3.0 and effective transgenerational transmission of the Gure language from competent parents to children (mean of 3.0). Enhancing the language attitudes of native speakers through various incentives, motivation and language engineering are also recommended to revitalise the language from endangerment, with a mean of 3.0.

## DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

This section elaborates on the key findings of the study regarding assessing the level of endangerment and revitalisation of the Gure language of Lere Local Government Area of Kaduna State, Nigeria. The discussion reflects on the level of the Gure language endangerment, the linguistic factors that initiate and hasten the endangerment, the level of intergenerational use of the language, and the linguistic strategies and programmes at reversing and revitalising the Gure language endangerment.





The study found a significant prevalence of endangerment in the Gure language. This finding aligns with previous discussions in Pikawi (2016), which indicated that the Gure language is actually endangered. In addition, its level of endangerment is quite high, as noted in Blench (2018; 2020), as almost all the East Kainji languages, the Gure inclusive, are highly threatened and the main source of endangerment is the spread of Hausa and the small size of communities. A major linguistic factor mitigating and hastening the endangerment of the Gure language is lack of appreciable and standard orthography. The language also has a limited domain of usage. These findings have support in Bamgbose (2011) and Hornsby (2013), who observed that a language with such characteristics is actually endangered. In addition, the Hausa and English languages pose serious threats to the existence and development of the Gure language as discussed and agreed in Pikawi (2016). Negative language attitudes of the Gure native speakers towards their language is equally a factor contributing to its endangerment. This finding agrees with Blench (2018, 2020) when he observes that the main source of endangerment is the spread of the Hausa language among the minority languages of the East Kainji languages of Nigeria. This indirectly influences the attitude of the Gure language native speakers towards their language, as they consider Gure a language of lower status when compared with the Hausa and English languages.

The study identified a lack of adequate and effective use of the Gure language with the children by their parents. This is because the language is not adequately exposed to children at home. This finds support in Haruna (2017), that a language that is sparsely exposed to younger generations is at the verge of endangerment and extinction. As a result, children are mostly exposed to the Hausa and English languages in the Gure community and beyond. This shows that the Gure language is not transmitted from generation to generation, as supported by Babalobi (2020), who stated that unless proactive steps are taken, more than 50 minority languages in the country might become extinct in a few years.

Furthermore, it is discovered in this study that the English language is more prestigious than the Gure; hence, parents pursue their children learning English at the expense of the Gure language. The finding further agrees with Igboanusi and Peter (2004, p. 137) when they note that "the speakers of minority languages do not seem prepared to allow their languages to die, but they also derive the benefits associated with the mastery of English (in the south) and English and Hausa (in the north).

As a result of the endangerment status of the Gure language, the study identified some linguistic strategies and programmes for reversing or revitalising the language. There is the urgent need for Kaduna State government to formulate a proactive language policy to enhance the status of the Gure language. The language should equally be developed by providing standard orthography to enhance the usage of the language at pre-primary and primary school levels. These findings are supported by Sarvi (2016, p. 130) when he notes that an endangered language should be developed to have "an accepted orthography, be taught in schools especially in the environs of the native speakers, and a language centre and/or board should be established...". Finally, the language attitudes of the native speakers should be enhanced positively towards their language. This finding agrees with Adewale and Oshodi (2013), who noted that the negative attitude of speakers can foster language endangerment in Nigeria.



## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study provides pioneering empirical research into the endangerment and revitalisation of the Gure language. The findings indicate that the Gure language is actually endangered and needs urgent revitalisation to save it from extinction. The study identifies some linguistic factors initiating and hastening the endangerment of the language. As further proof of deep endangerment, the younger generations are not adequately exposed to the Gure language. The effectiveness of current preventive strategies is mixed, indicating an urgent need for clearer language policies and better linguistic strategies and initiatives to revitalise the Gure language. Overall, this study underscores the significance of revitalising language endangerment not only as related to the Gure language but as a broader concern for Nigeria as a nation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, some recommendations are put forward to improve the situation regarding the endangerment of the Gure language of the Lere Local Government Area of Kaduna State, Nigeria, as provided below:

1. There is the urgent need to fully document and standardise the Gure language so that it has a standard orthography.
2. The Kaduna State government should establish a language centre and/or board to be charged with the assignment of vocabulary compilation and development of the Gure language.
3. The Gure language should be taught in schools, especially in pre-primary and primary schools in order to stimulate the interest of the native speakers and improve their socio-cognitive domain.
4. The study advocates for effective implementation of the National Language Policy (FRN, 2022) in an attempt to enhance the status of Nigerian languages.
5. Language revitalisation project is always a capital-intensive programme which individuals or communities may not be able to fund/finance. Therefore, government bodies and agencies should rise up and finance revitalisation projects of endangered languages, such as the Gure, in Nigeria.

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