THE LANGUAGES OF RIVERS STATE OF NIGERIA: AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract

This paper[2] provides an updated overview of the languages of Rivers State of Nigeria in respect of the number, linguistic classification and features of the languages, as well as the distribution of the languages across the 23 Local Government Areas (LGAs)[3] of the state. This is because the existing overviews contain little or no data on the linguistic features of the languages. It notes that Rivers State is a multilingual state in which 28 native or indigenous languages are spoken, and that the languages fall into two major sub-families (Benue-Congo and Ijoid) within the Niger-Congo phylum. With relevant data, the paper highlights and illustrates some of the interesting linguistic characteristics of the languages, which include advanced tongue root vowel harmony, noun classification via noun prefixes and noun classifiers, inclusive-exclusive distinction in personal pronouns, sex gender, verbal extensions, serial verb constructions and subject and/or object agreement marking. Furthermore, the paper considers the distribution of Rivers State languages and notes that the languages are not evenly distributed across the LGAs, and that many indigenous people of the state are bilingual or multilingual in the languages of the state. Finally, the paper notes that despite the enabling national and state policies and laws favouring mother-tongue education, Rivers State languages have not actively been used at the levels stipulated by the policies and laws. It recommends the enforcement and implementation of existing laws and policies so that the indigenous languages of the state are used at the levels stipulated by the National Policy on Education for the benefit of the citizens, state and country.

Keywords: Rivers State languages, multilingualism, advanced tongue root vowel harmony, noun classification, sex gender, mother-tongue education

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[3]. The following abbreviations are used in this paper: 1Pl = first person plural, 1PlS = first person plural subject, 1SG = first person singular, 1SgS = first person singular subject, 3Sg = third person singular, 3SgMSCL = third person singular masculine subject clitic, 3SgSCL = third person singular subject clitic, CL = classifier, DEF = definite, DF = definite future, excl. = exclusive, FE = factative enclitic, fem. = feminine, GEN = general tense marker, inan. = inanimate, incl. = inclusive, INF = infinitive, LGA = local government area, LOC = locative, masc. = masculine, NSM = non-interrogative sentence marker, O = object, OM = object marker, PAST = past, PE = perfect enclitic, PERF = perfect, PRES = present, S = subject, SVC = serial verb construction, V = verb.

1. Introduction

Rivers State, sometimes simply referred to as Rivers, is one of the 36 states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It was created on 27 May, 1967.[4] The state is located in the southern part of Nigeria and has a population of 5,198,716 million people (National Population Commission, 2006). Administratively, it is divided into 23 LGAs (see Table 1), and has Port Harcourt as its capital. Rivers is a multilingual and multicultural state, which is representative of the ethno-linguistic and cultural diversity of the Nigerian nation (cf. Williamson, 1980, p. 82; Kari, 2002). No fewer than 28 native or indigenous languages[5] are spoken in the state, and they are scattered across its 23 LGAs. Other languages spoken in the state, in addition to the number indicated above, are English and Nigerian Pidgin.

The broad objective of this paper is to provide an overview of the languages and dialects of Rivers State and their linguistic classification. From the outset, it is important to acknowledge that this paper is not the first attempt to identify and classify the languages and dialects of Rivers State. Previous attempts include Williamson (1980), Ndimele and Williamson (2002) and Ndimele, Kari and Ayuwo (2009). Incidentally, these previous attempts provide an overview of the languages with little or no data to illustrate the linguistic features of the languages. The specific objectives of the paper are to provide updated information on the number, linguistic classification and features of the languages or groups of languages, show the distribution of the languages across the different LGAs, and illustrate each of the interesting linguistic features of the languages or groups of languages with ample and relevant data and references, which are lacking in the existing overviews of the languages. The use of ample and relevant data and references to illustrate the interesting linguistic features of the languages are some of the things that make this paper unique and interesting. Most of the data in this paper are sourced from existing materials on the languages and are duly acknowledged. Data whose sources are not indicated are based on the present author's knowledge of the languages in question.

The paper is divided into eight sections. Section one provides information regarding the number of Rivers State languages and dialects and the distribution of the languages and dialects. It also highlights the objectives of the paper. In section two, the paper provides some background information in respect of what has been done on the languages of the state. In section three, the distinction between language and dialect and the justification for what is referred to as languages of Rivers State are discussed.

[4.] Communities in the present Bayelsa State of Nigeria were part of Rivers State before Bayelsa State was carved out from Rivers State on 1 October, 1996.

[5.] The term "'native' or 'indigenous' languages" is used here to refer to any language spoken in Rivers State that falls or may fall within the linguistic groups (see section 4) into which Rivers State languages are classified (cf. Williamson, 1989a, 1989b; Williamson and Blench, 2000; Ndimele, Kari and Ayuwo, 2009). The term thus excludes English, which is the official language of the country, and Nigerian Pidgin, which is a hybrid or mixed language derived mainly from Nigerian languages and English.

Section four discusses the linguistic classification of Rivers State languages. The general linguistic profiles of the languages or groups of languages are discussed in section five. Section six focuses on language use in Rivers State. Recommendations in respect of language use and implementation of policies are discussed in section seven. In section eight, which is the conclusion, the main points of the paper are presented.

2. Background Information on the Study of Rivers State Languages

Attempts have been made to identify and classify the languages of Rivers State. Williamson (1980) identifies 27 languages, including Igbo-Igbani,[6] but excluding Bille and Tẹẹ, while Ndimele and Williamson (2002) identify 25, including Igbo and Ọchịchị but excluding Aḅureni (Mini), Kụgbọ and Ogbogolo. They categorise Iḅanị-Igbo and Ndọkị as forms of Igbo and Bille as differing only in some respects from Kalaḅarị. Ndimele, Kari and Ayuwo (2009) discuss 17 languages, excluding the Igboid and Kegboid (Ogoni) languages because their focus was on the languages spoken by the Ijaw people (of Nigeria) located in the states of Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta, Edo, Ondo and Rivers. Hitherto, works on linguistic classifications have not listed Bille, Igbo-Igbani or Iḅanị-Igbo and Ndọkị as distinct languages (cf. Williamson, 1989a, 1989b; Williamson and Blench, 2000).

The Government of Rivers State of Nigeria (2006) recognises 24 indigenous languages of the state, excluding Bille, Iḅanị-Igbo, Nkọrọọ and Ogbogolo. It lumps together Aḅureni and Kụgbọ and refers to them as Aḅureni (Kugbo). Linguistically, Aḅureni (Mini) and Kụgbọ are considered two separate languages (see Figure 1). Therefore, this linguistic classification, which considers Aḅureni (Mini) and Kụgbọ as separate languages, is upheld in this paper.

The number of indigenous languages of Rivers State this paper identifies is 28, contra Government of Rivers State of Nigeria (2006, p. A11f). The languages, listed in alphabetical order, are Abuan[7], Aḅureni (Mini), Baan-Ogoi, Bille, Defaka, Degema, Egbema, Echie, Ẹkpẹyẹ, Eleme, Ẹngẹnnị, Gokana, Iḅanị, Ikwere, Kalaḅarị, Kana, Kịrịkẹ, Kụgbọ, Ndọkị, Ndọnị, Nkọrọọ, Obolo, Obulom, Oḍual, Ogbah, Ogbogolo, Ogbronụagum (Bukuma) and Tẹẹ. The geographical locations of the languages are shown in Figure 1. Incidentally, Bille, Echie, Egbema and Ndọkị are not shown on the map (see Figure 1).

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6.   Varieties of Igbo consisting of a mixture of Igbo as superstrate and Iḅanị as substrate are spoken in Bonny and Opobo communities. Some linguists prefer to use the terms "Bonny-Igbo" and "Opobo-Igbo" to refer to them (Ebitare Obikudo, Personal Communication).

7.   It is worthy of mention that many of the indigenous languages of the state do not have much written in or on them. Among the languages that have relatively been documented are Abuan, Degema, Echie, Kalaḅarị, Kana, Oḍual and Ogbronụagum.
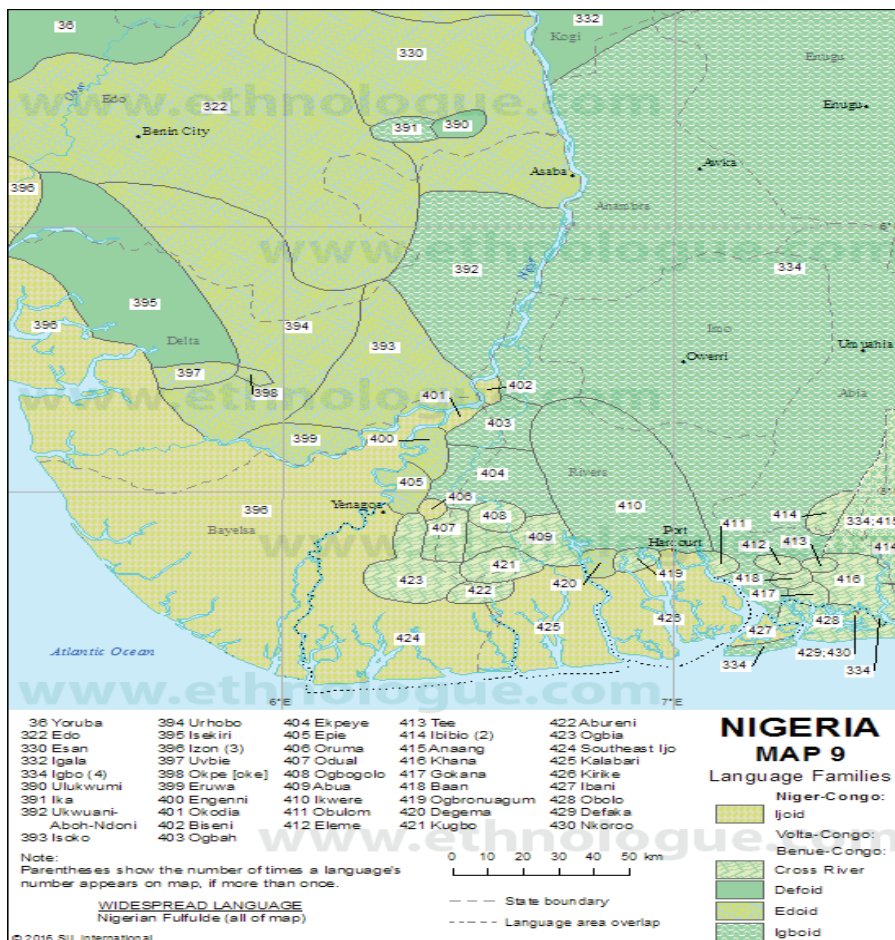
Figure 1: Map Showing the Geographical Locations of Rivers State Languages (Lewis, Simons and Fennig, 2016)

The distribution of indigenous languages of Rivers State in the different 23 LGAs is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Languages of Rivers State spoken in different LGAs

Local Government Areas	Language(s) Spoken
Abua/Odual	Abuan, Aḅureni (Mini), Kụgbọ, Oḍual
Ahoada East	Ẹkpẹyẹ
Ahoada West	Ẹkpẹyẹ, Ẹngẹnnị (Ẹgẹnẹ), Ogbogolo
Akuku-Toru	Kalaḅarị
Andoni	Obolo

	Asari-Toru	Kalaḅari̥
	Bonny	Iḅani̥
	Degema	Ḅille, Degema, Kalaḅari̥, Ogbronu̥agum
	Eleme	Baan-Ogoi, Eleme
	Emohua	Ikwere
	Etche[8]	Echie
	Gokana	Baan-Ogoi, Gokana
	Ikwerre	Ikwere
	Khana	Kana
	Obio/Akpor	Ikwere
	Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni	Egbema, Ndo̥ni̥, Ogbah
	Ogu/Bolo	Ki̥ri̥ke̥
	Okrika	Ki̥ri̥ke̥
	Omumma	Echie
	Opobo/Nkoro	Defaka, Iḅani̥, Nko̥ro̥o̥
	Oyigbo	Ndo̥ki̥
	Port Harcourt	Ikwere, Kalaḅari̥, Ki̥ri̥ke̥, Obulom
	Tai	Baan-Ogoi, Ṭe̥e̥

The information in Table 1 shows that many of the LGAs have only one indigenous language. For example, Ahoada East, Akuku-Toru and Andoni have only E̥kpe̥ye̥, Kalaḅari̥ and Obolo respectively as their languages. In some instances, one language is spoken in two or more LGAs. This is the case in Akuku-Toru and Asari-Toru, Emohua, Ikwerre and Obio/Akpor, and Ogu/Bolo and Okrika LGAs, for instance, which have Kalaḅari̥, Ikwere and Ki̥ri̥ke̥ respectively as their languages. Interestingly, some LGAs have two or more languages spoken therein. This scenario is exemplified by Abua/Odual, Ahoada West, Degema, Gokana, Opobo/Nkoro and Port Harcourt LGAs. Whereas two languages (Baan-Ogoi and Gokana) are found in Gokana LGA, as many as four languages are found in Abua/Odual (Abuan, Aḅureni (Mini), Ku̥gbo̥ and Odual), Degema (Ḅille, Degema, Kalaḅari̥ and Ogbronu̥agum) and Port Harcourt (Ikwere, Kalaḅari̥, Ki̥ri̥ke̥ and Obulom,) LGAs. Thus Abua/Odual, Degema and Port Harcourt LGAs boast the highest number of languages in the 23 LGAs of the state.

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8.   In addition to Echie, the O̥chi̥chi̥ language is reportedly spoken by the Umuebulu and Ikwerengwo communities in Etche LGA. Sadly, the O̥chi̥chi̥ language is now moribund, as its speakers have completely shifted to Echie (cf. Achonwa, 1981; Ndimele, 2003; Ndimele, Kari and Ayuwo, 2009).

Some of the languages of Rivers State have dialects. In Table 2, I present a list of such languages with their dialects.

Table 2: Rivers State Languages With Dialects

Languages	Dialects
Abuan	Central Abuan, Ẹmụghạn, Okpeden, Ọtạphạ (Ọtạbhạ)
Baan-Ogoi	Ka-Ban, Kesari
Degema	Ạtạḷạ, Usokun
Echie	Akpọkụ, Central Echie, Egbu/Ọgịdha, Ihie, Isu/Ọzụzụ, Mba, Ndashị, Obite/Igbodho, Ọmụma, Ọwụ, Ụmụoye
Ẹkpẹyẹ	Ako, Igbuduya, Ubẹye, Upata
Eleme	Nchia, Odido
Ẹngẹnnị	Ediro, Inedua, Ogua, Zarama
Gokana	Bodo, Bomu, Dere, Kibangha
Ikwerre	Akpabụ, Akpọ, Akpo-Mgbu-Tolu, Alụụ, Apanị, Egbedna, Elele, Ẹmọwhụa, Igwuruta, Ipo, Isiokpo, Ndele, Obele/Ibaa, Ọbịọ, Ọdegnụ, Ọgbakịrị, Omademe, Ọmagwna, Omerelu, Ọmụanwa, Ọmụdịoga, Ozuaha, Rumuekpe, Rumuji, Ubima, Ubumini
Kana	Babbe, Boúe, Ken-Khana, Norkhana, Nyo-Kana, Yeghe
Obolo	Ataba, Ibot Obolo, Ngo, Okoroete, Unyeada,
Oḍual	Aḍibom, Ạrụghụnyạ
Ogbah	Egnih, Igburu, Usomini

(Adapted from Ndimele and Williamson, 2002, p. 152ff; Simons and Fennig, 2017)

Table 2 shows that Abuan, Baan-Ogoi, Degema, Echie, Ẹkpẹyẹ, Eleme, Ẹngẹnnị, Gokana, Ikwere, Kana, Obolo, Oḍual and Ogbah are the only languages of the state that have dialects. Table 2 also shows that Ikwere has the highest number of dialects among the languages of the state. Rivers State languages that have no dialects are Aḅureni (Mini), Ḅille, Defaka, Egbema, Iḅanị, Kalaḅari, Kịrịkẹ, Kụgbọ, Ndọkị, Ndọnị, Nkọrọọ, Obulom, Ogbogolo, Ogbronụagum (Ḅukuma) and Tẹẹ.

3. Language vs. Dialect Dichotomy

Twenty-eight indigenous languages of Rivers State were listed in section two. It is necessary to clarify the difference between language and dialect – two terms that are often confused or misunderstood by non-linguists – and justify what is referred to as a language (and dialect) of Rivers State in this paper. The difference between them lies in the fact that two or more languages are usually not mutually intelligible but that dialects are, in most cases, because they are variations of the same language.

It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between language and dialect. The

distinction between the two terms could be complicated by politics, geography, shared writing systems, attitudes of speakers or a combination of these factors. This point is vividly illustrated by the case of Serbo-Croatian speakers in former Yugoslavia who claim that they speak different languages (Serbian and Croatian), even though they understand one another (cf. Wardhaugh and Fuller, 2015, p. 30f). Similarly, Cantonese and Mandarin speakers in China claim that they speak dialects of the same language (Chinese), even though they do not understand themselves, except that both languages have a common writing system (cf. Wardhaugh and Fuller, 2015, p. 31f).

What I consider Rivers State languages in this paper are speech forms that are mutually unintelligible, such as Degema and Kalaḅari, and those that have some degree of mutual intelligibility with other speech forms in other parts of the country but which by virtue of their being geographically located in Rivers State are deemed languages of the state. This latter case is exemplified by Ndọni, which has some degree of mutual intelligibility with Ukwuani and Aboh (spoken in Delta State of Nigeria). Ndoni, Ukwuani and Aboh are speech forms that are closely related to Igbo.

Linguistically, Ndọni is regarded as a dialect of the Ukwuani-Aboh-Ndoni language cluster (see Figure 1, language No. 392). However, by virtue of geographical location and politics, Ndọni is considered a language of Rivers State, not a dialect of the Ukwuani-Aboh-Ndoni language cluster. Similarly, Ḅille is listed in this paper as one of the languages of Rivers State because its native speakers consider themselves and their speech form distinct from the Kalabari people and their language (Kalaḅari). As noted earlier, the attitudes of speakers of a given speech form are sometimes factored into what is considered a language or dialect, especially from a sociolinguistic point of view.

4.   Linguistic Classification of Rivers State Languages[9]

All the languages of Rivers State and their dialects belong to the Niger-Congo phylum, the biggest language family in Africa, which covers most of West, Central, Southeast and Southern Africa. Within the Niger-Congo phylum, Rivers State languages are grouped into two sub-families – Benue-Congo and Ijoid. The languages under Benue-Congo sub-family are Abuan, Aḅureni, Baan-Ogoi, Degema, Egbema, Echie, Ẹkpẹye, Eleme, Ẹngenni, Gokana, Ikwere, Kana, Kụgbọ, Ndọki, Ndọni, Obolo, Obulom, Oḍual, Ogbah, Ogbogolo, Ogbronụagum and Tẹe, while those under Ijoid are Ḅille,[10] Defaka, Ịḅani, Kalaḅari, Kịrịke and Nkọrọọ.

The Benue-Congo sub-family is subdivided into West Benue-Congo and East Benue-Congo. Rivers State languages that belong to West Benue-Congo are Degema, Ẹngenni, Egbema, Echie, Ẹkpẹye, Ikwere, Ndọki,[11] Ndọni and

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9.   For a detailed discussion and graphic linguistic classification of these languages, see Williamson (1989a, 1989b); Ndimele and Williamson (2002); Williamson and Blench (2000).

10.   Ḅille may also be listed here and elsewhere in the sub-classification of Ijoid languages, since it is considered a language spoken in Rivers State.

11.   Like Ḅille, Ndọki may also be listed here and elsewhere in the sub-classification of West Benue-Congo languages, since it is considered a language spoken in Rivers State.

Ogbah, while those that belong to East Benue-Congo are Abuan, Aḅureni, Baan-Ogoi, Eleme, Gokana, Kana, Kụgbọ, Obolo, Obulom, Oḍual, Ogbogolo, Ogbronụagum and Tẹẹ. Furthermore, West Benue-Congo is sub-divided into Edoid and Igboid, while East Benue-Congo is sub-divided into Central Delta[12] and Cross River. Degema and Ẹngẹnnị belong to Edoid while Egbema, Echie, Ẹkpẹyẹ, Ikwere, Ndọki, Ndọnị and Ogbah belong to Igboid. Languages that belong to Central Delta are Abuan, Aḅureni, Kụgbọ, Obulom, Oḍual, Ogbogolo and Ogbronụagum. The Rivers State languages of Baan-Ogoi, Eleme, Gokana, Kana and Tẹẹ belong to a sub-division of Cross River known as Kegboid (Ogoni), while the Obolo language belongs to a sub-division of Cross River called Lower Cross.

The sub-family of Ijoid is further divided into Defaka and Ịjọ. Whereas Defaka is on its own as a sub-division of Ijoid, Ḅille, Ịḅanị, Kalaḅarị, Kịrịkẹ and Nkọrọọ belong to a sub-division of Ịjọ known as East Ịjọ. A family tree showing the classification of Rivers State languages is presented in Figure 2.
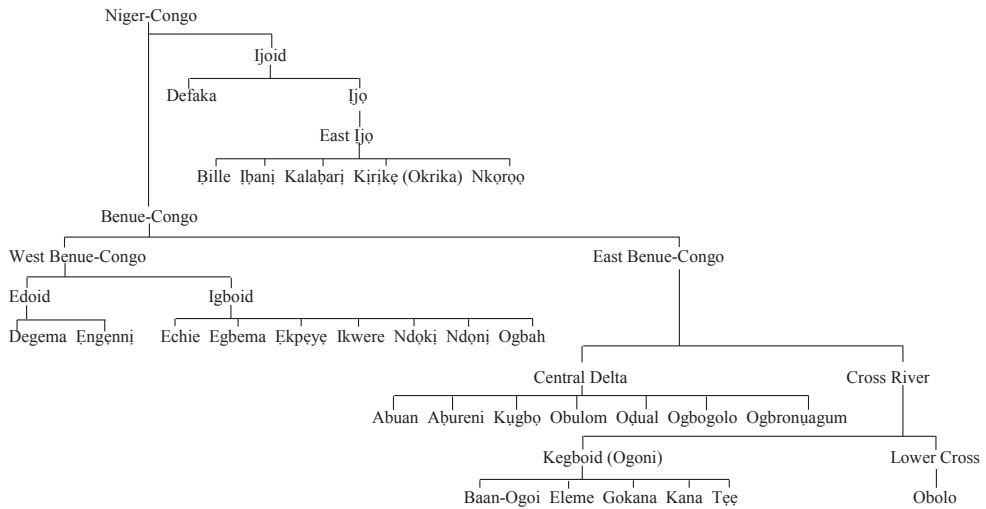

Figure 2: A Family Tree Summarising the Classification of Rivers State Languages (Adapted from Williamson and Blench, 2000, p. 18ff)

5. Linguistic Features of Rivers State Languages

In this section, I discuss some of the interesting general linguistic features of Rivers State languages. The linguistic features are categorized into phonological (related to the sound systems of individual languages), morphological (related to word structure), and syntactic (related to phrase, clause or sentence structure). I will begin by discussing the phonological features of the languages.

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12. The Central Delta languages are classified as a sub-group of Cross River (cf. Faraclas, 1989; Williamson 1989b; Williamson and Blench, 2000). However, recently Connell, Villa and Nara (2015) and Connell (2016) posit that these languages do not belong to Cross River but comprise a group that is older than Bantoid Cross and coordinate with Jukunoid, Platoid, etc. within the East Benue-Congo sub-family.

5.1. Phonological Profile of Rivers State Languages

Three interesting phonological features discussed in this sub-section are vowels, consonants and tone. Rivers State languages have vowel systems that range from six to twenty. Whereas Obolo is reported as having six vowels /i, e, a, ɔ, o, u/[13] (Williamson, 1984), Degema has ten vowels /i, ɪ, e, ɛ, a, ə̣, ɔ, o̤, ʊ, u/ (Thomas and Williamson, 1967), Kalaḅaṛị has eighteen vowels /i, ĩ, ɪ, ɪ̃, e, ẽ, ɛ, ɛ̃, a, ã ɔ, ɔ̃, o, õ, ʊ, ʊ̃, u, ũ/ (Harry, 2016), while Abuan (Gardner, 1980), Obulom (Ngeripaka, 2000), Oḍual (Kari, 2009) and Ogbogolo (Olibie, 1994; Francstan, 1995) have twenty vowels each /i, ii, ɪ, ɪɪ, e, ee, ɛ, ɛɛ, a, aa ə, əə, ɔ, ɔɔ, o, oo, ʊ, ʊʊ, u, uu/. This is contrary to Ndimele and Williamson's (2002, p. 168) claim that the Central Delta languages to which Abuan, Obulom, Oḍual and Ogbogolo belong have ten oral vowels. The presence of phonemically long vowels is characteristic of Central Delta languages, such as Oḍual, as shown in (1a), while the presence of phonemically nasalized vowels is characteristic of Igboid, Ijoid and Ogoni languages, as shown in (1b) and (1c).

(1a)   **ɔgá**   'egg'   (Oḍual: Gardner et al., 1974, p. 6)
        ɔ́ɔ́gá   'shrimp'

(b)   **sá**   'debt'   (Kalaḅaṛị)
        sã́   'urine'

(c)   **kɔ̄**   'to say'   (Kana: Williamson, 1984, p. 21)
        kɔ̃̄   'fodder'

Another very interesting phonological feature associated with the vowel systems of Rivers State languages is the phenomenon of (advanced tongue root) vowel harmony. In languages, such as Degema and Oḍual, which have ten and twenty vowels respectively, the vowels are symmetrically divided into two sets, wide or expanded and narrow or non-expanded, such that in most simple words, only vowels belonging to a given set can be found. In other words, it is not common to have vowels drawn from both sets in a simple word, except they are compound or newly borrowed words. The following pairs of words illustrate the phenomenon of vowel harmony in Degema (2a) and Oḍual (2b) respectively:

(2a)   **ɔɓʊ**[14]   'native doctor'   (vowels from narrow or non-expanded set)
        oɓú   'skate (fish)'   (vowels from wide or expanded set)

(b)   **ɛmʊ́**   'head'   (vowels from narrow or non-expanded set)
        əlivó   'rat'   (vowels from wide or expanded set)

Rivers State languages have phonemic consonant systems that range from twenty-two to forty. Obulom is reported as having twenty-two phonemic

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13.   All the language data in this paper are transcribed in phonetic symbols that have International
       Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) values.

14.   In this paper, low tone is unmarked in the data on Rivers State languages, for the sake of
       convenience.

consonants (Ngeripaka, 2000). Kalaḅarị has twenty-three phonemic consonants /m, n, p, b, t, d, ɓ, ɗ, k, g, kp, gb, tʃ, dʒ, r, f, v, s, z, l, j, w, h/ (Harry, 2016, p. 222), Degema (/m, n, ɲ, ŋ, ŋʷ, p, b, t, d, ɓ, ɗ, k, g, kp, gb, dʒ (z)[15], r, β (v), f, s, h, l, j, w/ (Kari, 1997, p. 9)) and Oḍual (/m, n, ɲ, ŋʷ, p, b, t, d, k, g, kp, gb, ɓ, ɗ, r, β, f, v, s, z, ɣ, l, j, w/ (Kari, 2009, p. 6ff) have twenty-four, Kana has twenty-five /m, n, ɲ, ŋ, ŋʷ, p, b, t, d, k, kʷ, g, gʷ, kp, gb, ʔ, dʒ, r, f, s, z, h, l, j, w/ (Ikoro, 1996), Abuan has twenty-six /m, n, ɲ, ŋ, ŋm, p, b, t, d, ɓ, ɗ, k, g, kp, gb, dʒ, r, β, f, v, s, z, ɣ, l, j, w/ (Kari and Joshua, 2011, p. 7),[16] while Echie has forty phonemic consonants /m, n, ɲ, ŋ, ŋʷ, p, pʰ, b, bʰ, t, tʰ, d, dʰ, k, kʷ, kʷʰ, kʰ, g, gʷ, gʷʰ, gʰ, β̃, ɓ, r, r̃, tʃ, tʃʰ, dʒ, dʒʰ, f, s, z, ʒ, ɣ, h, h̃, h̃ʷ, l, j, w/ (Ndimele, 2011, p. 14f).

Among the many interesting features of the consonant systems of Rivers State languages are consonant harmony and consonant alternation. Kalaḅarị (Jenewari, 1977, p. 68) has a type of consonant harmony in which voiced implosives [ɓ, ɗ] harmonize and voiced plosives [b, d] also harmonize in a simple word. Similar to our observation in respect of vowel harmony, consonant harmony of the type noted here requires that only voiced implosives or voiced plosives go together in a simple word, as the following pairs of Kalaḅarị words in (3a) and (3b) taken from Jenewari (1977, p. 68f) show:

(3a)	**ɓaɓa**	'calabash'
	ɗáɓá	'lake'
(b)	**bébé**	'whole'
	dede	'morning'

One interesting feature of Central Delta language as far as consonant systems are concerned is the alternation between certain pairs of consonants. In Ogbronụagum and Oḍual, alternations are observed to occur in words between the following pairs of consonants: [t] and [r] and [k] and [ɣ], depending on their position in the words in which they occur. It is observed that the consonants [t] and [k] occur word-initially in imperatives in Ogbronụagum, as in (4a), and Oḍual, as in (4b):

(4a)	**túu**	'come!'	(Ogbronụagum: Kari, 2000, p. 28f)
	kɛrʊ	'dance!'	
(b)	**telé**	'walk!'	(Oḍual: Kari, 2009, p. 10f)
	kíír	'dance!'	

However, when these consonants occur between vowels in these languages, such as when they are preceded by an infinitive vowel prefix, [t] becomes [r] and [k] becomes [ɣ] in Ogbronụagum, as in (5a), and in Oḍual, as in (5b) (cf. Kari, 2017, p. 9f):

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15.   In the Degema language, /dʒ/ and /z/, and /β/ and /v/ are dialectal variants. Whereas /v/ and /z/ are associated with the Aṭạla dialect, /dʒ/ and /β/ are associated with the Usokun dialect.

16.   For a detailed inventory of the vowel and consonant systems of Rivers State languages, see Ndimele and Williamson (2002, p. 161ff).

(5a)   **ərí-rúu**   'to come'   (Ogbronʋagum: Kari, 2000, p. 28f)

          arí-ɣɛ́ɛrʋ   'to dance'

(b)   **ó-rélé**   'to walk'   (Oḍual: Kari, 2009, p. 10f)

          ɔ́-ɣíír   'to dance'

Tone is another interesting phonological characteristic of Rivers State languages. In all Rivers State languages, the pitch of the voice can be used to distinguish words, phrases and sentences whose segmental compositions are otherwise the same. In other words, there is a correlation between variations in the pitch of the voice and the meanings of words, phrases and sentences, as in the pair of Kana words (6a), taken from Williamson (1984, p. 41) and in the pair of Degema words in (6b):

(6a)   **bṹ**   'bush baby'   (high tone)

          bṵ̀   'bow'   (low tone)

          bṵ̃   'door'   (mid tone)

(b)   **tɪrɛ́**   'pet (someone/something)'   (low (high) tone)

          tí⁺rɛ́   'day'   (downstepped-high tone)

The correlation between variations in the pitch of the voice and the meanings of sentences is illustrated by the Degema statement/question pair of the sentences in (7a) and (7b):

(7a)   **ɔjɪ**   **mɔ́-mɛ́sɛ́**.
          he   3SgSCL-sleep
          'He is sleeping'

(b)   **ɔjɪ**   **mɔ-mɛsɛ**.
          he   3SgSCL-sleep
          'Is he sleeping?'

The tones that are attested in Rivers State languages include high (´), mid (¯), low (`), and downstepped-high tone (a phonetically lowered high tone in the environment of a preceding floating low tone represented with an arrow pointing downwards between two high-toned syllables σ́⁺σ́).

5.2. Morphological Profile of Rivers State Languages

Some of the interesting morphological features of Rivers State languages are found in their nominal and verbal systems. The nominal systems of many languages of the state are characterized by noun classification via a system of prefixes, pronominal systems distinguishing between inclusive and exclusive pronouns, case marking and natural or sex gender. The classification of nouns via a system of prefixes attached to noun stems is a defining feature of Delta Edoid and Central Delta languages. In Degema (Elugbe, 1976) and Oḍual (Kari, 2007), for instance, nouns are put in various semantic classes, such as animate, human, man-made objects, human relationships and plants, based on the

alternating singular and plural prefixes attached to noun stems. Tables 3 and 4 illustrate noun classifications via prefixes in Degema and Oḍual respectively.

Table 3. Noun Classification in Degema Based on U-/A- and E-/I- Genders

Gender U-/A						
(a) parts of the body						
u-tóm	'head'	ə-		**ʊ-βɛ́**	'fingernail'	a-
u-ɗúm	'navel'	ə-		**ʊ́-sása**	'gill'	á-
(b) human relationships						
ʊ́-⁺βírɛ	'friendship'	á-		**ú-⁺dónə**	'in-law'	ə́-
ʊ-ɗɔ́m	'marriage'	a-		**ʊ́-⁺gá**	'lover'	á-
(c) plant parts						
u-tún	'fruit'	ə́-		**ʊ-ɓí**	'leaf'	a-
ʊ-sɪnɛ́	'root'	a-		**ʊ-kpaŋgí**	'branch'	a-
Gender E-/I-						
(a) animals						
ɛ-kpɛ́	'leopard'	ɪ-		**ɛ-fɛ́n**	'bird'	ɪ-
e-sén	'fish'	i-		**e-ŋʷén**	'monkey'	i-
(b) man-made objects						
ɛ-sɔ́⁺wá	'hoe'	ɪ-		**e-gbugbú**	'axe'	i-
ɛ-bɪrɛ́	'bag'	ɪ-		**ɛ-lɛgɛ́**	'knife'	ɪ-

(Adapted from Elugbe, 1976, p. 227f)

Table 4. Noun Classification in Oḍual Based on the A(A)-/ArA- and O(O)-/I- Genders

Gender A(A)-/ArA-						
(a) man-made objects						
u-tóm	'paint'	ara-		**ə́-lééɲ**	'garden'	ə́rə́-
əə-kpó	'ladle'	ərə-		**ə-gúməgúm**	'guitar'	ərə-
Gender O(O)-/I-						
(b) things/people with special status						
o-teledəm	'servant'	i-		**ɔ-tazá**	'hunter'	ɪ-
oo-ɗim	'corpse'	i-		**oó-βé⁺éɲ**	'useless person'	i-
ɔ-kpaná	'oldest son'	ɪ-		**o-biɔ́**	'baby nurse'	i-

(Adapted from Kari, 2007, p. 525ff)

In Central Delta languages, such as Abuan (Gardner, 1980) and Oḍual (Kari, 2009), inclusive-exclusive distinction in the forms of first person plural personal pronouns is lexically marked. This lexical distinction ensures that there is no confusion in terms of whether the reference of "We" includes or excludes the hearer. In Oḍual, the first person plural pronominal form **ezirɔ́** is used when the reference includes the hearer, while the form **ézɔ́ɔ́r** is used when the reference excludes the hearer, as shown in (8a) and (8b):

(8a)   **ezírə́**   **nóo-rú.**
         1plS   1p1.PRES PERF-come
         'We (incl.) have come'

(b)   **ézə́ə́r**   **nóo-rú**.
         1plS   1p1.PRES PERF-come
         'We (excl.) have come'

There is also morphological case marking in nouns in Oḍual whereby nouns are respectively marked for accusative and locative cases with **m-** attached to nouns that occur in object position and **t-** attached to nouns to indicate location (Kari, 2009, p. 16), as (9a) and (9b) show:

(9a)   **aamı**   **ú-ɣəə́**   **m-ɔ́βέrέέr**.
         1SgS   1SG.PAST-buy   OM-book
         'I bought a book'

(b)   **aamı**   **ú-ruú**   **mo-ɣɛɛl**   **t-ó⁺tú**.
         1SgS   1SG.PAST-want   INF-go   LOC-house
         'I wanted to go home'

A distinguishing feature of the nominal systems of Ijoid languages is the presence of a gender system whereby nouns and pronouns are marked for animacy and biological sex. In Kalaḅaṛi, for instance (Jenewari, 1977), a distinction is made between the nouns in (10) in respect of animacy and biological sex gender:

(10a)   **ówíɓɔ́**   **⁺ɓé**   'the man'
         man   DEF (masc.)

(b)   **ɛrɛɓɔ́**   **⁺má**   'the woman'
         woman   DEF (fem.)

(c)   **ɓɛ́lɛ́**   **mɛ́**   'the cooking pot'
         cooking   DEF (inan.)

The forms of the definite article **ɓe**, **ma** and **mɛ** indicate, among other things, that the nouns **ówíɓɔ́** 'man', **ɛrɛɓɔ́** 'woman' and **ɓɛ́lɛ́** 'cooking pot' are male (masculine), female (feminine) and neuter/inanimate respectively.

        The verb morphology of many Rivers State languages is characterized by the presence of verbal extensions. In Degema and the Central Delta languages of Abuan, Obulom and Ogbogolo, for instance, these extensions mainly occur as suffixes attached to verb stems to modify the lexical meaning of verbs without necessarily changing the lexical class of such verbs into say nouns, adjectives or adverbs. In the following pairs of words in Abuan (11a) and Degema (11b) respectively, the forms **-ɔ́** and **-sɛ́** are verbal extensions in these two languages:

(11a)   **búr**   'cover'
         búr-ɔ́   'cover oneself'

(b)   **mɛsɛ́**   'sleep'
         mɛsɛ-sɛ́   'cause to sleep'

The varieties of meanings expressed by extensional suffixes in Rivers State

languages include causative, reflexive, reciprocal, iterative, benefactive, associative, instrumental and accompaniment. Table 5 illustrates the range of meanings expressed by these suffixes in three Rivers State languages: Abuan, Degema and Obulom.

Table 5. Extensional Suffixes in Abuan, Degema and Obulom

Meaning	Abuan	Degema	Obulom
Causative	**-E** **bɛɛɲ-ɛ́** 'cause to cross'	**-EsE** **mɛsɛ-sɛ́** 'cause to sleep'	-
Reflexive	**-A** **búr-ɔ́** 'cover oneself'	**-EnE** **ɓun-ené** 'break itself'	-
Iterative	-[17]	**-βIrIj** **dɪ-βɪrɪ́j** 'eat many times'	**-(V)jAn** **pɛm-ɪján** 'jump about'
Reciprocal	-	**-EŋInE** **nó-βɛŋɪné** 'hit each other'	-
Benefactive	**-(v)nAAn** **pam-anáán** 'hold for'	-	-
Instrumental	**-Om̩** **lɔɣ-ɔm** 'put with'	-	-
Accompaniment	**-mOm** **tu-móm** 'come with'	-	-
Associative	**-An** **tuɣ-ən** 'live together'	-	**-(V)jAn** **lom-iján** 'bite together'

5.3. Syntactic Profile of Rivers State Languages

Languages of Rivers State also have interesting syntactic features. Four of them, highlighted in this paper, are word order, serial verb constructions, subject agreement marking and noun classifiers.[18] All Rivers State languages, except the Ijoid languages, have a subject-verb-object (SVO) basic word order. Unlike other Rivers State languages, Ijoid languages have a subject-object-verb (SOV) basic word order. Because of the differences in word order, Ijoid languages have postpositions while other Rivers State languages have prepositions. Examples (12a) and (13a) illustrate basic word order in Kana (East Benue-Congo) and Kalaḅarị (Ijoid), while (12b) and (13b) illustrate prepositions and postpositions in these languages:

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[17]. A dash in Table 5 indicates that a given verbal extension is not attested in the language in question.

[18]. Ndimele and Williamson (2002) do not mention or discuss the four syntactic features, neither do they mention or discuss any other syntactic features of Rivers State languages. Although Ndimele, Kari and Ayuwo (2009) mention word order and subject agreement marking, among other features, no reference is made to the presence of serial verb constructions, which is a common syntactic feature of Rivers State languages, and classifier systems, which are characteristic of Ogoni languages, such as Kana. Furthermore, although Ndimele, Kari and Ayuwo (2009) mention word order and subject agreement marking, they did not provide any linguistic data to exemplify or illustrate these features, which are amply exemplified in this paper.

(12a)   **ba**   **é-sú**   **jɛ̄**.
        they   DF-take   him
        S   V   O
        'They will take him' (Williamson, 1984:49)

(b)   **ba**   **lē**   **nɔ̃ɔ̃**   **té**.[19]
        they   be   on   tree
        'They are on a tree'

(13a)   **gogó**   **wá⁺rí**   **námá**-árɪ.
        Gogo   house   build-GEN
        S   O   V
        'Gogo is building a house' (Jenewari, 1977:119)

(b)   **ori**   **ásárí**   **ɓí⁺ó**   **émí**   **⁺í**.
        he   Asari   inside   be   NSM
        'He is in Asari' (Jenewari, 1977:159)

In (12b), the element **nɔ̃ɔ̃** 'on' in Kana is a preposition, while in (13b) **ɓí⁺ó** 'inside' in Kalaḅaṛi is a postposition. Whereas **nɔ̃ɔ̃** appears before the noun **té** because Kana is an SVO language, **ɓí⁺ó** appears after the noun **ásárɪ** because Kalaḅaṛi is an SOV language.

Another interesting syntactic feature of Rivers State languages, though not mentioned or discussed by Ndimele and Williamson (2002) and Ndimele, Kari and Ayuwo (2009), is the presence of serial verb constructions (SVCs). In Rivers State languages, verbs may occur in series without being linked by any overt connective morpheme. The verbs in series also may share a common surface subject and may share one or more tense, aspect and polarity markers. Example (14) illustrates the SVC in Degema:

(14)   **eni**   **e=síré**   **tá**   **ɗɛ́=n**   **inum**.
        we   1PlSCL-run   go   buy=FE   something
        'We ran and bought something' ('We, we ran went bought something')

The words **siré** 'run', **tá** 'go' and **ɗɛ́** 'buy' are verbs in series without an overt connective morpheme and they share one past tense marker =**n** attached to the verb **ɗɛ́** 'buy'. Among the many semantic notions expressed by serial verbs in the languages are comparative and benefactive, as examples (15) and (16) from Degema and Oḍual respectively indicate:

(15)   **breno**   **o=sóm**   **fíjé**   **wɔ́=⁺ɔ́n**.
        breno   3SgSCL=be good   be more than   you=FE
        'Breno is handsomer than you' (Kari, 2003b, p. 281)

(16)   **odí**   **á-sá**   **m-eɗiən**   **oβó**   **a-nɔ́ɣɔ́**   **áámí**.
        he   3Sg.PAST-cook   OM-food   the   3Sg.PAST-give   me
        'He cooked the food for me' (Kari, 2009, p. 74)

In the Degema example in (15), the verb **fíjé** 'be more than' marks comparative, while in the Oḍual example in (16), the verb **nɔ́ɣɔ́** 'give' marks benefactive.

Rivers State languages belonging to Central Delta, Edoid and Ijoid are

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19.   I am grateful to Dr. Suanu M. Ikoro, a native speaker of Kana, for providing me with this example and related materials.

characterized by subject agreement systems whereby the subject of the sentence is followed by an agreement clitic/marker. The agreement clitics or markers exist to preserve the identity or grammatical properties of the subject noun or pronoun even when the subject is missing or covert in declarative finite clauses. Consider the Degema and Kalaḅari examples in (17) and (18) respectively:

(17)   **ɔ́mɔ́**   **jɔ**   **o=síré=⁺té**.
        child   DEF   3SgSCL-run=PE
        'The child has run'

(18)   **ɔ=**   **wá⁺rí**   **námá-árɪ**.[20]
        3SgMSCL   house   build-GEN
        'He is building a house' (Jenewari, 1977, p. 119)

In the Degema sentence in (17), the element **o=** attached to the verb **siré** 'run' is a subject agreement clitic while in the Kalaḅari sentence in (18), the element **ɔ=** preceding the object noun **wá⁺rí** 'house' is a subject clitic. The system of subject agreement clitics or markers and other types of clitics that mark the grammatical categories of tense, aspect, mood and polarity have been well documented for Rivers State languages, such as Degema (Kari, 2003a, 2004, 2008), Kalaḅari (Jenewari, 1977), Odual (Kari, 2009) and Ogbronụagum (Kari, 2000). In the Degema sentence in (17), for instance, **=⁺té** is established as an enclitic, which marks perfect. Both subject and object agreement clitics/markers have been reported to exist in the Cross River language of Obolo (Ndimele, Kari and Ayuwo, 2009, p. 84).[21]

Noun classifiers are a common feature of the Ogoni languages, such as Baan-Ogoi, Eleme, Gokana and Kana (Ikoro, 1996). Incidentally, this interesting feature is also not mentioned or discussed by Ndimele and Williamson (2002) and Ndimele, Kari and Ayuwo (2009). Noun classifiers are words which co-occur with nouns and are used to classify them into various conceptual groups, depending on whether the nouns refer to flat, pointed, and round objects, human beings, animals, time, etc. Noun classifiers require the presence of a numeral or quantifier in the counting of nouns. The system of noun classifiers in Kana is partially represented in Table 6[22] and illustrated with the data in (19) – (22), taken from Ikoro (1996, p. 93ff).

Table 6. Noun Classifiers in Kana (Ikoro, 1996, p. 93ff)

Classifier	Conceptual Class
ŋʷíí	(for counting) young ones of animates (human/non-human)
ákpó	(for counting) inanimate objects with a trunk and liquids
ásúú	(for counting) individual items extracted from a stock or a bunch
aba	(for counting) potentially separable parts

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[20].   In this example from Jenewari (1977, p. 119), the present researcher replaced the non-topicalized subject NP, **Gogo**, with a corresponding subject clitic (cf. example (13)).

[21].   Incidentally, I did not have access to any relevant data in or on Obolo to illustrate object clitics/markers at the time of writing this paper.

[22].   For a detailed discussion of noun classifiers in Kana, see Ikoro (1994, 1996).

(19)   **zii**   **ŋʷíí**   **amūa**
        one   CL   youth:female
        'one young girl'

(20)   **lob**   **ákpó**   **tɔ̄**
        ten   CL   leg
        'ten legs'

(21)   **lob**   **ásúú**   **kpakpaa**
        ten   CL   maize
        'ten grains of maize'

(22)   **lōb**   **aba**   **kpá**
        ten   CL   book
        'ten pieces of paper'

In examples (19) – (22), the noun classifiers **ŋʷíí, ákpó, ásúú**, and **aba** combine with the numerals **zii** 'one' and **lob** 'ten' in the counting of the nouns **amūa** 'youth:female', **tɔ̄** 'leg', **kpakpaa** 'maize' and **kpá** 'book'.

6. Language Use in Rivers State

As noted earlier, Rivers State languages are scattered across the 23 LGAs of the state. Incidentally, many of the languages, such as Ḅille, Egbema, Obolo and Teẹ, are confined to the LGAs or communities in which they are spoken (cf. Afiesimama, 1995, p. 362). This situation notwithstanding, many indigenous people of Rivers State, especially those sharing borders, are bilingual. For example, many native speakers of Ogbronuagum are bilingual in Ogbronuagum and Kalaḅari. Similarly, many native speakers of Obulom are bilingual in Obulom and Ḳiṛikẹ.

> It is interesting to note that:
>
>> There does not seem to be any dominant indigenous language in Rivers State in the way that Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba are dominant and accepted in Kano, Imo and Oyo States respectively. There is no single indigenous language which can be used in addressing the people, unlike the three states mentioned above (Afiesimama, 1995, p. 362).

Nevertheless, there are some Rivers State languages that are used in radio and/ or television broadcasts. The languages include Ẹkpẹyẹ, Ikwere, Kalaḅari and Kana. Two factors that may account for the role or status accorded these four languages by the Rivers State Government are politics and population. Apart from Ẹkpẹyẹ, Ikwere, Kalaḅari and Kana, non-indigenous languages that are used in radio and television broadcasts are English and Nigerian Pidgin, which is sometimes referred to as "Special English", "Pidgin English" or "Broken English".

English is used in radio broadcasts by virtue of the fact that it is the official language of Nigeria, and the language of education at various levels. Nigerian Pidgin, though not encouraged to be used in education, is used in the media because many people (educated and non-educated) in the state understand and speak it. It is a language of wider communication that is spoken across LGAs

between people who do not speak a common language, although its impact is mostly felt in Port Harcourt LGA.

The use of indigenous languages of Rivers State as media of instruction in schools is to say the least disappointing. Shortly after the creation of Rivers State in 1967, The Rivers Readers Committee, chaired by Professor Ebiegberi J. Alagoa, and with late Professor Kay Williamson and Professor Otonti A. Nduka as members, was set up. This committee initiated the Rivers Readers Project and worked in collaboration with the Rivers State Government to design orthographies, primers and other pedagogical materials for use in schools in the various communities in the old Rivers State, which included communities in the present Bayelsa State of Nigeria. From the late 1960s up to the late 1970s, orthographies, primers and other pedagogical materials were produced for many languages of the state to encourage mother-tongue education.

The Rivers Readers Committee became moribund for various reasons, including lack of funding. It was revived in 2008 as the Rivers State Readers Project with Dr Tony Enyia as the Executive Secretary/Chief Executive Officer. Interestingly, under the new leadership, the Federal Government of Nigeria, through the National Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), approved orthographies for 17 languages of the state. This language development effort is complemented by many undergraduate and graduate long essays and theses/dissertations that have been written on different aspects of many of these languages and deposited in various Nigerian universities, especially the University of Port Harcourt.

Although there are national and state laws and policies which stipulate that the mother tongue be used in primary education (cf. Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004; Government of Rivers State of Nigeria, 2006), the use of Rivers State languages in education has not been encouraging. The languages are not being actively used in primary schools in the state.

7. Recommendations

Given the psychological, cognitive and cultural benefits of the use of the mother tongue in education (cf. Williamson, 1980, p. 81), and given the high degree of illiteracy in the languages of Rivers State among the indigenous people of the state, it is recommended that the federal and state governments enforce and implement existing laws and policies, so that the languages of the state are used at the levels stipulated by the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004) for the benefit of the citizens and the state in particular and for the benefit of the country in general. Although the efforts of the Rivers State Government as regards the development of languages of the state in relatively recent times is commendable, it is not enough for the state government to sponsor the writing and publication of orthographies and other pedagogical materials in and on the indigenous languages of the state. The government should show further commitment by going an extra mile to ensuring that teachers are trained to teach the languages of the state using the materials that are available in these languages, as well as other supplementary pedagogical

materials that the state government may consider to cause to be written and/or published.

Furthermore, the Rivers State government should set-up or revive the different local language committees in the state. It should also organize sensitization workshops on languages of the state, using linguists and other language experts in tertiary institutions in and outside of the state as facilitators of such workshops. The short and long-term benefits of such an endeavour cannot be overemphasised.

In respect of the use of Rivers State languages in the media, this paper recommends that the state government should seriously consider the present configuration of the state in terms of ethnic nationalities, populations of speakers and mutual intelligibility between languages of the state and look beyond Ẹkpẹyẹ, Ikwere, Kalaḅarị and Kana as the only languages of the media in the state. The Rivers State Government should consider the fact that by the creation of Bayelsa State from the old Rivers State, some relatively small ethnic nationalities and their languages have now become relatively dominant. For fair representation and the interests of speakers of Rivers State languages, which are not catered for by the state languages of the media, the state government should consider the use of one or more indigenous languages of the state, in addition to Ẹkpẹyẹ, Ikwere, Kalaḅarị and Kana. This will not only make it possible for many more indigenous people of the state to have access to information in their local languages but will also foster integration and development.

8. Conclusion

The paper has shown that Rivers State is a multilingual state, which is representative of the ethno-linguistic and cultural diversity of the Nigerian nation. It is noted that as many as 28 native or indigenous languages are spoken in it. By way of classification, the languages fall into two major sub-families (Benue-Congo and Ijoid) within the Niger-Congo phylum. Most of the languages belong to Benue-Congo.

With ample and relevant data, which is a significant departure from previous overviews on the languages of Rivers State, the paper highlights some of the interesting linguistic characteristics of the languages. The features include advanced tongue root vowel harmony (in which vowels separate into two sets of expanded and non-expanded, and in most cases, vowels from both sets do not co-occur in simple words), consonant harmony and noun classification via a system of noun prefixes and noun classifiers. Other features that the paper highlights are inclusive-exclusive distinction in personal pronouns, sex gender (in which a distinction is made between masculine (human male entities), feminine (human female entities) and neuter (non-human entities) genders) and verbal extensions (which express a variety of semantic notions such as causative, reflexive, reciprocal instrumental, benefactive, accompaniment and associative). In addition, the paper highlights serial verb constructions (which express notions such as comparative and benefactive) and a system of subject and/or object agreement clitics/markers (which preserve the identity

or grammatical properties of the subject and/or object noun or pronoun even when the subject and/or object is missing or covert in declarative finite clauses).

Furthermore, the paper notes the distribution of Rivers State languages in the 23 LGAs. It highlights the fact that the languages are not evenly distributed across the different LGAs, and that many indigenous people of the state are bilingual or multilingual in the languages of the state. Finally, the paper notes that despite the fact that there are enabling national and state laws favouring mother-tongue education, Rivers State languages have not been actively used at the levels stipulated by the policies and laws.

Consequently, the paper recommends the enforcement and implementation of the existing laws and policies by the federal and state governments so that the indigenous languages of the state are used at the levels stipulated by the National Policy on Education for the benefit of the citizens and the state in particular and for the benefit of the country in general. It also recommends that the Rivers State Government should consider the present configuration of the state and look beyond Ẹkpeye, Ikwere, Kalaḅari and Kana and adopt one or more additional languages of the state as languages of the media, so that many more indigenous people of the state could have access to information in their local languages to foster integration and development.

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