ABSTRACT

Lunyore is a Luhyia dialect spoken by Banyore people who live in Emuhaya District in Vihiga County and Maseno Division in Kisumu County. Maseno Division is a multilingual area where a range of languages are spoken. On one hand, Kiswahili and English are used as national and official languages respectively. On the other hand, are Dholuo and Lunyore that serve as mother tongues. Language choice and maintenance has become a common phenomenon in intercultural settings. Bilingual speakers are able to switch from one language to another with ease. In a multilingual society, speakers are faced with the challenge of choosing the appropriate language for communication in various domains. Language choice plays an important role in society because it determines the maintenance of a specific dialect or language. It was important to determine the position of Lunyore vitality. The study was carried out in Maseno Division, Kisumu West Sub-County. It was important to investigate the language choices made by the Lunyore speakers in Maseno Division to determine whether Lunyore dialect is being maintained given that Lunyore has fewer speakers in the area as revealed by the census report of 2009. The choices the Lunyore speakers make may lead to cultural loss which is closely linked to the traditional occupation and the way of life of the indigenous people. Language is an essential part of the cultural diversity of the world. However no research has been done to determine the maintenance of Lunyore language. The purpose of the study was to determine the vitality of Lunyore dialect in specific domains. The specific objectives were to; determine the influence of age, gender, education and occupation on language choice and maintenance among the Lunyore speakers in Maseno Division, establish the socioeconomic factors that influence language choices and maintenance among the Banyore speakers of Maseno Division, identify and explain the Banyore attitudes towards their language and other languages they speak and whether these attitudes lead to maintenance of Lunyore in Maseno Division, to investigate language choices in specific domains of Lunyore speakers and how they influence maintenance of Lunyore in Maseno Division. The study employed the Ethno linguistic Vitality theory (EV) by Giles, Bourhis and Taylor (1977) who argues that the vitality of the ethnolinguistic group is determined by three variables related to status, demography and institutional support. The study population consisted Lunyore speakers living in Maseno Division. Descriptive research design was used. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to collect data. Data were collected by use of open-ended and closed interview questions, questionnaire and observation schedule. A pilot study was carried out on 10 respondents from Lunyore speakers and 2 primary schools in Maseno Division to establish the reliability of the research instruments. Validity of the instruments was ascertained by experts from the department of Linguistics of Maseno University. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics; frequency counts and percentages. The study also used an observation schedule and interview guide to collect data from specific domains. The researcher purposively sampled 10 homes occupied by the Lunyore speakers, 5 primary schools that are in contact with Lunyore and Dholuo speakers, 3 churches, 3 market places and 5 baraza sessions were observed. Qualitative data was transcribed and reported as themes and subthemes emerged. The study revealed that Lunyore speakers chose Dholuo language in many domains. The difference between the choices of Dholuo against Lunyore was significant. The study found that there is a relationship between choice and the maintenance of a language. The study therefore recommends that the Lunyore speakers should be encouraged to speak their mother tongue. They should ensure that they enhance effective ways of speaking Lunyore dialect in many contexts. The study is significant because it has contributed to the sociolinguistic study of Lunyore dialect. In addition the study is important in preserving the identity and culture of Lunyore speakers in Maseno Division. The study recommends that further investigations into the vitality of other luia dialects should be undertaken to explicate their vitality. Lunyore speakers should ensure that they implement effective ways to enable them speak in their mothertongue in most contexts so as to enhance its vitality.