

## **Maintaining the Kimbeere Language in Embu County, Kenya: A Pathway to Social Equity and Cultural Sustainability**

**Fridah Muthue Kaviti<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Nobert Ombati Basweti<sup>2</sup>**

**St. Paul's University<sup>1</sup>**

**University of Nairobi<sup>2</sup>**

### **Abstract**

*The sociolinguistic dynamics of the preservation of the Kimbeere language in Embu County, Eastern Kenya, are examined in this study, emphasizing the language's vital role in promoting social justice among the Mbeere people. Using the frameworks of the Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory (Giles, Bourhis, & Taylor, 1977) and Joshua Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS), it examines the sociocultural, educational, and policy-related factors that affect the language's resilience or loss. The independent variable, the preservation of the Kimbeere language, was evaluated using community involvement and intergenerational transmission benchmarks. Social equity, the dependent variable, was measured using indicators of civic engagement, educational access, and cultural recognition. The results should demonstrate that, rather than merely improving cultural preservation, active language maintenance is a dynamic tool for empowering minority groups by improving their access to social recognition, civic engagement, and unbiased development.*

**Keywords: Kimbeere, Language Maintenance, Ethnolinguistic Vitality, Language Shift, Mbeere People, Eastern Kenya, Embu County, Intergenerational Transmission**

### **1.0 Introduction**

The threatened status of smaller languages is a recurring trend in the context of globalization and the dominance of big languages. According to a sociolinguist perspective, the welfare and social justice of a language's speakers are the primary factors in its preservation. The Mbeere people of Kenya speak the Kimbeere language, which is increasingly in danger due to a number of factors. These threats jeopardize the social justice of the people as well as their rich cultural legacy.

In light of the larger discussions surrounding the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which promote inclusive and equitable development, this paper examines the critical role that lingua-sustainability plays in promoting social justice. The purpose of this study's attention to Kimbeere is to highlight how fundamental linguistic rights are.

### **2.0 Overview**

In a time when major languages are becoming more and more dominant, and the world is becoming more interconnected, minority language preservation is a major issue. However, from a sociolinguistic standpoint, language maintenance is closely linked to social justice and the welfare

of language speakers. The Kimbeere language, which is spoken by about 272,357 people, is under pressure from more widely used languages like English and Kiswahili, according to the 2019 Kenya National Census Report.

The focus of this study on the Kimbeere language highlights how linguistic rights are fundamental human rights and how creating truly equitable societies necessitates their protection. This paper examines the critical role that language preservation plays in advancing social justice, situating it within the larger framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which demand equitable and inclusive growth.

### **3.0 Statement of Research**

Because its devaluation impedes social recognition, civic engagement, and equitable development, this study contends that preserving the Kimbeere language is crucial to advancing social justice among the Mbeere people. Achieving social justice and advancing sustainable development require proactive preservation of the Kimbeere language. However, pressure from nearby major Bantu languages, such as Kikuyu, Tharaka, Meru, Embu, and Kamba, is putting the Kimbeere language in danger of extinction. The Mbeere community experiences linguistic pressure as an enclave language-speaking group, which frequently results in code-switching in social and educational contexts. The Mbeere community is putting a lot of effort into maintaining its language in spite of these obstacles and halting a trend towards dominant languages that might cause language death.

### **4.0 Research Objectives**

1. To examine the sociolinguistic vitality of the Kimbeere language among the Mbeere people using the Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory (EVT) as a theoretical framework.
2. To determine the specific stages of the Kimbeere language's decline and gauge the degree of intergenerational disruption, Joshua Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) was employed.
3. To investigate how sociocultural, economic, and policy factors impact social justice and civic engagement in the community, as well as how the Kimbeere language is used and interpreted.

### **5.0 Literature Review**

In the literature review, we will discuss: language endangerment, language vitality, and language maintenance as a pathway to cultural and social equity.

### **5.1 Language Endangerment**

Globalization and multilingualism have led to the selection of only a handful of languages for widespread international use. Research from UNESCO, as cited in Wamalwa and Oluoch (2013), points out that among the roughly 6000 languages spoken around the world, just eight serve broader communication needs. Evidence from UNESCO also indicates that these dominant languages could replace up to 90 percent of local languages by the close of the 21st century. Studies attribute this trend largely to the failure to pass these languages on to younger generations. As a result, the count of native speakers drops steadily each day. Losing such languages amounts to the erosion of vital human heritage, including cultures, accumulated knowledge, and traditions handed down over many generations. The persistence of any language hinges on the determination of its community. Thus, speakers themselves hold the key to addressing the pressing issues facing their tongues today. In the current era, one major threat comes from the English language. Further analysis in the study reveals how English contributes to the vulnerability of indigenous languages.

An endangered language typically involves speakers who no longer employ it actively or transmit it to their descendants. It might also show a sharp drop in everyday communicative roles, according to UNESCO (2003). The organization elaborates that factors leading to language endangerment fall into internal or external categories. External influences encompass things like military involvement, where interpreters during peacekeeping missions aid in dialogues and exchanges. Other elements include educational systems, religious practices, or economic pressures. Internal factors tie closely to a community's sense of self-worth. It appears that groups viewing their own cultural background as inferior tend to undervalue their native tongue. Consequently, they may overlook the value in teaching it to children. They might even neglect broader efforts to safeguard their cultural identity. Batibo, as referenced in Wamalwa and Oluoch (2013), describes a language nearing endangerment through specific traits.

### **5.2 Language Vitality**

The discussion of language vitality and endangerment has evolved significantly from simple documentation to a more complex understanding of sociopolitical and cultural contexts (Crystal, 2000). Languages with fewer speakers, less institutional support, and a lower perceived social status are more likely to decline, according to research on indigenous languages in Africa (Mufwene, 2001). Because English is widely used in formal education and Swahili is the nation's

lingua franca, all of Kenya's native languages face significant obstacles. Language shift is similar among urban youth who view fluency in English as a prerequisite for social mobility and economic success, according to studies on related Bantu languages in the area, such as Kiembu and Kikuyu (Mbugua, 2018).

There are actual social justice implications to this linguistic shift. Members of a community may be excluded from social services, economic opportunities, and political processes if their language is not used in official contexts. Sen's (1999) capacity approach, which argues that social justice is about enabling people to reach their full potential, is a useful idea. This point of view holds that a person's ability to communicate in language is crucial to their potential and freedom. This point of view holds that language proficiency is a fundamental component of an individual's independence and ability to contribute to society. Preserving an indigenous language is not a sentimental act; rather, it is a necessary component of social justice since it ensures everyone's right to full participation.

According to Batibo (2005), many African languages continue to disappear as a result of interactions between speakers of dominant and minority languages. This threatens minority speakers' languages. Superior languages include Swahili, Arabic, Hausa, and Amharic. This was emphasized during the 2000 Asmara Conference in Eritrea. This Conference found that around half of Africa's languages are on the verge of extinction, the majority of which are in the southern Sahara. Language policy in Africa does not consider the usage of indigenous languages. They were able to conclude that the continuous use of foreign languages in commercial and economic operations is the root cause of many African countries' development lag.

Commercial and economic activity are the reasons why many African countries fall behind in development. They compared African countries to Asian countries, pointing out that in Southeast Asia, the usage of national languages is critical to economic development. Japan, Taiwan, Korea, Hong Kong, and Malaysia, for example, employ their native languages for education, wealth creation, and trade (UN Asmara: 2000). In his study, Kembo Sure (1999) claims that bi/multilingualism is one of the most significant consequences of the colonial system in Africa. This originated from the necessity for a common language that would bridge the linguistic diversity found in African societies, to integrate these diverse groups under colonial rule.

To that goal, foreign languages were introduced. He goes on to describe Africa's linguistic map, which is defined by a mix of indigenous and foreign languages, each with different functional assignments. Sure, he created a typology that defined policies as end glottic, mix glottic, or ex glottic.

He explains that even after attaining independence, some African countries retained the foreign languages inherited from their past colonizers as official languages. These countries are known as isoglossic language policy nations. End glottic language policy nations, on the other hand, have chosen to make their indigenous languages the official language. In Europe, minority languages compete for relevance with the three major languages: English, French, and Spanish. Despite the fierce competition they endure, some minority languages remain unafraid of the said languages. In portions of East Spain, there are around 7.5 million 'Catalonians' who are minority speakers. The language 'Catalan' was outlawed from 1939 to 1975 under Franco's rule. Following Franco's death in 1975, the restriction was repealed, allowing the Catalan language to be utilized in schools and business in Catalonia, Spain.

These are only a few examples of minority language speakers who have banded together to fight for the preservation of their language and heritage. The same is true for the majority of African languages, which have managed to avoid extinction. Kenya is a bilingual society; however, the official and national languages are English and Kiswahili, respectively. Despite the threat of language changes and code-switching, indigenous languages, including Mbeere speakers in Eastern Kenya, have managed to persist.

### **5.3 Language Maintenance**

Baker's (2001) discussion covers language maintenance in more detail. It looks at the stability of a language. Factors include the number of speakers and how they are spread out. Proficiency levels across age groups matter too. So does the degree to which the language holds on in certain areas of life.

Fishman (1996) suggests one solid approach to maintenance - Integrate the language into major societal structures, think religious groups, schools, and media outlets. This approach builds momentum for the language. Speakers then recognize the value in learning it. They end up using it more often in daily ways. Kithaka wa Mberia (2016) aligns with Fishman's view to some extent. He argues for using the mother tongue in early primary education in Kenya. Evidence from studies supports this as the stronger choice for children and the nation overall.

Scientific research backs a policy of vernacular languages for instruction at lower primary levels. Still, implementation brings real concerns and hurdles. These issues demand attention rather than dismissal. Overcoming them requires joint work from the county and national governments. Planning and funding play central roles here. Mberia stresses the ongoing role of mother tongues in teaching practices.

The discussion above brings up another key element. Language policies help sustain vulnerable tongues. Kembo and Ogechi (2005) note that speakers of such languages deserve equal standing. This follows the country's rules and processes. They highlight how laws for native speakers draw from global standards. The United Nations charter from 1948 sets procedures for language rights. The Barcelona conference on languages in 1996 adds to that framework. Batibo's 2009 analysis pushes for a better status for minority speakers in Africa. He believes maintenance of these languages could bring major gains to African nations. Drawing from the Bamako Conference of 2006, which focused on children's linguistics and efforts to preserve original languages in Africa, Batibo calls for updates to state laws, that indigenous languages need stronger support and one step involves creating an Academy of African Languages, known as ACALAN.

Sadly, certain African countries still rely on colonial-era language policies. Muthwii in 2004 describes how some languages received favoritism over others for various reasons. The Beecher report from 1949 lists the preferred ones. These included languages with larger speaker base, such as Gikuyu, Luhya, Luo, Kamba, and Kalenjin. A few of these gained spots in the school system as teaching media. Languages left out of that select group faced greater risks of fading away. Whaley, in 2006, underscores a vital strategy, by bringing minority languages into education to preserve them. Any language active in schooling gets preserved through written forms. This builds strength via positive views from its speakers.

### **Conceptual Definitions of Terms**

**Language**—Language is a systematic means of communication utilizing symbols, sounds, or gestures that allows individuals to convey ideas, emotions, and information within a cultural context. It serves not only as a tool for interaction but also as a repository of cultural heritage.

**Language Maintenance**—Language maintenance refers to the conscious efforts made by speakers of a language to continue using it in the face of external pressures from more dominant languages. Linguists study the factors that contribute to the preservation of languages, including community engagement, intergenerational transmission, and the language's functional domains.

**Language Death**—Language death occurs when a language ceases to have native speakers and becomes extinct, resulting in the loss of its linguistic structure and the cultural nuances embedded within it. This process is of particular concern to linguists, as it represents a significant reduction in global linguistic diversity.

**Language Endangerment**—Language endangerment describes the phenomenon where a language is at risk of falling out of use, often due to a decrease in the number of speakers or the lack of transmission to younger generations. Linguists categorize the levels of endangerment and analyse sociolinguistic factors that contribute to this decline.

**Language Revitalization**—Language revitalization involves efforts to revive and strengthen endangered languages through various strategies, such as educational programs, cultural initiatives, and community involvement. Linguists examine the effectiveness of these approaches and their impacts on language vitality.

**Ethnicity**—Ethnicity pertains to groups of individuals who share a common cultural heritage, including language, traditions, and social practices. Linguists explore how ethnic identity interacts with language use and influences linguistic variation and change.

**Ethnolinguistics**—Ethnolinguistics is the study of the intersection between language and culture, examining how language reflects and shapes cultural identities, practices, and worldviews. This field analyses the socio-cultural context in which languages are used and how they relate to concepts of ethnicity.

## **6.0 Conceptual Structures: Examining the Vitality and Disruption of Language**

The study is based on two basic sociolinguistic theories that provide a strong foundation for evaluating Kimbeere's current circumstances. The Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory (EVT), which was created by Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor in 1977, offers a framework for assessing the strength

and structural position of a language group. This theory underscores the role of language in preserving a community's identity and ensuring its continuity. It classifies communities into high and low vitality groups. High vitality groups have the resources and ability to protect their language and culture, while low vitality groups, like the Mbeere, may struggle without active efforts to sustain their language and heritage. This theory emphasizes the importance of both internal community efforts and external factors in determining the survival of a language. The theory emphasizes the importance of both internal community efforts and external factors in determining the survival of a language. The theory distinguishes between subjective and objective vitality. Subjective vitality refers to how a community perceives its language and culture, with those who view their language as essential more likely to maintain it. Objective vitality, on the other hand, is influenced by demographic size, institutional support, and social prestige. Larger communities tend to enjoy greater institutional backing, as seen in Kenya's dominant ethnic groups like the Kikuyu and Luo, which strengthens the vitality of their languages. In contrast, smaller groups such as the Mbeere lack this external support, making language maintenance more challenging.

Furthermore, the theory highlights the importance of institutional support and social status in maintaining a language. Formal support from institutions such as politics, media, and education, as well as informal community efforts, can significantly impact the vitality of a language. The Mbeere speakers, with limited institutional support, face challenges in preserving their language. However, the theory also suggests that low vitality groups can revitalize their language by identifying historical moments of cultural significance. By understanding these factors, the Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory provides valuable insights into how the Mbeere community can strengthen its language's chances of survival.

Kimbeere speakers are a smaller community compared to the large populations of the other surrounding languages. This demographic reality poses a challenge for Kimbeere, as fewer speakers can lead to a diminished presence and less frequent use in daily life. However, the commitment among a language-speaking group to pass their language on to future generations can help ensure its survival.

Therefore, it claims that a language's vitality is determined by three important factors: Factors related to demographics: Distribution and number of speakers. We are look at how the 272,357 Mbeere people are distributed between rural and urban areas, as well as the impact of



migration patterns.

**Institutional Support:** The government, media, and educational sectors all make use of the language. We investigated whether Kimbeere is discussed in educational institutions, radio programs, or local government meetings.

**Variables of status:** the language's social standing and prestige.

**Status variables:** The prestige and social standing of the language. This dimension looks into how the community, particularly the younger generations, feels about speaking Kimbeere.

Joshua Fishman created the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS), a diagnostic tool for determining the degree of language loss. From the highest level, where the language is used in official government and educational settings, to the lowest, where only a few elderly speakers remain, this eight-point scale measures the vitality of the language. GIDS suggests a good road map for language maintenance initiatives and is specifically helpful in recognizing the locations of intergenerational transmission disruptions.

**Table 1: The Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) and its Applicability to the Kimbeere Language**

*The Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale, or GIDS, provides a framework for assessing language vitality, and it applies in specific ways to the Kimbeere language.*

GIDS STAGE	OUTCOME
Stage 8	Involves full institutional support. The language operates at all levels, such as government, education, and media. This stage does not apply to Kimbeere. The language lacks any official status or broader institutional backing.
Stage 7	Refers to official status. Here, the language holds recognition but sees limited use in high-level government or academic settings. Kimbeere does not fit this stage either. It remains without an official language designation.
Stage 6	Covers official use alongside disruption in transmission. The language functions informally, yet intergenerational passing weakens. This stage seems applicable to Kimbeere. Older generations primarily employ it, while younger ones show a clear drop in learning. Transmission occurs inconsistently, often giving way to English and Swahili influences.
Stage 5	Mark's intergenerational disruption. Children receive no formal teaching of the language, leaving it mainly to adults in the community. Evidence indicates this applies to Kimbeere as well. Youth tend to favor Swahili and English, and schools

	offer no mother tongue instruction, which worsens the gap. Usage stays confined to homes and older speakers.
Stage 4	Signals community-level disruption. A community speaks the language but struggles to maintain it over time. This has not fully taken hold in Kimbeere, though trends point that way. Shifts away from the language grow significant, yet the community avoids total breakdown for now.
Stage 3	Involves disruption at the community and family levels. Only a few older individuals speak it, with no handover to children. Current patterns in Kimbeere suggest this could emerge soon if unchecked. Subtle cultural and linguistic elements fade, hinting at movement toward this point.
Stage 2	Describes isolated speakers. Individuals use the language without forming any community ties. This does not apply to Kimbeere.
Stage 1	Denotes a moribund language. Very few speakers remain, and no children acquire it. Kimbeere stays clear of this stage.
Stage 0	Means language extinction. No one speaks it anymore. This remains inapplicable to Kimbeere.

*Table 1 outlines these stages along with their descriptions and the current status for Kimbeere.*

## 7.0 Methodology

The complexities of attitude and language use were captured using a qualitative research methodology. This study combines the analysis of primary and secondary data.

### 7.1 Primary Information Gathering

Key Informant Interviews (KII) with five participants and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with ten community members in six randomly selected zones within the Mbeere region were used to administer the primary data. Participants with a wealth of knowledge about the use of the Kimbeere language, such as headmen, religious leaders, cultural elders, and leaders, were chosen through the use of purposeful sampling.

To find out more about how older, middle-aged, and young people preserve, negotiate, and revive the Kimbeere language in their daily lives, semi-structured interviews were used to gather detailed information from these age groups. Language use patterns and instances of code-switching were directly observed by participants in public settings like schools, marketplaces, and community gatherings.

## **7.2 Secondary Information**

Primary data was supplemented with secondary data. The inclusion criteria were met by peer-reviewed or government publications that were published within the last 20 years and were unique to Embu County or Kenya. The data sources included academic publications on Kenyan sociolinguistics, government policy documents on indigenous languages, and the 2019 Kenya National Census. Main themes and the illustrations of Kimbeere in official documentation were acknowledged through content and discourse analysis.

## **7.3 Sample size**

To provide a balance across various age groups and geographical areas, the study was conducted on a sample size of roughly 385 individuals. A thorough examination of generational variations in language usage and transmission is possible with sampling across multiple subgroups (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The size of the sample was adequate to capture a variety of viewpoints while keeping data collection and analysis manageable. The following was the strata and proportionate representation.

The Levels:- Children: 5–17 years old; Youth: 18–34 years old; Middle-aged: 35–59 years old; Elderly: 60 years and older

## **Methods of Data Collection**

The project used a variety of qualitative methodologies to gain a thorough understanding of language use, transmission, and preservation in the community. The data gathering methods employed are intended to provide in-depth, contextual insights about language behaviours across different age groups. Therefore, we used these methods: Key Informant interviews (In-depth interviews), Focus Group Discussion, and Observation. In-depth interviews were an important tool for collecting qualitative data. These interviews were conducted with ten elders, ten educators, and ten community leaders to learn about their experiences with the Kimbeere language, the challenges they've encountered, and efforts to preserve it. Elders, as cultural custodians, provided valuable historical and cultural context, whilst educators contributed insights into language use in educational settings. The semi-structured style of the interviews allowed for in-depth exploration of specific subjects while keeping the discourse focused on the research objectives (Creswell, 2014). A total of 7 focus group discussions (FGDs) were

conducted at various age groups, with two FGDs with ten participants in each group: two groups of ten participants for children, two groups of ten for youth, two groups of ten for middle-aged people, and one group of ten for elderly people.

The observations of participants were used to monitor real-life usage of the Kimbeere language in a variety of social contexts, including family interactions, community meetings, and cultural celebrations. This strategy helped detect actual language behaviours by contrasting them with self-reported data from interviews and surveys. The observations focus on language use in ordinary interactions, rituals, and social gatherings, providing insights into the language's living dynamics (Spradley, 2016).

#### **7.4 A Thematic Analysis of the Sociolinguistic Dynamics of the Kimbeere Language**

Research examines the sociolinguistic dynamics of the Kimbeere language. It focuses on preservation efforts along with suggestions for advancing social justice.

##### **7.5.1 Aspects of Institutions and Demographics**

Evidence points to a clear generational change in language use. This holds despite the substantial size of the Mbeere population. Older generations serve as the key holders of precise linguistic forms and deep cultural insights. They maintain a strong position on the GIDS scale. Younger individuals tend to alternate between Swahili and English in daily interactions. Kimbeere thus plays a less central role in their communication patterns. Such patterns suggest a progression to a higher stage of GIDS disruption. Society's exchanges now extend beyond reliance on this single language.

Mbeere speakers function as an enclave. They often switch codes with neighboring groups like the Kamba, Gikuyu, Embu, Meru, and Tharaka. Institutional environments present several real challenges for the language. According to the EVT framework, Kimbeere receives little backing because it lacks status as a medium for formal education. Its limited role in public spaces adds to this problem. Such constraints reduce the language's overall importance. They reinforce the view that Kimbeere remains mainly a home language. It does not serve as a pathway to broader opportunities.

##### **7.5.2 Community Initiatives and Social Equity**

Even though officials show little interest, community-driven initiatives remain crucial for

building pride in the Kimbeere language and putting it to practical use. Regional language contests and cultural events serve as a key counterbalance in this regard. They open up fresh areas for linguistic expression and help shape more favorable views of Kimbeere overall.

Such efforts prove essential for building social equity right from the community level. Evidence from the study points to how safeguarding the Kimbeere language aids the Mbeere people's fair involvement in their cultural and linguistic heritage. A thriving language lets community members voice their thoughts authentically and engage in social validation processes under their own conditions. In turn, this helps offset the isolation that often stems from pressure to adapt to prevailing language standards. On top of that, access to civic details and public services in the local dialect enables all residents to assert their entitlements and join democratic activities. This holds even for those who struggle with the dominant language.

## **7.6 Sociocultural and Economic Factors Shaping Language Resilience**

### **7.6.1 The Economics of Language. Perceptions of Usefulness and Opportunity**

The decline of the Kimbeere language stems from economic and social realities rather than any abrupt dismissal of cultural identity by its speakers. Community members often view Mbeere as lacking practical value. This belief carries deep implications beyond surface-level thoughts. English holds sway in higher education and job markets. Swahili supports trade and national belonging. Together, they form a linguistic market that sidelines Kimbeere from meaningful roles. Evidence shows young people rationally choose these dominant tongues to gain better prospects and upward movement in society.

Such notions of linguistic irrelevance arise from outside forces rather than natural feelings. External economic demands foster this devaluation over time. Dominant languages act as barriers to key resources. Speakers of local dialects face ongoing exclusion as a result. The sense of uselessness reflects broader structural imbalances in society. Kimbeere itself holds inherent worth. Yet national systems reward mastery of major languages alone. Minority tongues receive scant recognition or rewards. This pattern forms a cycle of reinforcement and limited economic pull leads to less usage. Reduced usage then solidifies views of worthlessness. In turn, it hastens the language's fade into obscurity.

### **7.6.2 The Generational Divide and the Erosion of Cultural Identity**

Shifts in language across generations mark a clear sign of this overall decline. Younger Mbeere speakers lean toward English and Swahili more than before. This creates barriers in everyday talks with elders. The change affects more than just words in chats. It touches on subtle elements that hold groups close. Reports indicate fewer traditional greetings among the young. Terms of affection and unique nicknames also wane in use. These losses quietly weaken ties within the community.

Such customs serve vital purposes beyond simple habits. They help weave the social structure tightly. Greetings often carry ideas of respect and order in culture; nicknames point to strong family or group connections. Losing them opens gaps in understanding between age groups. Elders link their sense of self and insights to these ways of speaking. They end up being pushed aside in homes and villages, passing down stories and values grows harder without a common ground in language. This setup highlights inequities where one age's contributions lose ground to another's choices, bonds fray at the core and community strength and shared sense of who they are suffer as a result.

**The key themes are emphasized below:**

#### **1. Language Vitality: Devaluation**

The Kimbeere language persists in intergenerational transmission. Yet it remains sidelined within Kenya's broader sociolinguistic environment, without adequate institutional backing. This gap between stated policies and everyday realities limits its place in public spheres. Consequently, the language occupies a fragile position on Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale, or GIDS.

#### **2. Social Equity. Language Barrier**

Such undervaluing of Kimbeere creates real hurdles for social equity. It fosters civic exclusion along with lasting disadvantages for its speakers. In local settings, English and Kiswahili dominate official interactions by far, and reliance on those, plus other nearby major language blocks, the Mbeere involvement. That pattern just deepens their overall marginal position.

### **3. Kimbeere Preservation**

Efforts driven by the community itself offer practical examples for reviving the language. Approaches involving media outlets and online spaces stand out here, while similar strategies have been effective in larger groups elsewhere. Expanding Kimbeere's reach through such media is a sensible approach. Nurturing its passage across generations proves vital for the language's ongoing survival. In turn, those steps could advance social equity more broadly.

### **8.0 Recommendations for Kimbeere Language Maintenance**

Boosting the Kimbeere language's strength requires joint action from Kenya's government and Mbeere community members alike. That partnership would elevate the group's standing, too. Recommendations point to several key areas. Policies from the government ought to support education in mother tongues. Resources for teaching materials in Kimbeere are also essential. Following closely behind is the need for training instructors in the language, changing the way people perceive native tongues is very important and recognizing them as vital components of society could help shift attitudes over time.

Mbeere community efforts deserve focus as well, setting up a local radio service fits the bill and digital tools for sharing news and traditions in Kimbeere would build on that because younger people might connect more with their roots that way. Older generations could serve as master teachers in informal ways and home settings and group events provide natural spots for passing on the language. Linking preservation to economic growth holds importance, that connection sustains the use in daily life and incentives for Mbeere speakers to actively promote their language would encourage participation.

### **9.0 Conclusion. Reaffirming the link between language equity and social justice**

Findings from this work provide clear evidence overall. Preserving Kimbeere in active ways stands as key to social justice. Sustainable progress depends on such efforts, too. The study outlines the language's challenges. It highlights needed actions led by communities and backed by institutions. Fishman's GIDS and ideas from ethnolinguistic vitality theory guide that analysis. Preserving the Kimbeere language not only protects cultural heritage but also helps speakers feel accepted in their community. They fully engage in civic activities; development becomes inclusive and equitable for them and language diversity emerges as a tool for justice in society. It is the responsibility of everyone involved to protect it, because a fairer tomorrow depends on this commitment.

## Reference

- Allard, R., & Landry, R. (1994). *Subjective Ethnolinguistic vitality: A comparison of two Measures*. International Journal of Sociology of Language, 108, 111-134.
- Brannen, J., & Moss, G. (2012). *Critical issues in designing mixed methods policy research*. American Behavioral Scientist, 56(6), 789-801.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764211433796>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). *Using thematic analysis in psychology*. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2), 77–101.
- Crystal, D. (2000). *Language death*. Cambridge University Press.
- Fishman, J.A. (1972). *The sociology of language: An interdisciplinary social sciences approach to Language in society*. Newbury House Publishers.
- Fishman, J.A. (1980). *Minority language maintenance and ethnic mother tongue schools*. Modern Language Journal, 64, 167-172.
- Fishman, J.A. (2001). *Reversing language shift: A 21st-century perspective*. Multilingual Matters.
- Giles, H., Bourhis, R.Y., & Taylor, D.M. (1977). *Towards a theory of language in an ethnic group Relations*. In H. Giles (Ed.), Languages, ethnicity and intergroup relations (pp. 307-348), Academic Press.
- Giles, H., & Johnson, P. (1987). *Ethnolinguistic identity theory: A social psychological approach For language maintenance*. International Journal of the Sociology of Language, 68, 68-99.
- Gumperz, J. J. (1982). *Discourse strategies*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kembo-Sure. (2003). *Language planning and policies in Kenya*. In B. Brock-Utne, Z. Desai, & M. Qorro (Eds.), *Language of instruction in Tanzania and South Africa (LOITASA)* (pp. 67–84). E&D Limited.
- Mufwene, S. S. (2017). *Language Vitality: The weak theoretical Underpinnings of what can It is an exciting research area*. Language 93(4). E202-e223
- Mufwene, S. S. (2006; 114). *Language Endangerment: An Embarrassment for Linguistics; CLS 42 the panels: Proceedings from the Para sessions of the Forty–second Meeting of the Chicago Linguistics Society: Volume 42 – 2*
- Rawls, J. (1971). *A theory of justice*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Sen, A. (2009). *The idea of justice*. Allen Lane.
- United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Un.
- UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages. (2003). *Language vitality and Endangerment*. UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org>
- Wright, S. (2004). *Language policy and language planning: From nationalism to globalization*. Palgrave Macmillan