

Socrates Mbamalu ~ How Can African Languages Be Protected?



An endangered language is defined as a language that is at a risk of falling out of use as its speakers die out or shift to another language. Many African speakers have shifted to other languages, mostly foreign languages and many African indigenous languages are on the brink of being endangered, nearing extinction. How African governments save these endangered African indigenous languages?

In a continent of 55 countries and over 2,000 languages, it is shocking that the official languages predominantly used are foreign languages. It is even worse that the medium of instruction in learning institutions are foreign languages. The marginalization of indigenous languages leaves many of the African languages without a role to play.

For a language to survive, it must have a defined and clear role that it plays in the society. It could be used as the language of the immediate community to communicate, which could as well be the mother tongue. It could be used as the language of wider communication, (a language used by people as a medium of communication across language or cultural barriers), which is the case for example with lingua franca. It could be used as the language of religion, for example Arabic in the Koran.

With the lack of a clearly defined role, a language tends to get less used. When a language has fewer speakers, the language eventually dies (language death). Due to language shift, when speakers shift from using one language to another, either due to economic gains or other reasons, the language becomes endangered, and if not protected, it will eventually die.

Read more: <https://thisisafrica.me/can-african-languages-protected/>

Read also: [Ngugi wa Thiong'o calls for preservation and inclusion of African languages in learning institutions](#)