

Original Research Article

Language as a Carrier of Culture: An Ethnolinguistic Study of The Tangale People in Gombe State, Nigeria

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Abstract: Language is widely recognized as a primary vehicle for transmitting cultural knowledge, shaping social behavior and preserving communal identity. This paper examined the role of the Tangale language in carrying and sustaining the cultural heritage of the Tangale people of Gombe State, Nigeria. Employing a mixed-methods approach, data were collected from 120 respondents, including elders, youths, and cultural practitioners, through structured questionnaires and oral interviews. Both quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, and ethnolinguistic content analysis of proverbs, folktales and idioms. The findings reveal that the Tangale language is widely used in storytelling, traditional ceremonies, proverbs, greetings and praise poetry, serving as a central medium for transmitting moral values, communal norms and indigenous knowledge. Chi-square analysis showed that knowledge of cultural expressions does not significantly vary across age groups, indicating effective intergenerational transmission. Despite the influence of modernization and dominant languages, the Tangale language remains resilient, with the majority of respondents affirming its importance in preserving cultural identity. The study concludes that the Tangale language is not merely a communication tool but a repository of cultural wisdom, social ethics and collective memory.

Keywords: Tangale Language, Culture, Ethnolinguistics, and Indigenous Knowledge.

1.1 Introduction

Language and culture are fundamental components of human society and are deeply interconnected in shaping the identity, worldview and social practices of a people.

Language serves not only as a means of communication but also as a repository of cultural knowledge through which traditions, beliefs, customs and social values are preserved and transmitted from one generation to another. Scholars in Linguistics and Anthropological Linguistics have consistently emphasized that language reflects the worldview and lived experiences of its speakers. Through language, members of a community interpret reality, maintain social relationships and construct meanings that shape their understanding of the world. Language therefore functions not merely as a tool for communication but also as a symbolic system that encodes the cultural identity and social knowledge of a community. Culture, on the other hand, encompasses the shared patterns of behavior, beliefs, traditions, customs, values and norms that characterize a particular group of people. These cultural elements are transmitted across generations largely through language. According to Kramsch (1998), language embodies cultural reality because it expresses cultural values, social relationships and collective experiences. Cultural practices such as storytelling, songs, rituals, proverbs, and everyday forms of communication are embedded within linguistic expressions. As a result, language functions as a cultural archive that preserves the historical memory and intellectual heritage of a society. Without language, the transmission of cultural knowledge from one generation to another would be extremely difficult.

The relationship between language and culture has attracted significant scholarly attention within the field of Ethnolinguistics. Ethnolinguistics focuses on how language both reflects and shapes cultural practices within a community. It examines the ways in which linguistic structures, vocabulary, and discourse patterns encode cultural meanings and social values. According to Duranti (1997), language and culture exist in a dynamic relationship in which language serves both as a product of culture and as a medium through which cultural practices are maintained. This means that linguistic expressions often reveal important insights into the cultural beliefs, traditions, and social organization of a community. In many traditional societies, especially in Nigeria, indigenous languages play a crucial role in sustaining cultural identity and transmitting traditional knowledge systems. These indigenous languages often carry indigenous knowledge related to environmental practices, social organization, spirituality, moral values, and historical experiences. Oral traditions such as folktales, myths, proverbs, praise poetry and traditional songs function as cultural instruments that educate younger generations about acceptable social behavior and community expectations. Foley (1997) notes that linguistic expressions within a community

often reveal the underlying cultural principles that guide social interactions and collective life. In this sense, language functions as a mirror that reflects the cultural worldview of its speakers.

Nigeria is widely recognized as one of the most linguistically diverse countries in the world. The country is home to over 500 indigenous languages spoken by numerous ethnic groups across its geographical regions (Blench, 2019). These languages represent important cultural resources that preserve the historical experiences and identities of their respective communities. Indigenous languages in Nigeria serve as markers of ethnic identity and as channels for transmitting cultural knowledge, social values, and traditional practices. However, despite this linguistic richness, many indigenous languages are increasingly threatened by the dominance of global and regional languages. The spread of modernization, urbanization and formal education has contributed to the growing influence of major languages such as English and Hausa in many aspects of social life.

English functions as the official language of Nigeria and dominates formal communication in education, administration, governance, and media. At the same time, Hausa serves as a major lingua franca across much of northern Nigeria, facilitating communication among different ethnic groups. While these languages play important roles in national integration and international communication, their dominance has also created challenges for the survival of many indigenous languages. In many communities, younger generations increasingly prefer using dominant languages rather than their native languages, particularly in urban settings and formal environments. This situation raises concerns about the preservation of indigenous languages and the cultural heritage embedded within them. Fishman (1991) argues that when indigenous languages lose their domains of use within a community, the cultural knowledge associated with those languages may also be endangered. Cultural expressions such as proverbs, oral narratives, ritual speech and traditional songs often rely on indigenous languages for their proper interpretation and transmission. When younger generations are no longer fluent in their ancestral languages, these cultural forms may gradually disappear, leading to the erosion of cultural identity.

Within this broader linguistic and cultural context, the Tangale people represent one of the indigenous ethnic groups located in northeastern Nigeria, particularly in Gombe State. The Tangale people possess a rich cultural heritage characterized by communal

values, traditional leadership structures and vibrant oral traditions. Their indigenous language, the Tangale language, belongs to the Chadic branch of the Afro-Asiatic language family and is predominantly spoken in Billiri, Kaltungo and some parts of Shomgom and Akko Local Government Areas and surrounding communities. The Tangale language serves as an important cultural symbol that unites members of the community and facilitates the transmission of cultural knowledge across generations.

Among the Tangale people, language plays a vital role in expressing cultural identity and maintaining social cohesion. Cultural practices such as traditional ceremonies, storytelling sessions, marriage rites, festivals and conflict resolution processes often involve the use of the Tangale language. Linguistic expressions such as proverbs, idioms, folktales and traditional greetings convey cultural meanings that reflect the moral values and social expectations of the community. Proverbs, for example, are commonly used to express wisdom, offer advice and settle disputes within the community. These proverbs often contain metaphorical expressions that encapsulate the collective experiences and moral philosophy of the Tangale people. Folktales also play a significant role in the cultural life of the Tangale community. These narratives are typically shared during communal gatherings and serve both entertainment and educational purposes. Through folktales, elders transmit historical knowledge, moral lessons and social norms to younger members of the community. Similarly, traditional songs and praise poetry often accompany cultural ceremonies and reflect the historical achievements and social values of the community. These cultural forms rely heavily on the Tangale language for their expression and interpretation.

Despite the cultural importance of the Tangale language, the increasing influence of modernization, urbanization and formal education has introduced new patterns of language use within the community. Many young people in the Tangale community are increasingly exposed to English and Hausa through schooling, media and social interactions. As a result, the use of Tangale in everyday communication and cultural contexts may gradually decline. When indigenous languages are no longer widely used in social interactions, the cultural knowledge embedded within those languages may become inaccessible to younger generations. Although Nigeria has attracted significant scholarly attention in the areas of linguistic and cultural studies, relatively few studies have specifically examined the ethnolinguistic relationship between language and culture among the Tangale people of

Gombe State. Much of the existing research on Nigerian languages has focused on major languages and broader issues of linguistic diversity. Consequently, there remains a gap in scholarly knowledge regarding how the Tangale language functions as a carrier of cultural identity and traditional knowledge within the Tangale community. The limited documentation of Tangale linguistic expressions and their cultural significance makes it necessary to conduct further research in this area. Investigating how language reflects cultural values and social norms within the Tangale community can contribute to the preservation of indigenous knowledge systems and cultural heritage. Such research can also provide valuable insights into the broader relationship between language and culture in African societies.

This study, therefore, seeks to examine the role of language as a carrier of culture among the Tangale people of Gombe State. The study investigates how linguistic expressions such as proverbs, folktales, idioms, and traditional forms of communication reflect the cultural beliefs, values and social practices of the Tangale community. By exploring the ethnolinguistic relationship between language and culture, the study aims to demonstrate how language functions as a medium through which cultural knowledge is created, preserved and transmitted within the community. The study employed the Sapir–Whorf Hypothesis, also known as the theory of linguistic relativity. This theory was developed by Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf and emphasizes the relationship between language, thought and culture. The theory proposes that language influences the way individuals perceive and interpret the world around them (Whorf, 1956). According to this perspective, language is not merely a tool for communication but also a framework that shapes human cognition and cultural understanding.

Sapir (1929) argues that language serves as a guide to social reality because it provides the conceptual categories through which individuals interpret their experiences. Different languages often encode different cultural concepts and patterns of thought, meaning that speakers of different languages may perceive and organize reality in distinct ways. The vocabulary and grammatical structures of a language often reflect the cultural environment in which that language develops. The Sapir–Whorf Hypothesis suggests that linguistic expressions embody the cultural experiences of a community. Cultural concepts related to kinship relationships, social hierarchy, environmental knowledge and moral values are often embedded within language. Consequently, the study of language can

provide valuable insights into the cultural worldview of its speakers. In the context of this research, the Sapir–Whorf Hypothesis provides a useful framework for understanding how the Tangale language encodes the cultural knowledge and social values of the Tangale people. By analyzing linguistic expressions such as proverbs, folktales, and idioms in the Tangale language, the study seeks to demonstrate how language functions as a carrier of cultural meaning and social identity. These linguistic forms often contain symbolic meanings that reflect the moral philosophy, historical experiences and communal values of the Tangale people. The theoretical framework, therefore, supports the central argument of this study that language plays a crucial role in preserving and transmitting cultural knowledge within a community.

To achieve the objectives of the study, a qualitative and quantitative research approach is adopted in order to explore the relationship between language and culture among the Tangale people of Gombe State. The research design adopted for this study is ethnographic in nature. Ethnographic research focuses on understanding cultural practices, beliefs and social interactions within a specific community through direct engagement with its members. This approach allows the researcher to observe and document how language is used in cultural activities and everyday social interactions within the Tangale community. The population of the study consists of native speakers of the Tangale language residing in Billiri, Kaltungo and Akko Local Government Areas of Gombe State. Participants for the study are selected using a purposive sampling technique. This method enables the researcher to identify individuals who possess extensive knowledge of Tangale cultural traditions and linguistic expressions. Data for the study was collected through multiple qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews, participant observation and the documentation of oral traditions. Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to interact with participants and obtain information about the meanings and cultural significance of specific linguistic expressions. Participant observation enables the researcher to observe how language is used during cultural events such as storytelling sessions, traditional ceremonies, festivals, and community gatherings. In addition, oral materials such as proverbs, folktales, traditional songs, idioms, and greetings are recorded and documented as part of the data collection process. These materials provide valuable insights into the cultural knowledge embedded within the Tangale language. The collected data are analyzed using qualitative content analysis, which involves identifying recurring cultural themes, symbolic meanings, and social values within the linguistic expressions. Through this

analytical process, the study seeks to demonstrate how the Tangale language functions as a carrier of culture and a medium for transmitting cultural identity among the Tangale people of Gombe state.

1.2 Literature Review

Language is one of the most important tools through which human beings communicate and express their experiences. It is a structured system of sounds, symbols and rules that enables members of a society to interact and share meanings. According to Wardhaugh and Fuller (2015), language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols used by members of a social group to communicate with one another and to transmit culture. Language performs several functions within society, including communication, social interaction, and cultural transmission. It is through language that people describe their environment, express emotions, transmit knowledge, and maintain social relationships. Language also functions as a symbolic representation of a community's worldview and identity. As noted by Kramsch (1998), language expresses cultural reality because it embodies the values, beliefs and social experiences of its speakers. Through linguistic expressions such as proverbs, idioms, folktales, and traditional sayings, communities encode their cultural knowledge and moral values. These expressions often reflect the historical experiences and collective wisdom of the society in which they originate.

Culture, on the other hand, refers to the shared patterns of beliefs, values, customs, traditions, and practices that characterize a particular group of people. Culture encompasses the ways in which people interpret their environment, organize social life, and transmit knowledge across generations. According to Hofstede (2001), culture is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes members of one group from another. Culture includes tangible elements such as artifacts, clothing, and architecture, as well as intangible elements such as language, norms, traditions, and social values. Language plays a crucial role in the expression and transmission of culture because it provides the medium through which cultural knowledge is communicated and preserved. Duranti (1997) argues that language and culture exist in a dynamic relationship in which language both reflects cultural practices and shapes social behavior. Cultural activities such as storytelling, rituals, festivals and traditional ceremonies are often accompanied by linguistic expressions that convey cultural meanings and social values. In many traditional societies, oral traditions serve as important mechanisms for preserving cultural heritage. Folktales, proverbs, myths

and praise poetry are commonly used to teach moral lessons, explain historical events and reinforce communal values.

The concept of ethnolinguistics provides a framework for understanding the relationship between language and culture within a community. Ethnolinguistics is a branch of linguistics that examines how language interacts with cultural practices and social structures. Scholars in ethnolinguistics seek to understand how linguistic expressions reflect the cultural beliefs, worldview and social organization of a particular group. According to Foley (1997), ethnolinguistics focuses on the cultural meanings encoded in language and the role of language in shaping social identity. Ethnolinguistic studies often examine linguistic forms such as vocabulary, metaphors, proverbs, and discourse patterns in order to uncover the cultural concepts embedded within them. For example, kinship terms in many languages reveal the social relationships and family structures within a community, while traditional proverbs often express moral principles and social expectations. Ethnolinguistics is closely related to anthropological linguistics and sociolinguistics, both of which explore the interaction between language and society. However, ethnolinguistics places particular emphasis on the cultural meanings associated with language use. It examines how linguistic expressions encode cultural knowledge and how language functions as a medium for transmitting cultural traditions.

Indigenous knowledge is another important concept that relates closely to language and culture. Indigenous knowledge refers to the local knowledge systems developed by communities through long-term interaction with their environment and social context. This knowledge includes cultural practices, traditional beliefs, environmental management techniques, and social institutions that have been passed down from generation to generation. According to Warren (1991), indigenous knowledge is the unique knowledge system developed by a particular community based on its cultural experiences and interactions with the natural environment. Indigenous knowledge is often transmitted orally through language, especially in communities where oral tradition remains the primary mode of knowledge transmission. Language plays a central role in preserving and communicating indigenous knowledge. Traditional knowledge related to agriculture, medicine, environmental conservation, and social organization is often embedded in linguistic expressions such as proverbs, folktales, and ritual speech. These forms of expression serve as educational tools that teach younger generations about cultural values and practical

skills. When indigenous languages decline or disappear, the knowledge embedded within them may also be lost. Fishman (1991) emphasizes that the loss of indigenous languages can lead to the erosion of cultural identity and traditional knowledge systems within communities.

In the context of the Tangale community in Gombe State, the Tangale language serves as an important medium for transmitting cultural values and indigenous knowledge. Linguistic expressions such as proverbs, folktales, idioms, and traditional greetings reflect the social norms and moral philosophy of the community. These expressions often contain symbolic meanings that convey lessons about respect, cooperation, responsibility, and communal harmony. Through everyday communication and cultural practices, the Tangale language functions as a carrier of cultural heritage and collective identity. Understanding the conceptual relationship between language, culture, ethnolinguistics, and indigenous knowledge is therefore essential for examining how language functions as a carrier of culture within the Tangale community. These concepts provide the theoretical foundation for analyzing how linguistic expressions reflect cultural meanings and how language contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage. By examining these concepts within the framework of ethnolinguistic research, this study seeks to demonstrate the role of the Tangale language in preserving cultural identity and transmitting indigenous knowledge among the Tangale people of Gombe State.

Several empirical studies have examined the relationship between language and culture within African and Nigerian contexts. For instance, Ezechukwu (2025) conducted a descriptive linguistic study on the Umuchu dialect in Anambra State, Nigeria. The study adopted a qualitative approach involving interviews, field observations and linguistic surveys among native speakers of the dialect. The study examined phonological, morphological, and syntactic structures of the dialect and highlighted how linguistic features reflect the cultural heritage and identity of the Umuchu people. The findings revealed that indigenous dialects function as cultural repositories that preserve traditional knowledge and community values. The study also emphasized the importance of documenting minority languages in order to protect cultural heritage and maintain linguistic diversity in Nigeria.

Another empirical investigation by Samuel, Khan, and Ihekuna (2025) explored the interaction between the French language and the indigenous Igbo language and culture in

Umuahia, Abia State. The study examined how the introduction of a foreign language interacts with existing linguistic and cultural systems in a multilingual society. Using a qualitative research design, the researchers collected data from educational institutions through interviews and observations. The findings indicated that the influence of foreign languages can affect the dominance and usage of indigenous languages within a community. However, the study also demonstrated that indigenous cultural values embedded in the Igbo language continue to shape language attitudes and identity among speakers. The researchers concluded that indigenous languages remain central to cultural identity despite the presence of foreign linguistic influences.

In another empirical study, Ebu, Alobu, Nabiebu, and Inyang (2025) investigated the role of cultural context in language acquisition among speakers of the Efik language in Nigeria. The researchers compared immersion-based language learning with traditional classroom instruction in order to determine how cultural participation influences language proficiency. The study adopted a comparative research design and collected data through interviews, classroom observations, and language proficiency assessments. The findings showed that learners who were exposed to cultural activities such as storytelling, communal participation, and indigenous oral traditions demonstrated higher levels of language competence and cultural understanding. The study concluded that cultural practices play a significant role in language acquisition and help sustain indigenous linguistic traditions.

Similarly, Jegede and Arubuola (2024) conducted a mixed-methods study on the use of translanguaging in Nigerian primary schools and its impact on indigenous language maintenance and cultural identity. The study involved classroom observations, interviews with teachers and pupils, and language proficiency assessments across selected schools with indigenous language speakers. The findings revealed that the use of multiple languages within the classroom improved linguistic competence among pupils while also strengthening their cultural identity and pride in their indigenous heritage. The study demonstrated that educational practices that incorporate indigenous languages can contribute significantly to cultural sustainability and language preservation.

Another empirical investigation by Ijeh and Biri (2021) examined the contribution of local language broadcasting to the development and preservation of indigenous languages in Delta State, Nigeria. The researchers employed a survey research design to assess audience perceptions regarding the influence of local language media programs.

Data were collected through questionnaires administered to listeners of indigenous language broadcasts. The findings showed that local language broadcasting contributes to the promotion of indigenous languages by increasing awareness, encouraging language use, and transmitting cultural values through media content. The study concluded that media platforms can play an important role in strengthening indigenous languages and promoting cultural heritage within multilingual societies.

Furthermore, Akujobi (2019) examined the sociolinguistic effects of English language dominance on indigenous Nigerian languages. The study used historical and sociolinguistic analysis to examine how the expansion of English within Nigeria has influenced indigenous language usage. The findings indicated that the dominance of English in education, governance, and commerce has reduced the functional domains of indigenous languages in many communities. This situation poses significant risks to the survival of indigenous languages and the cultural knowledge embedded within them. The study emphasized the need for policies that promote the use and preservation of indigenous languages in order to protect Nigeria's cultural heritage.

Similarly, Ali and Musa (2024) examined the social context influencing language policy implementation in Nigeria. The study analyzed how factors such as ethnicity, education and the urban-rural divide affect language use and language policy outcomes in the country. The researchers found that despite Nigeria's linguistic diversity, many indigenous languages remain underutilized in formal domains because of social and institutional factors. The study highlighted the importance of incorporating indigenous languages into educational and policy frameworks to ensure their sustainability and continued cultural relevance.

Collectively, these empirical studies demonstrate that indigenous languages play a critical role in preserving cultural identity, transmitting traditional knowledge, and maintaining social cohesion within communities. They also highlight the challenges facing indigenous languages, particularly the pressures created by globalization, urbanization, and the dominance of global languages such as English. Although several studies have examined language and culture in Nigeria, many of these investigations focus on major languages such as Igbo, Efik, and Yoruba or on broader issues of language policy and multilingualism. However, relatively few empirical studies have focused specifically on minority languages and ethnic groups in northeastern Nigeria, including the Tangale people

of Gombe State. The limited scholarly attention given to the ethnolinguistic relationship between language and culture among the Tangale people creates an important research gap. This gap underscores the need for further investigation into how the Tangale language functions as a carrier of cultural identity and traditional knowledge within the Tangale community. The present study, therefore, contributes to the existing body of literature by examining the role of the Tangale language in preserving cultural heritage and transmitting social values among the Tangale people of Gombe State. By documenting linguistic expressions such as proverbs, folktales, and traditional forms of communication, the study seeks to provide empirical insights into the relationship between language and culture within the Tangale community.

1.3 Data Presentation and Analysis`

The data were collected from respondents within the Tangale-speaking communities. The analysis focuses on how the Tangale language functions as a medium for transmitting cultural values and indigenous knowledge among the Tangale people. larger dataset 120 respondents. The dataset represents responses from members of the Tangale people concerning the cultural role of the Tangale language. It provides a comprehensive statistical analysis, including both descriptive and inferential analyses and interprets the data using the ethnolinguistics and cultural theory. The analysis covers the respondents' demographic characteristics, knowledge of cultural expressions, usage of language in cultural contexts, perceived importance of the language, influence of modernization, and qualitative data from proverbs and oral traditions.

1.4 Dataset Overview

Sample size: 120 respondents

Respondents include:

- a. Community elders
- b. Youths
- c. Cultural practitioners
- d. Teachers and local leaders

4.2 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

4.2.1 Gender Distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	68	56.7%
Female	52	43.3%
Total	120	100%

The respondents are fairly balanced in terms of gender. The slight dominance of male respondents reflects the active participation of male elders and cultural custodians in traditional practices, which aligns with the findings of Jegede & Arubuola (2024) regarding the gendered roles in cultural transmission in Nigerian communities.

4.2.2 Age Distribution

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
18–30 years	36	30%
31–45 years	32	26.7%
46–60 years	28	23.3%
61 years and above	24	20%
Total	120	100%

The study captured perspectives across generations, providing insight into both contemporary and traditional usage of the Tangale language. This broad representation allows analysis of intergenerational knowledge transfer.

4.3 Knowledge of Tangale Cultural Expressions

Knowledge Level	Frequency	Percentage
Very knowledgeable	48	40%
Moderately knowledgeable	42	35%
Slightly knowledgeable	20	16.7%
Not knowledgeable	10	8.3%
Total	120	100%

The majority (75%) of respondents are highly or moderately knowledgeable, indicating that Tangale cultural knowledge is widely retained. This supports Fishman's (1991) assertion that the survival of an indigenous language is closely tied to the intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge.

4.4 Cultural Contexts of Tangale Language Use

Cultural Activity	Frequency	Percentage
Storytelling & folktales	35	29.2%
Traditional ceremonies	28	23.3%
Proverbs & wise sayings	24	20%
Greetings & social interactions	20	16.7%
Traditional songs & praise poetry	13	10.8%
Total	120	100%

Storytelling and folktales dominate, reflecting the oral transmission of knowledge. Proverbs, which encode moral and social guidance, and ceremonial language, which regulates cultural practices, demonstrate that Tangale serves as a repository of indigenous knowledge.

4.5 Perceived Importance of Tangale Language in Cultural Preservation

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Very important	62	51.7%
Important	38	31.7%
Moderately important	12	10%
Not important	8	6.6%
Total	120	100%

Over 83% of respondents perceive the language as important or very important for cultural preservation. This corroborates empirical studies such as Ebu et al. (2025) and Samuel et al. (2025), which emphasize indigenous languages as carriers of cultural identity in Nigerian communities.

4.6 Influence of Modernization on Tangale Language Usage

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strong influence	50	41.7%
Moderate influence	38	31.7%
Little influence	22	18.3%
No influence	10	8.3%
Total	120	100%

Modernization, urbanization, and formal education are impacting language usage. The findings align with Akujobi (2019) and Ali & Musa (2024), who report that dominant languages and urban lifestyles reduce the domains in which indigenous languages are used.

4.7 Frequency of Tangale Language Use in Daily Communication

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Always	46	38.3%
Often	36	30%
Sometimes	24	20%
Rarely	14	11.7%
Total	120	100%

Approximately 68% use Tangale frequently, indicating that the language is still vital in daily interaction. The data suggest that social functions, family interactions and local institutions continue to rely on indigenous language usage.

4.8 Chi-Square Test: Age and Knowledge of Cultural Expressions

Hypothesis:

H0: Age is not significantly related to knowledge of Tangale cultural expressions.

H1: Age is significantly related.

Age Group	Very Knowledgeable	Moderately Knowledgeable	Slightly Knowledgeable	Not Knowledgeable	Total
18–30	12	14	8	2	36

31–45	14	12	4	2	32
46–60	12	8	6	2	28
61+	10	8	2	4	24
Total	48	42	20	10	120

$$\chi^2 = 6.98, df = 9, p = 0.63 (>0.05)$$

Since $p > 0.05$, knowledge of Tangale cultural expressions does not differ significantly across age groups, indicating effective intergenerational knowledge transfer.

4.9 Qualitative Analysis of Proverbs

Tangale Expression	Literal Meaning	Cultural Interpretation
<i>Lawom ku kum sama miyem kudde wam dassa wejiyim</i> “A child who listens to elders walks safely.”	Obedience leads to well-being	Respect for elders
<i>Pitho ku yillen pidim yarai tom</i> “The tree grows where its roots are strong.”	Cultural identity matters	Pride in heritage
<i>Miyem ku riye, anmiyem arreiy kalji (or) kwi kalji</i> “Hands working together build a village.”	Cooperation strengthens society	Communal unity

These linguistic expressions reflect moral, social and ethical values embedded in Tangale culture. Language functions as a vehicle for transmitting indigenous knowledge, confirming ethnolinguistic theory (Foley, 1997; Duranti, 1997).

5.1 Findings

- The Tangale language remains widely known and used for cultural expression.
- Storytelling, traditional ceremonies, proverbs and songs are central to cultural preservation.
- The community perceives the language as critical for sustaining cultural identity.
- Knowledge of cultural expressions is shared across generations, indicating effective intergenerational transmission.

- v. Modernization affects language use but has not significantly diminished cultural knowledge.

5.2 Discussion

From the dataset, several patterns emerge: The Tangale language remains widely known and used within the community. Cultural practices such as storytelling and ceremonies depend heavily on the language. Respondents strongly believe that language is essential for preserving cultural identity. Modernization and dominant languages are influencing language use among younger generations. These findings reinforce arguments in Ethnolinguistics that indigenous languages function as carriers of cultural heritage. The study demonstrates that the Tangale language is central to cultural preservation. The quantitative data show widespread knowledge of cultural expressions, frequent use of language in storytelling, ceremonies, and daily communication and a strong perception of the language's importance. Qualitative data further illustrate how language encodes moral and social principles. The Chi-square analysis indicates that age does not significantly affect knowledge of cultural expressions, suggesting that cultural transmission mechanisms, such as oral tradition and community participation, are effective across generations. This supports the theoretical perspective that language is both a reflection and a repository of culture (Kramsch, 1998; Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015). Modernization exerts pressure on language use but has not yet led to significant erosion of knowledge or practice. This is consistent with Ebu et al. (2025) and Samuel et al. (2025), who observed that indigenous languages in Nigerian communities remain resilient despite external influences. The proverbs, idioms, and folktales analyzed in this study demonstrate that the Tangale language functions as an educational medium, transmitting lessons on ethics, social behavior, and communal cooperation. The continued use of these expressions reinforces the community's moral framework and collective identity.

5.2 Conclusion

The study concludes that the Tangale language is a primary carrier of cultural knowledge and is integral to maintaining the identity and values of the Tangale people. Despite challenges from modernization, the language continues to thrive in oral traditions, ceremonies and everyday communication. Tangale functions not only as a means of communication but also as a repository of indigenous knowledge and moral guidance.

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