

## INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF THE KIPSIGIS LANGUAGE IN KURESOI SOUTH SUB-COUNTY, KENYA

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### Abstract

Intergenerational transmission is the most fundamental factor in the survival and preservation of minority and indigenous languages. However, in multilingual African contexts, positive attitudes towards heritage languages do not necessarily result in continuity of use or effective transmission. This study examines the relationship between language attitudes, language use, and intergenerational transmission intentions among young Kipsigis speakers in Kuresoi South Sub-County, Nakuru County, Kenya. It was anchored in the Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory and adopted a mixed-methods research design. The target population comprised native Kipsigis speakers aged 18–34 years residing in Kuresoi South Sub-County. A sample of 140 respondents was selected through stratified sampling based on gender and level of education to ensure representativeness. Data were collected using questionnaires and Focus Group Discussions. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and cross-tabulations, while qualitative data were analysed thematically. The findings show that although most respondents demonstrate high emotional attachment and cultural pride in Kipsigis, clear disparities exist in actual language use. While 62% expressed willingness to transmit the language to their children or younger siblings, 28% were unsure and 10% were unwilling. A very strong positive relationship was found between frequency of language use and intention to transmit the language. Over 80% of respondents who use Kipsigis daily reported a strong desire to pass it to the next generation, whereas infrequent users were more likely to be unsure or unwilling. Qualitative evidence shows schooling practices, peer pressure, and digital spaces limit use, requiring home-based and digital transmission. This study concludes that positive attitudes cannot maintain intergenerational transmission unless consistent daily use is maintained.

**Keywords:** intergenerational transmission, language attitudes, youth language practices, Kipsigis language, ethnolinguistic vitality.

### Introduction

Intergenerational Transmission is the most decisive factor in the maintenance and survival of minority and indigenous languages. Fishman (1991) holds that, despite a language having high symbolic positioning, it cannot maintain itself without continued use at the family and community levels. Subsequent research has shown that language shift in many cases does not involve an explicit rejection of the language. As provided by Grenoble and Whaley (2006), language shift involves a gradual weakening of language transmission as younger generations increasingly emphasize the advantages of dominant languages in education, employment, and their lives in

general. An emerging body of sociolinguistic findings indicates that positive linguistic attitudes do not always lead to active language use or language transmission. According to Baker (2020), speakers can show their pride and emotional connection to their own language, and at the same time prefer dominant languages in a non-emotional way. This has been reported to occur in the minority language context of many other parts of the world that are mostly referred to as attitudinal or functional diglossia (Edwards, 2010). Consequently, languages can still maintain a high degree of symbolism even as their functional domains shrink.

Youths play a significant role in language

shift despite positive attitudes. Being the present speakers and future parents, the youth are important agents in preserving or disrupting intergenerational transmission. Studies among the young population show a consistent trend: the high affective attachment to the indigenous languages is accompanied by less use of the language daily, particularly in both institutional and contemporary areas (Omoniyi, 2018). Androutsopoulos (2014) also asserts that digital media and peer communication are increasingly influencing youth language practices and forming new sociolinguistic settings, which tend to favour dominant languages. These dynamics are powerful in African multilingual situations. According to Bangbose (2011), indigenous languages serve as markers of ethnicity and cultural identity, whereas English and national languages dominate in education, employment, and the media. Kamwangamalu (2013) further captures what he refers to as the prestige paradox, whereby the African young people maintain emotional attachment to their native languages but associate socioeconomic mobility with colonial or national languages. Youth language practices, therefore, reveal a clear gap between positive attitudes toward indigenous languages and their actual use. This gap significantly accelerates language shift by weakening intergenerational transmission.

In Kenya, English and Kiswahili occupy dominant institutional positions due to its multilingual landscape. Although Kenya's language-in-education policy officially promotes the use of mother tongue in early primary education, empirical research shows that it has been inconsistently implemented (Kioko & Muthwii, 2001). Consequently, the native languages are mostly relegated to the informal sphere of life, that is, at home, at cultural events, and in community communication. The studies on the young population in Kenya indicate that the indigenous languages are still considered to be culturally important, but in fact, their use decreases with the further progress of the education system (Kembo-Sure, 2021; Kiramba, 2020). These general tendencies are exhibited by the Kipsigis language, which is a Southern Nilotic language that is mainly used in Kenya in the Rift Valley.

Although it is still common to find Kipsigis speakers in rural and semi-rural settings, young people are becoming more exposed to the world where Kiswahili and English are related to modernity, prestige, and economic prospects. Mukhwana (2008) notes that young people operate within a twofold linguistic condition, shaped simultaneously by cultural affiliation and by pragmatic pressures arising from education, mass media, and the workplace especially in Kenya. Nevertheless, minimal empirical studies delving directly into the relationship between language attitudes among Kipsigis youth with regard to actual language use and Transmission intentions exist. This situation underscores the need for focused empirical inquiry into how the language attitudes of Kipsigis youth translate into actual language use and intergenerational transmission practices.

Existing research on Kenyan indigenous languages has frequently examined attitudinal aspects either descriptively or in isolation from patterns of actual language use. It has rarely systematically linked these attitudes to intergenerational transmission practices. For example, Sociolinguistic studies show that negative or ambivalent language attitudes among youth can contribute to language shift and reduced use of indigenous languages in important social domains (Omoniyi, 2018). Moreover, relatively few investigations employ both quantitative and qualitative methods to capture not only the magnitude of language practices but also the meanings young speakers attach to those practices. This gap is significant given that, according to UNESCO (2009), intergenerational transmission remains the primary mechanism through which indigenous languages are sustained. Consequently, this study explores the relationship between language attitudes among young Kipsigis speakers in Kuresoi South Sub-County and their patterns of language use and intentions to transmit the language to future generations.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is based on Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory (EVT). EVT was proposed by Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor (1977). The proponents define ethnolinguistic vitality as a group's capacity

to maintain and defend its existence across time as a collective unit with a distinct identity and language. It involves the continuous intergenerational transmission of a group's language and cultural practices, as well as social cohesiveness and an emotional connection to the group's collective identity. Ehala (2015) asserts that speakers of a language must take part in group activities for it to be said to have vitality, and its preparedness is indicated by a shared understanding of the world and its relationships to both. In a setting with two or more speech communities, an ethnolinguistic community with high vitality is more likely to endure and prosper as a collective entity. This insight is important for understanding the Kipsigis case, where young speakers express strong emotional attachment and cultural pride, yet face structural pressures that limit functional language use. EVT therefore allows this study to interpret youth language attitudes as meaningful but insufficient on their own unless supported by regular practice and enabling environments.

According to Appel and Muysken (1987), a language group is said to have low vitality and is likely to switch to another language with high vitality if it has little or none of the three factors (demographic, status, and institutional support). Language strength interpretation between dominant and dominated groups is characterized by language strength profiles, and the preparation and organization of a speech community is predicated on shared understanding in an intergroup environment where the speech community is involved (Ehala, 2015). This proposition directly informs the analysis in this study, which demonstrates that infrequent use of Kipsigis is associated with weaker intentions to transmit the language, despite generally favourable attitudes. EVT therefore provides an explanatory bridge between attitudinal data and observed language practices.

EVT proponents developed a conceptual method to examine the sociostructural factors that influence the strength of an ethnolinguistic group by providing three dimensions of structural variables to be monitored for vitality. These three important variables are related to status,

demography, and institutional support.

Muturi (2019) posits that social factors are related to how the language is perceived within the speech community or the region in which it is found. It encompasses the socioeconomic conditions of the speakers and their language, as well as the social history of both the speakers and their language. According to Aswegen (2008), the status factors are further divided into economic status, social status, socio-historical status of language, and language status within and outside the language locality. Findings from this study indicate that Kipsigis enjoys strong symbolic and cultural status among young speakers, who associate it with ethnic identity, heritage, and emotional belonging. However, its functional status remains limited, particularly in formal domains such as education, media and employment which are dominated by English and Kiswahili. This imbalance reflects a broader post-colonial African linguistic context in which indigenous languages are emotionally valued but structurally marginalised. EVT helps explain why positive attitudes alone do not guarantee sustained use or transmission when a language lacks socioeconomic and institutional utility.

According to Muhanji (2017), demographic factors include the sheer number of group members and the proportion of their population in comparison to other groups in the areas where they live. These factors also encompass marriage patterns, immigration and emigration trends, and population density. Speakers who live in a concentrated geographical area are, according to Sachdev (1995), more likely to maintain their language than those dispersed within the larger population. These demographic conditions, therefore, play a crucial role in strengthening or weakening the maintenance of a community's language.

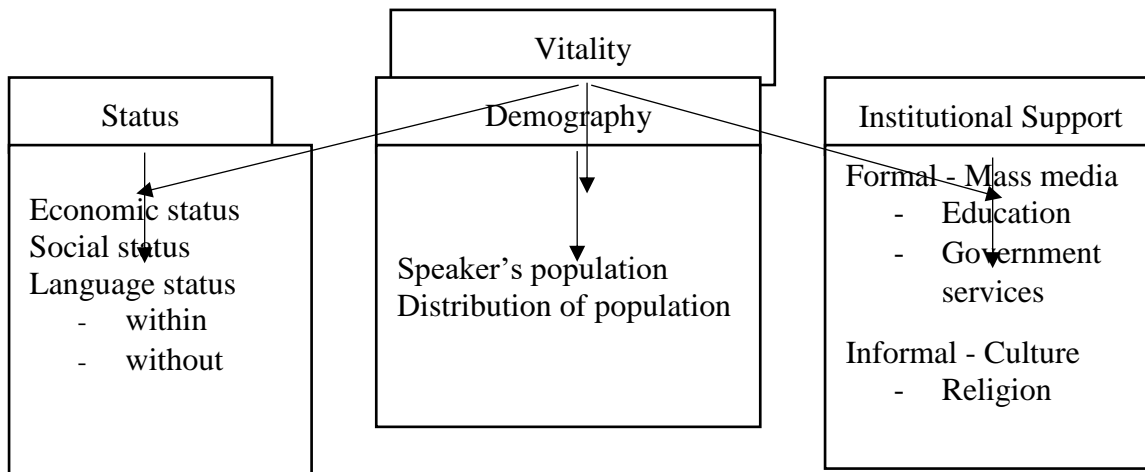
In this study, demographic strength is examined through frequency of language use in the home and community, as well as willingness to transmit Kipsigis to younger generations. The findings reveal a strong relationship between regular language use and transmission intentions, with daily users of Kipsigis being significantly more likely to express firm intentions to pass on

the language. This supports EVT’s emphasis on intergenerational transmission as a central mechanism of language maintenance and highlights how reduced everyday use weakens demographic vitality over time.

Institutional support is defined as the extent to which an ethno-linguistic group enjoys representation in, and control over, the various institutions of a community, region, or nation (Sachdev, 1995). According to Yagmur (2011), institutional support encompasses both official and unofficial assistance that a linguistic group in the larger society can use. Minority communities may set up their own institutions to support their language and culture in the form of informal support, such as supplemental schools. Formal support, on the other hand, can signify that the government supports the linguistic group and that the ethno-linguistic group participates in the formulation of public policy (Giles et al., 1977)

The findings show that Kipsigis has limited presence in formal institutions, where English and Kiswahili dominate, thereby constraining opportunities for young speakers to use the language beyond the home. These structural constraints reinforce language shift tendencies despite positive community attitudes. However, the study also identifies emerging forms of informal institutional support, including cultural practices and youth-driven digital platforms, which function as adaptive strategies for maintaining language visibility and use.

Figure 2.1 below presents a schematic summary of the key factors that determine ethnolinguistic vitality as proposed in Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory. It visually integrates the three core dimensions (status, demography, and institutional support) that jointly shape the strength and sustainability of a language group.



**Figure 2.1: A Summary of Vitality Factors**

As illustrated in Figure 2.1, ethnolinguistic vitality is sustained through the interaction of status, demographic, and institutional support factors rather than any single variable operating in isolation. The figure demonstrates how weaknesses in one dimension may undermine overall vitality, even when the other factors appear strong. It therefore emphasizes the need for a balanced and integrated

approach when analysing language maintenance and shift among speech communities.

EVT was applicable to this study because it laid a framework for an integrated analysis of attitudes, practices, and structural conditions that influence intergenerational transmission. The framework helps explain why positive attitudes alone may not translate into sustained language use or effective transmission by situating youth

language attitudes within broader sociolinguistic forces. The theory, therefore, informs both the interpretation of findings and the discussion of strategies for strengthening the vitality of Kipsigis among young speakers.

### **3.0 Methodology**

This study employed a mixed-methods research design. Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) define a mixed methods research design as an approach or technique that involves comprehensive analysis and combination of both the quantitative and the qualitative data in order to gain a broader insight into a research issue. In qualitative research, data is collected in the form of narratives while in quantitative research, data is collected in the form of numbers and accurately subjected to analytical statistical programs to draw numerical values.

The study population consisted of 140 young speakers of Kipsigis, aged between 18 and 34 years. This age bracket was chosen because it is one of the important transition periods, when people build their linguistic identities and tend to take up parental, care, and societal roles, hence playing a direct role in intergenerational Transmission (UNESCO, 2009). This study employed a stratified sampling technique to select young speakers of Kipsigis, providing data for analysis. Stratified sampling is a probability sampling technique that involves dividing the population into distinct subgroups (strata) based on specific characteristics, then randomly selecting participants from each stratum. According to Bryman (2012), this approach ensures that key demographic variables are proportionally represented in the sample, thereby enhancing the reliability and generalizability of the findings. The sample was selected in the four wards of the Sub-County of Kuresoi South: Kiptagich, Keringet, Amalo, and Tinet to have a geographic and sociocultural representation. The sample was stratified into male and female, and was diverse in terms of educational level, consisting of primary, secondary, and post-secondary education. This variety allowed testing the mediation of the age, education, and social exposure factors on language attitudes and practices.

Data was collected using a questionnaire and Focus Group Discussions (FGD). According to Creswell (2014), mixing qualitative and quantitative methods in research allows for a more comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon. Using separate groups for FGDs and a questionnaire enables researchers to capture a broader range of data types and perspectives, which enhances the depth of analysis. Quantitative data on attitude towards the language, frequency of use, and intention to transmit the language were collected using a structured questionnaire. Items in the questionnaire were on emotional attachment, pride, perceived cultural value, perceived utility of Kipsigis, daily language use, and willingness to transfer the language to the younger generations on a Likert scale. According to Garrett (2010), these attitudinal scales play a significant role in the research of language attitudes and enable the systematic comparison between respondents.

Four focus group discussions were used to complement the qualitative data; the young Kipsigis speakers were stratified in terms of gender and educational level. The FGDs were 6-8 participants in duration of about 60 minutes. Meetings were done in a neutral community setting and in the late afternoon to facilitate the ease and access of the participants. Some of the themes investigated by the FGDs included the use of language in various fields, views on prestige and modernity, family language practices, and views on educating young generations in the Kipsigis language. The particular conditions that made FGDs the most appropriate in this study were that language attitudes are created by society and frequently expressed by interaction and collective stories (Krueger & Casey, 2015). Group discussions enabled the participants to share experiences, and the results showed that there was unanimity as well as some variation in attitude and practice.

SPSS (version 28) was used to analyse quantitative data to produce descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Cross-tabulations among frequency of language use and transmission intentions were investigated, and thus it was possible to identify relationships between attitude

and behaviour patterns. The FGDs provided the qualitative data that were transcribed word-for-word and subjected to thematic analysis using a six-step model by Braun and Clarke (2006). This consisted of being acquainted with the data, preliminary coding, theme creation, revision, and refinement. The inductive approach was used because the researcher sought to allow themes to emerge from the participants themselves rather than being imposed a priori. Creswell (2014) notes that this approach is particularly appropriate for revealing underlying meanings related to language use, identity, and transmission.

### Research Findings and Discussions

This section presents findings on the trends of usage and transmission of Kipsigis language among young speakers in Kuresoi South Sub-County. The quantitative findings of the questionnaire are presented first followed by the qualitative findings from the focus group discussions.

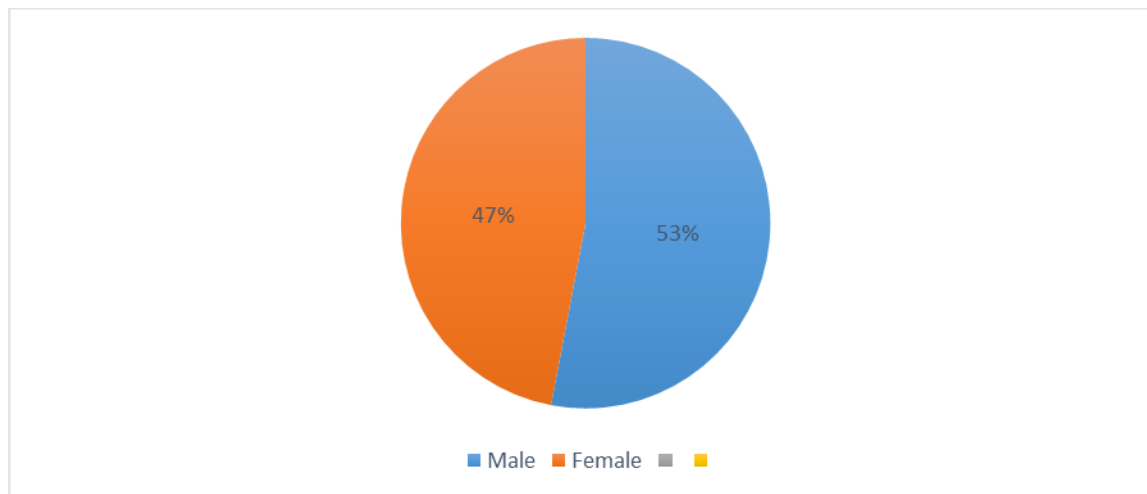
#### Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The respondents comprised 140 young Kipsigis speakers from Kuresoi South Sub-County. The sampling process was designed to represent the

four wards of Kuresoi South Sub-County: Kiptagich, Keringet, Amalo, and Tinnet. It also aimed to reflect diversity in terms of gender, age, and educational level.

#### Gender Distribution

Participants in the study were required to indicate their gender. Based on the data, male respondents account for 53% of the total respondents, with females making up the remaining 47% of participants, as shown in Figure 4.1 below. This distribution reflects a reasonably balanced gender representation, enabling insights from both male and female perspectives on language attitudes. Although gender did not emerge as the primary determinant of attitudes toward Kipsigis, previous studies indicate that women may demonstrate stronger cultural loyalty in language matters. This aligns with Obiero (2008), who asserts that women often play a critical role in language maintenance and cultural transmission through everyday socialization practices. The balanced gender distribution, therefore, enhances the representativeness of the findings. The relation between gender and language attitudes is shown in Figure 4.1 below.



*Figure 4.1: Gender distribution of the respondents*

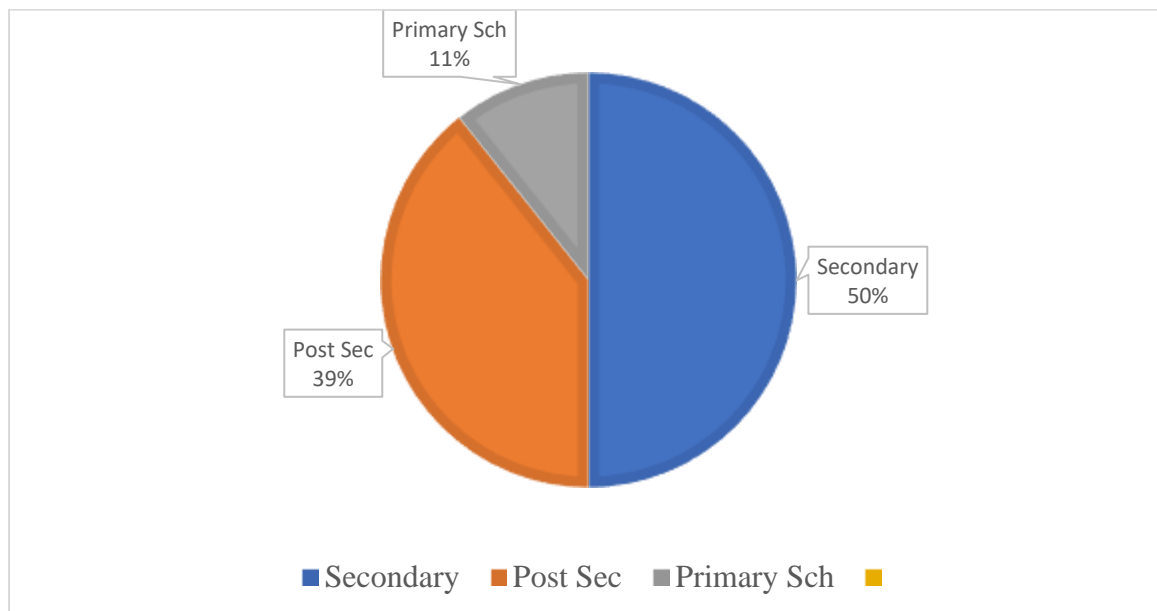
#### Age Distribution

The respondents comprised native Kipsigis speakers aged 18 to 34 years. Findings in Table 4.1 show that the largest group of respondents (32.1%) was between 21-25 years old, followed by 18-20 years (25%), 26-29 years (25%), and 30-34 years (17.9%). This spread reflects a balanced representation across the youth age spectrum. It also ensures that the findings capture diverse age-based perspectives on language attitudes.

**Table 4.1: Age distribution of the respondents**

Age Group(Years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18-20	35	25.0
21-25	45	32.1
26-29	35	25.0
30-34	25	17.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>100.0</b>

One of the most important variables of language ideologies and preferences is education. The level of education, as cited in previous studies (Mukhwana, 2008; Muthwii, 2004), significantly shapes language attitudes because exposure to formal schooling increases the use of English and Kiswahili, which are considered dominant languages in education and work environments. The relationship between educational background and language attitudes is highlighted in Figure 4.2 below.

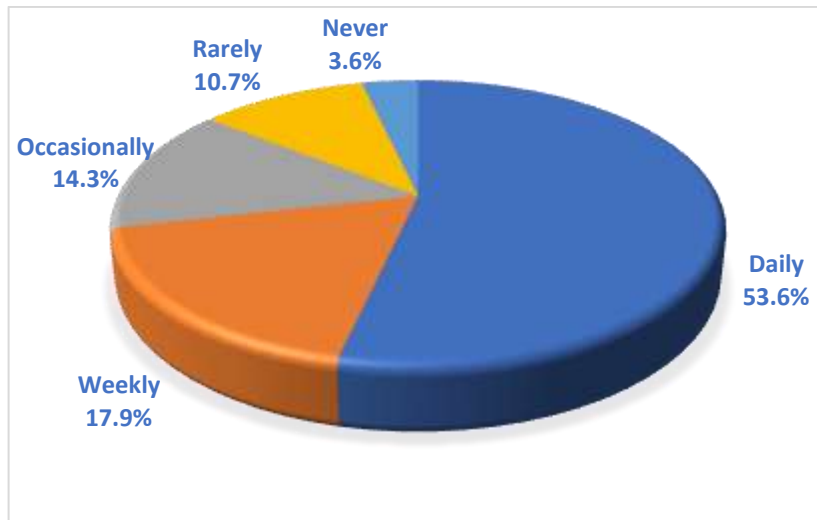


**Figure 4.2: Educational background of the respondents**

As shown in Figure 4.2 above, 50% of the respondents indicated that they had completed secondary school, 39% had attained post-secondary qualifications, while 11% had only reached primary school. These findings suggest that majority of respondents have a relatively high level of education which may influence their language preferences and attitudes. It also indicates that formal education plays a significant role in shaping the use and perception of dominant languages such as English and Kiswahili.

### Kipsigis Language Use among the Youth.

The respondents were asked to respond to the question on the frequency of speaking Kipsigis. Figure 4.3 presents a summary of the respondents' reported frequency of speaking Kipsigis across different age groups.



*Figure 4.3: Frequency of speaking Kipsigis*

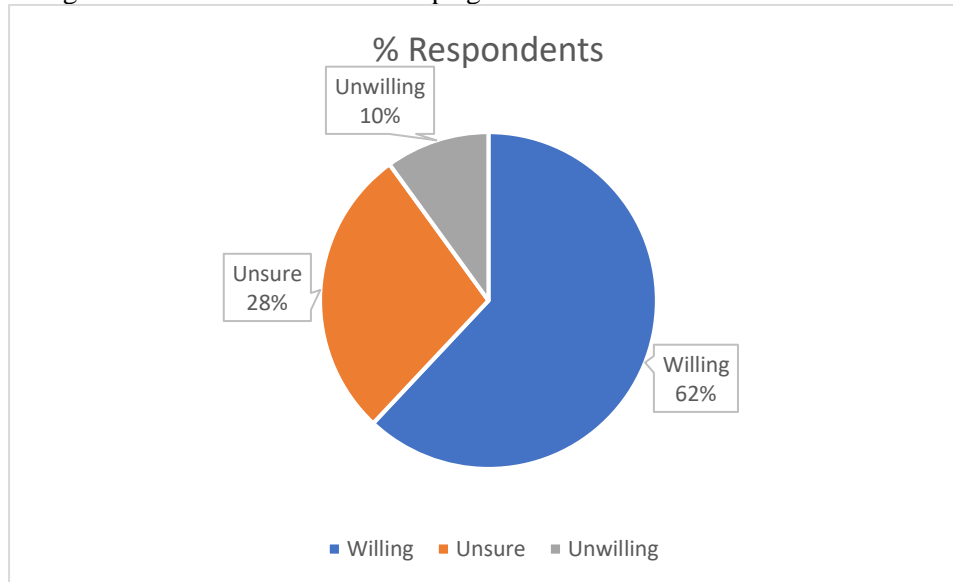
As shown in Figure 4.3 above, 53.6% of the respondents indicated that they used Kipsigis daily, with 17.9% indicating that they did this weekly. 14.3% reported that they used the language occasionally, 10.7% said they hardly use it, and 3.6% said that they never use the language. These findings demonstrate that most of the young speakers are in constant touch with Kipsigis, but a significant minority speaks the language infrequently or not at all. This pattern suggests that while Kipsigis remains relatively vibrant among many young speakers, its use is unevenly distributed within the youth population. Consequently, the presence of a sizeable group with minimal or no use of the language points to potential risks for sustained intergenerational transmission if supportive measures are not put in place. According to Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory (EVT), the frequency and domains of language use are key indicators of a community's vitality. In this context, the uneven distribution of Kipsigis usage among youth suggests that while the language remains relatively vital for many, there is a potential risk to its sustained intergenerational transmission if supportive measures are not implemented.

The findings resonate with the existing empirical studies on the use of ethnolinguistic vitality in the context of the minority language. For example, Kamau and Motanya's (2024) study on the Shona minority in Kenya, found that the active use of the heritage language in different areas of life including home, work, and community gatherings is one of the most important factors in keeping the language alive thus in line with the Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory (EVT) on importance of active use and social support on the survival of a minority language

It is also worth noting that trends in age indicate a gradual decreasing consumption pattern, with the respondents shifting to older categories of youth. The younger participants (18-20 years) gave higher rates of daily use as compared to older participants, who were oftentimes more inclined to give occasional or situational use. This change indicates that the more one is exposed to formal education, workplaces, and extended social contacts, the more such exposure affects the daily language activities. The findings, therefore, suggest that increased exposure to formal and multilingual environments contributes to a gradual decline in the consistent daily use of Kipsigis among older youth.

### Generational Desires among the Youth.

The participants were asked whether they would be ready to transmit Kipsigis to their children or younger siblings. Figure 4.4 illustrates the distribution of respondents' intentions and practices regarding intergenerational transmission of Kipsigis.



**Figure 4.4: Percentages of intergenerational transmission practices**

As shown in Figure 4.4 above, 62% of the respondents indicated that they were willing to transmit Kipsigis to the next generation. However, 28% were not sure, while 10% said that they were not willing to transmit the language. These findings demonstrate that although most of them indicate their willingness to transmit Kipsigis, almost two-fifths of young speakers either are not so sure or show their unwillingness, which also indicates a possible weakness in the long-term sustainability. The presence of substantial uncertainty and unwillingness among a significant minority points to a potential vulnerability in the long-term intergenerational sustainability of Kipsigis. This finding contrasts with studies carried out in more linguistically homogeneous and geographically isolated rural communities where intergenerational transmission is generally more stable and less disputed (Brenzinger et al., 2011). The observed ambivalence suggests that while positive attitudes exist, they are increasingly shaped by competing linguistic pressures, thereby weakening the overall vitality of the language.

There were differences in transmission intentions depending on age. The willingness of older respondents (mainly 30–34-year-olds) to transmit the language was higher than among younger people. The trend indicates greater participation in family life, caregiving, and cultural obligations as young people grow in age, which seems to enhance adherence to language transmission. This suggests that life-stage factors play a crucial role in shaping language transmission decisions among young speakers. Consequently, efforts to promote Kipsigis transmission may need to target younger age groups before family responsibilities become a motivating factor. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) provide rich qualitative evidence of transmission practices within families. One female participant noted, *“We teach our younger siblings and children through conversation and songs. At home, it is part of daily life”* (FGD 1, Female 2). This account highlights the role of everyday interaction and culturally embedded practices, such as songs, in facilitating natural language transmission within the home. The FGD evidence reinforces the view that informal family domains remain critical sites for sustaining Kipsigis across generations. In another instance, a male participant pointed out the problems of reinforcement by giving this account: *“It is not enough to teach at home. When the kids go to school or meet friends in town,*

*they switch to Kiswahili or English. Sometimes they forget what we taught them” (FGD 3, Male 9).* These accounts suggest that while positive attitudes facilitate proactive teaching, external influences, such as schooling and peer interactions, may limit the effectiveness of transmission. This finding corroborates the observation by Wamalwa et al. (2020) that in minority communities, even when speakers hold positive attitudes toward their heritage language, societal pressures and dominant-language environments can lead to gradual language shift and erosion. Such findings highlight the complex interplay between individual agency and broader social forces in language maintenance. Fostering both supportive attitudes and enabling environments is, therefore, essential for sustaining Kipsigis across generations.

Community-level transmission supports familial teaching by providing children with informal exposure to the Language through various cultural activities. The participants strongly noted that oral traditions, storytelling, and ceremonial songs provide avenues for learning and practicing Kipsigis. One female participant indicated, *“We always speak Kipsigis when singing or dancing at village activities. This is how children learn to sing, dance, and understand their culture” (FGD 2, Female 4).* These activities indicate community reinforcement in intergenerational transmission and support UNESCO’s (2009) assertion that minority languages depend on community-based domains for support in sustaining vitality. This demonstrates that community cultural practices play a vital complementary role to the family in reinforcing intergenerational transmission and sustaining the vitality of Kipsigis.

Despite these practices, the youth identified significant barriers to transmission. The emphasis on English and Kiswahili in formal schooling decreases opportunities for children to use and reinforce Kipsigis. Peer influence encourages children to adopt dominant languages for social acceptance. In addition, when youth begin entering urban workspaces, they often focus on mastering English or Kiswahili, reducing further opportunities to practice or transmit the Language. FGD participants echoed these difficulties as one female participant reflected, *“Even if we teach our children at home, schools and friends push them toward English and Kiswahili, so they forget what we say” (FGD 1, Female 6).* These findings highlight that structural and environmental factors moderate the effectiveness of intergenerational transmission, reinforcing that positive attitudes are, in themselves, insufficient to guarantee long-term language maintenance. It is, therefore, clear that while positive attitudes toward Kipsigis exist, external pressures from education, peers, and urban environments pose significant challenges. This indicates that language maintenance requires supportive structural and social conditions beyond familial efforts.

In light of the challenges, the young speakers reported that they employed various adaptive strategies, such as the integration of Kipsigis in their daily routines and the creation of digital content, such as songs and videos, in the promotion of the use of the language. These strategies resonate with recent studies, which establish the value of the involvement of young people in the utilization of digital media as a new trend in the maintenance of minority languages (Androutsopoulos, 2014; Jones & Uribe-Jongbloed, 2013). Nevertheless, studies indicate that the maintenance of ethnolinguistic vitality cannot be solely supported through involvement in digital media without the reinforcement of the two domains of family and institution (De Houwer, 2009); thus, such strategies can improve the visibility of the Kipsigis but should be supported through other structural arrangements.

### Language Future Vitality Perceptions and challenges.

The respondents were asked whether they felt that Kipsigis would still be used by the young people in the next 20 years. The results reveal mixed opinions. Table 4.2 below summarizes the respondents' perceptions of the future vitality of Kipsigis among young people.

**Table 4.2: Frequency of youth perceptions of Kipsigis vitality**

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	90	64.3
No	50	35.7
<b>Total</b>	140	100

As indicated in Table 4.2, about 64.3% of respondents believed that Kipsigis would make it to the future on the basis of good cultural attachment, their continued use back at home, and their practices in the community. Nevertheless, 35.7% of them said they were sceptical, citing the prevalence of English and Kiswahili in education, media, and urban living as some of the biggest threats. These findings suggest that while a majority of young speakers are optimistic about the continued use of Kipsigis, a significant minority remain doubtful about its long-term survival. The results highlight the tension between strong cultural attachment and external pressures from dominant languages in shaping language vitality.

This ambivalence was also witnessed in the FGD discussions. Respondents also said that they were confident in what they were doing and felt anxious about the new trends in younger children, especially code-switching and the trend towards dominant languages. These ambivalent views indicate that the young people are cognizant of both the positive and the negative aspects of the Kipsigis in their present sociolinguistic situation. In terms of challenges, a large percentage of young individuals indicated problems associated with peer pressure, school, and workplace language standards. Most of them mentioned that although they were more comfortable with Kipsigis at home or in informal community settings, Kiswahili or English was often required in other contexts. For example, one respondent explained that everybody speaks English or Kiswahili at school: *"In case you speak Kipsigis, people laugh or fail to understand you"* (Male, 19, Questionnaire response). Another emphasized workplace limitations: *"When you speak Kipsigis at work, people stare at you and consider you unprofessional"* (Female, 24, Questionnaire response). These results confirm the affective-behavioural gap outlined by Fishman (1991), where positive attitudes do not always translate into actual language use under strong institutional pressure.

These challenges were also reflected in FGD narratives, where participants explained that digital and urbanised spaces further encourage code-switching or reduced use of Kipsigis. One participant noted that social media, work-related communication, and schools operate mainly in English or Kiswahili, making it difficult to consistently use Kipsigis (Male, 22, FGD 2). This supports Androutsopoulos' (2014) observation that minority language speakers actively negotiate language use across contexts.

When asked about the future of Kipsigis, some respondents expressed optimism based on continued home use, cultural pride, and emerging youth-oriented digital content. One respondent noted, *"Kipsigis will not die because we educate our children, sing songs in the language, and even do it online"* (Female, 25, Questionnaire response).

Conversely, about 35–40% of respondents expressed concern about the long-term survival of the language, citing the dominance of English and Kiswahili in education and urban settings. One participant observed, *"Many children speak English; they mix languages, and Kipsigis can vanish unless something is done"* (FGD 1, Male 7). This concern aligns with UNESCO's (2009) observation that minority languages are vulnerable in contexts where institutional support is weak and dominant languages are socially and economically valued.

From an ethnolinguistic vitality perspective, these findings indicate that while the symbolic status of Kipsigis remains strong among youth, demographic vitality and institutional support are increasingly constrained by urbanisation, education policies, and social pressures. Positive attitudes alone are therefore insufficient to guarantee long-term language maintenance. However, youth-led adaptive strategies such as home-based teaching, participation in cultural activities, and digital engagement demonstrate active efforts to sustain the language despite these challenges.

### Conclusions

The study concludes that Kipsigis continues to possess strong symbolic and cultural value among young speakers, particularly as a marker of identity and community belonging. However, its functional use is increasingly confined to home and community domains, with limited presence in institutional, educational, and official contexts. This restriction poses a long-term risk to the language's vitality, as reduced functional breadth may eventually weaken intergenerational transmission.

The research also concludes that young people are not mere observers of language shift but rather actors whose everyday decisions will make or break the trends of keeping the indigenous languages alive as means of communication or relegate them to the symbolic levels. The simultaneous nature of a positive view of the Kipsigis future with a negative view of growing Kiswahili and English domination is one example of a larger conflict in modern African multilingualism.

### Recommendations

The study recommends that community organisations, cultural organisations, and community leaders should actively support youth-initiated projects that incorporate the Kipsigis language into digital spaces such as social media,

podcasts, short videos, and online storytelling forums. Local cultural committees can also start annual awards or recognition programme on creatively produced Kipsigis digital content thus promoting the maintenance and the usage of the language among young speakers

In addition, parents and elder siblings should be sensitised through community forums, religious gatherings, and local barazas on the importance of sustained home use of Kipsigis. Community-based sensitisation programmes should emphasise that natural, everyday interaction is the most effective form of language transmission. Framing home language use as a deliberate cultural investment can help families adopt more intentional and consistent Kipsigis language practices.

The study further recommends that Kipsigis should be integrated in the county cultural departments as well as in local administrative offices through selected public communication platforms, which include community meetings, public announcements, and cultural documentation programmes. Even low institutional presence is able to increase the perceived legitimacy and functional relevance of the language, and thus support larger extent of maintenance efforts.

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