

## **Attitudes of Iteso Students towards the Ateso Language**

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**Abstract:** The study investigated Iteso students' attitudes towards the Ateso language in Kumi district. It had been observed that Ateso was not widely taught as it should have been as only eight schools out of 76 embraced the teaching of Ateso in secondary schools. Many stakeholders blamed such a trend to young peoples' attitudes towards Ateso language. The objective of the study was to establish the attitudes of Iteso students towards the Ateso language. The researchers mainly used the qualitative research approach with a survey design. Instruments of data collection were the questionnaire and interviews. Four schools were selected and a total of 320 respondents were sampled from 480 using simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques. The study found out that students are attached to Ateso language mainly because it is their mother tongue and they highly favour it for patriotic or integrative reasons. The study unveiled the prevailing attitude of the students towards Ateso language and so will help policy makers in planning for its better teaching. The study has also added to the knowledge bulk, especially in the disciplines of sociolinguistics and social psychology of language, particularly in the field of attitude studies.

**Keywords:** Iteso Students' attitude, Ateso language, mother tongue, Kumi district, social psychology of language.

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### **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

This paper investigates the attitude of students towards Ateso language. There is a general outcry among the general community (especially elders) that young people have abandoned their languages and are not proud of them in terms of speaking and identifying with their mother tongue [1]. However, the claims that there was negative attitude towards Ateso by the educated youth or those still at school had not been substantiated by any scientific study. This prompted this research to establish the truth about these claims.

The main reason we conducted this study was that Ateso language was one of the local languages selected to be taught in secondary schools. However, only a few schools embraced it in their curricula. We blamed this passive response on students' attitude. We strongly claimed that the young people did not like their language and this was impacting the schools' decision to offer the language in the curriculum negatively. It was therefore imperative to establish the attitude of students towards their own language as a way to get a scientific answer.

It must be noted that Attitude towards something leads to its success or failure [2]. UNESCO asserts that language attitudes can be a powerful

weapon leading to both promotion and loss of people's languages. According to the UN cultural body UNESCO, there are currently 7000 endangered languages. Ateso is one of those languages in danger of disappearing [3]. Loss of any language presents adverse effects to the world. According to Global Language Hotspots, "Language is the storehouse and often the only window onto the collective history of a community. When these languages disappear, so too does a wealth of knowledge about a community, the environment its speakers live in, etc. pass out of existence forever" [4]. One way to preserve a language is by having it entrenched in the young people. It was certainly important to find out the feeling of young people towards their own language since they are the ones with the future of the language.

### **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Ateso is one of the languages that NCDC identified as one of the major languages to be in the secondary school curriculum, yet Ateso was not widely being taught. It was only taught in eight schools out of seventy six secondary schools registered with the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Sports. There was a general feeling in the country that attitude of the young people towards local languages is unfortunately negative. There is also an assertion that

many Africans view their own ethnic languages as unsuitable for use in official domains (such as education). This was of concern because attitude is a component that is instrumental in language learning. It affects implementation of policies and negative attitude may cause the demise of a language in question in future. This therefore necessitated our research on the role played by students' attitudes in the learning of Ateso in secondary schools in Teso sub-region.

### **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

The general objective was to investigate the general attitudes of students towards the Ateso language in Teso sub-region

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The perception of what attitude is falls in two broad categories of Behaviourists and Mentalists. This concept has had many definitions. Smit [5] for example in defining from the mentalist point of view, cites Weber thus: 'attitude is an evaluative reaction – a judgement regarding one's liking or disliking- of a person, event ,or other aspect of environment... (it) is a non-neutral position about the attitude object and can range in its intensity. Key in this definition is the phrase "non neutral." We can infer that there is no middle position when it comes to attitude. One cannot exhibit both a positive and negative attitude towards the attitude object. They either show a feeling or opinion of approval or disapproval towards something, and not both. We therefore deduce that, attitude is a feeling or opinion of approval or disapproval of an attitude object and that feeling may be very strong, strong or weak.

Crystal, as cited in Coronel [6] defines attitude as the feelings people have about their language and the languages of other people. This definition elucidates two things: firstly, it stresses that natives have different notions about their own. Secondly, people also have notions, prejudices, and stereotypes about the language(s) of others. Such opinions motivated our study of Iteso students' attitude towards their own mother tongue. It is worth noting that people's views of other people's languages and linguistic features may be positive or negative based on political and social reasons.

Further, attitude has been looked at by a number of scholars as a psychological issue. For instance, Eagly and Chaiken [7] maintain that attitude is a psychological predisposition that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour. It is evident that the two important terminologies for us to note in understanding attitude within this framework are, favour and disfavour. It is also clear that the things we favour are the ones we like and vice versa.

An attitude may be positive or negative views, feelings, prejudice or reactions to a certain person, idea, object, institution, circumstance, place, thing or event and can influence the behaviour of an individual, his choice of action and the way he reacts to a certain issue. An individual's reaction towards a certain issue, to a large extent, depends on how the individual perceives or views it [8]. Because of this, Kobia and Ndiga, found out that majority of secondary school students in Igembe South District who had a negative attitude towards Kiswahili affected their performance in the language. However, Eiser's definition is more compelling and we adopted it for our study: "To say that we have a certain attitude, towards something or someone is a shorthand way of saying that we have feelings or thoughts of like or dislike, approval or disapproval, attraction or repulsion, trust or distrust and so on" [9]. Considering all these definitions, we surmise that we can have an attitude towards anything and it is something ingrained in our mind which causes us to feel in a particular manner towards another.

Negative attitudes towards African languages have been widely reported by researchers. According to Adegija [10] many Africans view their own ethnic languages as unsuitable for use in official domains. They thus neglected them. The neglect experienced by these languages played a significant role in creating a negative attitude towards them, which may lead to their demise in the future. Nakayiza [11] also blamed the younger generation and especially girls (who even tended to avoid speaking their mother tongue) for having a negative attitude towards their mother language (Luganda). However, she claims that there was negative attitude towards Ateso had not been substantiated by any scientific study. This prompted this research.

In exploring peoples' attitudes, Nakayiza [12] writes that, "although local languages performed well in cultural-identity functions, they were affected by increased negative attitudes by especially the younger generation". Girls especially tended to even avoid speaking their mother tongue (Luganda). She recommended that there is a need to de-cultivate the negative attitudes and ideologies. Nakayiza also found out that, "The language attitudes of young people do not show much evidence for enthusiasm towards their mother tongues, including Luganda". This discovery had not yet been made among the Iteso students. The researchers wanted to investigate this among the Iteso students of Teso sub region. Further the young students believed that local languages would not help them to get jobs, nor would they aid them to pursue a professional career of their choice. This was yet another gap for the researcher to investigate in Teso. For example, did Iteso students think along the same lines of not getting jobs and careers? In addition, she

observed that parents from the middle class families even barred their children from speaking the local language at home and preferred English instead. Interestingly, the study also found out that girls were even ashamed of using Luganda when they were calling their parents on phone. However whether the Iteso students also felt ashamed or shy to speak their language had not yet been established. This was yet another gap that needed to be filled.

Mukhwana [13] conducted similar study as that of Kobia and Ndiga. He investigated attitudes towards Kiswahili in urban Kenya. His aim was to find out the relationship between these attitudes and their impact on language planning and language policy. He sought to find out situations in which the masses considered the use of Kiswahili appropriate as well as the relative position of Kiswahili in relation to English and other local languages. His findings were that the urban Kenyans had positive attitudes towards Kiswahili for integrative reasons (that is to say for unity and generally social interaction with one another), rather than for instrumental reasons (such as its use as a medium of instruction at school). The language attitude towards Kiswahili by urban Kenyans differed from correspondent to correspondent in two distinct and consistent ways. First was the need to be one people, (integrative factor) and second the need to advance economically. Of the two, the attitude about Kiswahili and the need to advance economically received less weight because more interviewees were against it. On the other hand, the need to be one people outweighed the economic reason in terms of language attitudes towards Kiswahili. The level of orientation to the integrative factor had also not yet been found in Teso. This motivated the researchers to conduct this study.

**METHODOLOGY**

The study used a descriptive survey design. A survey, according to Griffee, “is an umbrella term that allows for many data collection procedures including questionnaires, interviews and observations.” Griffee

further states that “Survey design studies purport to measure a construct which is theoretical (for example opinions, beliefs and attitudes).” [14]. The design was therefore found to be appropriate for use since this study dealt with attitudes. The design helped the researchers to answer the questions of what the attitudes of the students’ were towards Ateso language.

The data collection tools were interviews and questionnaires. The questionnaire had 16 items in general, 13 of which were closed ended. Respondents were provided with statements which they were required to tick. These ranged from strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree, disagree, to not sure. Three other questions were open ended where they were supposed to answer freely.

317 students were sampled out of the 465 students doing Ateso in four schools. We used Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table to arrive at the specific numbers required for each school. Only three teachers of Ateso were interviewed. For data analysis, we used SPSS software. SPSS tables were mainly interpreted qualitatively, although there were aspects of percentages that produced a limited level of quantitative analysis.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

**Attitudes of students towards Ateso language in secondary schools**

This section mainly presents the attitude of students towards the Ateso language in secondary schools. The focus was on the perceived value of Ateso, the beauty and the contexts or situations of speaking the Ateso language among students of secondary schools in Teso sub region among others. The presentation and discussion followed the items as they appeared in the Likert scale of the questionnaire the researchers used as in the tables below.

**“I think there is no value of speaking Ateso”**

**Table 1: Thoughts on the Value of Speaking Ateso**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	48	15.1	15.1	15.1
	Agree	15	4.7	4.7	19.9
	Not Sure	19	6.0	6.0	25.9
	Strongly Disagree	187	59.0	59.0	84.9
	Disagree	48	15.1	15.1	100.0
	Total	317	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary data, 2015

A majority (59 percent) of the subjects strongly disagreed to the statement that “there is no value of speaking Ateso.” Another sizeable number of the respondents (15.1 per cent) disagreed to this very

statement. Another 15.1 per cent and 4.7 per cent however were in strong agreement and agreement with the statement respectively; while 6 per cent were not sure of their feeling about whether there was any value

of speaking Ateso or not. Those who attached value to the speaking of Ateso might have done it for integrative reasons and for the fact that it is necessary for communication among the people. The other reason is that Ateso is their mother tongue, so it was necessary to speak it in order “to promote the culture” according to some respondents, because “Ateso is our tribe for Iteso.” Ateso was seen to be of a high value by the students when they said they needed to communicate

with their family members and those who are illiterate. The attitude that they revealed was, those who knew only Ateso were referred to as illiterate. Also, those who agreed saw it as being instrumental in promoting unity among the tribe. This is in line with what Gardner [15] called integrativeness, a function of language that facilitates interaction and togetherness.

**“Ateso sounds beautiful to me”**

**Table 2: How Ateso Sounds Beautiful to them**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	214	67.5	67.5	67.5
	Agree	74	23.3	23.3	90.9
	Not Sure	14	4.4	4.4	95.3
	Strongly Disagree	11	3.5	3.5	98.7
	Disagree	4	1.3	1.3	100.0
	Total	317	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary data, 2015

On the affective variable of attitude, an overwhelming majority of the subjects, 67.5 and 23.3 per cent strongly agreed and agreed respectively to the fact that Ateso sounds beautiful to them, compared to an insignificant minority of 4.4, 3.5 and 1.3 per cent who were not sure, strongly disagreed, and disagreed respectively. They affirmed that Ateso “is sweet,” “it is nice and clear to speak” and it sounds nice. This shows that they have a positive attitude towards Ateso. It was thus not surprising to find out that a massive 61.8 and 20.8 per cent strongly disagreed and disagreed with the

statement that “Ateso sounds ugly”. The remaining 5.4, 2.5 and 9.5 percent strongly agreed, agreed and were not sure respectively. This same sentiment had been discussed in Nakayiza’s study [16] which found out that some people were found to like Luganda more because it sounded more beautiful and expressive than Luruuli and had more written materials. Such a state of affairs (of beauty and expressiveness) had not yet been established for the sake of Ateso.

**“In Some Situations, it is Best not to Speak Ateso”**

**Table 3: Situations where it is Best not to Speak Ateso**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	66	20.8	20.8	20.8
	Agree	118	37.2	37.2	58.0
	Not Sure	54	17.0	17.0	75.1
	Strongly Disagree	58	18.3	18.3	93.4
	Disagree	21	6.6	6.6	100.0
	Total	317	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary data, 2015

Respondents overall attested to the fact that Ateso is too lacking in some respects to be used in some other contexts. This is represented by 20.8 per cent and 37.2 per cent who strongly agreed and agreed respectively. Those who showed varying degrees of agreement felt that Ateso is “not applicable in offices.” Such were also the ones who perhaps said that it should be abolished because “there is no institution which allows it to be spoken.” 17 per cent were not sure, perhaps because they were ambivalent on this issue. 18.3 per cent however strongly disagreed.” Those who strongly agreed and agreed suggest support for an earlier finding of Adegija as cited in Muggadam [17], who affirmed that “many Africans view their own ethnic languages as unsuitable for use in official

domains. They believe that these languages lack the capacity for expressing ideas in a variety of domains”. This could be true of the Iteso students who were the respondents of this study. This is because 60.9 per cent strongly attached significance to English language as a medium of instruction when they were asked if all other subjects should be taught in Ateso and not English.

A similar attitude was exhibited by the youth in Busoga region who according to Cultural Research Centre that carried out a research on the changes brought about by the use of local languages in teaching, found that, the youth considered Lusoga as a primitive and difficult language that would not enable the learners to cope with technological changes today as well as the

job market. The youth however, were oblivious of the wide range of employment opportunities that await local language graduates. This situation is in a direct sharp contrast with what Al nofie [18] found out where learners favoured the use of their mother tongue (Arabic) in the interpretation of difficult concepts in

English medium classes. However, this is not reason enough for us to conclude that these students have a negative attitude towards Ateso language.

**“I would Use my Language in my Office as long as the other Person understands it”**

**Table 4: Ateso Language Use in the Office as long as the Other People understand**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	156	49.2	49.2	49.2
	Agree	100	31.5	31.5	80.8
	Not Sure	28	8.8	8.8	89.6
	Strongly disagree	23	7.3	7.3	96.8
	Disagree	10	3.2	3.2	100.0
	Total	317	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary data, 2015

Pertaining to the use of mother tongue in the office with those who understand it, 49.2 per cent strongly agreed that they saw no problem in doing it. This was followed by 31.5 per cent who agreed. 8.8 per cent were not sure. 7.3 per cent strongly disagreed and only 3.2 disagreed. Those who strongly agreed did it because of their strong love for their mother tongue. These were arguably the same who reported that they would not feel shy to speak Ateso in any circumstances.

Those who agreed could have also done that because of their attachment to their mother tongue. Those who strongly disagreed could have done so because they thought Ateso was not an official language, while those who were not sure might have done so because of their double mindedness on the same.

**“Ateso is a Language that tells People who I am”**

**Table 5: Ateso as a Language that Tells People Who They Are**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	189	59.6	59.6	59.6
Agree	62	19.6	19.6	79.2
Not Sure	34	10.7	10.7	89.9
Strongly Disagree	21	6.6	6.6	96.5
Disagree	11	3.5	3.5	100.0
Total	317	100.0	100.0	

The table above shows that 79.2 percent of the entire population examined had the attitude that Ateso is part of their identity. This reiterates Nakayiza’s [19] findings that local languages performed well in cultural-identity functions. However a smaller percentage opposed this statement. 10.7 were not sure, 6.6 and 3.5 per cent strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively. Those who disagreed in varying proportions might have done so because they were not proud of their Teso identity or they are not aware of identity markers. Also, those who were not sure could be said to have not understood the concept of language and identity. Language is indeed an identity marker and many have considered it as such. For example, UNESCO’s Director General in a personal communication on February 21, 2012 stressed that “Languages are who we are; by protecting them, we protect ourselves.”

identity, according to Edwards [20] and Norton [21]. According to Fasold as cited in Smit [22], Language is an important symbol of group membership. Language attitudes therefore act as a measurement of social structures; ‘they can also be used to support sociolinguistic changes as intended by language planning... It is therefore advisable to realise that successful language planning largely depends on co-operation of the people concerned.’ Thus, a majority of the students as key stakeholders exhibit cooperation with the new policy of learning local languages as subjects in secondary schools in Uganda because they have a strong feeling of belonging to the Iteso through Ateso language. For instance one respondent in Atatur said, “Ateso is the first sign/ symbol for identification of an Itesot”.

**“It is a Must for my Children to Speak Ateso”**

The language we use, it must be noted, forms an important part of our sense of who we are – of our



**Table 6: How it is a Must for their Children to Speak Ateso**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Valid	Strongly Agree	145	45.7	45.7	45.7
	Agree	70	22.1	22.1	67.8
	Not Sure	44	13.9	13.9	81.7
	Strongly Disagree	35	11.0	11.0	92.7
	Disagree	23	7.3	7.3	100.0
	Total	317	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary data, 2015

The table above table reveals on the one hand that a huge proportion of the population studied showed a strong feeling that their children must speak Ateso. This is represented by 45.7 per cent and 22.1 per cent who strongly agreed and agreed respectively. This means that there will be continuity in the generations to come that will be speaking Ateso. This is because such respondents say that one “cannot be an Etesot without knowing Ateso”. This was a response from Nyero Rock High School. On this basis, one can conclude that Ateso’s death is not imminent.

However, there is cause for concern as on the other hand, a minute set of opinions embodied a strong disagreement and also just a disagreement on the compulsion for their children to learn Ateso. These sentiments were represented by 11 and 7.3 per cent who strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively. Those who strongly disagreed could have done so because they chose English, as Ateso was not applicable in some contexts. And those who disagreed could have done that as a result of thinking that, “no, because you might go somewhere where people do not understand Ateso.” The other statement that corroborated this view is:

“It is better to speak Ateso so that Ateso language will not die or disappear. Ateso is the most fluent language to speak I feel proud when I am speaking Ateso I should continue with the same spirit to speak Ateso and even my children in future.”(Fieldwork 2015: Atatur)

The remaining 13.9 percent were however not sure as to whether they will force their children to learn Ateso or not, probably because they were at cross-roads. This sizeable number could be sensitised on the advantages of preserving mother tongue. These are, first, the native languages are extremely crucial because they promote and preserve what is good in the customs and ideals of the Africans and second, greater injustice is committed when people are deprived of their languages. Third is the fact that use of mother tongue at school is a powerful remedy against illiteracy. It is thus imperative to do this sensitisation to avoid a likely disaster of language death that is threatening about 3000 languages.

**“I Feel Shy to Speak Ateso”**

**Table 7: Level of Feeling of Shyness to Speak Ateso**

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Valid	Strongly Agree	37	11.7	11.7	11.7
	Agree	22	6.9	6.9	18.6
	Not Sure	57	18.0	18.0	36.6
	Strongly Disagree	160	50.5	50.5	87.1
	Disagree	41	12.9	12.9	100.0
	Total	317	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary data, 2015

The table above reveals that the highest concentrations of the subjects’ views were not in consonance with the statement “I feel shy to speak Ateso”. Those who strongly disagreed constituted a majority divergent view of 50.5 per cent; those who were just in disagreement with the same statement were represented by 12.9 per cent. On the other hand, there was a minority view of those who strongly agreed and agreed to the fact that they feel shy to speak Ateso represented by 11.7 and 6.9 per cent respectively. Those who were not sure were nearly the same as those who had varying degrees of disagreement. This was depicted

by a percentage of 18. There were certainly reasons for these kinds of responses. Those who strongly disagreed might have held the kind of strong sentiment expressed by a respondent in one school:

“I support and strongly say that Ateso is my mother language and I will not fear to speak it in public and show out as an Itesot so I encourage other Itesots to remain Itesots. (S) Top pretending.”(Fieldwork: Nyero Rock)

Those who disagreed might have shared a similar opinion with this respondent who expressed that:

“I love Ateso because I am and Iteso and grew up speaking Ateso and I will not be on any occasion shy to speak Ateso.”(Fieldwork: Atatur Seed)

Those who however strongly agreed perhaps were not willing to be identified as Iteso at some times. Those who agreed that they were sometimes shy to speak their mother tongue could be having an inferiority complex that made them to shy away from speaking it.

**“I feel Happy to Hear an Etesot Speaking another Language with another Etesot”**

**Table 8: Respondents who feel Happy to hear an Etesot Speaking another Language with another Etesot**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	75	23.7	23.7	23.7
Agree	47	14.8	14.8	38.5
Not Sure	32	10.1	10.1	48.6
Strongly Disagree	118	37.2	37.2	85.8
Disagree	45	14.2	14.2	100.0
Total	317	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary data, 2015

Respondents were also asked about their feelings towards Iteso who speak other languages other than Ateso with fellow Iteso. 75 (23.7 percent) reported they were very happy to hear an Etesot speaking Ateso with another Etesot. 47 (14.8 per cent) were just happy. 32 (10.1 per cent) were blank minded on this phenomenon, while 118 (37.2 per cent) expressed their deep unhappiness. 45 (14.2 per cent) showed similar sentiments when they disagreed. Those who did not see a problem with the speakers of the same language opting to use another language in the course of their interlocution might have been so because of their being liberal minded and perhaps having a lesser attachment to their mother tongue. This is in line with what

Nakayiza [23] discovered among the youth. She argued that most young people had a negative attitude towards local languages. Those who did not see sense in two people of the same language who know it but choose to use another could have felt so because of the strong attachment or pride they have in their tribe and language or for identity, since many of them saw it as a language that identifies them. Those who were blank minded were just noncommittal. This is an answer to people who say that Iteso, even when they are alone can choose to speak another language (usually English), abandoning theirs.

**“I love to watch Ateso Translated Movies”**

**Table 9: Respondents’ Love to watch Ateso Translated Movies**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Valid	Strongly Agree	208	65.6	65.6	65.6
	Agree	67	21.1	21.1	86.8
	Not Sure	23	7.3	7.3	94.0
	Strongly Disagree	14	4.4	4.4	98.4
	Disagree	5	1.6	1.6	100.0
	Total	317	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary data, 2015

The statement “I love to watch Ateso translated movies” attracted largely straight forward support. An overwhelming majority of 65.6 per cent confirmed their strong love for Ateso translated movies, 21.1 per cent were also in agreement, providing a marked contrast with those who strongly disagreed and disagreed, who were represented by a low 4.4 and 1.6 per cent respectively. Those who strongly disagreed perhaps still have a strong attachment to English medium movies and those who just agreed also felt that they still preferred those movies acted in English. 7.3 per cent of the informants however, were not sure if they liked watching Ateso translated movies or not.

This could be because they could actually consume both. One respondent from Kumi Trinity Secondary School strongly supported Ateso movies when He said:

“I strongly agree about this issue ateso should be taught and even movies should be translated. I say this because it my mather tougue and I feel proud of this language Sir thank you for bringing this issue x100%.”(Fieldwork)

Such is the attitude towards Ateso as well as movies translated into Ateso. This is in line with Weber cited in Smit, who writes that, “Attitude is an evaluative

reaction – a judgement regarding one’s liking or disliking- of a person, event, or other aspect of environment... (It) is a non-neutral position about the attitude object and can range in its intensity.” [24].

The affective pillar of the Mentalist theory is portrayed here. The affective component involves an emotional response to the attitudinal object. It encompasses realities such as love or hate or passion among other feelings. It therefore means that if someone loves the language, for instance, Ateso, he

might love anything presented graphically, in audio or in visual. It is thus not surprising to find out that a large number of respondents loved watching Ateso translated movies. This implies that they love Ateso language and their love for it affected their behaviour that is to watch Ateso movies (conative pillar of the theory represented here). Hence their attitude towards it is positive.

**“I would not Mind if Ateso Language were to Die or Disappear”**

**Table 10: Respondents who would not Mind if Ateso Language were to Die**

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	16	5.0	5.0	5.0
	Agree	12	3.8	3.8	8.8
	Not Sure	61	19.2	19.2	28.1
	Strongly Disagree	185	58.4	58.4	86.4
	Disagree	43	13.6	13.6	100.0
	Total	317	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary data, 2015

In relation to language death, 58.4 per cent of the respondents were highly concerned about the death of Ateso. In addition, 13.6 per cent showed a similar concern when they disagreed to the statement. This is because they have a strong attachment to their mother tongue so much so that they would want to prevent it from disappearing from the face of the earth. This general occurrence was accentuated by a respondent from Atatur Seed School who revealed that:

“It is better to speak ateso so that ateso language will not die or disappear. Ateso is the most fluent language to speak I feel proud when I am speaking Ateso I should continue with the same spirit to speak ateso and even my children”(Fieldwork 2015: Nyero Rock)

It baffles one to discover that some Iteso students actually would not mind if their language died

or not. This is a portrayal of some negative attitude towards Ateso amidst the otherwise positive one held by many. This sentiment is embodied by a small percentage of 5.0 and 3.8 who strongly agreed and agreed respectively. Those who strongly agreed may not be having a strong attachment to their mother tongue and those who agreed could perhaps just be callous about the death of Ateso. A bigger percentage of 19.2 maintained that they were not sure. This was perhaps because they were not aware of the consequences of the catastrophe of language death. This status quo affirms what Nakayiza [25] reported. They maintained that local languages were hindered by negative attitudes from not only the young, but also parents.

**“Ateso is more Superior to any other Language in this Region”**

**Table 11: Ateso’s Superiority to any other Language in the Region**

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Valid	Strongly Agree	154	48.6	48.6	48.6
	Agree	69	21.8	21.8	70.3
	Not sure	56	17.7	17.7	88.0
	Strongly Disagree	14	4.4	4.4	92.4
	Disagree	24	7.6	7.6	100.0
	Total	317	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary data, 2015

The attitude that Ateso is more superior to any other language in the region was upheld by 48.6 and 21.8 per cent who strongly agreed and agreed respectively. On the other hand, 4.4 and 7.6 per cent had varying degrees of disagreement. The remaining 17.7 per cent was not sure of the superiority of Ateso

in the region. Those who strongly agreed that Ateso is superior did that because of the prestige they allot to it as their mother tongue. Those who agreed knew that Ateso has a significant number of speakers in the region, while those who disagreed might have done so with the knowledge of the hegemony of English in the



region and indeed the country as a whole. One respondent from Nyero Rock High School said:

“I love English because it helps me to speak to any kind of person in his/her capacity as it is an official language” (Field work 2015).

Another said:

It is not all along good to speak Ateso because it is not used in the offices of Uganda (Fieldwork 2015)

Such views show that students are aware of the influence of English in the country and could explain why some of them said Ateso is not the most superior language in the region.

**“Ateso is better able to express my important Thoughts/Ideas than other Languages”**

**Table 12: Ateso’s Ability to express their Thoughts than other Languages**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	169	53.3	53.3	53.3
	Agree	81	25.6	25.6	78.9
	Not Sure	29	9.1	9.1	88.0
	Strongly Disagree	26	8.2	8.2	96.2
	Disagree	12	3.8	3.8	100.0
	Total	317	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary data, 2015

Regarding the ability of Ateso to express important thoughts or ideas more than any other language, 169 (53.3 per cent) strongly agreed and 81 (25.6 per cent) agreed that Ateso was their best language for self expression. Conversely, 26 (8.2 per cent) strongly disagreed and a further 12 (3.8 per cent) disagreed that Ateso was their most useful instrument of relaying their thoughts. Nonetheless, 29 of the respondents (9.1 per cent) were not sure. Those who were not sure could have done that because they can as well express themselves in other languages such as English and Kiswahili. One respondent from Nyero for example represented this opinion when making this statement in favour of Kiswahili as one of the languages he loved:

“Kiswahili because it is my daddy’s tongue.”(Fieldwork 2015)

Those who disagreed might have conceptualised that English is their most useful tool of self expression. This is because of the prestige allotted to English. However when asked about their languages of preference in their order, a majority of them chose Ateso. Those who strongly agreed could have preferred it because it is their mother tongue and those who agreed could have done so because of the views the researchers present shortly hereunder. This means overall, that Ateso remains the easiest medium for them to express themselves. This can be explained by the following views obtained through an open ended question:

“It is my mother language and it is easy to speak.” (Fieldwork 2015)

“Ateso –it is good because it is the language easier to understand.” (Fieldwork 2015)

“Ejok noi, ijaikit ijo alimun akoni womision jokan.”

(It is very good; it enables you to express your thoughts properly) (Translation by the Researchers)

“It is good to speak Ateso because it is the language I can be able to describe anything”

This means overall, that Ateso remains the easiest medium for them to express themselves as explained by the above views obtained through an open ended question.

**Attitudes of Students towards Ateso from Open Ended Questions**

The respondents were asked to reveal their general thoughts on Ateso in open ended questions. This endeavour was fruitful as it helped expose the feelings of the respondents in their own words. The responses revealed a positive outlook of Ateso by the students. In this section, we therefore present some of the responses verbatim to show these feelings and thoughts. The order will be Nyero Rock High School, Atatur Seed School, Kumi Trinity S.S and Dr. Aporu Okol Memorial S.S.

**Responses from Nyero Rock High School**

These include the following:

“I support and strongly say Ateso is my mother language and I will not fear to speak it in public and show out as an Itesot so I encourage other Itesots to remain Itesots .(S) Top pretending.” (Fieldwork 2015: Nyero Rock )

Ateso language is a very best language that I prefer most than other languages resean behind

is because I am an Itesot born from teso land so I have to abind with my language it not for me to ignore it..." (Fieldwork 2015: Nyero Rock)

"Ateso is my mother tongue which I personally cannot ignore. Since it also strengthene the culture of Iteso. Ateso cannot be removed because its a language created by God which no one cannot even change." (Fieldwork 2015: Nyero Rock)

"...aria erutai eong arai eong etesot (even if I am hated I am an Etesot ." (Fieldwork 2015: Nyero Rock )

"I will not reject my original language ateso." (Fieldwork 2015: Nyero Rock)

"I feel good when Iam speaking Ateso because it is my mother tongue and the most understandable language by most people." (Fieldwork 2015: Nyero Rock)

"Its fun when I am speaking Ateso." (Fieldwork 2015: Nyero Rock)

"I love Ateso because I am and Itesot and grew up speaking Ateso." (Fieldwork 2015: Nyero Rock)

"We cannot deny our language and it is sweet." (Fieldwork 2015: Nyero Rock)

It is good because it shows unity and it is easy to express views using it. It also creates job opportunities like Bible translation." (Fieldwork 2015: Nyero Rock)

#### **Responses from Atatur Seed School**

The respondents from Atatur had this to say: Ateso language is very easy to pick other than other languages most of the itesots like and are proud of their language Ateso Iteso believe that itesot people are clever /bright people Iteso people can speak English fluently without any difficulty other than other tribes eg the Lugishu who cannot pronounce other English words such as 'ask' properly." (Fieldwork 2015: Atatur Seed)

It is better to speak ateso so that ateso language will not die or disappear. Ateso is the most fluent language to speak I feel pround when Iam speaking ateso I should continue with the same spirit to speak ateso and even my children in future." (Fieldwork 2015: Atatur Seed)

"Ateso is the first sign / symbol for identification of an Itesot." (Fieldwork 2015: Atatur Seed)

#### **Responses from Kumi Trinity Secondary School**

In this school the respondents were equally enthusiastic about Ateso language. The responses below show some of these sentiments:

Ejok noi,ijaikit ijo alimun akoni womision jokan(it is very good, it makes you express your thoughts very well.")(Fieldwork 2015: Kumi Trinity)

"Ateso language should widely spread to outside teso region" (Fieldwork 2015: Kumi Trinity)

"My view about Ateso language is that all students should learn ateso in teso region because ateso is the official language in teso."(Fieldwork 2015: Kumi Trinity)

"Very yes: You know its my mother tongue so I have to speak. It (is) God who brought all the languages so we have to follow God's rule."(Fieldwork 2015: Kumi Trinity)

"Yes it is good. It keeps myself strongly and purely as a true Atesot."(Fieldwork 2015: Kumi Trinity)

#### **Responses from Dr. Aporu Okol Memorial**

Like their counter-parts in the other schools, responses from this school further showed the prevalence of positive attitude towards the Ateso language in Teso sub region. Some of these responses were:

"People should not fear to speak Ateso in every part of the country."(Fieldwork 2015: Dr. Aporu Okol Memorial)

"...Because Ateso is the best language to talk with people who don't go to school". (Fieldwork 2015: Dr. Aporu Okol Memorial)

"I strongly love Ateso because I am Atesot, I born in Teso, it is my language that I speak and I proud to be Atesot that's why I love Ateso."(Fieldwork 2015: Dr. Aporu Okol Memorial)

"Ateso is a language that I can die with because it is my mother tung. Ateso teaches me about cultural beliefs of long ago. Ateso also teaches me how marriage was organise before the girls was taken to the boys home as a woman."(Fieldwork 2015: Dr. Aporu Okol Memorial)

#### **CONCLUSION**

In summary, the above responses on the general attitudes of students from those selected schools reveal that Ateso is strongly supported because of a wide range of reasons. The attitudes were that Ateso is their mother tongue which they should not be shy or fearful to speak. Also it is their language which is easy to understand, very interesting and sweet. Further it is a language that they cannot deny since it is their own God-given gift which should be appreciated by speaking it. Furthermore, in all circumstances they would remain Iteso and so they needed to uphold the language. They were therefore proud of their identity created by their language which makes them true Iteso.

It also emerged that Ateso should be spoken for continuity reasons, that is to avoid language death. They further saw Ateso as a language that best expresses their thoughts and serves societal functions such as interaction with especially the illiterates. Our study thus found out that Iteso students have a high regard for their mother tongue, contrary to the view we held that their attitude must have been negative. Other factors for the slow embracement of the teaching of Ateso should therefore be sought.

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