

## CULTURAL POLICING AS A LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE STRATEGY AMONG THE OGU PEOPLE

Esther Senayon  
Mountain Top University, Nigeria  
esthersenayon@gmail.com

### Abstract

Existing literature on Language Shift Language Maintenance (LSLM) globally has been limited to certain strategies such as the use of the language in education, the media, intergenerational transmission, etc. They are not only considered paradigmatic but also sacrosanct as a result of which data collection and analysis in this area of sociolinguistics are often predictable and monotonous. The application of these paradigms in the unpacking of LSLM situations tends to foreclose venturing beyond mainstream scholarship. Although works on Ogu-- a minority language in South-western Nigeria-- call for government and native-speakers' intervention in its maintenance, such studies have not comprehensively investigated the systematic steps that certain influential Ogu speakers have adopted to initiate its maintenance. This study therefore investigated a previously unacknowledged strategy in mainstream LSLM scholarship, which involves informal application of non-forceful, non-coercive and subtle policing strategies by native speakers in maintaining their language and culture. These strategies constitute what I have termed *cultural policing* (CP). The research was hinged mainly on ethnography, which entailed a decade-long observation, together with key informant interviews, in-depth interviews and focus group intervention (FGD) in three local government areas in South-western Nigeria. These local government areas were Badagry, Ipokia and Ado-Odo/Ota. Informants were purposively sampled and data were subjected to content and descriptive analysis. Based on the findings, the paper concludes that as *cultural policing* has been observed to be working for Ogu in South-western Nigeria, its efficacy could be tested in other minority language situations globally.

*Key Words: Language shift, Language maintenance, Cultural Policing, Ogu, South-western Nigeria, Ethnolinguistic vitality*

### 1. Introduction

Language maintenance has become a topical issue in African sociolinguistics, essentially because of the rising occurrence of language shift and endangerment. Krauss (1992, 1998) predicts that the 21<sup>st</sup> century may see more than half of the world's languages disappear, as children in language minority communities increasingly speak a language of wider communication rather than their ancestral languages. UNESCO (2003) corroborates this, claiming that approximately 90% of the languages of the world are in danger of disappearing. Generally, scholars agree on the socio-economic, political and cultural determinism of language shift (Muntzell 1989; Fishman 1991; Nettle & Romaine 2000) while the scholarship of language shift presupposes the existence of a bilingual or multilingual setting (Gorter 2008; Grosjean 2010; Lewis et al 2013; Cope & Eckert 2016). Therefore, the interaction and contact of two or more languages usually results in the non-dominant language shifting to the dominant.

### 2. Literature Review

Existing literature on Language Shift Language Maintenance (LSLM) globally has been limited to certain strategies such as the use of a minority language in education, especially through state support (Lewis 2013), the media (Cormack 2007), intergenerational transmission through family agency (Mejía 2016) and language activism (Nyika 2008), etc. In view of the mediatory capacity of contemporary communication technology, more recent scholarship has continued to acknowledge the deployment of social media for minority language maintenance (Jany 2018; McMonagle 2019). Put together, the strategies are not only considered paradigmatic but also sacrosanct as a result of which data collection and analysis in this area of sociolinguistics are often predictable and monotonous. The application of these paradigms in the unpacking of LSLM situations tends to foreclose venturing beyond mainstream scholarship.

Lewis et al (2014) define language maintenance as the effort to arrest and reverse the process of shift. According to Holmes (1992: 64):

nothing benefits a country more than to treasure the languages and cultures of its various peoples because in doing so, it fosters intergroup understanding and realizes greater dividends in the form of originality, creativity and versatility

Linguists have suggested various ways by which languages can be maintained. Fishman (1991; 2001), in his famous Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS), emphasizes the importance of intergenerational transfer of languages to children to sustain the continued existence of the language as well as language acquisition and use. Clyne (2003: 22) notes that “Once the use of a language diminishes significantly in the home, intergenerational transmission, a key factor of language maintenance, is compromised”. The role of personal family efforts cannot be overemphasized in minority language maintenance (Schaefer & Egbokhare 1999; Piller 2001; Onadipe-Shalom 2013; Juan-Garau, 2014; Smith-Christmas 2014; Senayon 2016a).

Linguists have also suggested regular interaction of children with grandparents. Children from minority language communities should be allowed to live with their grandparents-- who should be native speakers of the language, especially grandmothers, and interact with them regularly as part of strategies to maintain the language (Ishizawa 2004). Prevoo et al. (2013) further reveal that language shift in children can be linked with the socio-economic status of their mothers. It is also suggested that speakers of minority languages, should live together in close-knit communities while migrants maintain contact with homelands (Holmes 1992; McCabe 2016).

Potowski (2004) calls for dual immersion programmes for students in such a way that the students be immersed in the minority language for large portions of the school day with the expectation that they will become equally proficient in their first language (L1) and in their second language (L2). In as much as this will encourage students in maintaining minority languages, it is not certain that the success rate will be high, as before long, the students may, as a matter of necessity, shift to the language of wider education. Again, it is not stated at what stage in the child’s education that he should be introduced to the dual immersion programme. The bottom line is for minority language speakers to develop a positive attitude to their language and teach their children to speak it with pride (Carli et al. 2003; Senayon 2016a).

Wurm (1999) believes that positive government language policies can go a long way in maintaining dying languages. He cites the example of some Aboriginal languages in Australia that had been endangered as a result of harsh government policies. Wurm’s position is also supported by Vizi (2012), Marten (2012) and Weichselbraun (2014) in their assertion that minority languages can be preserved if they enjoy positive language policy and linguistic rights in their communities. However, Offiong and Ugot (2012) advocate for institutional and community support, arguing that maintenance of a threatened language lies in the hands of both its speakers and the government.

### **3. Language Maintenance and the Case of Ogu in South-western Nigeria**

Ogu, a West-Benue Congo language, is a minority language spoken in South-Western Nigeria, specifically in Ogun and Lagos States, where Yoruba is the dominant language. The language has been experiencing widespread shift by its youths to Yoruba and English due to socio-political marginalization and economic deprivation. Crucial to the shift from Ogu to Yoruba is inferiority complex and lack of self-confidence exhibited by the Ogu in the face of the more prestigious Yoruba. Another reason the youth are shifting is the socio-economic benefits they stand to gain by identifying with the majority group. Such perceived benefits include job opportunities, scholarships, political appointments, etc. Although some members

of the older generation still have some proficiency in the language, intergenerational transmission has not been subsequently sustained. The adults seem to have even been influenced by the young people. The attitude has precipitated the speaking of Yoruba in almost every domain, denial of Ogu identity and adoption of Yoruba names. While various attempts have been made at engaging with issues around language shift and strategies for language maintenance with respect to Ogu in particular, available literature still leaves much room for further explorations.

For instance, scholars who have carried out studies on Ogu, like Soremekun (1986), Capo (1990), Johnson (1994), Akere (2002), Durodola (2004), Tadopede (2010), Ofulue (2013), Onadipe-Shalom (2013), Senayon (2016a), have affirmed the widespread shift of the language to Yoruba and English in several domains. Even when some of these studies have suggested reversal strategies in the maintenance of the language, such strategies resonate with the normative and paradigmatic responses in language maintenance scholarship, some of which have been discussed earlier in this essay. For instance, Onadipe-Shalom (2013) calls for government intervention through the inclusion of Ogu as a subject of study in schools in Ogu communities. Capo (1990) advocates for government intervention in standardizing an orthography for the language, while Johnson (1994) canvasses for the use of the language at the domestic front. These are globally acknowledged normative strategies, which however have not been effective for Ogu as the language continues to suffer social and political neglect due to its minority status. Invariably, this paper focuses on the systematic efforts that a group of Ogu people has adopted towards the maintenance of the language, which are similar to what obtains in professional policing. This is what I call *cultural policing*. Further description of this term will be offered later in the essay.

### 3.1. Motivation for the Study

Data presented in this article is a product of ten years of ethnographic study. During fieldwork for an earlier research, questionnaire was used as a survey instrument to measure the extent of language shift and loyalty among the Ogu. Generally, data emanating from the questionnaire indicated strong loyalty to the language by both young and old, while the true picture on the ground from my ethnographic study that started in 2005 upon my marriage to a member of the linguistic group, was the direct opposite. This fact of the contradiction is essentially about the ambivalence that is exhibited in the day-to-day interaction of the Ogu with one another and with non-native speakers of the language, especially their Yoruba-speaking neighbours. As a language that has been marginalised politically, economically and socially, the people, by reflex, often tend to shift their linguistic patronage to the more privileged Yoruba and English. Yet at other times, they tend to be passionate about the same Ogu when it comes to matters bordering on ethnic nationalism. This is particularly so during moments of inter-ethnic tensions and conflicts (see Senayon, 2016b). This view resonates with Bamgbose's (1991) observation that language alone may not be the marker of ethnicity. His remark is informed by the case of the Fulani who have shifted from Fulfulde to Hausa in northern Nigeria but still consider Fulfulde as a marker of their identity. But the critical place language occupies for the Ogu in the context of this study is peculiar because the dynamics are different. This is because unlike the Fulani who have traded their language for political power, the Ogu do not enjoy such privilege of power in the Nigerian context, which translates to losing both power and language, a situation with dire prospects of endangerment for their ethnicity.

In trying to unravel the mystery behind the ambivalent attitude of the Ogu towards issues of language shift and loyalty, I began to probe further the personality of my field assistant. He is best described as a *cultural police* member in view of his cultural and linguistic enthusiasm, prior to the research in most communities of the study area (see Senayon 2016b). He had already developed a reputation for urging people, through various informal encounters, to cultivate the habit of speaking Ogu everywhere. Again, he was known for deploring Ogu people's preference for Yoruba and English, contending that such tended to compromise the dignity of the identity of the Ogu. Therefore, the *cultural policing*

reputation of my field assistant influenced the questionnaire responses to indicate that the Ogu were more predisposed to speaking Ogu. In the case of Ogu, this observation is vital to the understanding of language shift and maintenance, precisely because the initial shift from the 1950s began with influential Ogu cosmopolitans, which is why their role in facilitating a reverse shift to the language is as critical (see Senayon 2018). Further pilot research revealed that there were many more such influential Ogu people in the *cultural police team* who had been able to initiate a reversal of attitudes in favour of Ogu through informal strategies that are similar to what obtains in professional policing. Against this backdrop, the researcher gathered data on the activities of this team and how they had impacted Ogu language maintenance. The analysis of data is through the lens of what I term *cultural policing*. The coinage is informed by the realisation that the adopted strategy by the identified category of Ogu native speakers departs from those generally acknowledged suggestions for language maintenance.

#### 4.1. *Cultural Policing in Theory*

The term *cultural policing* is not the application of force. This clarification is needful in view of the tendency to associate professional policing with the use of force and violence in its operations. Palmer et al. (2012) are of the view that policing is one of the most basic and essential avenues for improving the quality of life in all nations; rich and poor; modern and traditional; large and small; as well as peaceful and strife-ridden. The term “cultural policing” is my coinage and is used in this context to refer to those soft and subtle, non-violent, non-forceful strategies informally adopted by an elite and influential group among the Ogu-speaking communities in a bid to reverse the widespread shift being experienced in the native linguistic milieu. The vitality of this strategy consists in the knowledge that here is a group of individuals that has shaken off the ethnic bias of inferiority and marginalization and has become greatly successful in educational, intellectual and material terms. As a term, *cultural policing* is preferred over *language policing* because the strategy informally adopts a holistic approach that mobilizes various elements of culture in the realization of Ogu language maintenance. Again, *cultural policing* is similar to language activism, but is not quite the case in the very sense that the native speakers themselves identify fellow speakers who have shifted to other languages. Language activism thrives on advocacy that is target mostly at state patronage and mainstreaming of minority and endangered languages in the domain of formal learning, mass communication, etc. *Cultural policing*, however, operates through strategies such as observation, suspicion, questioning, etc., which are key conventional policing strategies, to encourage others to return to the patronage of their language. Thus, while language activism thrives on advocacy targeted at the state for the adoption of minority and endangered languages for formal use in the public domain (Combs and Penfield 2012) and may involve non-native speakers, *cultural policing* is about native-speaker-to-native-speaker agency at reversing language shift. Critical to the understanding of the peculiar dynamics of cultural policing is the centrality of the elite to the operations.

The attitude and intervention of the Ogu elite along the line of *cultural policing* for language maintenance are significant in the way they destabilize the iconic assumption about the unlikelihood of minority heritage language use in homes of highly educated people (Karidakis and Arunachalam 2016). The strategies, as employed by these Ogu elite, are akin to strategies that the police globally use to “maintain law and order, public peace and safety in the society” (Momoh 2010: 136). The difference, however, is that *cultural policing* entails an informal practice as well as exclusive deployment of friendly, non-coercive and subtle policing strategies. Members of Ogu *cultural police team* underscore Alderson's (1979: 2) view that:

the police have a duty to themselves as a group and to the public (and particularly to the interested public) to begin to question the principles and practices which are historic and traditional and to venture forth with comments of their own, which will help to inform and

stimulate the debate which, at present, rages around them.

The *cultural police* debunk the practice of abandoning one's language for a more prestigious language while sensitizing their people towards a cultural renaissance, whose hallmark is a shift back to Ogu. This is also why they are more correctly referred to as *cultural police* and their activity *cultural policing* rather than language policing.

The *cultural police* employ elements of culture such as food, naming, music, facial scarification, etc. in identifying denying kinsmen. They reckon that the penchant for certain Ogu cultural elements like for food and music, especially in cosmopolitan centers like Lagos, Ibadan, London, New York, etc. cannot be by accident. Meeting people that exhibit such cultural passion means investigating, rather informally, to confirm their identity as Ogu in order to encourage them to complement their cultural affirmation with linguistic loyalty. In the same way, Ogu facial scarification is unique and provides the lead for Ogu *cultural police* to approach, in the friendliest way, bearers of such mark that may not be willing to speak the language with pride. In maintaining Ogu, the culture of the people is also maintained since language cannot be divested of culture. It is pertinent to note at this point that language shift, in the first place, was initiated among Ogu people by some influential native speakers, who travelled to Lagos in the early years between the 1950s and 1970s, embraced Yoruba and brought it home to their ancestral homelands on their return or visits home. These people were seen as cosmopolitans who wielded a lot of influence on their kinsmen (Senayon 2018b). The people whom I refer to as *cultural police* here are a new crop of influential Ogu men and women who, by virtue of high formal education and social standing, have shaken off the vestiges of inferiority complex. They speak Ogu with pride and now try to identify denying kinsmen and encourage them to embrace speaking Ogu. This they do by applying strategies that are similar to what obtains in professional policing thus explaining the term "cultural police".

The Ogu cultural police operate by using some or all of the policing strategies listed below:

1. Observation
2. Suspicion
3. Information
4. Intelligence
5. Tip-off
6. Investigation
7. Questioning
8. Clues
9. Proof
10. Persuasion
11. Reformation

Generally, the strategies above, on which further explication is provided in the discussion of this essay, can be subsumed under four main modes of operations. This way, the strategies are principally categorized as ranging from the use of tip-off, to "partnership strategies intelligence" (Ratcliffe 2002), to "hindsight bias" (Villejoubert et al 2006), and to "investigative interviewing" (Williamson 2006). These are core elements of policing strategies that the Ogu *cultural police* have informally adopted in their operations towards the maintenance of the language.

The Ogu *cultural police* are able to achieve their goal by appealing to their people's sense of ethnic pride and dignity. Being well-placed people in society, they lead by example as they speak the language themselves and teach members of their immediate families to do the same. They address their people in the language, refusing to join in the practice of speaking the dominant language while stressing intergenerational transmission. In as much as

material benefits do act as attraction to language maintenance, in the case of the Ogu, ignorance and lack of high formal education are contributory factors to the widespread shift being experienced in Ogu communities. The *cultural police* encourage members of Ogu communities to take pride in speaking their language and identify with their people, both at home and in the diaspora. There is no gainsaying the fact that government has a crucial role to play in the empowerment of Ogu and its speakers. However, due to their minority status, and the domineering presence of the Yoruba, political agitations may take a longer time to yield results. The Ogu cultural police are of the belief that the situation facing their people is one that needs immediate interventions. As Ndhlovu (2010: 41) puts it, "No one or group of people can maintain a language better than the speakers themselves". Seeing the risk of endangerment looming over their language, the Ogu cultural police have appropriated the task of sensitizing their people on the cultural risk involved in the non-maintenance of their ethnic language and origin. Their stance underscores Ericson and Haggerty's (1997: 8) suggestion that "the police believe that the world can be made more secure by ever more perfect knowledge of risk".

The informal use of policing strategies for language maintenance by some Ogu language loyalists is not strange, as there exists in the literature the fact that public participation in policing complements professional practice with special benefits (Fitzgerald et al. 2000; Neyroud 2001 and Putnam 2000). This fact is buttressed by Crawford (2008: 148) in his definition of policing as "a set of activities and processes that may be performed by a variety of professional and ordinary people". Civilians do assist the police in their investigations, especially in the area of supplying information. Intelligence-led policing involves effectively sourcing, assembling and analyzing "intelligence" (Tiley 2008: 375). Tiley again asserts that, among other things, the police have the objective to contribute to liberty, equality and fraternity, as well as help create trust in communities. The motivation for the method of operation of the Ogu *cultural police* stems from the desire to liberate their people from the marginalization and psychological inadequacy they suffer as a result of their minority status within a prestigious linguistic group such as the Yoruba. They seek linguistic equality and fraternity between them and their neighbours. For them, charity begins at home, as individuals who do not appreciate and cherish their language should not expect other people to do it for them. This consciousness finds expression in the leadership example of the *cultural police*. They speak the language with pride wherever they find themselves, even at the expense of being ridiculed.

At the core of *cultural policing* is the primacy of family agency. Ogu *cultural police* involve members of their families in the speaking of the language. As mentioned earlier, this strategy is crucial in the maintenance of any language, considering that the family constitutes the nucleus of every linguistic group. Language shift, endangerment and death naturally begin from the family. For the Ogu *cultural police*, the understanding about the place of the family has informed a certain level of passionate insistence on Ogu in their homes. The pride in making Ogu their family language, irrespective of their location, has an infectious value because other native speakers across social strata who see Ogu *cultural police* as models have responded positively to their linguistic attitude. Ultimately, the consciousness and knowledge of the socio-economic privileges of the *cultural police* as highly educated elite with capacity to influence others without coercion have made them linguistic models to others who are beginning to exhibit reverse shift to Ogu. It is in this sense that *cultural policing* for language maintenance among the Ogu succeeds and offers a model that is devoid of force.

#### 4.2. Language Activism

Language activism involves an organized and meticulous agitation and canvassing for the recognition and use of minority languages. Penfield et al (2008) emphasize the need for team work in saving seriously endangered languages, which suggests some form of formal collaboration. Penfield and Tucker (2011) again assert the importance of documenting and revitalizing languages that are prone to endangerment. Sinfrey (2012) argues that some 'small' minority languages flourish and others fail unless speakers of these languages articulate

their aspirations and needs with respect to the survival of their language. Language activists, who are also called language militants, are usually at the forefront of the agitation against the marginalization and subordination of minority languages.

Part of the stance of language activists is for minority languages to be used in education. As Canagarajah (in Leeman et al 2011) puts it, one key challenge of language learning is for learners to retain their sense of self while also appropriating new discourses and subjectivities. Again Leeman (2011) asserts that the failure of elementary and secondary schools to recognize or value the languages that learners bring to the classroom can contribute to the depletion of student's psychological wellbeing as well as to language loss. In this regard, language activists advocate that minority languages be given a place in the educational sector mostly as a medium of instruction rather than just a subject in the curriculum.

Agitations for the use of minority languages in the media form another platform for the activities of language activists as the media play a major role in the sensitization of the public on issues that are crucial to the effective working of society. Part of the reasons that majority languages gain ground over and above their minority counterparts are the vast coverage given them in the media. In a survey carried out by Zabaleta et al (2010), the role of journalists from ten European minority-language communities was examined. The study revealed that journalists, apart from their professional functions, can be language activists, carrying out pro-language functions. Majority of them do adhere to the sound values, standards and practices of professional journalists but consider that they also have an additional journalistic role before the community in terms of nourishment and defense of their language. In the words of Eisenlohr (2004), language activists and linguists have begun using new technology in projects aimed at revitalizing the practice of lesser used languages.

Language activism usually involves group work with people coming together in associations and organizations to champion the cause of their language. Such groups are recognized by the government as most of their agitations are aimed at the government to be more positively disposed towards their language. They advocate the use of the minority language in targeted public spheres like educational institutions, the media, religion, government, etc. Some of their agitations yield positive results as well as dividends where the agitations are well articulated and strategic. Kriel (2010) discusses the activities of political activists who formed an association in South Africa that fought for the recognition and use of Afrikaans. The group which called itself *Genootskap Regte Afrikaanders (GRA)*, among other things, wrote a dictionary of Afrikaans as well as other elementary grammar books in a bid to standardize the language. The GRA fought against the threat posed by Anglicisation to Afrikaaner identity and Afrikaaner interests. The organization agitated for the recognition of Afrikaans as a language of South Africa and so be used in schools, churches, parliament, everywhere, etc.

Although language activism goes a long way in language maintenance efforts, the focus of language activists is on suppressing the threatening language rather than on rekindling the interest of the speakers of the language in their language. They therefore employ a rather firm and forceful undertone to their agitations, especially to alter governmental language policies that work against the interest of their language and constitute a threat to their group identity. Focus is usually more on the usage of the threatened language in the public domain rather than on the domestic front. In a sense, that is why language activism still has a long way to go if speakers of a minority language must use their language. Efforts must thus be channeled towards reawakening the interest of minority language speakers in speaking their language at the home front, most especially in the area of intergenerational transfer of the language. Communities are first and foremost made up of families and if the different individuals that make up the family speak the language, then of course the language is maintained in the community. This is the crux of the activities of the Ogu cultural police team. It is not an organized formal group; neither are their agitations against governmental language policies or suppressing the threatening language. They do not canvass for more recognition in the public domain but are interested in the survival of their language in the home front. They therefore emphasize language loyalty and intergenerational

transfer. This is a marked difference between them and language activists. However they can be said to be language activists of some sort, except that their mode of operation is unique in the sense that it is similar to professional policing.

Ogu cultural policemen and women have saddled themselves with the task of preventing their ethnic identity and pride from being undermined as they look out for Ogu sons and daughters who have compromised their identity in order to find favour and certain privileges that are enjoyed by large linguistic groups. They therefore employ the tool of subtle persuasion in carrying out their activities. Their mode of operation is unique in the sense that they employ strategies that are similar to those used by the police in maintaining law and order. For instance, an Ogu cultural police is very *observant* and is quick to notice unusual language behaviours around him. His *suspicion* is then aroused and that leads him to carrying out *investigation*. In the process of investigation, he looks for *clues* and *evidence* to *prove* that a suspected individual is a denying Ogu. He then goes into questioning, which sometimes can lead to *confession* and *reformation*. The italicized terms resonate with professional policing. This informs the use of the term “police”. In identifying denying Ogu, the cultural police employ elements of culture such as food, music, facial scarification, etc. This again informs the use of the term “cultural police”. The dynamics of operation of the Ogu cultural police expresses their uniqueness and clearly define them from language activists. While operating informally, their main modus operandi is the identification of Ogu speakers who have abandoned their language and are hiding under the identity of Yorùbá. Once the identity of the Ogu speaker is established, the cultural police then use subtle and persuasive words in their interaction with denying kinsmen. In the process, they arouse their sense of cultural patriotism and ethnic dignity inherited by being born into any linguistic group.

### 4.3. The Notion of Policing

The notion of maintenance and sustenance, to say nothing of survival, has always prompted the application of the term “policing” to various social contexts and dynamics. Beyond the formal references to the term in the context of human security in relation to community and statehood, it has often found outlets in other contexts during which what is prioritized is the necessity of maintenance. This understanding, for instance, informed the invention of terms and intellectual outputs such as *Policing Democracy* (Ungar 2011) and “environmental policing” (Mwanika 2010). In the case of Ungar's intervention, the concern in the application of the term “policing” is geared towards the sustenance and development of democratic ideals in previously dictatorial societies in Latin America. On the other hand, “environmental policing” indicates an awareness of the compromise and vulnerability of the environment in the face of human and non-human induced disasters. Invariably, the environment needs to be policed as a strategy against disruption, which means an espousal for protection and maintenance of the environment against a drift towards an apocalyptic termination.

In the context of this discussion, moreover, the term *cultural policing* refers to certain strategic activities aimed at maintaining and preserving the language and culture of Ogu people by certain highly influential members of the group. As language loss is tantamount to cultural annihilation, there is need for languages that are threatened to be policed so that their speakers can come to terms with the inherent values in the maintenance of their linguistic and cultural heritage. As explained above, the Ogu cultural policemen and women have saddled themselves with the task of preventing their ethnic identity and pride from being compromised as they look out for Ogu sons and daughters who have compromised their identity presumably for certain socio-economic benefits that are enjoyed by members of privileged linguistic groups. Their mode of operation is unique in the sense that they employ strategies that are similar to those used by professional police in maintaining law and order; yet they do so in a rather informal way that is marked by friendliness, non-coercion and subtlety. The procedure of identifying these speakers can be labour-intensive, needing quite a deal of patience and endurance. This aligns with Mawby's (1999: 9) position that “Policing seems to be labour-intensive to almost the same degree in every country”. Once the identity



of the Ogu speaker is established, the *cultural police* informally then use subtle and persuasive words in their interaction with denying speakers. In the process, they arouse their sense of cultural patriotism and ethnic dignity inherited by being born into any linguistic group.

### 5. Methodology

The method of data collection was basically qualitative, with the research instrument of ethnography spanning one decade. Also deployed were Key Informant Interviews (KII) and In-depth Interviews (IDIs). Twelve key informants, who are part of the Ogu cultural police, were interviewed to find out the modus operandi of the team, while another 12 informants, who had been policed, were also involved in IDIs in order to ascertain the efficacy of the strategy for Ogu language maintenance. Three focus group discussions (FGDs) – one in each local government area – were conducted. Informants were drawn from both sexes, cutting across all age groups and social statuses. The study area comprised Badagry Local Government area in Lagos State, and Ipokia and Ado-Odo Ota Local Government Areas in Ogun State in South-western Nigeria. The sampling technique employed in the study was purposive.

Undertaking the decade-long ethnography involved interaction with multiple spaces and personalities within the domestic and public domains. There was, first for the researcher, a relationship with the Ogu from the angle of marriage. Being married to a member of the group, the ethnography began from the immediate family of her husband which served as the first location of informal observation about the tendency of members of the group to easily shift to Yoruba. The ethnography also involved interacting with other members of the linguistic group across Ogun and Lagos States during public functions. Besides the two states, the author's interaction included meeting elite Ogu-speaking people in other parts of Nigeria especially in Delta and Oyo States. Social media interaction, informal telephone conversations and discussions with other members of the group living outside Nigeria, also contributed to the extent of the ethnography for this study. Therefore, the privilege of marriage to a member of the group who played and continues to play a key role in the informal operations of the *cultural police* facilitated how a non-native speaker like the author was able to collect data

The purposive approach to data collection was informed by the ample period of the ethnography that allowed the author to draw from a rich pool of participants with whom she had interacted informally since the period of her association with the group through marriage. Another crucial factor had to do with the author's determination, long before she decided to investigate the phenomenon of *cultural policing*, to develop passion for learning and speaking the language. It made it possible for her observation to be both participant and non-participant. Her ability to learn and speak the language encouraged native speakers to be enthusiastic in volunteering to participate in the various interview sessions, seeing that a non-native speaker was interested not only in speaking the language but also in undertaking a formal study of it. The data generated were categorized into case studies and subsequently subjected to content and descriptive analyses in a way that was essentially qualitative.

### 6. The Ogu Cultural Police and the Dynamics of their Operation

As listed earlier, the Ogu *cultural police* operate by using some or all of the following policing strategies: information, tip-off, suspicion, intelligence, investigation, observation, evidence, questioning, reformation, persuasion, etc. Generally, the strategies above can be subsumed under four main modes of operations. This way, the strategies are principally categorized as ranging from the use of *tip-offs* and "*partnership strategies intelligence*" (Ratcliffe 2002), as well as, "*hindsight bias*" (Villejoubert et al 2006), and "*investigative interviewing*" (Williamson 2006).

The dynamics of the operations of the cultural police team are such that they reflect the operational strategies used in professional policing for maintaining law and order,

although the concern of the *cultural police*, as used in this study, is the maintenance of language and linguistic space. However, issues such as force, arrest, torture, violation of human rights, etc., are excluded since it is not the intention of the Ogu cultural police to force or threaten anyone to speak their language. It is important to reiterate the fact that the Ogu cultural police team is not a formal organization for which membership demands any formal laid down procedures. Anyone who has had an encounter of language maintenance with the *cultural police* and keys into the ideals of their operation is said to have enlisted into the team. There is thus the angle of informality, consciousness, and even unconsciousness to *cultural policing* for language maintenance, as sometimes members are unconscious of their own language maintenance efforts; whereas their actions influence others to commence a reverse shift to Ogu.

### **6.1. Data Presentation and Analysis: Hindsight Bias: the “I knew it all along” Phenomenon**

Findings in the field show that in most cases, cultural policing for language maintenance among the Ogu operates through the "I knew it all along" phenomenon. Villejoubert et al. (2006) used the term “hindsight bias” in professional policing to describe the “I knew it all along” feeling that people often experience when certain events happen or when certain confessions are made. Such people would say that they had always known that the incidents would happen or not occur. Such feelings have been known to bring about a bias in their interpretation and explanation of events. Usually, in carrying out their informal daily activities, the cultural policemen and women run into individuals that they suspect to be Ogu speakers who are hiding their identity. Observation, which arouses suspicion, is often the first strategy employed in the course of identifying those who have shifted from Ogu to Yoruba. In some instances, running into ‘suspects,’ is purely by chance as the cultural police may not have the intention of looking out for such suspects. The chance meetings may happen in a cab, a place of worship, in work places, schools, hospitals, clubs, restaurants, markets, etc. Suspicion usually happens when, in the course of interacting with people, the *cultural police* identify a particular speaker’s peculiar accent as betraying his Ogu identity. For instance, someone may be speaking Yoruba with a particular accent that gives away their Ogu identity to a native Ogu speaker. It is a fact that some Ogu speakers do speak Yoruba with such an accent that makes the Yoruba ridicule them. It is an established phonetic fact that Ogu does not have the alveolar trill [r] in its sound inventory and as such its speakers often substitute it with the alveolar lateral [l]. This phonetic index, among others, is one way that the *cultural police* often identify their denying kinsmen.

Cultural policing can be either short term or long term, depending on the time a cultural police operative suspects the identity of an individual, carries out investigation, gets clues, questions and then brings the suspect to confession and return to the patronage of Ogu. Some policing encounters may take minutes, a few days or weeks while some months or years.

### **7. Investigative Interviewing**

Investigative interviewing is another strategy employed by Ogu cultural police team. The concept of investigative interviewing, as engaged in professional policing, came up as an alternative to interrogation, which was always associated with the use of force and brutality (Williamson 2006). Police employ this strategy of investigative interviewing as a fact-finding measure of gathering information when investigating crime without the deployment of force or violence.

The extract below is from my personal observation typifying investigative interviewing, as employed by Ogu *cultural police*. I was in a commercial bank to carry out some transactions and was waiting for my turn when the person in front of me in the queue tendered his deposit slip to the cashier, who wore a tag showing his name as Oluwasegun Gbenga, a Yorùbá name. Upon taking a look at the deposit slip, the cashier, to the

consternation of the other impatient customers in the queue, started asking the man a series of questions and the following dialogue ensued:

- Cashier:** Are you from Badagry?  
**Customer:** Yes, but why do you ask?  
**Cashier:** Because of your name  
**Customer:** What about my name? Do you like it?  
**Cashier:** It looks like the name of people from Badagry.  
**Customer:** Whoa! How do you know that the name is from Badagry? Are you from Badagry?  
**Cashier:** [Hesitant] Eh...eh... Y-e –s... but I am a Yorùbá .  
**Customer:** I see! Then you must be an Ogu and my brother. Why are you hiding your identity?  
**Cashier:** [Apologetic] It is not my fault; I was born and bred in Lagos. My parents only told me I am Ogu, but I have never been to my home town. My parents answer Yorùbá names and so do I.  
**Customer:** It is a pity! Do you speak any Ogu?  
**Cashier:** A little because my parents sometimes speak it to us, but they speak more of Yorùbá. I like to speak the language but any time I try to reveal my identity, my Yorùbá friends laugh at me and call me “Egun lasan lasan” (a worthless Ogu). So I stopped telling people I am Ogu.  
**Customer:** You are a young man and you must learn to live up to your true identity because when the chips are down, you will discover that you are neither Ogu nor Yorùbá. Your language is your identity. So insist on your parents speaking more of the language to you.  
**Cashier:** [In smiles] Thank you Sir. I will do just that!

The conversation typifies an encounter between an Ogu cultural police and a denying Ogu. The cashier, having seen the name on the customer’s slip, recognises it as an Ogu name and begins to question him. Unknown to him, the customer is an Ogu who suspects that the cashier’s interest in his name might be connected with an Ogu ancestry. He probes further and eventually his suspicions were confirmed. For the Ogu cultural police, identifying denying kinsmen often begins with observation and then suspicion. That the cashier introduced himself as Yoruba goes a long way to proving the fact of denial and hidden identity on the part of some Ogu people. At the instance of the cultural police, he eventually confesses his true identity.

The next reaction of an Ogu cultural police as soon as he suspects an individual to be an Ogu is that he warms his way into becoming friends with the person and subtly gets into a conversation that would have features of questioning. In the process, he gathers more information as evidence and proof. He then introduces himself as a proud speaker of Ogu and thereafter carefully explains the joy and pride in identifying with one’s cultural and linguistic origins by speaking the language.

## 8. Long and Short Term Cultural Policing

The timeline between when an Ogu *cultural police* suspects that a certain individual is a denying Ogu, carries out investigation, goes into questioning, gets the individual to own up to his or her true identity and resolves to return to the patronage of Ogu, determines what I call long or short term policing. Some policing encounters may take only a few minutes while others years.

The excerpt below is from a high school boy who was policed by his teacher (in-depth interview). This encounter took only a few days and can be categorised as short term:

My English language teacher always wondered why my classmates called me Tunji when the name on my exercise book was Setonji.

She once asked me where I was from and I told her Lagos State. She explained that my first name resembled an Ogu name but I insisted I was Yorùbá and that my name was Tunji for short. Not wanting to continue the argument, she calmly advised me to ask my parents about my true identity as she suspected that I wasn't the Yorùbá that I claimed

The language employed in this conversation cum-questioning is usually persuasive and emotional as it is targeted at the listener's sense of ethnicity. The teacher had had the hindsight bias – the I-knew-it-all-along feeling – before deciding on questioning. It is not always the case that the 'suspect' would be cooperative with the cultural police, seeing that in some instances, the 'suspect' sees it as an encroachment into their privacy as well as their fundamental right to freedom of speech. In some other instances, the suspect may tell the cultural police that he or she does not stand to gain any special privileges by speaking the language, so why the bother? As a 'cultural' police member, whose interest is in the maintenance of his cultural heritage, he is not deterred as he or she continues to persuade the suspect to appreciate his or her language and people, even if he has to explore his bilingual linguistic competence.

Some encounters like the one discussed above may take days, weeks and even months and demand a lot of patience, energy and willpower on the part of the cultural police to achieve the desired results. Ultimately, the 'suspect' accepts to identify with his or her language and people. This is the reformation stage and the job of the *cultural police* is somewhat completed. However, the *cultural police* still maintain close ties with their reformed kinsmen by becoming family friends in order to assist and continue to encourage them, together with their family members, in their new resolve to speak Ogu. One such instance involved a *cultural police* member (one of my informants) who travelled to the United Kingdom on vacation and was pulling a call through to Nigeria in front of a shopping mall. Unknown to him, an Ogu woman, who had just come out of the mall, heard him making the call in Ogu. She was fascinated by the sheer knowledge of meeting someone speaking the language in public far away from home. She introduced herself to him and even took him home to meet her family. There he discovered that their children couldn't speak Ogu even when both parents were natives and that the kids had never visited Nigeria. He encouraged the parents to start talking to the children in Ogu, no matter how little. Throughout his month-long period of stay in the United Kingdom, he regularly visited the family to see how they were doing in respect of speaking Ogu to their children. On his return to Nigeria, he remained in touch with the family and the following year facilitated their visit to Nigeria. The family took the children to Badagry, their ancestral homeland where they had first hand contact with the people, the language and the culture by spending weeks before returning to the United Kingdom. The visit resonates with Holmes' (1992) assertion that language maintenance also works through visit to ancestral homelands where children can interact with their native speaker relations. This way, the *cultural police* continue to be linguistic gatekeepers for their people.

For some other encounters, the time of suspicion to reformation may take only a few minutes because some suspects to whom the *cultural police* have given enough evidence to confirm their identity, often own up easily and regret their actions. They blame their unpatriotic attitude towards Ogu on ignorance. Having been well educated on the inherent benefits in preserving their language, they promise to change their ways and speak the language together with other members of their families. The Ogu cultural policemen or women are able to achieve this task of persuading Ogu speakers to patronize their language mainly because they are well-placed in society and are not ashamed to identify with their people and the language. They are an epitome of the proud Ogu personality, who, though marginalised and unrecognized, still hold on to their ethnic and cultural heritage. They educate members of their families to be proud speakers of the language both at home and abroad. Seeing that they are highly educated and of high standing in the community, other speakers of Ogu, who hide their identity, are encouraged by the way the *cultural police*

showcase their linguistic and cultural heritage. More often than not, previously denying members of the linguistic community are willing to toe this line of linguistic pride upon encountering the cultural policemen and women.

### **9. Evidence of the Effectiveness of Cultural Policing for Ogu Language Maintenance**

Responses of Ogu people in their ancestral communities, who partook in focus group discussions, confirm that the activities of the cultural police team have been impacting the maintenance of the language. The data below show the language maintenance influence of *cultural police* members on speakers in Ogu indigenous communities:

You see our people who have become highly-educated and now have good jobs come visiting home and speak Ogu to us. We are surprised that they haven't forgotten the language; they still remember their roots. The reason that some of us preferred Yorùbá to Ogu was because we felt ashamed of the language. If we found ourselves in the midst of the Yorùbá they belittle us by saying "Who are the Ogu? They are worth nothing". This kind of ridicule made many of us to hide our identity, stop speaking the language until some of us lost it. But now that some of our sons and daughters who are highly placed in society speak the language with pride, we in the villages are encouraged by their actions to regain some confidence in ourselves.

The data above confirm the role of the elite group, who informally makes up the *cultural police* team and has functioned towards the maintenance of Ogu. By virtue of their status in the society, they are role models whom the younger and inexperienced people look up to for advice even in other matters aside language. It is natural that their lifestyle would have some impact on their people. The influential people, especially the ones that travelled to Lagos between the 1950s and 1970s were instrumental in instigating language shift to Yoruba. Denial and disguised identity began with them and eventually infected speakers in the ancestral homelands. The present influential people who are now leading the cause for Ogu language maintenance are a new crop of Ogu elite who by virtue of their education have broken themselves free from the vestiges of shame and denial. They have shown the example of returning to the patronage of Ogu and are now encouraging their people to do same in the ancestral homelands. The uniqueness of their operation lies in the manner they employ strategies that resonate with conventional policing strategies for the identification of denying speakers of Ogu. This goes back to the assertion that the maintenance of a minority language lies squarely in the hands of the native speakers themselves and some people among them must provide leadership (Ndlovu 2010).

### **10. Partnership Strategies Intelligence**

Ratcliffe (2002) uses the term "partnership strategies intelligence" to refer to information received by the police from members of the public which is taken as intelligence. Intelligence assists the police in unravelling crime. Ogu *cultural police* usually use information and intelligence (though two different things but are viscerally liked in the context of cultural policing) as part of the dynamics of their operations. While information refers to basic knowledge divested of application, intelligence describes the application of such knowledge in investigating challenges associated with human and situational issues. Intelligence here could be information received from another person about the suspected identity of another individual. Such chance information could come unconsciously from interactions with the informant as the *cultural police*, who, as is characteristic of policing generally, is alert and vigilant. He then processes the information, transforms it into intelligence and begins his investigation, looking for clues and evidence that he might use to identify the 'suspect' beyond doubt about his true identity. Such clues might be facial scarification or tribal marks, certain Yoruba or English names that are in fact Ogu names that have been, Yorubarised or Anglicized, etc. Some Ogu people, who were originally given Ogu names, grow up to find

any Yoruba name that somewhat resembles their Ogu names in pronunciation but not in any way having the same meaning and begin to use such names. It is not uncommon therefore to find Ogu people bearing such Yoruba names as:

Adétúnjí (Royalty reincarnated) for Setonji (Destiny's appointed time)  
 Títílopé (Eternal gratitude) for Titengbe (Significant)  
 Béwàjí (Risen with beauty) for Peawhanji (Victory over battles)  
 Dáíísí (The spared one) for Thasi (In Tha's hand)<sup>1</sup>  
 Jídé (The reincarnated one) for Jidenu (A thing of hope)  
 Adamitunde (My matchet has returned) for Athanmitonde (Not by our power)  
 Omowùmí (I desire a child) for Maumeh (A God-sent person)  
 Adansere (A playful bat) for Athansede (Not by my power)

The above are just a few of the Ogu names that are often Yorubarised and, as such, bearers of such Yoruba names are usually suspected to be Ogu speakers under cover, especially when they claim to hail from Lagos or Ogun State in South-Western Nigeria. Another style is for some of the Ogu to Anglicize their Ogu names. For instance, an Ogu name like Dekon could be changed to Dickens, Potuetho to Pot and Akodegbe to Accord. Names like these often lead members of Ogu *cultural police* team to their targets. When an Ogu *cultural police* member meets such suspects, he or she could introduce himself by his own Ogu name and immediately that often strikes a chord in the suspect, which is exactly the intention of the police when he or she employs that manner of introduction. He or she then watches the reaction of the suspect and takes it up from there. The suspect often is mellowed into revealing his or her identity and takes a decision to return to his or her roots. The questioning thereafter may continue in Ogu and both enjoy the richness of the language as well as its cultural heritage. The entire procedure does not end without the now reformed suspect enlisting into the Ogu *cultural police* team. Using himself or herself as an example, his or her personal experience is a motivating factor in winning others to his side.

Policing, in general terms, according to Palmer et al. (2012), is a moral profession with unflinching adherence to the rule of law and human rights as the embodiment of humane values. The Ogu cultural police are law-abiding citizens of the country who are also knowledgeable about the rights of the citizens and so do not in any way violate other people's fundamental human right to freedom of speech. This explains why the dynamics of their operations are purely informal and friendly. The relationship between the police and the suspect is the type that operates among kinsmen embodied by the cultural ties of brotherhood. More importantly, the caveat of morality in the definition above applies to the Ogu *cultural police* in the sense that they are able to mobilize a certain degree of outstanding cultural morality for themselves. This credential is besides their high educational qualifications, so much so that denying members are convinced about the seriousness of *their* brief as linguistic gatekeepers.

Brogden and Nijhar (2005: 2) are of the view that "policing is determined by strategies, tactics and outcomes based on community consent". *Cultural policing*, as practised by the Ogu elite, is unique in the sense that the policing strategies and tactics used in language maintenance procedures are approved by Ogu communities who are happy that such cultural renaissance is taking place. The attitude of the Ogu community in South-western Nigeria towards cultural policing reveals the fact that minority language speakers still hold their languages dear to them and need just a little sensitization and prodding to resist language shift. Though marginalized people shift to more privileged languages, they live with the emotional pain and pressure that go with the loss of ethnic identity but are often unable to do anything about it. Little wonder then that the activities of the cultural police open their

understanding to the fact that they can still do well in life without denying their language and their people.

### 11. The Role of Partnership in Cultural Policing

The activities of Ogu cultural policemen and women find validation in what Crawford (2008: 160) refers to as “policing by communities”, a situation where individual civilian members of the community participate in policing “as social ties and informal social control constitute the bedrock of local order”. The maintenance of Ogu language has been taken up by these policing individuals with the aim of preserving their cultural heritage via policing strategies. Wetife (2008) explains that the discharge of police functions consists of advising, controlling, directing, monitoring and reforming people. This the Ogu *cultural police* do in the course of carrying out their duties consciously and unconsciously. Their major reformation tool is the power of persuasion and advice, which sometimes translates into negotiation and mediation in winning over fellow Ogu to their side. In this regard, they differ from the professional police who may sometimes apply force to elicit information and confession from suspects, although they deny the use of torture during interrogation.<sup>2</sup> Again, Ogu *cultural police* are not unaware of the advice of Wetife (ibid.) that policemen need to exercise a great deal of discretion in carrying out their activities. In some cases, therefore, the Ogu *cultural police* have to take their time to observe, strategise and decide on how best to handle particular individuals who may pick offence with the sheer idea of being policed. This is where a large dose of discretion is applied in order not to jeopardize the essence of their actions and spoil the good work that they have started. If they are at a loss as to how to handle certain tricky situations, they seek the advice of fellow cultural police who may proffer subtle and logical strategies to use. In this case, intelligence sharing is part of their operational strategies as one cultural police can link up with fellow police for intelligence, information and evidence. They may serve as informants for one another and may even investigate a case based on tip-off. In some cases, the tip-off could come from non-Ogu speakers who are aware of the activities of the cultural police by virtue of the fact that they are their friends, neighbours and colleagues. Such non-Ogu informants have witnessed the *modus operandi* of the cultural policemen and women, having been in the environment of policing. The extract below from a key informant, one of the *cultural police*, attests to this:

A female neighbour of mine recently attended the naming ceremony of a friend of hers and came back to tell me excitedly that my traditional Ogu music was played at the ceremony. However she said she wondered why that happened when her friend and the husband were both Yorùbá. She couldn't place the reason for Ogu music at a naming ceremony in a Yoruba household. That sprang me into action.

In the above instance, musical choice becomes a vital cultural index in the initiation of *cultural policing*. From the data above, the choice of music by the celebrant aroused suspicion in the guest, who though not an Ogu cultural police, had been familiar with the activities of the team since she had one as neighbour. Music is a cultural element and the choice of traditional music from people from South-western Nigeria can be an indication of their ethnic identity. An Ogu *cultural police* personnel would certainly be interested in investigating a supposed Yoruba man who takes delight in playing Ogu music at a very important ceremony of naming his newborn child. In the instance above, the *cultural police* took upon himself to pay a friendly visit to the family, introducing himself as Ogu and that he was fascinated to know that Ogu music was played at the ceremony. Thereafter the family

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2                      The police now use questioning in place of interrogation to reduce the forceful nature of eliciting confessions from suspected criminals.

was happy to know that an Ogu person who was highly placed in the city could be so proud to introduce himself as one and freely spoke the language. The realization marked the change in their linguistic attitude.

Informants are also conversant with the traits and character that may arouse suspicion about the identity of an individual. For instance, they could say to an Ogu cultural police: "There is a classmate of mine who has an odd Yoruba name and some funny tribal marks and speaks Yoruba with an accent. He says he is from Lagos State and claims to be Yoruba but I suspect he is 'Egun'. Maybe you could check him out".<sup>3</sup> The informant in this case could be a fellow student and friend or roommate with the Ogu *cultural police*. Acting on this tip-off, the police man or woman begins investigation so as to gather more proof to determine the true identity of the suspect. After this, he/she may arrange a friendly and cordial meeting with the suspect(s). In the course of interacting with and questioning the suspect, the *cultural police* member may follow the advice of Afonja (2008) that a police officer must cultivate a keen sense of observation. This keen sense of observation tells the police whether it is wise to let his intentions be known to the suspect on that first occasion of meeting with him or choose to delay it till another time. Meanwhile, he maintains the cordial relationship with the suspect whom he or she is soon able to win to his or her side with the power of persuasion.

## 12. Cultural Elements in Cultural Policing

An Ogu cultural police could identify a suspect based on facial scarification. In Western Nigeria, especially among the Yoruba, different groups are identified by specific marks on their faces. The Ogu too have their unique facial scarification, which tells the specific families and clans to which they belong. Such marks for both the Ogu and the Yoruba could range from just a single or several vertical or horizontal strokes, either on the forehead or on one or both cheeks. Facial scarification is not peculiar to Western Nigeria alone but a phenomenon that is common to the whole of Africa. Apart from language, it is another mark of ethnic identity and culture. Generally, people who are conversant with the different marks are able to tell who is who. A person can deny his language by shifting to a more prestigious language, but if he has tribal marks on his face he cannot hide his identity from those who know him. Facial scarification is a sure way of making its carriers know that they cannot run away from themselves as the marks, once given, are permanent and tell others who they are. Some Ogu people, who pretend to be Yoruba, are often identified by their kinsmen who recognize the marks on their faces. The marks are part of the evidence to raise suspicion in the Ogu cultural police as to the identity of such individuals. The Yoruba too are conversant with their peculiar tribal marks such that when they see an individual carrying a different set of unique tribal marks claiming to be one of them, their suspicion is aroused, and if such persons are friends with Ogu *cultural police*, they may draw their attention to the situation. This could then lead to further investigations on the part of the cultural police *personnel* as they gather more proof to unveil the real identity of the 'suspect'. Once the true identity is confirmed, the police use the usual strategy of persuasion to bring the suspect to confession, reformation and enlistment into the Ogu cultural police. The following excerpt from another key informant cultural police member illustrates this kind of situation:

I work with one of the government-owned television stations in South-western Nigeria. From time to time we get students of Mass Communication and Media Studies from universities and polytechnics coming to do their industrial attachment with us. Recently a new batch came and as the one in charge of the training, I arranged to meet them the following day. Already, they had all submitted their names and the

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3 Even when the language and the people are Ogu, they are generally referred to as Egun by the Yoruba.



institutions they were from. Taking a look at the names, I saw a particular Dickens. Immediately I suspected that he was one of my kinsmen who had anglicised their Ogu names. In this particular case, I suspected that Dickens was a corruption of the Ogu name Dekon (prayer answered, or prayer over). I was ready to get to the root of the matter, pained at the extent to which my people had deviated from the language. And when I finally met the chap, he had on his face the Wheda tribal marks and then suspicion changed to confirmation.

Upon friendly interrogation of the young man, he owned up to having anglicised his name. The media officer encouraged him to stop manipulating his name and pointed to the contradictions in his scarification. He subsequently expressed remorse and henceforth throughout his attachment period proudly identified with the language, considering how often he conversed with the officer in Ogu. Neyroud (2008: 715) opines that policing is about police officers doing the right things for the right reasons. So long as what the Ogu cultural police do is for the preservation of the language, their activities are appreciated by the people as they realize that their shift to Yoruba, borne out of ignorance, is a step in the wrong direction.

### 13. Surveillance in Cultural Policing

Surveillance, as used by the police, has been yielding positive results for the Ogu cultural police. As a policing strategy, it involves the "tracking down of certain targeted individuals or groups of individuals whom the police regard as suspects, whether known or unknown and making arrests as well as traffic stops and sweeps of area" (Manning 2010: xiii). However, though the Ogu *cultural police* use this strategy, they do it in a quite different way, as they are not police in the real and formal sense of the word. Surveillance, for them, is a way of identifying their kinsmen and not arresting criminals in the real sense of criminality as in individuals who have contravened the law. Arrest for them is the point where they are able to come face to face with the suspect with a stance of brotherhood and comradeship and are able to bring them to confession and reformation.

In some instances, elements of food culture peculiar to the Ogu become another way by which these police men and women get the lead to carry out their brief. This is evident in the extract from another informant from an in-depth interview:

While studying for my College of Education certificate, I once had a hall mate who claimed to be Yoruba but whom I suspected to be Ogu. However, each time I raised the issue, he denied it. Then on a certain morning while preparing a particular Ogu delicacy (sanpiti), I noticed that he became very uneasy, going into the kitchen and exchanging pleasantries with me severally. He even refused to go for his morning lectures. I remember that as the peculiar aroma of the beans pervaded the air, my roommate could not endure it anymore. He suddenly exclaimed in Yoruba: "E ti se kini yi wa leni (You have prepared this special meal of ours today!). I was able to confirm his Ogu identity that day which he could no longer deny. (A 22-year old male student from Ipokia LGA)

The encounter above is an example of long term cultural policing as the police here had suspected the identity of his roommate for some time and had been observing him keenly. All he needed was evidence to prove his case and that evidence would only come after about a year. In this case, it was the hall mate's food preference that gave him away. As the informant revealed, after the incident, the denying Ogu member changed his linguistic attitude and began to converse with him in Ogu with pride both in private and public.

#### 14. International Police (INTERPOL).

In some other instances, Ogu *cultural police* members operate like international police. When a criminal commits an offence in one country and flees to another, INTERPOL is a network of police from 190 countries all over the world that is engaged. They share information with one another, thereby helping members in different countries to handle crimes that cross borders. For the Ogu *cultural police*, intelligence can be gathered from Nigeria and the diaspora on suspected denying members of the group. Since the maintenance of Ogu is paramount to the police, they go to any length to regain the loyalty of their denying kinsmen to the language and so they are not hindered by space. In the excerpt below, one of my key informants, an Ogu *cultural police* member, revealed that it was information received from another police in Nigeria that helped unravel a case he had handled in South Africa.

I once met a Nigerian called Raffiu who claimed he was Yoruba but I suspected he was an Ogu whom an uncle of mine had mentioned was coming down to Johannesburg. I greeted him warmly and introduced myself as an Ogu from Nigeria. He replied my greetings in English claiming he was Yoruba. Then I called my Uncle in Nigeria and asked some questions about the guy and he confirmed that he was Ogu. The next time I met Raffiu, I greeted him in Ogu and he had no choice but to reply in Ogu, seeing that he had been found out. From that day onwards we related as kinsmen and spoke Ogu only (A 40-year old male pharmacist from Badagry LGA).

One other important fact about the above is that the period of intelligence sharing between Nigeria and South African took months before the suspected denying member was approached to open up on his identity and converse in Ogu. As is the case with INTERPOL, the instance illustrates the long-term dimension to *cultural policing*. Evidence that *cultural policing* has facilitated Ogu language maintenance is manifest in many areas. The extract below, for instance, proves that there is a change in the pattern of naming among Ogu families, as many now give their children Ogu names:

I attended the naming ceremony of the third child of my elder brother a few months ago. The first two children both have Yorùbá names though they have Ogu middle names which the children don't even know and which their parents think hard about before they can remember, as the names were given the kids by their paternal grandparents. As a result of the linguistic renaissance going on in our community presently, our people now cash in on every opportunity to showcase our Oguness. My brother's third child was given an Ogu name at the ceremony and so far that is the only child with an Ogu name in the family. When I asked him what prompted this new trend, 'cos he was notorious for not identifying with Ogu, he said he had become "converted". I am really happy with the changes I see in our community now. (a 45-yr old female civil servant from Ado-Odo Ota LGA)

It therefore follows that while language activism is substantially about agitating for the public utilization of a minority or endangered language, cultural policing affirms native-speaker-to-native-speaker agency in a manner that acknowledges leadership of the elite. *Cultural policing* departs from language activism by the very sense in which it also prioritises the agency of informal use by native speakers of a minority or endangered language in order to boost its compromised vitality. Those involved are themselves native speakers with social and political privileges anchored in high educational qualifications. Their loyalty to the language becomes a moral edge that nudges others to reconsider their linguistic and cultural denial and begin to speak Ogu with pride. Inevitably, while language

activism affirms government/state agency for minority language survival and maintenance, *cultural policing* affirms native speakers' agency.

#### 14. Conclusion

It has been established through the literature review that scholarship on Ogu is very scanty and mostly focuses on establishing the fact that the language is experiencing shift to Yoruba and English. Again hegemonic global maintenance strategies abound in the literature, but so far none has discussed the use of policing strategies in language maintenance. Yet the operationalization of *cultural policing* in this study should not be surprising, considering that "language shift is such a complex social practice that it cannot be satisfactorily explained by the use of preconceived, deductive analytical frameworks (Forsman 2015: 37). The strongest yield on language maintenance has been through *cultural policing* among the Ogu, which is why the strategy cannot go unacknowledged. This is precisely because while most of the normative recommendations for language maintenance emphasize state agency, they have not proven to be as productive in the maintenance of Ogu as much as *cultural policing* has done. Scholars of LSLM can study the maintenance of other minority languages against the conceptual backdrop of *cultural policing* to see if there are parallels. Finally, considering the efficacy of *cultural policing* as a language maintenance strategy among the Ogu, scholars working on minority languages undergoing shift are invited to investigate the existence of parallel approaches in the maintenance of such languages.

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