THE ATTITUDE OF TIV SPEAKERS TOWARDS LEXICAL BORROWING AND ITS ROLE IN LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE

By

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Abstract

This study investigates Tiv speakers' attitudes towards lexical borrowing and examines its role in the maintenance of the Tiv language. In the context of increasing language contact and globalization, minority languages like Tiv face challenges related to language change and potential shift. Lexical borrowing, as a linguistic phenomenon, can both enrich and threaten the integrity of indigenous languages. This research uses a descriptive survey design to explore how Tiv speakers perceive borrowed words, their acceptance or resistance to such borrowings, and the implications for language vitality. Data collected through interviews with different age groups in the Tiv community reveal balanced attitudes that balance linguistic innovation with cultural preservation. Findings show that the Tiv language has borrowed extensively from English and neighbouring languages such

as Igbo, Yoruba, Jukun, Hausa, Udam, and Bantu-Nyanza. Most of the borrowed words are nouns, especially in domains such as education, religion, politics, commerce, and food. Findings also indicate that attitudes towards borrowed words vary among Tiv speakers. Younger and more educated speakers generally accept borrowing as a natural part of language development and modernization. In contrast, older and more rural speakers tend to express concern about the influence of foreign elements on the purity of the Tiv language. Findings further reveal that lexical borrowing plays a significant role in enhancing the vitality of the Tiv language. By expanding the vocabulary and allowing the expression of new concepts, borrowing helps Tiv remain functional and relevant in a multilingual and modern society. The findings suggest that promoting language education, inclusive language policies, community awareness campaigns, and documenting indigenous vocabulary alongside borrowed terms can foster positive attitudes towards lexical borrowing. The study concludes that given the dynamic nature of language contact in multilingual societies, investigating these attitudes is essential for informing language policy, preservation strategies and the reinforcement of cultural identity.

Keywords: Language, morphology, language attitude, lexical borrowing, and language maintenance.

Introduction

Language is not static; rather, it evolves through continuous contact with other languages and cultures. One prominent aspect of this evolution is lexical borrowing, the process whereby one language adopts words from another. In the Tiv language, spoken across several States in Nigeria, such as Benue, Nasarawa and Taraba, and extending beyond Benue State lexical borrowing has played a significant role in the language's development and dynamism.

This study provides valuable insight into Tiv speakers' attitudes towards lexical borrowing and the ways in which borrowing influences the maintenance and vitality of the Tiv language. Given the dynamic nature of language contact in multilingual societies, investigating these attitudes is essential for informing language policy, preservation strategies and the reinforcement of cultural identity. As speakers come into contact with neighbouring ethnic

groups and global influences, loanwords permeate the Tiv lexicon, reflecting social, cultural and technological changes Durkin 2014; Matras (2009). However, attitudes towards borrowing can greatly influence how these loanwords are integrated and the extent to which they affect language maintenance. Language maintence refers to the continued use of a language by a speech community across generations, despite the presence of competing or dominant languages. It occurs when speakers consciously or unconsciously sustain their indigenous or minority language in daily communication, cultural practice, education and religion.

Fishman (1991) adds that language maintenance involves the intergenerational transmission of a language, especially within the family domain. If children continue to acquire and use the language, maintenance is taking place. While some speakers may regard borrowing as a natural enrichment, others may perceive it as a threat to the purity and identity of the Tiv language Milroy and Milroy (1999). Understanding these attitudes is crucial because they shape language practices, usage and, ultimately, the vitality of the language. This study explores the perceptions of Tiv speakers regarding lexical borrowing and examines how these attitudes contribute either to the preservation or erosion of the Tiv language. It also highlights the relationship between borrowing and language maintenance within the socio-cultural context of the Tiv people.

The study adopts the Language Contact Theory proposed by Uriel Weinreich (1953). The theory posits that language contact occurs when speakers of different languages interact, leading to linguistic and social changes in one or both languages. Weinreich further argues that language contact may result in language convergence, language divergence, or language replacement, depending on factors such as language use, language attitudes and social context. Although, morphological processes such as affixation, compounding and reduplication have been extensively studied in Tiv and other Nigerian languages, limited attention has been given to how lexical borrowing is perceived by the Tiv speakers and how these attitudes influence language maintenance and identity. Existing studies focus largely on structural analysis of word formation leaving a gap in sociolinguistic investigation of speakers attitude, perception and ideological response to borrowed forms. This study therefore addresses that gap

by examining attitudes towards lexical borrowing and its implications for Tiv language vitality.

The aim of this study is to examine the attitudes of Tiv speakers towards lexical borrowing. The objectives of the study are to: identify the types of words borrowed and the morphological adaptation of such words; investigate the attitudes of Tiv speakers towards the use of borrowed words in their language; asses the perceived impact of lexical borrowing on the vitality and maintenance of the Tiv language.

Conceptual Review

Conceptualising Language as a system of communication and culture

Language is a complex system of communication that enables human beings to express thoughts, emotions and ideas through structured symbols such as sounds, gestures or written signs. It is a unique human capacity that facilitates social interaction, cultural transmission and the construction of knowledge. Language plays a significant role in human life, as human beings are inherently social creatures. Inderwati and Hayati (2015:34) state that "it is believed that human beings and language are deeply connected in the sense that people own a language and use it to interact with others". From a cultural perspective, Babatunde (2002:1) explains that language is "the expression of culture, the depository of culture and a crucial mode of culture transmission".

Morphology

Morphology is the branch of linguistics concerned with the internal structure of words and the processes through which words are formed. It examines the smallest meaningful units of language, known as morphemes, and the ways in which these combine to create words. Morphology helps to explain how words change form in order to express grammatical meanings such as tense, number and comparison. Scholars have defined morphology in various ways. Aronoff and Fudeman (2011:123) describe morphology as the study of the internal structure of words and the rules governing word formation. Similarly, Katamba (2015:3) defines morphology as the

component of grammar that determines the structure of words and the manner in which words are constructed from morphemes.

Attitude

Fishbein and Ajzen (2018:67) define attitude as "a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour". This definition highlights that attitude involves evaluation and predisposition towards an object, such as a language or linguistic feature. Garrett (2019:12) describes language attitude as "the set of beliefs, feelings and predispositions towards a language or language variety", emphasising the emotional and cognitive factors that shape how speakers perceive languages. Kirkpatrick (2020:1) views attitude as "an individual's positive or negative evaluation of a language which can influence language use, maintenance and shift".

Lexical Borrowing

According to Dylewski and Zuzanna (2021:301), the term borrowing, though seemingly easy to define, may pose certain terminological challenges. Durkin (2014) posits that in linguistics, the term borrowing refers to a process in which one language replicates a linguistic feature from another language, either wholly or partially. Durkin further notes that the metaphorical use of the word borrowing has well-known limitations: nothing is removed from the so-called donor language, and there is no expectation that the borrowed item will ever be returned. Dylewski and Zuzanna (2021) support this view and suggest that the term influence might be more appropriate. Nevertheless, borrowing has remained firmly established in linguistics since the nineteenth century and is widely used without metaphorical consideration.

Liu (2020) asserts that linguistic borrowing is generally defined as the transfer of linguistic elements from one language into another, and it is recognised as a universal linguistic phenomenon. Liu (2020:41) explains that whenever a speech community incorporates an external linguistic elements into its contemporary language, borrowing occurs. The phenomenon has long attracted scholarly attention in sociolinguistics, anthropological linguistics, contact linguistics and historical linguistics. Liu further observes that borrowing is most

frequently found in vocabulary, and this type is specifically referred to as lexical borrowing.

The Role of Lexical Borrowing in Language Maintenance

Lexical borrowing plays an important role in language maintenance by enriching a language's vocabulary and enabling it to respond to new social, cultural and technological realities. Thomason and Kaufman (2019) argue that lexical borrowing functions as a crucial mechanism through which languages expand their vocabulary and adapt to new cultural and technological developments, thereby enhancing the relevance and survival of minority languages in contact with dominant ones.

When speakers adopt words from other languages, they often fill lexical gaps or introduce concepts that previously had no equivalent expression in their indigenous language. This process helps to sustain the language's relevance and usefulness in changing environments, thereby encouraging continued use among speakers. Ibhadi (2019) emphasises that the strategic adoption of borrowed words supports the relevance of Nigerian languages in multilingual settings, fostering language loyalty and continuity.

Similarly, Akinlabi (2017:87) notes that lexical borrowing in Nigerian languages contributes significantly to language development and maintenance by enabling indigenous languages to remain functional in evolving socio-cultural contexts. Owolabi (2018) also argues that borrowing enriches the lexicon of Nigerian indigenous languages, thereby strengthening their resilience and preservation despite the growing dominance of English.

Empirical Review

More recent scholarship strengthens the relevance of examining attitudes towards borrowing. For example, Yaron Matras (2019) emphasises that contact-induced change is strongly shaped by speaker agency and social networks, arguing that borrowing patterns cannot be fully understood without analysing community perception and identity construction. His work highlights the interaction between structural borrowing and sociolinguistic evaluation. Similarly,

Alexandra Aikhenvald (2018) demonstrates that borrowing often follows predictable patterns depending on intensity of contact and sociocultural dominance. Her research shows that lexical borrowing may increase under conditions of sustained bilingualism, but community attitudes determine whether borrowed forms replace or coexist with indigenous vocabulary. Recent scholarship in African sociolinguistics by scholars such as Salikoko Mufwene (2015) and Yaron Matras (2019) demonstrates that minority languages undergoing intense contact with dominant languages often experience lexical expansion alongside ideological tension. These studies show that speakers frequently adopt borrowed items for communicative efficiency while simultaneously expressing concerns about language purity and cultural identity. Such findings highlight the complex relationship between structural change and language attitudes in contact situations.

Ibrahim and Mayank (2016) examined the sociolinguistic consequences of language contact on the Kurukh language in Jharkhand. Their study revealed that Kurukh speakers increasingly prefer dominant regional languages such as Hindi and Sadri in daily communication, resulting in reduced intergenerational transmission of the indigenous language. The findings highlight how language shift often accompanies intense multilingual contact, particularly where socio-economic mobility is associated with dominant languages. Although informative, the study focused more on language shift than on detailed attitudes toward lexical borrowing.

Ogbu (2019) investigated borrowing as a word formation process in the Igede language. The study identified lexical borrowings from English, Igbo and Hausa, attributing borrowing to socio-cultural factors such as colonial influence, trade, religion and technological development. While the research documented structural integration of loanwords, it did not extensively examine speaker attitudes or perceptions regarding borrowed forms. This limitation creates space for further sociolinguistic inquiry into attitudinal dimensions of borrowing.

Nwagbo (2021) examined minority language maintenance in a multilingual Nigerian context. The study demonstrated that despite the dominance of larger regional and global languages, minority languages can survive when speakers maintain positive attitudes and

community-based strategies for intergenerational transmission. The research highlighted that language maintenance is not determined solely by structural factors but is strongly influenced by speaker commitment and identity orientation. However, while the study provides valuable insight into maintenance strategies, it does not specifically examine lexical borrowing or speaker evaluation of borrowed forms.

Similarly, Yulia Kirilenko (2024) provided a contemporary sociolinguistic analysis of language attitudes, emphasising how attitudes shape language status, prestige, and vitality. Kirilenko argues that attitudinal orientation directly affects language choice in multilingual settings and contributes to either language expansion or decline. The study reinforces the theoretical assumption that positive evaluation supports language sustainability, while negative evaluation accelerates shift. Although conceptually strong, the research remains largely theoretical and is not situated within a specific African minority language context.

In addition, Alhazmi (2023) investigated language attitudes in rapidly changing multilingual societies and identified key dimensions such as solidarity, identity construction, and perceived prestige. The findings reveal that speakers often display pragmatic acceptance of dominant-language influence while simultaneously expressing emotional attachment to their heritage language.

Jen (2011) explored borrowing as a mechanism for language development in Tiv. The study demonstrated that Tiv has adopted lexical items from English, Hausa and neighbouring languages to expand its vocabulary. It concluded that borrowing contributes positively to lexical enrichment. However, the study primarily emphasised structural analysis rather than systematically measuring how Tiv speakers evaluate or respond to borrowed words in terms of identity and language maintenance.

This tension between pragmatic borrowing and ideological preservation is highly relevant to studies of lexical borrowing. However, like other recent studies, it does not focus specifically on Tiv or on detailed analysis of borrowed lexical items within an indigenous Nigerian setting. These studies demonstrate that language attitudes

play a crucial role in shaping language maintenance and borrowing patterns. Nevertheless, empirical research that directly investigates Tiv speakers' attitudes toward lexical borrowing remains limited. This gap justifies the present study, which integrates attitudinal analysis with structural documentation to contribute context-specific evidence to the broader discussion on language maintenance.

Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive survey research design to investigate Tiv speakers' attitudes towards lexical borrowing. The design is appropriate because it facilitates the collection of attitudinal and linguistic data from respondents within their natural sociolinguistic environment. It allows for systematic documentation of perceptions, usage patterns and interpretations regarding borrowed lexical items. The population of the study comprises Tiv speakers residing in Makurdi Local Government Area. A purposive sampling technique is employed to select participants who are native Tiv speakers and who actively use the language in daily communication. A total of twelve (12) participants are selected, comprising both male and female respondents across different age groups (e.g., youths, adults and elderly speakers) to ensure balanced representation. Data are collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation and guided elicitation from elderly native speakers. The semi-structured interview consists of approximately three open-ended and structured questions designed to explore participants' attitudes towards borrowed words, frequency of usage, perceived impact on Tiv identity, and acceptability of loanwords. The interview questions are thematically organised and administered in Tiv and/or English depending on participant preference. Responses are recorded and later transcribed for analysis. Non-participant observation is conducted in natural communication settings such as markets, homes and social gatherings to document spontaneous usage of borrowed lexical items. Observational data focus on context of use, frequency of occurrence and code-switching patterns. The intuition of elderly native speakers is incorporated as a form of expert linguistic validation. Elderly speakers (aged fifty and above who are recognised as competent custodians of traditional Tiv vocabulary are consulted to evaluate whether borrowed forms are perceived as acceptable, fully integrated, or semantically distinct from native equivalents.

Their judgments are documented through structured elicitation sessions where specific borrowed words are presented for evaluation. Their responses are compared to interview and observational data to enhance reliability. Data collected are analysed based on the word borrowed and the nature of borrowing that enable language attitude. Borrowed words are categorised based on source language and morphological adaptation.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table I: Examples of Tiv Words Borrowed from English Language

Tiv	**English Equivalent**
Afiishi	Ice-fish
Ahwa	Hour
Ajanda	Agenda
Imbuluu	Envelop
Apii	Appeal

Source: Fieldwork 2025

The data in the table above presents a selection of Tiv lexical items borrowed directly from the English language. The lexical items presented in the table were selected through a systematic criterion based procedure involving semi- structured interviews, non-participant observation and elicitation from native speakers of Tiv. Data were collected from natural communication contexts such as markets, homes, social gathering and academic environment to capture authentic usage of borrowed words. Participants were asked to identify words perceived as non- native and to provide native equivalents where possible, while elderly native speakers validated the authenticity and structural adaptation of the forms. These borrowed forms reflect adaptation to Tiv phonological and morphological systems. For instance, *Afiishi* (from ice-fish) shows phonological modification and semantic retention, where the consonant cluster

is simplified, a process common in Tiv adaptation of foreign sounds. Similarly, *Ahwa* (from hour) demonstrates the insertion of an initial vowel sound to accommodate Tiv's preferred syllable structure, thereby avoiding problematic consonant patterns and silent letters.

The borrowings *Ajanda* (agenda) and *imbuluu* (envelope) also reveal phonological accommodation and morphological nativisation, as Tiv adds vowel endings such as -aa or -uu to conform to its open syllable structure. These borrowings indicate a high level of lexical interaction between Tiv and English, resulting from social, educational and religious contact. They further demonstrate how Tiv maintains its internal structural integrity while incorporating foreign lexical elements. Such adaptation signifies linguistic resilience rather than replacement, showing that borrowing serves as a strategy for language maintenance rather than language endangerment. By adopting new words for modern concepts and objects, Tiv remains relevant in contemporary communication while preserving its identity.

Table 2: Examples of words borrowed from Igbo language into Tiv

Tiv	**Igbo**	**Source: Igbo**	**Gloss**
Ogbono	ogbono	Igbo	A specie of vegetable
Akpu	Akpu	Igbo	Condensed cassava
Ego	Ego	Igbo	Money
Abakpa	abakpa	Igbo	Slipper
Anguro	Anugwu/anugo	Igbo	Snuff
Ugu	Ugu	Igbo	A type of vegetables

Source: Fieldwork 2025

The table above presents lexical borrowings from Igbo into Tiv, reflecting strong socio-cultural and commercial contact between Tiv and their south-eastern neighbours. The borrowed terms largely

relate to food, agriculture, material culture and trade. For example, *Ogbono* and *Ugu* refer to vegetables widely cultivated and consumed in both Tiv and Igbo communities, suggesting shared agricultural and dietary practices. Their adoption reflects both linguistic borrowing and cultural diffusion through trade and intermarriage.

The word *Akpu*, meaning condensed cassava, is another significant borrowing. Since cassava products are staple foods in both communities, this term was likely adopted to describe a specific Igbo variant of processed cassava, illustrating lexical expansion in Tiv's food-related vocabulary. Similarly, ego (money) has been retained semantically and may have been borrowed due to Igbo's longstanding commercial influence in Nigeria. Its usage in Tiv speech contexts reflects sustained economic interaction.

Also words such as *Abakpa* (slipper) and Anguro (snuff) further indicate borrowing within the domain of material culture between Hausa and Tiv. These items likely entered Tiv society through intergroup exchange between Tiv and Hausa contact. Phonologically, the borrowed forms remain largely unchanged, suggesting compatibility with Tiv sound patterns. Unlike many English borrowings which undergo greater modification, Igbo borrowings show minimal alteration, possibly due to shared phonological and tonal similarities. These borrowings indicate that Tiv-Igbo contact is both linguistically enriching and culturally integrative. Rather than reflecting linguistic dependence, the borrowing process represents language maintenance through expansion, as Tiv incorporates useful lexical items while retaining its structural identity.

Table 3: Words Borrowed from Yoruba

Tiv	**Source: Yoruba**	**Gloss**
Amala	Yoruba	Yam flour
Akamu	Yoruba	Palp
Akara	Yoruba	Beans cake
Adere	Yoruba	A fabric

Source: Fieldwork 2025

The data in the table above illustrates several lexical items borrowed from Yoruba into Tiv. These borrowings reflect cultural and economic contact between Tiv and Yoruba speakers, largely facilitated through trade, interregional migration and social interaction in cosmopolitan centres. Most of the borrowed items relate to food, clothing and material culture, indicating practical domains where cultural interaction necessitated linguistic exchange. For instance, Amala (yam flour) and Akamu (pap) are food-related borrowings that reflect the spread of Yoruba culinary culture beyond the south-western region. Similarly, Akara (bean cake) has gained national prominence and is widely recognised across Nigeria. Its adoption into Tiv speech reflects cultural integration and lexical convergence.

The terms Adere, in particular, suggests Yoruba influence in textile culture. Phonologically, these borrowings retain their Yoruba forms with minimal modification, indicating compatibility with Tiv phonotactic patterns and high acceptability among Tiv speakers. Sociolinguistically, these borrowings suggest that Tiv speakers maintain a largely positive attitude towards Yoruba lexical items, adopting them to enrich vocabulary without necessarily displacing native expressions.

Table 4: Examples of words borrowed from Jukun

Tiv	**Source: Jukun**	**Gloss**
Aya	Jukun	Fellow house wife
Elegede	Jukun	A specie of vegetable
Mgbagye	Jukun	Thank You
Shai	Jukun	Alcohol

Source: Fieldwork 2025

The table above presents lexical items borrowed from Jukun into Tiv, reflecting close historical and geographical contact between the two ethnic groups in Benue and Taraba States. The borrowings relate to domestic life, agriculture and social interaction, showing that regular

contact encourages linguistic exchange. For example, Aya (fellow housewife) reflects kinship and social relationships, suggesting that cross-marriages or domestic interactions may have influenced its borrowing. Elegede (a species of vegetable) points to agricultural exchange and shared dietary resources. The expression shai (alcohol) further demonstrates borrowing in the context of hospitality and communal gatherings. Most of these borrowings retain their original forms with minimal phonological modification, suggesting phonetic compatibility between Tiv and Jukun. Such borrowing reflects linguistic tolerance and adaptability rather than linguistic loss.

Phonologically, most of the borrowed words preserve their Jukun structure with minimal modification, reflecting phonetic compatibility between the two languages. This structural closeness makes borrowing more natural and seamless. From a sociolinguistic standpoint, these borrowings reveal mutual linguistic tolerance and adaptability, where Tiv incorporates foreign lexical items without losing its linguistic integrity.

Table 5: Examples of Words Borrowed from Udam

Tiv	**Source : Udam**	**Gloss**
Akem	Udam	A calabash used for fetching water
Agwagwa	Udam	A duck
Pete	Udam	A hoe produced by Udam

Source: Fieldwork 2025

The lexical items above represent borrowings from Udam into Tiv language. The lexical items presented in the table were selected through systematic data collection and validation procedures aimed at identify borrowed words from Udam into Tiv. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation and elicitataion sessions with native Tiv speakers who have sustained contact with Udam speakers. Words were recorded during natural communication in social and economic interactation where borrowing is mostly likely to occur. During interviews participants were asked to identify lexical items perceived as originating from Udam and to

explain their usage and meaning. Elderly native speakers were further consulted to confirm the authenticity, source attribution and degree of integration of the selected words.

The table provides evidence of contact between the two neighbouring groups in the lower Benue Valley. The borrowed terms relate mainly to domestic utensils, animals and agricultural tools, suggesting that Tiv-Udam interaction is rooted in farming, trade and daily social relations. *Akem* refers to a calabash used for fetching water, a common household item in traditional societies. Its borrowing implies that the object or its cultural relevance may have been associated strongly with Udam practice. *Agwagwa* (duck) indicates lexical enrichment relating to fauna. Pete (a hoe produced by Udam) reflects borrowing motivated by technological and economic exchange, as tools are often borrowed alongside their names when associated with a particular group known for producing them. These borrowings show that language maintenance does not necessarily require resistance to external influence; rather, it involves selective adoption of items that enhance communication and cultural expression.

Table 6: Examples of Word Borrowed from Bantu Nyanza

Tiv language	**Source: Bantu Nyanza**	**English Meaning**
Inyam	Nyama	Animal
Kuhe	Kuha	Bone
Mnyam	Nyama	Dream
Ishe	Iso	Eye
Ishu	Ishi	Fish

Source: Abraham (1940:6-7)

Table 7: Examples of Word Borrowed from Hausa language

Tiv	Source: Hausa	English meaning
Ijembe	Fulani	Axe
Abikwinyi	Hausa	Earrings
Kasua	Hausa	Market
Boki	Hausa	Friend

Source: Fieldwork 2025

The table above presents lexical items linked to Bantu Nyanza, indicating deep historical and linguistic connections between Tiv and the wider Niger-Congo–Bantu language family. The items listed are core vocabulary, such as animal, bone, dream, eye and fish, suggesting that the similarities may reflect shared linguistic ancestry rather than recent borrowing .For instance, *Inyam* (from Nyama, meaning 'animal') demonstrates a form of morphological adaptation, where Tiv introduces a prefix to align the term with its nominal system. Similarly, *Kuhe* (from Kuha, 'bone') shows minimal phonological modification, reflecting structural similarity between the languages. Such lexical parallels suggest either sustained contact or a historical relationship in which cognate forms have remained stable across time.

Discussion of Findings

The study reveals that Tiv has borrowed a wide range of lexical items from several contact languages, including English, Hausa, Fulani, Igbo, Yoruba, Jukun, Udam and Bantu Nyanza. These borrowed words cover domains such as food, agriculture, commerce, kinship and everyday social interaction. The borrowed vocabulary includes both core lexical items (for example, ishe 'eye' and kuhe 'bone') as well as cultural and technological terms (for example, ajanda 'agenda' and kasua 'market').

Morphologically, the borrowed words undergo phonological and structural adaptation to fit Tiv syllable patterns and tonal structure, often through processes such as vowel insertion, reduplication and vowel harmony. These adaptations allow borrowed words to blend smoothly into Tiv while retaining their original meanings, demonstrating Tiv's morphological flexibility and phonological

accommodation. Regarding attitudes, data from interview responses show measurable variation among participants. Out of the total respondents of twelve (12) participants; seven (7) participants (58.3%) expressed positive attitudes towards lexical borrowing, describing it as natural, practical and necessary for modern communication. Three (3) (25%) participants expressed neutral attitudes, indicating that borrowing neither positively nor negatively affects their perception of Tiv language. Two (2) (16.7%) expressed concern that excessive borrowing may weaken indigenous vocabulary and threaten linguistic identity. These figures indicate that although positive perception dominates, a noticeable proportion of participants remain cautious about the long-term impact of borrowing. This quantitative representation confirms that attitudes are not uniform but socially differentiated even within a small sample.

The impact of lexical borrowing on the vitality and maintenance of Tiv therefore appears largely constructive but socially contested. Borrowing enriches the lexicon and supports communication in new domains, reinforcing language adaptability. However, concerns expressed by some participants highlight the need for balanced language development strategies. To promote sustainable linguistic growth, language education programmes should emphasise both lexical innovation and preservation. Cultural institutions and media platforms should encourage balanced usage of borrowed and indigenous forms. Additionally, documentation and standardisation of borrowed terms through dictionaries and educational materials will reduce inconsistency and strengthen linguistic stability.

The findings of this study align with previous empirical research which argues that language attitudes significantly influence language maintenance and borrowing patterns (e.g., Nwagbo 2021; Matras 2019). Similar to earlier studies, the present data indicate that positive speaker attitudes support lexical integration, while concerns about language purity reflect ideological tension identified in sociolinguistic literature. However, unlike some broader cross-linguistic studies, this research provides context-specific evidence from Tiv speakers, thereby extending existing scholarship to a new linguistic setting.

Conclusion

This study provides valuable insight into Tiv speakers' attitudes towards lexical borrowing and the ways in which borrowing influences the maintenance and vitality of the Tiv language. Given the dynamic nature of language contact in multilingual societies, investigating these attitudes is essential for informing language policy, preservation strategies and the reinforcement of cultural identity. This research contributes to broader discussions on language maintenance and language shift, particularly within minority and indigenous languages, and offers practical recommendations to support the sustained use of Tiv in the face of increasing linguistic influences.

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