

Contribution of women to linguistic vitality in northwestern Nigeria

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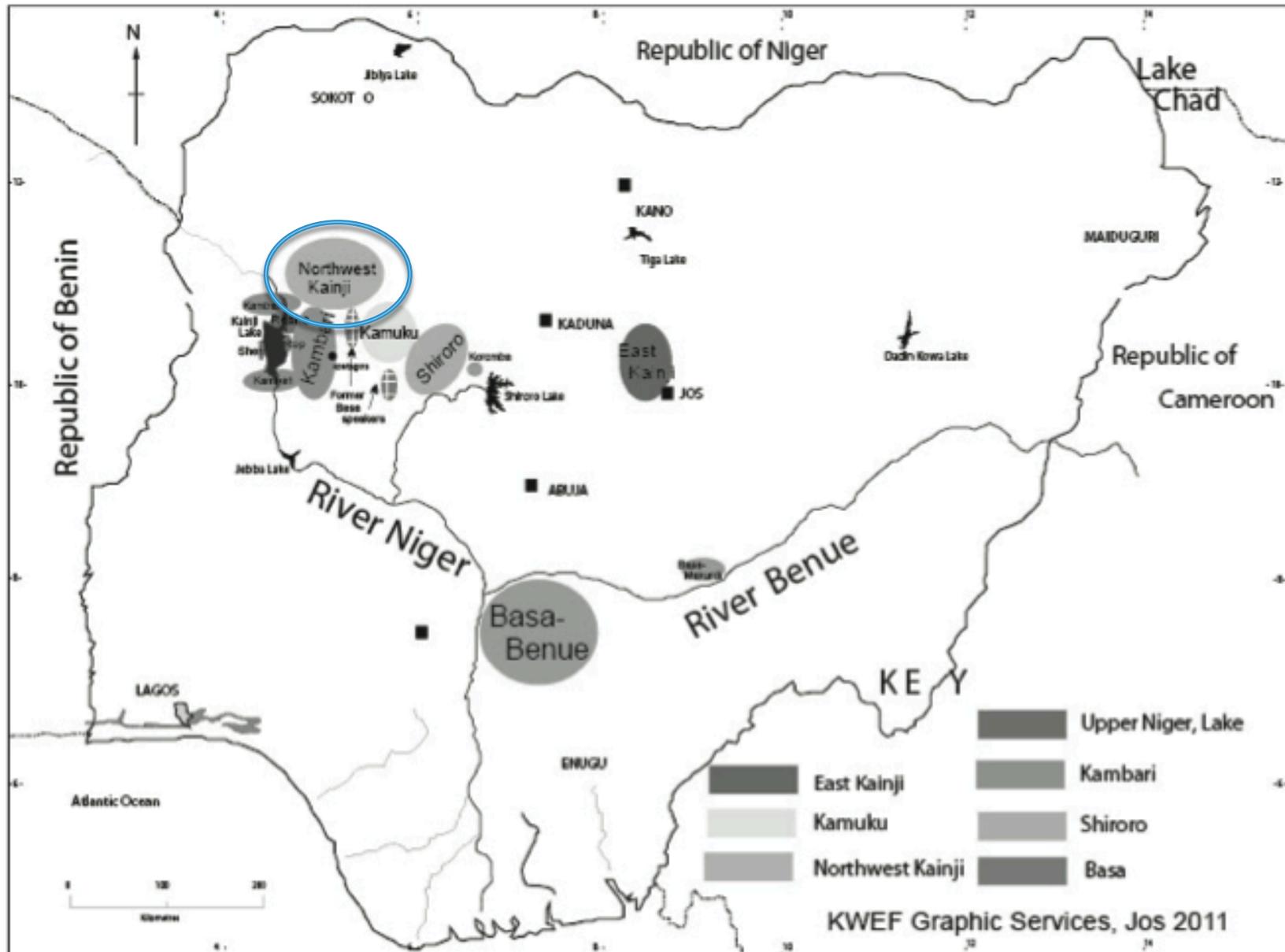


Goal: Awareness

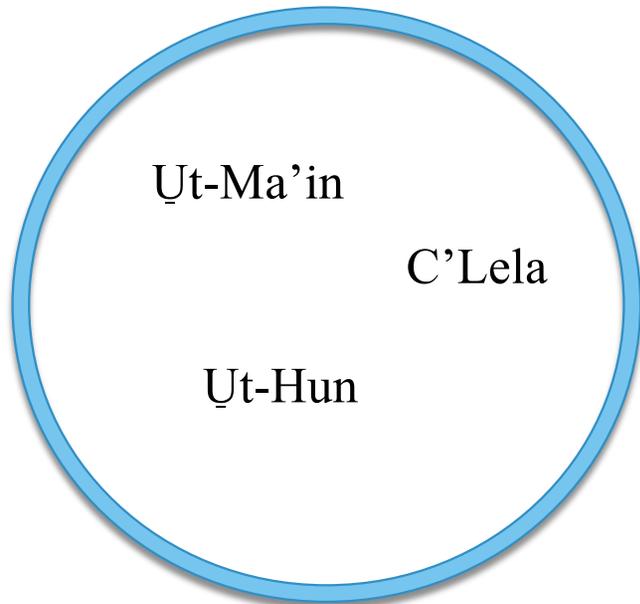


- How do we validate women in the work of language documentation?
- Can we develop new expectations for the contribution of women in language development?
- Will we enlist women more readily in the tasks of language documentation and maintenance?

Field context



Field context



- Multiple visits (2005-2007) and a subsequent visit in September 2013
- Primarily spent time with Ut-Ma'in speakers
- Similarities of culture, traditional religion, agricultural practices and lifestyle among these three groups.

Three lessons learned



- 1. Knowledge of language contributed to the corpus**
- 2. Crucial role in intergenerational transmission of the language**
- 3. Non-mixed gender environments allow women a voice**

Contribution to the corpus

- Wordlist collection in 2006/7
 - **1700 African Comparative Wordlist**
 - **Wordlist from five men, appointed by community leaders to assist me**
 - **A wife's contribution, a bystander**
- Pear Stories, personal narratives, folk narratives and wordlists in 2013
 - **Six women**
 - **Six men**

Contribution to the next generation

- **Multilingualism – local languages, Hausa, English (schools, government)**
- **Intermarriage is very common**
 - **2 male Ut-Ma'in speaking consultants are married to C'Lela women**
 - **Children speak C'Lela, Hausa, English**

Mixed gender vs. non-mixed gender

- **2005 involvement of one woman while husband in same room**
- **2013**
 - **Involvement of first (of six women) while male relatives in same room**
 - **Split into two groups, men with my husband and woman with me**

Outcomes: Mixed gender



- **Women remain silent.**
- **Women hesitant to share, even when asked directly.**
- **If they speak, it is only to affirm or agree with a man who has just spoken.**

Outcomes: Non-mixed gender



- **Women more relaxed.**
- **Women eager to share, eager to speak.**
- **One-on-one: Researcher and consultant**

- **Example: Wordlist elicitation**

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References

- Lewis, M. Paul (ed.), 2009. Ụt-Ma'in: A language of Nigeria. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, 16th edition. Dallas, Tex.: SIL International. Online version: http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=gel.
- Stuart McGill & Roger Blench 2012. Documentation, development, and ideology in the northwestern Kainji languages In Peter K. Austin & Stuart McGill (eds.) *Language Documentation and Description, Vol 11*, 90-135. London: SOAS.