

Abstract

The purpose of this introductory study is to establish the extent of multilingualism and mother tongue maintenance mechanisms among the community in spite of having lived among the Ekegusii-speaking people for almost a century. Data were gathered through interviews with Nubian speakers and adult Ekegusii-speaking neighbours and through observation. The findings are that the Nubians speak up to six different languages which are KiNubi, Arabic, Ekegusii, Kiswahili, Dholuo, and English. On first language maintenance, their culture, religious faith, the Arabo-Nubian linguistic connection, and their historical experiences have kept their first language intact. These findings contradict the experience of the Suba-a minority, Bantu speaking people of the Lake area (Lake Victoria) Nam Lolwe in Luo, Nalubaale in Luganda, and Nyanza in Kinyarwanda, who were assimilated in language and culture by the Luo speakers suggesting that development of multilingualism and mother tongue maintenance by ethnic minorities or otherwise is a function of a complex of factors.