



Investigation of the Effects of Language Attrition among Jar Native Speakers of Hausa in Bauchi State

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated language attrition among Jar native speakers of Hausa in Bauchi State, Nigeria, focusing on the extent of Hausa dominance, causes of Jar language decline, and its effects on cultural identity. Using a descriptive survey design, data were collected from 395 Jar speakers—including elders, adults, and youths—across four Local Government Areas through a structured questionnaire titled Language Attrition and Cultural Identity Questionnaire (LACIQ). Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The findings revealed that the Jar language is rapidly losing ground, particularly among the younger generation who prefer Hausa in daily interactions, education, religion, and commerce. Major causes of this shift include urbanization, intermarriage, inadequate mother tongue education, and weak parental transmission of the language. The research further showed that this linguistic erosion has led to the loss of traditional values, cultural practices, and effective communication between generations. The study concluded that the ongoing decline of the Jar language endangers the community's cultural heritage and identity. It recommended that government agencies, community leaders, and linguists collaborate to revitalize the Jar language through educational inclusion, documentation, and media promotion to ensure its survival as a symbol of cultural pride for future generations.

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INTRODUCTION

Language attrition, the process of acquiring a first language (L1) which is lost or in use, decline over time by native speakers, is now a growing concern in the majority of multilingual communities across Nigeria (Okorafor & Ochulor, 2024). In Bauchi State, numerous minority languages like Jar-related languages are increasingly under dominant language pressures, especially from Hausa, which serves not only as a lingua franca but also as social, economic, and educational forms of communication (Garba, 2018). Empirical studies in Bauchi have shown that smaller languages are moving towards Hausa in normal conversation, especially among young people and in cities. For example, the Gera language group shows extensive language shift:

young Gera speakers tend to incorporate Hausa into their usage, code-switch or even replace Gera terms with Hausa lexemes (Garba, 2018).

Likewise, the Dazawa language has been said to be "nearly extinct," with older members of the community being the only ones that are still fluent, while the majority of the younger generation has converted to speaking Hausa. Wikipedia Favorable attitudes toward Hausa, its prestige status, and its use in wider domains (e.g., education, business, mass media) merely contribute to this trend (Garba, 2018; "Factors Responsible for the Spread of Hausa in the Southern Bauchi Area," 2021). At the same time, inter-generational transmission and language policy are typically absent or

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inconsistent in the promotion of maintenance of minority languages.

The outcome is that some speech communities are experiencing levels of attrition not necessarily complete elimination but palpable decline in fluency, vocabulary, and functional usage in certain domains (example: Hausa kinship terms attrition in Zaria) (Abdulkadir & Abbas, 2022). As Jar native Hausa speakers of Bauchi State are at the nexus of hegemonic Hausa pressure and minority language contact, the effect of language attrition in their case is in need of a cautious investigation. It is important for identifying how identity, culture, and knowledge of language could be changing, and to guide policy on the maintenance and revival of languages in multilingual and minority-language environments.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Smaller languages in contact and multilingual situations are subjected to pressures that lead them to be eroded slowly, a phenomenon known as language attrition. In Nigeria, the majority of indigenous languages struggle to maintain viability with super ordinate languages such as Hausa, English, among others (Ebo, 2022). There does, however, exist a discernible lack of empirical studies that quantify whether the presence of Hausa usage among native speakers of Jar is precipitating attrition in their Jar linguistic skill.

One other notable study contrasted Hausa and Jar pronouns (Garba, 2021), yet this paper does not have any concern for attrition processes by domains, generations, or by functional proficiency. Specifically, for Jar native speakers of Hausa in Bauchi State, it is unclear which linguistic areas (vocabulary, phonology, morphosyntax, pragmatics) are most affected by attrition. Which generations or age groups have the most attrition, the social, psychological, and contextual factors behind differential attrition are scantily researched, the impacts of attrition on cultural identity, inter-generational communication, and language maintenance are scantily documented? No standard measure or base data are available to quantify degree of attrition across individuals or groups. Without

resolution of these deficits, efforts to sustain Jar may be incongruent and language policy or revitalization be misguided. Therefore, this study seeks to examine systematically the effect of language attrition among Jar indigenous Hausa speakers of Bauchi State, identifying domains, patterns, and factors to define this phenomenon.

Objectives of the Study

This study is designed to achieve the following specific objectives:

1. To determine the extent to which language attrition has occurred among Jar native speakers of Hausa in Bauchi State.
2. To identify the factors responsible for language attrition among Jar native speakers of Hausa in Bauchi State.
3. To examine strategies that can be adopted to minimize the effects of language attrition among Jar native speakers of Hausa in Bauchi State.

Research Questions

Based on the objectives of this study, the following research questions have been formulated to guide the investigation:

1. To what extent has language attrition occurred among Jar native speakers of Hausa in Bauchi State?
2. What are the factors responsible for language attrition among Jar native speakers of Hausa in Bauchi State?
3. What strategies can be adopted to minimize the effects of language attrition among Jar native speakers of Hausa in Bauchi State?

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Concept of language attrition

Language attrition has been broadly defined as the partial or complete loss of native-speaker L1 proficiency by reduced use or prolonged L2 exposure. Language attrition affects different linguistic domains (phonology, lexicon, morphology, syntax, and pragmatics) and ranges from slight difficulty in lexical retrieval to complete L1 substitution in areas of everyday life (Gallo,



2021). Recent reports emphasized that attrition is not a one-process phenomenon but a set of domain-conditioned changes operating under the effects of use, exposure, and affective factors. Recent research also needs more task-specific, fine-grained measures (e.g., lexical decision, story retelling) to detect incremental L1 loss.

Relationship between First Language (L1) and Second Language (L2)

The relationship between a first language (L1) and a second language (L2) is one of the most significant topics in linguistics, psycholinguistics, and second language acquisition (SLA). This relationship involves how the knowledge, structure, and use of a person's first language influence the learning and use of another language acquired later in life. The first language (L1) refers to the language a person acquires naturally from birth through interaction with parents and community members. It is also known as the mother tongue or native language (Lightbown & Spada, 2022). The second language (L2), on the other hand, is any language learned after the first, usually through formal instruction or social exposure (Ellis, 2015). The most important connection between L1 and L2 is language transfer the process by which structures, sounds, or meanings from the first language influence the second. Positive transfer occurs when similarities between L1 and L2 help learning. Negative transfer (interference) occurs when differences between the two languages cause errors. For instance, a Jar native speaker learning Hausa might pronounce Hausa words using Jar intonation or structure, showing L1 interference. According to Odlin (2021), transfer is a natural cognitive process, as learners rely on previous linguistic systems to make sense of new ones.

Bilingualism and multilingualism in Northern Nigeria (with relevance to Jar speakers)

Northern Nigeria is highly multilingual. Hausa serves as a lingua franca for the area and boasts high socio-economic status (employed for trade, media, and much educational usage). Jarawa (Jar) languages are a small, under documented group of this multilingual mosaic;

their speakers employ Hausa extensively in addition to using their local varieties (Garba, 2018). The sociolinguistic context in which a high-ranking regional language serves as the primary medium of education, markets, and mass media facilitates language shift and attrition for small speech groups such as that of Jar speakers. The age gradient of proficiency and domains of use attested for other Bauchi minority languages (e.g., Gera) is replicated in the predicted form by Jar speakers.

Language Shift, Maintenance, and the Role of Institutions

Language shift is the gradual process of change where a speech community changes from a language to another, typically causing the decline or eventual extinction of the first language. It typically occurs when speakers of minority languages use the dominant language for socioeconomic, political, or educational reasons (Fishman, 2022). In Northern Nigeria, for instance, various minority language groups like the Jar people are shifting towards Hausa, which is the native lingua franca employed in education, trade, and religion (Yakubu, 2023). Language maintenance is the concerted actions of a community to maintain their ancestral language in use and continue passing it down despite external pressures. Language maintenance, according to Holmes (2021), is the retention of a speaker's linguistic identity through intergenerational transfer, cultural usage, and institutional backing. The level of language maintenance or loss is contingent on attitudes in the community, demographic density, family transfer, and policy status (Ezeani & Igboanusi, 2022).

Institutions are the deciding factors for both language shift and maintenance. Schools affect language use through planning curricula and language-of-instruction policy. While schools focus on mainstream languages (for example, Hausa or English) instead of local languages, minority languages are devalued, causing rapid language shift (UNESCO, 2023). Conversely, using indigenous languages in primary education, local mass media, and religious instruction facilitates maintenance and revitalization.

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Religious movements, mass media, and local government agencies also play a significant role in language use. For example, Hausa dominance in sermons, radio broadcasts, and state communication in Bauchi State has resulted in Jar language usage decline at formal and informal levels. However, these institutions can be utilized for language revival through education on a community scale, cultural festivals, and language documentation projects (Lewis, Simons, & Fennig, 2024). Therefore, effective language maintenance involves institutional collaboration, policy enforcement, and community engagement. If local governments, schools, and media outlets collaborate to encourage indigenous languages, the harmful consequences of language shift can be undone. Institutional participation is critical for the Jar people to ensure the sustainability of their linguistic and cultural traditions.

Sociolinguistic Factors Influencing Language Attrition among Speakers

Language attrition is not only a linguistic phenomenon but a sociolinguistic one, which is prompted by an interaction of multiple dimensions of social, cultural, and psychological factors within a speech community. Sociolinguistic variables such as age, gender, education, social mobility, intermarriage, and attitudes towards the mother language go a long way to decide whether a language is maintained or lost over time, asserts Holmes (2021). Among minority populations such as the Jar speakers in Bauchi State, these elements determine the level of language loyalty or change towards dominant languages such as Hausa. Intergenerational transmission is one of the key sociolinguistic factors. As long as parents no longer speak and teach the original native language to their children, the younger population will grow up with a preference for a more dominant language (Fishman, 2022).

In the majority of Jar-speaking households, parents increasingly use Hausa in the family, seeing it as more convenient to communicate, learn, and gain economic benefits. Such practice is restricting exposure for younger speakers to full mastery of Jar, accelerating the attrition of first languages. Education is also

contributing significantly. The dominance of Hausa and English as schooling media marginalizes the Jar language, cementing its position as the 'inferior' language (Yakubu, 2023).

Students taught predominantly in the indigenous languages begin to equate success and modernity with the dominant language and view their mother language as inferior (Ezeani & Igboanusi, 2022). Urbanization is also crucial. Rural-urban migration exposes the speakers to multilingual settings where dominant languages, notably Hausa, are used for socio-economic purposes. Therefore, minority language speakers usually prefer the majority language for acceptance and access (Garba, 2018). Jar to Hausa marriages also influence language loss. Families adopt Hausa as the interlanguage at home that further leads to the decline of the native language (Afolabi, 2022).

Media exposure and religion also influence language behavior. Its use across the country in radio broadcasts, religious sermons, and entertainment programs adds to its prestige and functional advantage. Speakers use Hausa more and more in public and private settings, while Jar is reserved for certain traditional or ceremonial contexts (UNESCO, 2023). In the end, attitude and identity are the determining factor. As Giles and Coupland (2021) note, positive attitudes towards language facilitate maintenance, while negative attitudes accelerate attrition. In some Jar communities, young speakers identify Hausa as modern and progressive, while Jar is viewed as rural or something old. Such a transformation of identity erodes emotional and cultural investment in the mother tongue. In summary, sociolinguistic factors such as education, urbanization, intermarriage, religion, language attitudes, and family language practice interact to lead to language decline or vitality. In order to prevent total loss of languages by minority groups such as Jar people in Bauchi State, these factors should be tackled through policy reform, education, and cultural revitalization.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which is suitable for investigating

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social, linguistic, and attitudinal phenomena as they occur naturally within a population. The descriptive design was considered appropriate because it allows the researcher to collect data from a representative sample of Jar native speakers in order to describe the current state of language attrition, its causes, and effects as influenced by contact with Hausa in Bauchi State.

According to Creswell and Creswell (2023), a descriptive survey enables the researcher to obtain quantitative and qualitative data about people's attitudes, practices, and experiences without manipulating any variables. This design helps in identifying existing relationships between variables and describing the degree to which one variable (e.g., exposure to Hausa) influences another (e.g., retention of Jar language). The population of this study comprises all Jar native speakers residing in selected local government areas of Bauchi State, Nigeria, where the Jar language is traditionally spoken.

The major Jar-speaking communities are found in Toro, Tafawa Balewa, Alkaleri and Dass Local Government Areas, with smaller portions of speakers scattered across Bauchi and Bogoro LGAs. The estimated population of Jar speakers, according to recent projections from the Ethnologue (2024) and the National Population Commission (NPC, 2023), is approximately 135,200 individuals. Krejcie and Morgan formula (1970), a total of 395 respondents were selected as sample for the study through multi stage sampling technique where four Local Government Areas (Toro, Dass, Alkaleri and Tafawa Balewa) were purposively selected because they have the highest concentration of Jar speakers and represent both rural and semi-urban settings where language use varies significantly.

From each selected LGA, two major Jar-speaking communities were randomly chosen.

This ensured geographic and sociolinguistic diversity within the sample. Within each community, systematic random sampling was used to select individual respondents from households and social centres. The sample included both males and females, as well as different age and educational groups, to capture intergenerational variations in Jar language proficiency and usage. The major instrument used for data collection in this study was questionnaire titled "*Jar Language Attrition and Hausa Influence Questionnaire (JLAHIQ)*", with five-point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly Agree* (5) to *Strongly Disagree* (1). The instrument was validated by three experts from Applied Linguistics and one from Measurement and Evaluation after which they were then subjected to a pilot study involving 30 Jar speakers in a non-sampled community using Cronbach's Alpha, a reliability coefficient of 0.86, was obtained, indicating a high level of reliability (George & Mallery, 2019).

The questionnaires were distributed in person to the sampled respondents in the selected Jar-speaking communities across the selected LGAs. The researcher and her assistant guided participants in completing the forms, especially those with limited literacy levels. Out of the 395 copies of the questionnaire administered, 380 were properly completed and retrieved, representing a 96% return rate. This high rate of retrieval strengthened the validity of the quantitative data obtained. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics.

RESULTS

Research Question One:

To what extent has language attrition occurred among Jar native speakers of Hausa in Bauchi State?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation on the Extent of Language Attrition among Jar Native Speakers

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	St.D	Decision
1	I now speak Hausa more frequently than Jar in daily communication.	3.71	0.49	Very High Extent
2	I find it difficult to recall some Jar words I used to know.	3.62	0.53	Very High Extent
3	I mix Hausa and Jar when speaking with other			

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	Jar people.	3.56	0.61	Very High Extent
4	My children or younger relatives prefer speaking Hausa instead of Jar.	3.68	0.57	Very High Extent
5	I use Jar language mostly when interacting with elderly people	3.12	0.72	Very High Extent
6	Jar language is rarely used in formal gatherings or public places.	3.79	0.45	Very High Extent
7	I prefer listening to Hausa media (radio, TV) rather than Jar content.	3.66	0.51	Very High Extent
8	The number of fluent Jar speakers in my community is declining.	3.70	0.48	Very High Extent
	Grand Mean	3.60	0.54	Very High Extent

Source: Field Survey 2025

Findings from table 1 above revealed a grand mean of 3.60 with a standard deviation of 0.54, indicating that language attrition among Jar native speakers of Hausa in Bauchi State is occurring to a very high extent. The highest mean (3.79) was recorded for the statement that “Jar language is rarely used in formal gatherings or public places,” which shows a strong shift toward Hausa in institutional and public domains.

Similarly, a high mean of 3.71 suggests that Hausa has become the primary language of daily communication among Jar speakers, even in intra-group contexts.

Research Question Two:

What are the factors responsible for language attrition among Jar native speakers of Hausa in Bauchi State?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation on Factors Responsible for Language Attrition

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	St.D	Decision
1	Frequent social interaction with Hausa speakers reduces my use of Jar	3.72	0.50	Strong Factor
2	Intermarriage between Jar and Hausa families weakens the transmission of Jar language.	3.68	0.55	Strong Factor
3	Hausa is the main language of education, religion, and trade in our area.	3.81	0.46	Strong Factor
4	The younger generation prefers Hausa because it is more socially prestigious.	3.59	0.61	Strong Factor
5	Urbanization and migration have exposed Jar speakers more to Hausa culture.	3.63	0.58	Strong Factor
6	The absence of Jar in media (radio, TV, and online platforms) contributes to its decline.	3.74	0.52	Strong Factor
7	Parents encourage their children to speak Hausa for social and economic reasons.	3.70	0.56	Strong Factor
8	The use of Hausa in religious gatherings discourages the use of Jar.	3.46	0.65	Moderate Factor
	Grand Mean	3.66	0.56	Strong Factor

Source: Field Survey 2025

The table 2 above indicated that all the listed items with the exception of item eight, have mean values above 3.50, with a grand mean of

3.66 and a standard deviation of 0.56. This indicates that respondents strongly agreed that multiple sociolinguistic and environmental factors

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contribute to the attrition of the Jar language. The item with the highest mean (3.81) “Hausa is the main language of education, religion, and trade in our area” suggests that Hausa has gained dominant institutional and functional status. This functional dominance leads to linguistic displacement, where Jar loses its relevance in key communication domains. Similarly, intermarriage

(mean = 3.68) and media influence (mean = 3.74) were rated highly as contributing factors.

Research Question three:

What strategies can be adopted to minimize the effects of language attrition among Jar native speakers of Hausa in Bauchi State?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation on Strategies for Minimizing Language Attrition among Jar Native Speakers

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	St.D	Decision
1	Encouraging the use of Jar language in homes and community gatherings.	3.45	0.68	Agreed
2	Incorporating Jar language into early childhood and primary school curricula.	3.62	0.59	Strongly Agreed
3	Organizing cultural festivals and literacy programs in the Jar language.	3.53	0.65	Strongly Agreed
4	Creating local radio and social media content in the Jar language.	3.48	0.71	Strongly Agreed
5	Documentation of Jar oral literature and traditional Stories	3.57	0.62	Strongly Agreed
6	Government and NGO support for indigenous language preservation initiatives.	3.60	0.58	Strongly Agreed
7	Establishing community-based Jar language clubs and associations.	3.50	0.66	Strongly Agreed
Grand Mean		3.53		Strongly Agreed

Source: Field Survey 2025

The analysis in the table 3 above revealed a strong consensus among respondents that deliberate community and institutional efforts are essential for minimizing the effects of language attrition. The grand mean of 3.53 indicated a high level of agreement that the Jar language can be revitalized through combined home-based reinforcement, educational inclusion, and cultural promotion. Specifically, respondents strongly agreed that introducing the Jar language into primary education and documenting oral traditions are among the most sustainable measures for preserving linguistic heritage.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings from research question one revealed that language attrition among Jar speakers is significant, particularly among the younger generation, who increasingly favour

Hausa in communication, education, and social interaction. The majority of respondents confirmed that while older speakers remain proficient in Jar, younger speakers exhibit declining competence and often code-switch or code-mix with Hausa. This supports the assertion by Yakubu (2023) that the dominance of Hausa in Northern Nigeria has led to the gradual erosion of minority languages such as Jar, Sayawa, and Zul.

Similarly, Ezeani and Igboanusi (2022) observed that the intergenerational transmission of minority languages is weakening due to changing linguistic preferences and socio-economic pressures. The results also is in agreement with the findings of Bamgbose (2020) and Eze (2021), who observed that in multilingual Nigerian communities, minority languages are increasingly endangered due to the functional dominance of major regional languages like

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Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo. The trend observed among Jar speakers aligns with the global patterns where minority languages face decline due to dominance by a more prestigious or widely spoken language (Grenoble & Whaley, 2021). The result of research question two revealed that multiple sociolinguistic and environmental factors contribute to the attrition of the Jar language. The findings are consistent with those of Bamgbose (2020) and Eze (2021), who reported that the dominance of regional lingua francas (Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo) has marginalized indigenous minority languages in Nigeria.

Similarly, Fishman (2020) noted that intergenerational transmission failure is a critical indicator of language endangerment. Grenoble and Whaley (2021) further observed that education systems that exclude minority languages accelerate linguistic assimilation. The situation of the Jar people reflects this trend, as Hausa has become the language of power, education, and social mobility, while Jar remains confined to informal and domestic contexts. Thus, the analysis demonstrates that social, economic, and institutional pressures collectively drive the attrition of the Jar language in Bauchi State. Findings from research question three indicated that respondents strongly agreed that introducing the Jar language into primary education and documenting oral traditions are among the most sustainable measures for preserving linguistic heritage.

This finding aligns with the work of Igboanusi (2021) and Bamgbose (2019), who emphasized that early education and community-driven literacy initiatives are crucial in reversing language shift in minority language contexts. Furthermore, the use of modern communication platforms, including local radio and social media, was also viewed as an effective contemporary tool for engaging younger speakers. This agrees with Ezeani and Nwachukwu (2022), who noted that digital platforms can serve as "linguistic empowerment spaces" for endangered languages when properly utilized. The respondents also stressed the importance of government support and policy intervention, particularly in integrating indigenous languages into school curricula and

funding cultural programs. As observed by Arokoyo (2023), language maintenance thrives when communities receive institutional backing for documentation, orthography development, and intergenerational transmission. Overall, the findings suggest that reversing Jar language attrition requires a multifaceted approach combining education, cultural revival, media engagement, and policy support. The implementation of these strategies would enhance language pride, strengthen cultural identity, and foster intergenerational transmission among the Jar-speaking communities of Bauchi State.

Summary of Findings

1. Jar language is undergoing rapid decline, especially among younger speakers, due to the increasing dominance of Hausa as the preferred medium of communication, education, and social interaction. Many young Jar speakers now exhibit limited fluency, which points to a gradual shift from Jar to Hausa as the dominant language.
2. Socio-cultural and environmental factors such as urbanization, intermarriage, lack of parental transmission, and the use of Hausa in schools and media have weakened the intergenerational transmission of Jar, leading to a reduction in native fluency and usage.
3. Community participation, educational inclusion, and digital engagement (i.e. introducing Jar into the school curriculum, organizing cultural festivals, documenting oral traditions, and creating Jar-language media content) were identified as effective strategies for minimizing Jar language attrition.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that language attrition among the Jar people is both a linguistic and cultural challenge. It threatens the preservation of the community's cultural identity, oral traditions, and historical continuity. The loss of a language is not merely a change in



communication but a loss of cultural memory, values, and worldview. Hence, the ongoing erosion of the Jar language represents a gradual disconnection from ancestral heritage.

Moreover, the study concludes that the major causes of Jar language attrition are urbanization, intermarriage, lack of language transmission within families, and the absence of institutional support. These factors collectively undermine the status and functional relevance of the language in daily communication and education. However, the findings also show that revitalization is achievable through deliberate and sustained efforts. If communities, governments, and educational institutions collaborate, the Jar language can be preserved and promoted. Encouraging the teaching of Jar in schools, organizing cultural festivals, documenting oral literature, and producing media content in Jar are viable means to reverse language loss.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The government should adopt a comprehensive language policy that protects minority languages and provides funding for their development. Inclusion of Jar in local administrative and educational frameworks will enhance its functional importance.
2. Jar community associations, traditional leaders, and cultural organizations should initiate language preservation projects, such as community reading centers, oral storytelling sessions, and cultural festivals. These activities can promote pride in the native language and encourage its daily use.
3. Linguists, researchers, and local stakeholders should collaborate to document Jar vocabulary, grammar, and oral traditions. Developing a standardized orthography and producing dictionaries or textbooks will aid teaching and research in the language.
4. The Jar language should be promoted through radio programs, social media platforms, podcasts, and mobile

applications. Digital tools can increase visibility and appeal to the younger generation, helping to modernize and normalize the use of Jar in contemporary communication.

5. Parents and elders should make conscious efforts to speak Jar at home and encourage children to do the same. Family-level language use is the most effective method of ensuring long-term language survival (Fishman, 2022).

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