

## Abstract

In an effort to investigate dialectal variation in under-described language varieties, a seven-month exploratory study was carried out to collect information that would highlight what has been written and researched on two under-described language varieties from Africa – Swahili from the east coast of Africa and Yoruba of West Africa. This report focuses on Yoruba. One hundred and sixty papers on Yoruba language was looked at for this study. This is made up of journal articles, conference papers, research publications, web page articles and books. From these papers on Yoruba, specific policies, attitudes and research approaches were identified that could help shed light on ways in which Yoruba documentation and description differs from those of the better-described languages widely discussed in the literature. The current study examines to what extent these policies, attitudes and research approaches play in the status of Yoruba as an under-described language. Results reveal that while the Yoruba language has millions of speakers all around the world, and a seemingly limitless number of linguistic researches, there is need for a more exhaustive description of the language. Hence it is recommended that effort be made to: encourage an exhaustive description of the language; improve people's attitudes to the language; push for the study of the language in schools, in the same way as the English language; and to heed of the concern that the language is heading towards extinction.

**Keywords:** Dialectal variation, under-/better-described language varieties, Swahili, Yoruba language, language documentation, language description, extinction.