

LANGUAGE AS A VERITABLE TOOL FOR EDUCATION, SOCIALIZATION AND PRODUCTIVE LIVING IN NIGERIA



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Abstract

This paper “language as a veritable tool for education, socialization and productive living in Nigeria” was studied. Related variable statements discussed are: meaning of language, meaning of education, occupational achievement predicated by language, progress and development, culture preservation. Other intrinsic values of language include listening skills, speaking skills, reading skills and writing skills acquisition. The extrinsic values of language elucidated include speech specialization as in media broadcasting. It was recommended among others that all subjects taught in school should be translated into Nigerian local languages for advancement in knowledge. All native languages in Nigeria should be developed to international standards.

It would have been excellent if the over 400 languages spoken in Nigeria are developed to international standard to accommodate information developed and presented in all formal education in the world. Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and Biology if they had been explained, taught and examined in Yoruba, Igbo, Igala, Epira, Efik and Hausa or Angas languages, how excellent would have Joint Admissions and Matriculation Examination results, West African Schools Certificate Examinations scores been for Nigerian candidates? Indeed, there would have been several A1, B2 and high credits. Language, the intuitive knowledge of communication is the only aspect of culture that is an intrinsic medium of information transmission worldwide. Children learn language almost intuitively as they observe their parents in phonation. Children imitate their parents as parents open their mouths to speak. As observed by Nnamani (2012), language serves as the vehicle for realization of the national policy on education in Nigeria; as sound production by an individual citizen depicts how developed education had transformed the cultural, ethical and ethnic standards of Nigeria communities. Nnamani even advocated that effective

communication ensures skills and abilities, radical social innovations within the environment.

Ability of the individual person (s) to make good articulation in languages implicates people in good strategies in life and decision making efficiency. Language also has the propensity to socialize people; affords people the educational opportunities and skills processing (Abdulazeez 2000). Language is the bedrock of any educational process; all learning in schools in Nigeria are accomplished in only one form of language: English language except the French, Hausa, Ibo, Yoruba, Efik and Ibibio; that are mainly chosen as qualifying subjects in Nigerian schools. So, sciences: Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Agricultural sciences are done through the instrumentality of English language. Language enhances symbols, Gesticulations, beckoning, manipulation and coding information into messages that are interpreted by human beings and animals. Linguistic process is very fundamental to all learning in schools.

Purpose of the Study

This paper is embarked upon in order to advance a more realistic sensitization of values of language. It attempts to show that language, most especially native languages apply to all spheres of human endeavour, and educates on reasons for poor communication and poor use of language their effect on messages. The intention is to sensitize people on the fact that the acquisition of the basic language skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing is a panacea for the attainment of education. The aim is to showcase education as a pre-requisite for employment and productivity. What is Education?

Literature Reviews

Meaning of Education

It is an enlightening experience. Fafunwa in Nnamani (2011) defined it as the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or young adult develops attitudes and other forms of behaviour which are of positive values to the society in which he or she lives. Education equips the individual with the necessary potentials that will assist him to make positive changes in the environment he or she belongs. Without education, the individual may not develop his potentials and may resign himself to fate believing whatever state he finds himself is an act of God. However, Kayoed's (2005) belief goes contrary to the stipulation made in NPE (2004) which advocates that education should foster the worth and development of the individual for individual's sake and for the general development of the society. It goes further to state that education aims at inculcation of the right types of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual, the mind in the understanding of the acquisition of appropriate skills, development of abilities (mental, physical plus socio-economic abilities) and competencies as equipment for the survival, to live in and contribute to

the development of his society. It provides skills for growth and better quality of life. Agusiobo (2000) further inferred that education equips one with the necessary instrument to transform his environment. What are the functions of education? Functions of education transcend:- occupational achievement, progress and development and culture preservation.

Functions of Education

Occupational achievement: Education is geared towards affecting a person by introducing him into a way of thinking and behaving as well as instilling in him the right norms, values, attitudes, skills and techniques that are considered desirable for development purposes in the society. A person that has acquired these desirable norms, values, attitudes, skills and techniques will be gainfully employed because he is already equipped with the necessary skills to perform any role that is assigned to him. Take for instance, a medical doctor or a teacher who has acquired the skills and techniques of his profession will perform without problem any role 'that is required of him in his chosen profession. Education equips one with the ability of getting employed as well as being productive in the job. It is a pre-requisite for lucrative employment.

Progress and development: The level of educational attainment of a society goes a long way to determine the progress, development and level of civilization' of that society,

(Adebisi and Babajide 2005). It is a catalyst to any developmental process. Education brings about progress and advancement in the society thereby promoting and improving the status of the society. Okeke (2000) observed that it is a panacea for achieving social and economic freedom as well as knowledge acquisition which will empower the recipient in bringing comfort and happiness to the society and family. Good education helps one to make progress in his chosen career. Anybody that is educated is regarded as well bred and modest.

Culture preservation: Education exerts a lot of influence on man. It is the influence of education on man that distinguishes him from animal. Animal has no education and has no culture too. Ocho (2005) observed that up until now that the 'cow has not learnt to do anything'. Man has consistently through education improved his culture and this culture has been preserved and transferred from one generation to another. Man keeps on improving, changing and discarding some aspects of the culture that are either not suitable or obsolete unlike the animal.

The functions of education can only be harnessed through language. Man needs language to harness his society for the improvement of self and others and to keep abreast of what is going on in the rest of the world. For him to be productive in his ambition, he needs the power of expression which is language, (Jiboku 1999, Yusuf 2003) in Yusuf 2003.

Language

Language is a tool which one uses to express himself. It is an instrument which human beings use to make representations of their feelings and thoughts. It could be verbal or written. Offorma (2009) defined it as a system of signs and symbols and rules for using them, and that is why each language has its lexis, structure, stylistics, orthography and phonology. It is made up of words, their pronunciation and the methods of combining them. Language development goes in four sequential stages: Listening — speaking — reading— writing

The Listening Skill

Listening skill is the first in the hierarchy of the language skills. It has to do with one's ability to comprehend what another person has said. It goes beyond hearing. Ifionu and Ohuche (1996) described hearing as 'psychological capabilities'. This is because one can always hear what is uttered within his hearing range provided one does not have any hearing impairment. Listening goes beyond hearing to comprehension. It involves the conscious effort of the individual (listener) in order to comprehend what is being said. Hybel and Weaver (2001) describe listening as a process of receiving, interpreting, evaluating and responding to messages or information. The message or information has to be received or heard through the senses after which they will be processed or interpreted for the necessary evaluation and response. One cannot boast that he has heard something if he cannot interpret or comprehend what he has heard.

The Speaking Skill

The speaking skill is the second stage. After the listening stage, the language learner moves a step further to express himself through speech. It is the art of expressing oneself through the use of the speech organs. In this stage, the individual tries to 'express his thoughts and feelings through speech, in such a way that he could be understood by other users of the language. Speech is an indispensable tool in human communication. Anybody that is incapable of communicating to another fellow through speech is regarded as having speech problems. Its activities include conversation, discussion etc. Through these activities, vocabulary usage and coherent organization of oral communication are improved,(Callahan and Clark in Mgbodile, 1999). Without adequate knowledge of speaking skills the language user may have problems in pronunciation, spelling and information, (Marjah in Oforma 2009).

The Reading Skill

Reading has to do with one's ability to interpret written words. It is the process of translating written or printed symbols into ideas which the writer intends to convey to the readers. It involves pronunciation and interpretation. If one looks at the words and his mind fails to register the quantum of meaning that is required of those words, the person will not be said to have read. Makama and Makama in quoting Cahil (1999) described reading as looking at graphic symbols and formulating

mentally the sounds and ideas they represent. Reading is not mere mentioning of words; it entails one's ability to pronounce the words correctly, interpret them and utilize whatever information there in'.

The Writing Skill

Writing is the process of making paper presentations of one's thoughts, feelings and ideas. Uzoegwu (2001) described it as a means of expressing feelings, thoughts, and using the appropriate graphic symbols that are acceptable to the target language. A person is deemed a good writer if he is able to put down his thought, feelings and ideas on paper in an organized manner. Writing is a higher order skill and the last skill in language learning. Before one acquires this skill, the person must have acquired the previous skills. Offorma (2009) contended that writing skill requires intensive teaching and practice. This is because it is the highest and the most complex of all the language learning skills.

Implied Values of Language

Employment Opportunity

The word 'employment', is a noun that means the act of employing or state of being employed, simply put, the idea of giving work to an employee, by an employer. This employee is the one who is hired to provide services in an organization or a company. Productivity in this context has to do with ability and efficiency in production; whereas production means the act of producing something or one's ability in achieving a significant amount of result. Education through language empowers one to achieve significant result; it makes one productive, if one can be adjudged as being capable of producing significant result that is being productive, the person is capable of getting employment. This is because the essence of recruitment or employment in an establishment or organization is to have people that are capable of making the establishment move forward, thereby yielding positive results. Education through language is a good asset for employment and productivity. This is because it provides the necessary ingredients for employment and productivity.

Socializing Agent

The Nigerian government reiterates the relevance of language in education in NPE (2004:10) by stating that, "every child shall learn the language of the immediate environment, and for the interest of national unity, it is expedient that every child shall be required to learn one of the three Nigerian languages: Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba". And then for the smooth interactions with our neighbours, every Nigerian child should learn to speak French and, hence; French shall be our second official language and should be a compulsory subject in the primary and Junior Secondary Schools. Also, the medium of instruction in primary schools should be the language of the immediate environment while English should progressively be used as a medium of instruction from fourth year in the secondary schools. We should recall

that one of the goals of primary education according to the National Policy on Education is to inculcate in the learners permanent Literacy and Numeracy, and ability to communicate effectively. Literacy is anchored in reading, which is language,(Nnamani 2011). Numeracy has to do with numbers (mathematics) which are also manipulated in a language.

Vehicle for Knowledge Acquisition

Language is fundamental to acquisition of education since every teaching and instruction in the schools is done in a language whether foreign or indigenous: For this reason, the mastery of language skills should be the business of any educational enterprise. Anybody that wants to excel and be productive in his chosen career must master language skills. Whenever we make reference to someone as being productive and fit for employment, what readily comes to our mind is that the person is highly knowledgeable in his chosen field. The truth is that behind the knowledge is the language which enhances instruction and understanding. The person must have listened and read effectively and efficiently to authorities in that field for him to be knowledgeable and productive. The skill of listening has to be imparted to students so that they will learn how to encode information in the long term memory for the purpose of reproduction if the need arises, (Offorma 2009). They need to know that comprehension is the essence of listening, for comprehension begets knowledge. Listening comprehension is mostly emphasized in the teaching and learning of listening skills. Listening may be useless without comprehension.

Speech Specialization

Speech is the core of oral communication. For anyone to be proficient in speaking, the person must have been an effective listener. Students who listen effectively acquire the right speech skills, (Offorma, 2009). The art of speaking should be taught to learners so that they will master pronunciation, spelling and intonation and in turn be able to present their knowledge of things orally when the need arises. Take for instance, a medical doctor who has not mastered the speaking skills will not pass his viva (Oral exam), and so most unlikely to effectively communicate with his patients and as such will not be employed. He will not be productive in the hospital because he cannot effectively communicate orally with his patients and staff. It was experienced in a hospital in Ankpa in Kogi state where a doctor asked one of his nurses to call the next Patient, but because of problem of poor pronunciation which leads to poor perception, the nurse went out and called another nurse whose name is Patience. Again, oral interview is part of the recruitment exercise that is undergone by a teacher before he or she could be employed to teach. Then one begins to wonder whether a teacher that has not mastered his intonation, spelling and pronunciation will be able to communicate his ideas effectively with his interviewers. In the classroom also, instruction and teaching will elude students who have a teacher whose oral communication is not effective to the students. He will be misinterpreted and his teaching will leave nothing to be desired.

Reading and Knowledge Acquisition

Reading cuts across every subject ranging from sciences, arts, humanities among others. The records of man's breakthroughs in these various fields are stored in the books and reading is the only instrument for unraveling the information so stored. Anybody that does not know how to read will be ignorant and handicapped in terms of awareness, knowledge and experience. Reading eliminates illiteracy and broadens one's horizon. In education, it is the key that one uses to unlock treasures stored in the books. Bologun in Umoh (1992) described reading as an indispensable factor in modern life because it is one of the major avenues of communication. A student should be taught to learn to read and subsequently, read to learn. He should be taught the associated reading skills like the skimming, scanning, surveying and studying. These skills will enhance the student's reading in order to understand other subjects so as to be gainfully employed and become productive equally. Hughes (1975) regarded reading as a 'top skill' because it affects most of the children's learning in the school and the individual's progress in other subjects will depend considerably on his reading ability. A non-reader is handicapped and cannot be productive in any field in today's society.

The individual needs to be exposed to writing narratives, dialogues, descriptions, expository essays among others. This is to instill in the person the habit and opportunity of using the appropriate words, phrases and clauses to describe persons, events and situations and to express personal and individual thoughts and ideas. Writing skill consists of having something that is worth expressing and knowing how best to express it on paper. A secretary that can neither put up a memo nor record the proceedings of a meeting or a typist who cannot easily take down dictations is not productive and therefore not fit for employment.

Summary and Recommendations

It could be concluded that language (verbal and non-verbal) is indispensable for it is very important to human development. It affords one the opportunity for employment. It is life sustaining as man becomes productive. Language remains the bedrock of all education, for every education is education in language (foreign or local). The knowledge of the language skills must be the business of everybody that needs employment and being productive. Language must be studied intensively. Experts in language arts should be trained to foster knowledge transmission. Language laboratories must be built in primary, secondary, technical colleges, colleges of education, universities and tertiary institutions in Nigeria to enforce language learning. All subjects must be translated to local languages as in India and China for rapid African technological development.

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