

GLOBALIZATION AND THE PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING OF IGBO LANGUAGE IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN SOUTH EAST, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Language plays a vital role in the daily interaction and communication by human beings. Government appreciates the importance of language as a means of promoting social interaction and national cohesion and preserving cultures. Thus, every child is mandated to learn the language of the immediate environment. This view of every child being required to learn one of Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa is a laudable policy statement by the government in its efforts to see that, these languages are taught and learnt as second languages in Nigeria. This paper examines the global approach to the teaching and learning of Igbo language in colleges of education and the problems and prospects of the teaching of this language in South East, Nigeria. Vital recommendations were given to improve the effective teaching and learning of Igbo languages in schools.

Keywords: Globalization, Igbo language, Teaching and learning, School.

The goals of education cannot be achieved without a language and the process of imparting knowledge has to be carried out through a language (Aguiyi, 2012). Language according to Ezeudu (2013) is a means of preserving the people's culture. Adegbite in Chidi-Ehiem (2016) opines that, "language is a system of sounds

or vocal symbols which human beings use to communicate experiences. It is a special characteristic of human beings. Language is the most important factor in identifying who is who, where one comes from, what one is made of, one's culture and tradition. It is a vehicle of thought, culture and communication. It has a dual function; as a subject on the curriculum as well as a medium of instruction. Language is the pivot around which every activity rotates hence it is an instrument of public relations, medium of imparting knowledge, means of national and political interaction and a gateway to national unity.

According to Mgbodile in Chidi-Ehiem (2016), language is the chief means of generating, maintaining and transferring culture and civilization. He stresses that man learns to speak a language in the way he learns to walk, to climb or swim. Gomwalk (2000), stated that language regulates all human activities, embodies culture and to understand culture, one must understand and appreciate the language of the culture as an essential medium of cultural transmission. Ezeudu (2013), Olarewaju (2006) in Igbojinwaekwu (2015) insisted that using another language other than the mother tongue as a medium of instruction, impairs and inhabits the development of the child's personality and ability.

The National Policy on the Teaching and Learning of Igbo Language in Nigeria

In order to implement the language policy of the teaching and the learning of Igbo language, the Federal Government of Nigeria made it compulsory that Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba should be taught in all Federal Government secondary school, also called unity Schools. They also mandated the states to implement the national language policy. The Federal Government with the establishment of the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) in 1989 directed the NCCE to mandate all colleges of education in Nigeria to start the teaching and learning of Igbo language.

In 1992, the then Minister of education, Prof. Aliu Babatunde Fafunwa outlined what his Ministry was able to achieve towards the implementation of the language provisions contained in the National Policy on Education. They are as follows:

- (i) Provision of approved syllabus for Nigerian languages (Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba)
- (ii) Provision of approved syllabus for English, Arabic and French
- (iii) Setting up a technical committee on the production of teachers of the major Nigerian languages.
- (iv) Funding of a national workshop on the production of teachers of the major Nigerian languages.
- (v) Organization of national curriculum conference.
- (vi) The production of texts on the vocabulary of primary science and mathematics in nine Nigeria languages

- (vii) The production of quadrangular glossary of legislative terms in English, Igbo Hausa and Yoruba
- (viii) The development of orthography for thirty-one Nigerian languages.
- (ix) The production of meta-language manuals for the three major Nigerian languages.

Some of the relevant language projects were also carried out by the Nigerian Education Research and Development Council (NERDC).

In addition to all these, the Federal Ministry of Education, few years ago went ahead to establish the National Institute of Nigerian Languages at Aba, Abia State of Nigeria. This institute was saddled with the responsibility of fostering the development and teaching of Nigerian languages (Epuchie, 2008).

However, it can be that the quest for national unity and social integration actually stimulated the birth of the Federal government policy which recognizes the teaching of three major Nigerian Languages Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba in Nigeria's institutions of learning (FRN, 2014). Among other things, eminent Nigerian linguists who are versed in these domains and in education were constituted into committees for the purpose of drawing up programmes and standardizing these languages (Emenanjo, 1995 in Chidi-Ehiem, 2014). While the secondary level is to provide the preliminary ingredients for the acquisition of these languages, the tertiary level is a stage for consolidation of acquired elements and preparation for social life outside an individual's mother tongue community. In this regard, the teaching in the junior secondary school as well as the senior secondary school programmes in some states, the language departments at tertiary levels also organize language courses where manpower is available as well as carryout research in the area of Nigerian languages (Iwuchukwu, 1985 in Chidi-Ehiem, 2014). In addition, the tertiary level supplements manpower for the teaching of these major languages at the primary and secondary levels. The Federal Government of Nigeria acknowledged this fact and its support gave birth to the language provision of the National Policy on Education in 1977, which has since undergone several revisions namely in 1981, 1989, 1998, 2004 and 2014. The emergence of the National Policy on Education has been a welcome relief to Nigeria's educational system.

Globalization and the Growth in the Teaching and the Learning of Igbo Language in Colleges of Education in South East, Nigeria

In Nigeria especially in South East, all the Federal Government Colleges and Federal Colleges of Education and all state secondary schools and all the Colleges of Education employ teachers to teach Igbo language as both L₁ and L₂ in their Junior Secondary Schools. The National Examination Council (NECO), examines candidates in Igbo language both L₁ and L₂ for Junior Secondary School Certificate Examination (JSSCE), graduates from the Colleges of Education are employed to teach Igbo language as both first and second language in our secondary schools.

Globalization and the growth and the spread in the teaching and learning of Igbo language in our Junior Secondary Schools (JSS) and Colleges of Education in Nigeria helps in creating a sort of consciousness that will help in creating awareness and in strengthening the desired national unity in Nigeria. Many Igbo language teachers are recruited to teach Igbo in the Federal Government Colleges, states secondary schools, Federal Colleges of Education and state Colleges of Education in both Igbo speaking and non-Igbo speaking states in Nigeria. These teachers mix freely with the indigenes of the states where they are posted or employed.

Arohunmolase (2006) opined that, linguistic diversity is one of the better known attributes in Nigeria. Ethnic divisions are also based on linguistic lines, which is to say that, the existence of many languages in Nigeria means the existence of many basically distinct ethnic nationalities trying to form a nation. Meanwhile, language is the pivot around which every activity rotates hence it is an instrument of public relations, medium of imparting knowledge, means of national and political interaction and a gateway to national unity.

The global growth, spread and the development of the teaching and learning of Igbo language as a foreign language in the United States of America (USA), Britain, Brazil and all over Europe among others, has really helped in encouraging many people to study Igbo language in Colleges of Education in Nigeria. These people know that, there is employment opportunities open to them after their graduation, in countries all over the world. Globalization, a recent occurrence that affects the economic, social, political and cultural changes all over the world has also affected the teaching and learning of Igbo language in our Colleges of Education in Nigeria.

The age of globalization requires that the teaching and learning of Igbo be taken to another level. Shyamlee and Phil (2012) opined that if we neglect or ignore technological developments they will continue and perhaps we will never be able to catch up irrespective of our discipline or branch. For this reason many Igbo teachers especially in the higher institutions make efforts to infuse new technologies into their jobs not just to become relevant to the new age but also to post Igbo language on the global village map. This lends credence to why Shyamlee and Phil (2012) asserted that the new era assigns new challenges and duties on the modern teacher.

Prospects of the Teaching and Learning of Igbo

In a multi-lingual and multicultural society like Nigeria where many languages compete for national recognition and higher political status, there is the need for an integrating or unifying language to be used for national development. It is therefore probable that having realized the all important role of language as a unifying force, Nigeria embarked on a national language policy, which she probably hoped would be the magical instrument, which would restore the so much desired national unity in the country.

According to Elugbe cited in Arohunmolase (2006), the problem of multilingualism in a developing nation such as Nigeria, and in the independent nations has been tackled by scholars such as Fishman (1968), Agbeyisi (1984), Bamgbose (1991), Crozier and Blench (1992), Bloch and Tragers (1995) in Chidi-Ehiem (2014). Arohunmolase (1998) in Arohunmolase (2006) was of the opinion that we can use the linguistic, historical and the cultural evidences in Nigerian languages for our desired national development and unity. If pupils/students in our primary/secondary schools, colleges of education and universities are appropriately taught Igbo language, they would know all the things that unite Igbo language with other Nigerian languages, socially, historically, linguistically and culturally. It will also enable Igbo and other language scholars to be able to exploit the ancestral ties among Nigerian languages so as to show Nigerians that they have a common history (Arohunmolase, 2006).

The NPE (1977, revised 1981, 1989, 1998, 2004 and 2014), emphasized the importance of Nigerian languages in the education of a child as a means of preserving the culture of a people and for national unity. This is a laudable policy of Nigerian Government. The National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) has developed curricula named the minimum standards for Colleges of Education, for the teaching of Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba. The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), has developed curricula on Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba for the JSS to replace the former one that had so many problems. The Federal Government established the National Institute for Nigerian languages, Aba, Abia State in order to help in the production of Nigerian language teachers. However, it cannot be said that the teaching of languages in the secondary schools and colleges of education is hitch free.

The Envisaged Problems

The NPE (2014) stated that, government's major purpose for the pre-primary education is to develop the orthographies for many more Nigerian languages and to produce textbooks in Nigerian languages. For primary education, Government should see to it that, the medium of instruction in the primary schools is initially the mother-tongue or the language of the immediate community (LIC) and for the secondary education, at the JSS level, the NPE provided that, in selecting two Nigerian languages, students should study the language of their own area in addition to any of the three main Nigerian languages, Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba, subject to the availability of teachers and at the SSS level to our Colleges of Education (FRN, 2004 revised in 2014).

The introduction of Nigerian languages (Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba) at the JSS level and the colleges of education worsened the compounded problem of the supply of trained teachers. It is a matter of great regret that, adequate plans were not made for the supply of teachers before the federal government decided to implement the

Nigerian language policy in Colleges of Education. The Federal government should redesign the NPE to include the teaching and learning of Igbo language in our Colleges of Education.

Another problem that is affecting the production of Igbo language teachers is that there is little or no opportunity for graduates of the L₂ NCE programme to go for a Bachelor degree programme in their chosen area of specialization. Since the products of this programme lack self-confidence in themselves because of the programme they went through, most of them cannot fit into the Nigerian language programme at the University level. It is a matter of regret that the National Institute for Nigerian languages (NINLAN), Aba, Abia State which ought to run the first degree programme for such NCE graduates is yet to start off with the programme after twelve years of its inception.

If there are no opportunities for this category of teachers to go for degree programme, it will be very difficult to get teachers to teach the languages at the senior secondary level.

Methodology Factor

The question of what to teach and how to teach it is another factor in language instruction in the upper basic school level. Williams in Ngwoke (2010) identified the two areas to be "content" and "activities" to be emphasized in the course of instruction and adds that the distinction between these two kinds of competence is basic to the formulation of realistic objective for language teaching. In a recent supervision of some practicing student teachers, it was observed that most of them could not clearly state the content of their lesson. Their statements were more of what students were expected to be doing (activities) in the getting read for the lesson. Their instructional objectives were not properly focused on what should be the content to be learned by students.

William in Ngwoke (2010) identified two basic areas of focus by a language teacher to be 'linguistic' and communicative' competence. Linguistic competence refers to the ability to control items of language at the sentence level. Such items are in phonology, grammar and lexis,. Communicative competence refers to the ability to use language in its socio-cultural interpersonal aspects beyond the sentence i.e. the discourse level. In most secondary schools, some teachers concentrate much on linguistic competence thus abandoning communicative competence. The result is that students may simply know and write some rules of grammar but not able to use such rules fluently in communication and vice versa.

Examination-Oriented Methods

In most of our secondary schools, some teachers only teach for the purpose of their students passing examination. In the JSS III and SSS III which is the examination class, the practice in most cases is revised past question papers with the

pupils. Providing answers to the questions asked is sometimes assumed to be an evidence of mastering the subject. Sometimes lessons are drawn from past examination questions for lesson instruction in secondary schools, thus leaving the major curriculum content untreated. Ubahakwe in Ngwoke (2010:42) opined that:

Although there is clear consensus that examination is not the true test of knowledge, there is no denying that our teachers teach for examinations in most of our institutions. The few teachers who venture out of the examination syllabus are promptly reminded by the anxious students and parents that education can afford to wait but that the meal-ticket' can't.

That situation described by Ubahakwe in Ngwoke is clear evidence that most teachers and students alike go for the extrinsic value of education rather than the intrinsic. If paper qualification is the main emphasis of the teachers, they will produce students who cannot satisfy the National Language Policy objectives.

Code-switching

In code switching, the teacher begins in English then stops and continues in Igbo or vice versa. Again Odoemenam and Eze (2007) noted that in code-switching a speaker says one or more sentences in one language and then switches over to sentences in another language. Some times, teachers employ this method as a means of bringing to the understanding of the learners some concepts or ideas they consider abstract. However, this technique can lead to confusion when not properly handled. It may affect the Igbo language production of the learner, which may often lead to linguistics interference that leads to substandardness.

Students' Attitude towards the Study of Nigerian Languages

The National Language Policy as a framework that regulates the use of language in Nigeria offers to every Nigerian a clear and acceptable national option to a national language. The by-product of the National Language Policy is a national language for national integration, national cohesion and the preserving of Nigerian cultural heritage.

What is the attitude to its study? Ubahakwe in Ngwoke (2010) opined that unfortunately, owing to our mutual suspicion and jealousy, no linguistic group would like to give up its own language in favour of another in the interest of the nation. The above assertion simply summarizes the attitude to the learning of Nigerian languages. It is on record that Nigeria, though one geopolitical entity hardly agrees in policies that tend to favour any geopolitical or ethno-linguistic nationality against another. Kosemani and Anunah (1996) in Chidi-Echiem (2014) held that in most of the arrangements encouraging one or two languages over others, the chosen language(s) invariably belong to a majority, dominant political group. Any arrangement that creates an impression of ethno-linguistic superiority is usually vehemently opposed

by other ethno-linguistic groups. Since this is the case, even students are equally affected.

The lackadaisical attitude exhibited by students in the study of Hausa and Yoruba is equally not entirely spared in the Igbo language, which is both the mother tongue, and language of the immediate environment in South East. Most students do not have personal interest in the study of Igbo language but decide to both attend the classes and also offer it at the School Certificate Examination because of the fact that it is compulsory.

Conclusion

This paper examined globalization and the problems and prospects of the teaching and learning of Igbo language in our Colleges of Education in South East, Nigeria. It is observed that the development and the spread all over the world of the teaching and learning of Igbo language as a foreign language has also helped in the development and in the teaching and learning of Igbo in Colleges of Education in South East, Nigeria. The Federal Government in our view should introduce the teaching and learning of Igbo from the primary level of education to the university level. Every subject taught in the secondary schools, Colleges of Education and the University are all introduced from the primary school which is the bedrock of Nigerian education. The Federal Government should go beyond rhetoric to assist institutions of higher learning in the production of teachers of Nigerian language. They could do this by the provision of language laboratories, computers with diacritic marks, libraries and other materials that would facilitate the teaching and learning of the Nigerian languages. The various state governments in the country could be given, money, guidelines and stipulations in terms of time to carryout its projects as well as develop their own local languages. The National Institute for Nigerian Language (NINLAN) should be made to take the bull by the horn to run degree programmes for L₂ students in the three main Nigerian languages, so as to help in the production of teachers to teach Igbo as a second language in Colleges of Education in Nigeria.

Recommendations

For the teaching and learning of Igbo language to be effective, the following recommendations are made:

1. The Federal Government should mount up publicity campaign for its citizen to know what they stand to gain academically, politically and otherwise if initial formal literacy is taught in the mother tongue.
2. The Federal Government should go beyond rhetoric to assist institutions of high learning in the production of teachers of Nigerian language. They could do this by the provision of language laboratories, computers with diacritic marks, libraries and other materials that would facilitate the teaching and learning of the Nigerian languages.

3. National Institute for Nigerian Languages should be made to take the bull by the horn to run degree programmes for L₂ students in the three main Nigerian languages. This will go a long way in reducing the waste that is incurred by the production of this caliber of teachers who would not go beyond the NCE level of certification. In order to complement the effort of the National Institute for Nigerian Languages in this regard, one University in the three Geo-political zones of the North, East and West should be encouraged to mount programmes for holders of L₂ (NCE) certificates in Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba respectively. This will go a long way towards ensuring, the steady supply of teachers of Nigerian languages to schools and colleges in the country.
4. Again, it is important here to point out that Nigerian. Language teachers who graduate successfully in their programme should be given automatic employment. This will go a long way towards sustaining the zeal of others who would want to study Nigerian languages. If the Federal Government can successfully promote the study of two international languages of English and French, one wonders why it could not encourage and sustain the study of its national languages.
5. Finally, Nigerian Language teacher educators should on their part show more commitment to the teaching and learning of Nigerian languages. They could do this by attending re-fresher courses whereby they will be able to update their knowledge in their area of specialization.

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