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**REPOSITIONING LANGUAGE EDUCATION AS AN INSTRUMENT OF  
PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

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Ebonyi State.***Abstract**

*The vision of education for sustainable development is a world where everyone has the opportunity to benefit from quality education and learn values, behaviour and lifestyles required for a sustainable future for positive societal transformation. This study examined sustaining development through language education as a means of fostering Nigeria. A 16-item questionnaire was drawn on what contains how language can sustain development in Nigeria; a purposive sampling technique was employed in gathering information and analyzed through chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ). The findings reveal among others that language is a major promoter of national development as the  $\chi^2$  cal < obv i.e.  $00 < 1.00$ . Hence, it is recommended that the learning of language especially indigenous languages should be encouraged and the federal and state governments should sponsor programmes or seminars motivating the learning of the languages more than before.*

**Keywords:** Repositioning, Language, Instrument and Sustainable Development.

Language is one of the most important attribute of humanity, language is so vital in a man's life that there is hardly any situation where it is not involved. It is a vehicle of power, a means by which we control, create and preserve culture (Daniels, 2003). Language is an important tool in education. Adegbite in Chidi-Ehiem (2015) opines that, "language can be described as a system of sounds or vocal symbols which human beings use to communicate experiences. It is a special characteristics. Language is the most important factor in identifying who is who, where one comes from, what one is made of, ones culture and tradition. It is a vehicle which is used to impart knowledge and so 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. Ijeoma in Nwaubani (2007), stated the basic function of language as follows:

Language facilitates the acquisition and

1. Exchange of information and ideas
2. It identifies wants and needs
3. It is a means of self identification
4. Language is social interaction
5. It is a means of expressing feelings and emotions

It is therefore a social function that permits the individual to become an interacting member of the society. 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 sustainable development in Nigeria.

The essence of language to man's life is not hidden because it is an important aspect of his development. Wall work in Daniels (2005), language is used:

6. as a social regulator
7. for ceremonial purposes
8. as an instrument of action
9. To keep records
10. To convey orders and information
11. To influence people
12. To enable self-expression
13. To embody and enable thought

If we consider the above, it becomes obvious that no human society can exist without language. It therefore means that language is seen as instrument of economic and political power.

Our country, Nigeria is a country of many languages in order to sustain development in the country, the numerous languages should be acknowledged and their roles appreciated. Language is a social function that permits the individual to become an interacting member of the society. Bamgbose in Nwubani (2007) opines that language not only serves as a means of communication and self expression, it also make cooperative effort and joint action. It therefore, no doubt makes possible social co-operation, social cohesion and interaction of the members of a community for the purpose of overall social development.

According to Mgbodile in Chidi-Ehiem (2015), language is the chief means of generating, maintaining and transferring culture and civilization. He stresses that man learns to walk, to climb or swim. Consequently, language is the bedrock to nation building. For Aziza in Chidi-Ehiem (2015), language is the most important tool with which society is

organized and it is hardly possible to talk of national development without including the language with which the people formulate their thought, ideas and needs. This means that every human action revolve around language.

Through the instrumentality of language a group of people can promote peace required for sustainable development, harmony, protection of the environment and the personal fulfillment of each human being (Nwubani, 2007).

If this nation is to achieve a sustainable national development, there should be a review of the national language. Language is the glue that holds the society together; it is the vehicle of unity and the windows for seeing reality.

Development is a process that creates growth, progress, positive change or addition of physical, economic, environment, social and demographic components.

It is the systematic use of scientific and technical knowledge to meet specific objectives or requirements. It is also a process of economic and social transformation that is based on complex cultural and environmental factors and their interactions (Business dictionary).

Sustainable development can be defined as the structured principles that have been conceived to meet the expectations of human development. It is also seen as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Sustainable development is the organizing principle for meeting human development goals while simultaneously sustaining the ability of natural systems to provide the natural resources and ecosystem services based upon which the economy and society depend (Wikipedia, 2014).

### **The study**

It is believed that language is the essential facilitator in the development and growth of a given nation. This expresses hope for sustenance of development in Nigeria but it is quite unfortunate that Nigerians regard the indigenous language that are supposed to serve as an instrument for development in our nation as incomplete. In the education sector, Nigerian languages are being accorded an inferior status both the elites and the illiterates opt for English language, which exposes their wards to the foreign culture that under rate its foreign users. How then can the development be sustained in this country of ours when our own language is neglected.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the relationship between language and sustainable development in Nigeria

2. To what extent does lack of knowledge of indigenous language influence the sustainable development in Nigeria?
3. To what extent does language responsible for sustainable development?

**Research 1:** What is the relationship between language and suitable.

**Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Response of Respondents**

S/N	Items	$\bar{x}$	SD	Dec
1.	Language is an instrument of action that can lead to development	2.95	1.10	GE
2.	Language is a vehicle for impacting knowledge for sustainable development	2.61	1.20	GE
3.	Language fosters the understanding of sustainable development	2.75	0.99	GE
4.	Without the language, it will be difficult to convey the information and ideas of sustainable development	2.68	1.25	GE
	<b>Overall</b>	2.75	0.83	GE

**Table 1:** This shows that each of the items 1,2,3, and 4 indicates that language is the major instrument for impacting knowledge for sustainable development to a great extent. The overall mean score of 2.75, implies that the two colleges of education in Imo State are of the opinion that language fosters the understanding of sustainable development to a great extent. The standard deviation (range 0.83-2.25) indicate that the responses do not vary so widely.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent does lack of knowledge of indigenous language influence sustainable development in Nigeria.

**Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents.**

S/N	Items	$\bar{x}$	SD	Dec
1.	Without indigenous language sustainable development will not be achieved	3.12	1.05	VGE
2.	Sustainable development will be better understood with indigenous language	2.50	0.89	GE
3.	Without indigenous language, people will be less concern about sustainable development goals.	2.89	1.31	GE
	<b>Overall</b>	2.62	0.69	GE

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**Table 2:** This shows that lack of knowledge of indigenous language influence sustainable development in Nigeria. Item 1 indicates that without indigenous language, sustainable development will not be achieved to a very great extent. On the other hand, items 2 and 3 shows that without indigenous language people will be less concern about sustainable development goals to a great extent. The standard deviation (range 0.69-1.31) indicate that the responses do not vary so widely.

**Research Question 3:** To what extent can language be responsible for the sustainable development.

**Table 3: Mean and Standard of the Respondents**

S/N	Items	$\bar{x}$	SD	Dec
1.	To convey information and direction on sustainable development	2.11	1.27	GE
2.	As an instrument of action on sustainable development	2.55	1.34	GE
3.	As a means of charting the course for the attainment of sustainable development.	2.83	1.12	GE
	<b>Overall</b>	2.37	0.79	GE

**Table 3:** This shows that language can be responsible for the sustainable development in Nigeria to a great extent. The overall mean score of 2.37 implies that language is means of charting the course for the attainment of sustainable development. The standard deviation (range 0.79-1.34) indicate that the response do not vary.

In the light of the above, the study seeks answers to the following hypothesis.

1. There exists no significant relationship between language and sustainable development in Nigeria.
2. Lack of knowledge of indigenous language will not significantly influence the sustainable development in Nigeria.
3. Language is not responsible for the sustainable development in Nigeria.

A survey research method was used in determining the effectiveness of language as a viable instrument of sustaining development in Nigeria. A total of forty lecturers and forty students were drawn from the two colleges of education in Imo State.

**Instrument**

The researcher used a self developed questionnaire the language education assessment questionnaire (LEAQ) which consists of 4-items. The respondent were required

*The Intuition*  
 to indicate on a 4-point scale, the extent the language can sustain our development in Nigeria using to very Great extent, (VGE), to a great extent (GE), to a less extent (LE) and to a very less Extent (LE).

The samples validity and reliability were ensured via test-re-test method conducted previously. Data collected was analyzed using chi-square test.

## Discussion

Data in tables 1, 2 and 3 showed that language is a veritable tool for the sustainable development. It fosters the understanding of sustainable development and as well very difficult to convey the information and ideas of sustainable development in Nigeria to a very great extent. This result implies that for the teachers of the languages especially the major Nigerian language like their science education counterparts to teach effectively incentives should be provided for them in schools in Nigeria. The implication of finding could be that if incentives are not adequately provided for the teachers they would not be motivated to teach and impact effectively and this might in turn affect the language education, especially indigenous language as an instrument of promoting sustainable development in Nigeria. Hence finding agrees with the observation of Epuchie (2008) when he noted that there is a significant relationship between the existence of incentives to teachers and the quality of their product.

## Results

Result on language as the source of sustenance of development in Nigeria.

**Hypothesis 1:** There exist no significant relationship between language and sustainable development in Nigeria.

**Table 1: Analysis of Respondents**

N	$\bar{x}$	SD	$X^2$	df	Table value	P<0.05
6	71.83	5.84	0.000	5	1.000	Significant

Table 1 shows that, the mean and SD is given as 71.83 and 5.84 respectively. The  $x^2$  value is 0.000 at degree of freedom of 5 at  $p < 0.05$  while the table value is given as 1.000 which means that the  $x^2$  calculated is less than the observed value hence there exist significant sustainable development in Nigeria.

**Hypothesis 2:** Lack of knowledge of indigenous language will not significantly influence the sustainable of development in Nigeria

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**Table 2: Analysis of Respondents**

N	$\bar{x}$	SD	$x^2$	df	Table value	P<0.05
5	38.00	32.02	.600	3	.896	Significant

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation is 38.00 and 32.02 respectively. The  $x^2$  value is 600 at degree of freedom of 3 at  $p < 0.05$  while the table value is given as .896 meaning that the  $x^2$  calculated is less than the observed value, hence the lack of knowledge of indigenous language significantly influence the promotion of the sustainable national development in Nigeria.

**Hypothesis 3:** Language is not responsible for the sustainable development in Nigeria.

**Table 3: Analysis of Respondents**

N	$\bar{x}$	SD	$X^2$	df	Table value	P<0.05
3	62.00	9.89	.000	3	1.000	Significant

Table 3 indicated that the mean and the standard deviation given as 62.00 and 9.89 respectively. The  $x^2$  value is given as .000 at degree of freedom of 3 at  $p < 0.05$ , while the table value is 1.000 which means that the  $x^2$  calculated is less than the observed value, hence, language is responsible for promotion of sustainable development in Nigeria. From the foregoing, it is obvious that lack of the knowledge of one another's language in our country hinders the sustainable of our development as shown in table 2.

In addition, according to UNESCO, language is important because "through language people communicate, share meaning and experience their sense of individual and community identity. Loss of language and culture is frequently accompanied by large human and social costs, including poverty, poor health, drug and alcohol abuse, family violence and suicide.

Language is a communication tool and powerful means to disseminate knowledge and ideas. But lack of interest in the promotion of the indigenous language has been a long time problem in our society with the result that policy-makers and federal and state government are yet to device means for the actualization for the usage of indigenous language in our daily activities in our country which will boost unity and national development.

### Conclusion

The findings of this study have shown that language is the key elements of communication since there is no development without communication; we can state that

language has a particularly important function in the achievement of the sustainable development. Recognizing the profound importance that people place on their language is a core insight for tackling poverty and hunger. It is an important part of the move away from “top down” models of development that have been shown not to work and towards participatory development models, which often do.

### **Recommendations**

It is recommended from the findings that a child’s language is closely associated with its natural identity, there is therefore need for re-orientation by the educational sector seeing themselves as vanguards of Nigerian development which entrenched in their language. It is also pertinent that programmes be sponsored on radio, television and newspaper to help in promoting and encouraging the languages. The tradition games of these languages should also be encourages which would help in strengthening the spread and as well motivate others to learn them. Instructional materials, books, well equipped libraries and other resource materials should be made available to the language teachers. Government should provide incentives in form of allowance and special salary scale for language teachers especially Nigerian language teachers in the field.

Finally, the language experts should organize seminars, conferences, workshops, symposiums and as well as sent on government sponsored regular training to update their knowledge that will help in the promotion of the indigenous languages in Nigeria.

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