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REMEDY OF GLOBAL CONFLICT OF UNESCO AND SCHOLARS IN EXTINCTION OF IGBO LANGUAGE

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Abstract

This paper examines the level of Igbo language endangerment and what the UNESCO argues in the extinction of Igbo language in the year 2025. The paper went further to highlight position of Igbo language in Nigeria. UNESCO political threat to Igbo language extinction, the degree endangerment of Igbo language. Finally, the paper made good recommendations to every Igbo speaker to have a positive change of attitude towards the Igbo language and encourage our children where ever they are to speak Igbo language and keep the culture alive.

Keywords: Global, Conflict, Unesco, Scholars, Extinction, Language

Introduction

Nigeria is made of 450- 500 ethnic groups each an ethnic group speaks a language. Igbo language is one of the three major languages recognized in Nigeria. In the classification of languages in Africa, Igbo language belongs to Niger Khordafian group, other languages that belong to Niger Khordafian group are as follows: Edo, Efik, Hausa and Yoruba etc. UNESCO prediction on the extinction of Igbo language in 2025 is political. Ukazu, (2012).

Aikawa (2001) Language politics is a term used to describe political consequence of linguistic differences between people or on occasion as political consequences of the way a language is spoken and what words are used. It means language can express some authority.

Examples include:

v Regional or official language: Generally this means that all official documents affecting a country or region are published in a particular language that is official, but not in all languages within the region are used for official work. Evidence in a court of law may also be expected to be in an official language only. In Nigeria Igbo language as an example is used in the court of law and could also be used in the deliberation in the national assembly.

v In countries where there is more than one main language, there are often political implications in decision that are seen to promote one group of speakers over another, and this is often referred to as language politics. Nigeria is a typical example of this type of language politics where UNESCO and their political allies are carrying false propaganda against Igbo language that are spoken all over the world for extinction and acceptance of unpopular one.

v Language politics sometimes relates to dialect and are perceived as a more cultural. 'advanced' or 'correct' form of the language. Politicians may therefore try to use the dialect rather than their own when in the public eye. Alternatively, those speaking the dialect perceived as more 'correct' may try to use another dialect when in the public eye to be seen as man/woman of the people. Nigerian are standard example of the above analysis where people regards educated persons as only one who speaks English, but far be it from the meaning of education.

v At times minority languages have either been promoted because of the identity of the country's leader or banned schools; as politicians have either sought to promote a minority language with a view to strengthening the cultural identity of its speakers, or banning its use (either for teaching, or on occasion) with a view to promoting a national identity based on the majority language. An example of recent promotion of a minority languages are, Efik, Fulfulde, Edo and Ngas.

The position of Igbo language in Nigeria

The place of Igbo language in Nigeria history cannot be replaced by any other thing else. This is because of the economic and political role the speakers of the language (Igbo) play in the development of Nigeria as a country (Ukazu, 2012). UNESCO and other organizations appreciate what the expressive culture of any community means to its people, an embodiment of everything that matters to self-definition and group identity. Language, as the most dynamic component of that culture is the repository of the world view values and more as well as chief instrument for mass mobilization in a community.

The fact is that Igbo language instead of gaining communication height in the hierarchy of languages is currently moving in the downward trends in the comity of human languages. The language drawing increasing concern amongst individual scholars within the Igbo nation and beyond; but following the prediction of extinction of Igbo language by United Nation Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) advisory committee on language, it is necessary now for Igbo nation to walk up and develop the language.

Pluralism and Multi-language Education, that Igbo language and by implication, culture may be heading for extinction and subsumed by other stronger Nigerian languages by 2025. If nothing is done, by its speakers to ensure that it is not only taught in schools, colleges and universities, but also used as language of official communications within government and business circles in Igbo speaking states:- Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo, some part of Delta and Rivers states. It should be noted that extension of the link between Igbo language and Igbo culture is noted on the fact that "language is the handmaid" of culture, the two are inseparable (Baldeh, 1991) Okoye, & Onunegbuchunam (2011) have shown that hardly can an Igbo make a statement without switching. This ugly trend is growing because the language habits of a person predispose certain choices of interpretations (Sepir, 1956).

The appeal of language resides precisely in its capacity to meet the needs of man for self expression and for communication of experience in his day-to-day engagements with the world around him. Man needs language for his dissection and analysis of national reality and spiritual experience as well as for formulation of hypothetical statements, theories and belief as well as value systems. Above all Igbo language has all these qualities to fulfil the needs of man in this age of Science and technology.

Arguments and Statement of UNESCO Globally on Igbo Extinction

Prince, (2009) stated that languages less occurs when the language has no more native speakers, and becomes a "dead language". If eventually no one speaks the language at all;, it becomes "an extinct language". While languages have always gone extinct throughout human history, they are currently disappearing at an accelerated rate due to the processes of globalization and neo-colonialism, where the economically powerful languages dominate other languages (Austin, & Sallabank, 2011).

Professor Innocent Eleasu, a United States based Economist, who hails from Obibiezena in Owerri North Local Government Area of Imo State has argued that traceable with Igbo language was not the UNESCO prediction but the fact some language

scholars have come up with similar findings, which seems to confirm the position of UNESCO. The prediction of UNESCO calls for scholarly discuss not only on its face value but also, over the historical facts that many human language and culture have disappeared over the ages. For instance in Nigeria, The following languages have become moribund with few elderly speakers, Bete Bubbure, Carmo, Fali of Baissa, Fam, Holina, Kiong, Kudu, Mberu, Njerep, Odut, Shem, Sheni Undu Rishi, Yargkan and Ziriya (UNESCO. org). Again Defaka Fyam, Ilue, jala Ju, Kubu, Lere Cluster, Luri, Ngwaba, Okorogbena, Shiki and Somyewe have become seriously endangered language, which the young people that speaks them have reached or passed middle age (UNESCO.org). Ugwoke (1998) has earlier presented a comprehensive list of indigenous Nigerian languages that are endangered.

Igbo people are increasingly engaging in the progressive race to words culture marginalization endangerment this study is cantered on culture marginalization theory of language "This frequently happens when indigo-eons theory populations in order to achieve a higher social status adopt the cultural and linguistic traits of a people who have come to dominate then though colonisation conquest, or invasion. This is the most common cause of language enlargement (Austin & Sallabank 2011). When the people gradually neglect and refuse to promote official and unofficial communication dynamics in their language, consciously or unconsciously, they are culturally marginalizing their language. This is the situation found across the length and breadth of the Igbo nation. Unfortunately, some Igbo people have paid with their breath for neglecting their language.

Anyaeqbuna (2012) showed that following the wanton repetitive killings of Ndigbo in Northern Nigeria some aggrieved Igbo youths made reprisal attacks on Northerners at NKP or junction and some other areas. The mounted roadblocks and screened vehicles for Northerners. The basis of screening was the ability to understand and speak Igbo. It was a disaster that few Igbo youths were k killed needlessly, because they either did not understand or could not speak that calls for Igbo revived. The Igbo language revival scholars must therefore a arise in the race Igbo fluently, they were mistaken for "Northerners seeking camouflage". What a l bad scenario against time towards the revival of our language (Krause, 2007).

Revising of Igbo "language and culture shift" fish man (1991) needs patriotic attention and urgency. This could be attained through the cultural revival of the Igbo either linguistic vitality (Ehala, (2009) if all and sundry within the Igbo nation and beyond can gradlali. progressively reduce their high level of social violence against the language.

(a) Home engineered language violence.

This is the form of domestic violence that hurts the language from its cultural root. Many parents from the earliest years of their children's infancy deny them the opportunity of learning how to speak Igbo language because they have soon never to speak Igbo in the house, let alone training the new Igbo child with the language. It is no longer a taboo, to hear and see parents that shamelessly banned their children from speaking Igbo language at home, especially when they have grown to mix up with their peers and speedily picks the language. In the course of this paper, a parent who engages in this type of language violence told the researcher that the children have nothing to gain for not knowing how to speak or write Igbo language that will not affect their academic future.

Language violence by Nigerian societies

- (a) School encouraging language violence.
- (b) Church encouraging violence.
- (c) Dialectical violence against Igbo language.
- (d) Government Negligence of Igbo language.
- (e) Multidimensional societal language violence.

The Degree of Igbo Language Endangerment

Language endangerment can be defined as a condition whereby the socio-economic, political, technological, cultural and religious ecologies have altered to a point where so languages species cannot survive or thrive in them.

According to Aikawa in UNESCO (2001), endangerment can be ranked on a continuum from stability to extinction. Six degrees of endangerment may be distinguished with regards to intergenerational language transmission. They are:

- (1) **Extinct:** There is no one who can speak or remember the language.
- (2) **Critically Endangered:** The youngest speaking are in the great-grandparents generation and the language is not used in everyday interactions.
- (3) **Severely Endangered:** The language is spoken only by grandparents and other generations while the parents' generation may still understand the language they typically do not speak it to their children or among themselves.

(4) **Definitely Endangered:** The language is not learnt as the mother tongue by children in the home. The youngest speakers are thus of the parental generation. At this stage parents may still speak their language to their children, but their children do not typically respond in the language.

(5) **Unsafe:** Most children speak their parental language as their first language but this may be restricted to specific social domains such as the home where children interact with their parents and grandparents.

(6) **Safe:** The language is spoken by all generations. The intergenerational transmission of the language is uninterrupted.

Conclusion and Recommendations

There is no doubt whether Igbo language is endangered or not. It is good to know the degree of the endangerment at present the degree of Igbo language endangerment is in between "definitely endangerment and unsafe" it is frightening to note that about 40 percent of Igbo children cannot speak Igbo language. Every parent is encouraging his children to speak English instead of Igbo language. Igbo language would be politically possibly extinct in the next 50 years if the current rate of decline is sustained. In the face of the dying Igbo language; it will be abnormal against our fore fathers if we do not do anything now for development of Igbo language, our fathers and future generation will not forgive us if we allow Igbo language to be extinct.

Recommendations:

- (1) Every parent should endeavour to teach his or her children culture.
- (2) Exercise interest of their children towards Igbo language.
- (3) Speak Igbo language all the times.
- (4) Provide scholarships for students and teachers of Igbo language.
- (5) Use Igbo language in media, radio, television and newspapers.
- (6) Encourage children to choose Igbo language as a compulsory subject in the institution of learning.

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