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## TEACHING IGBO LANGUAGE AS A SECOND LANGUAGE - PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

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### **Abstract**

*Language is the pivot around which every other thing revolves. The need for one to acquire a language is a necessity, It becomes an added advantage when one acquires a second language especially in a multilingual second multicultural nation like Nigeria. Igbo is one of the three major languages in Nigeria (Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba). It is taught as a first and second language both in the primary, secondary and the higher institutions. To promote peaceful co-existence, employment opportunities, inter tribal marriage among others, people from other ethnic zones are learning second languages other than theirs. Igbo is one of these languages taught as a second language. This paper discusses some methods and problems of teaching Igbo as a second language andproffers solution to the identified problems.*

### **Introduction**

The main goal of learning a living language is for communication and cultural understanding. Perhaps the Federal Government's deep concern for the issue of languages in Nigeria made her come up with language policy as stated in the NPE (1981). Section 1.8 of the NPE is the most vital of the document to this study. It says: in addition to appreciating the importance of language in the educational process and as a means of preserving the people's culture, the government considers it to be in the interest of the national unity that each child be encouraged to learn one of the three major languages other than his mother tongue. In this connection, the government considers the three major languages in Nigeria to be Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba.

Agheyisi in Emenanjo (1994) says that ‘since 1977 when the Nigerian second language (NL) or Second Nigerian Language (SNL) was given a place in the NPE, reactions ranging from pessimism to unbridled optimism have greeted it....’ Despite all odds, the Igbo language teacher should rise up to the challenges facing the teaching of the language either as first or second

language, more especially as second language because of the duality of the language and culture of the learners involved.

### **Second language learning – its aims**

A second language is a language that is acquired after one must have acquired the mother tongue (MT) or the language of the immediate community (LIC). Second language is therefore a non native, functional language learned intentionally for a purpose. It therefore means that such language can be taught in a formal, informal or both settings. The paramount aims of learning a second language are for effective communication, cultural understading and cross-fertilization of ideas, One may need to learn another language just to have for an alternative language or to acquire it for business and comnerce.

### **Methods of Teaching Igbo Langusge ae Second language**

Epuchie (1998) says that tenching method denoes the vais ies Wdertaen by a teacher in order to make students learn”According to Emenanjo (1994) ‘ a good method is one that is practicable, effective and capable of realizing the set objectives” some methods to teaching as second language include:

#### **a. Audio-Oral Skills**

In audio oral skills, listening, understanding snd speaking are involved. The first effort to be made here is getting the learners exposed to listening to one consistent variety of the spoken Igbo the standard form (Igbo language has so many varieties). This could be achieved through:

#### Sound Drills

Listening to sound drills.

Listening to tone drills.

Listening to simple conversation among native speakers.

Activities to be used in sound drills include:

Conversation/dialogue

Dramatisation of events.

Oral descriptions/discussions.

Impromptu speaking.

#### **b. Literary Skills**

These involve reading and writing

Basic Reading involves:

- I. Recognition of letters - digraphs, diacritics and words.
- II. Matching of letters and sounds.
- III. Matching tone marks with sounds
- IV. Reading words and sentences after the teacher.
- V. Answering questions on one-two paragraph passages.
- VI. Gradually improving reading speed through timed passages.
- VII. Reacting to what is read.

Basic Writing

This could be achieved through:

- I. Copying letters and words correctly
- II. Matching tone marks with letters
- III. Completing words with appropriate letters
- IV. Completing phrases, clauses and sentences
- V. Completing proverbs, riddles and tongue twisters
- VI. Transforming, sentences from one tense/aspect to another.
- VII. Writing personal letters.
- VIII. Taking notes from what is read and heard
- IX. Presenting, one's own view in written form.

### **C. Translation method**

Translation is the process of replacing a textual material in one language (SL) with text in another language (TL). A second language can hardly be taught to a first language learner without using translation. This involves translating from the second language to the language the learner understands.

#### **d. Primer Method**

This involves using the letters of the alphabet in forming words in the language eg. a -ala, b- bata, ch-chere, d - di e-effe etc. This method is effective in the primary state of teaching the letters of the alphabet, forming simple words and increasing the students' vocabulary.

#### **e. Discussion Method**

According to Lzuwa (2003), discussion as a teaching method "is the process of free or guided of ideas or information on a specific issue or problem between members of a group". This method is highly effective in discussing visits or excursion.

#### **f. Mixture Method**

This use of combination of different teaching methods to achieve a set objective. The teacher start method in the introductory part of the lesson, switches over to another method in the middle of the lesson and uses a different method in the concluding aspect.

#### **g. Communicative Language Teaching Method.**

This method focuses on communicative competence through (a) Group activity Oral interview (c) Audio-visuals (d) Role playing (e) Interactions with the native speakers of the language.

Other methods are also aimed at communicative competence but their approach to it is time consuming in achieving this aim.

#### **Problems of Teaching Igbo language as Second Language (L<sub>2</sub>)**

Ikekeonwu (2013:2) sees language education as a "wholesome attempt to bridge communication barrier in Nigeria through the education system thus preparing the ground for a more harmonious, ethnic-distrust free future for the country"

Teaching is an effort by a matured or experienced person to change the behaviour of a person or persons through imparting knowledge, skill, information etc. It is obvious that teaching goes with goals and objectives. Teaching is by no means an easy task. For one to qualify as a good teacher, the following qualities and conditions must be present:

- a. Adequate knowledge of the subject matter
- b. Adequate knowledge of methods of teaching
- c. Must know your learners (students) and carry everybody along
- d. There must be conducive environment
- e. There must be instructional media

f. Laboratory must be provided where necessary

When any of the above listed and other vital ingredients that are necessary for imparting knowledge are lacking, there are bound to be problems in teaching generally. Other problems of teaching of Igbo language as a second language include:

**a. Lack of textbooks** - One of the most challenging problems in teaching Igbo as a second Language is lack of appropriate textbooks for Igbo L2 learners.

Most teachers of Igbo L2 use textbooks meant for L1 students which will definitely be too high for Igbo L2 learners. There are no official and uniform recommended textbooks, and even if they are, they are not readily available. Olalekan (1998), says, " the ideas, facts and language styles of a student's second language cannot be effectively disseminated where there are inadequate textbooks".

**b. Problem of Curriculum**

The L2 teachers in the field are not involved in designing the curriculum for L2. Most times the curriculum designed for L2 will be too high for them and will not fall in tandem with what they need to be taught.

**c. Lack of instructiona/ Media**

Another problem facing the teaching of Igbo as a second language is the lack of instructional media such as language laboratory, cultural laboratory/room, audio and visual aids, diagrammes, posters, charts, tapes etc instructional media are important in all facets of teaching.

**d. Lack of Motivation-** Teachers and learners of Igbo language both as L<sub>1</sub> and satme people that have the will to learn Igbo' which a the Igbo teachers neither is price given to the best graduating Igbo language student L<sub>2</sub> are not motivated Unlike their counterparts in the science, no special allowance needed for initiating the action.

**e. Lack of Trained Teachers-** The number of trained Igbo teachers are not enough. While some schools battle with insufficient number, others have none at all, More still Igbo L<sub>1</sub> teachers need to go for Igbo L<sub>2</sub> teaching course to be able to cope with the challenges of teaching Igbo L<sub>2</sub> learners.

**f. Lack of Interest** - Hardly do you get students that willingly applied to study Igbo either as L<sub>1</sub> or L<sub>2</sub>. Most times it is when it becomes obvious that admission will elude them completely that they will reluctantly accept to read Igbo either as L<sub>1</sub> or L<sub>2</sub>. This will negatively affect their interest and morale in learning the course.

Social Factor- Most people consider Igbo language as degrading and inferior that they wouldn't want to speak it in their homes let alone teaching it to their children either as a first or second Languages

**g. Funding** - teaching Igbo as a second language needs more of interactive sessions and informal setting. Students that are residing outside the Igbo speaking states should come on acculturation/immersion programme in the Igbo speaking states and interact with the native speakers of the language. Acculturation/ immersion programme is a prerequisite for the graduation of those in the Colleges of Education studying Igbo as a second language, therefore they had no alternative than to spend half of the stipulated twelve weeks by National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) due to lack of fund.

**h. Government Policy**- Nigeria's language policy is one of the best policies but its poor or rather lack of implementation becomes a cog in the wheel of indigenous languages progress.

### **Conciusion**

Second language learning especially Igbo language as a second language has not been accorded high priority. Such study is still seen as time wasting and degrading. Most of the benefits of acquiring a second language are not language specific - diversity in interests, supply and demand, and simple preferences and interests are adequate determiners of language choice. No amount of learning a second language is too small or too much-a student. Who learns only to greet or count or read signs in another language has benefited compared to the student who has had no second language experience. No young person should be deprived of learning a second language. On the other hand, the teaching of Igbo language either as L1 or L2 needs a hard working and conscientious teacher. The teacher is expected to know all the possible media he can use to make the teaching and learning worthwhile. It could be observed that lack of adequate knowledge about the production, selection and utilization of media including lack of finance are among the constraints to the effective production and utilization of media for teaching Igbo language both as L1 and L2.

### **Recommendations**

- i. In teaching Igbo as second language, emphasis should be laid first on oral skills other skills.
- ii. Igbo L2 teachers should endeavour to publish textbooks based on the Curriculum second language.
- iii. National Institute for Nigerian Languages (NINLAN) should be empowered to translate books from the source language to the target language (the second language).
- iv. Teachers should be encouraged through sponsorship to attend workshops and seminars. They should also be motivated through scholarship, language exchange programme abroad etc

- v. Igbo L2 teachers should be involved in designing the curriculum of Igbo L2. L1 and L2 curriculum should be separated.
- vi. Federal Government should assist L2 learners by sponsoring their acculturation programme.
- vii. South Eastern Governors, Political office holders and philanthropists should sponsor Igbo L2 learners. This will encourage more people to enroll for the programme
- viii. Only well trained and qualified teachers should teach second language.
- ix. Language laboratory, instructional media, audio-visual, computer centres, cultural laboratory etc should be provided.
- x. Parents should change their attitude of not allowing their children to speak Igbo language. They should also encourage them to study Igbo language in school, if not for economic reasons at least for the reactivation, promotion and preservation of our ethnic culture.

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