



Influence of English Language Spoken by the Teacher and His Qualification on Students' Learning of Igbo Language

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of English spoken by the teacher and his qualification on students' learning of Igbo language. Every language spoken by the teacher during a language class, especially a language that is different from the one being taught must have influence on the learning of that language. Similarly, the qualification of a teacher in the language he teaches also influences the learning of that language. The study is guided by one research question. The sample of the study comprised 550 senior secondary school students drawn from the population using purposive sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled Igbo language Learning Questionnaire for Students (ILLQS) developed by the researcher for the study. Mean and Standard Deviation were used to answer the research question, interpret and analyze the data collected for the study. The results of the findings indicated that the mixing of both English language and Igbo language while teaching the students causes confusion among them, and negatively influences their learning of Igbo language. It was recommended that the teachers should use only the standard Igbo while teaching Igbo language instead of mixing it with English Language.

Introduction

Language is a medium of communication or interaction among human beings. It is very important in the life of human beings because they use it to reveal one another's thought. As one of the features of human beings, language is very useful because without it, it will be very difficult for man and woman to live together, express their thoughts, communicate and share ideas. This is in line with the belief of Mgbodile (1999) that language makes it easy for human beings to engage in meaningful dialogue, exchange of knowledge, ideas and thoughts through different forms of literature, writing of books, dissemination of news on television and formation of language associations and organizations.

Igbo language is among the different languages in Nigeria. It is spoken by the people who inhabit the south eastern part of Nigeria. Igbo people, as one of the ethnic groups in Nigeria, have Igbo language as their identity. The same thing is applicable to other ethnic groups. In Nigeria, there are three major languages recognized by the federal government as indigenous languages. They are Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba languages. These are the three languages approved to be thought in Nigeria schools and to be written during senior secondary school examinations. Based on the numerous advantages of language, the federal government of Nigeria considered it expedient and decided that every school child must learn one of the three major languages apart from his or her mother tongue. The government also instructed that a child should be taught with the language of his immediate environment starting from his first year to his third year in primary school. However, it appears that

this instruction is no longer adhered to as could be observed in most primary schools today where the teachers hardly teach the pupils using Igbo language as the medium of instruction. The teachers use English language as the medium of instruction instead. Commenting on this issue, Ohiri-Aniche (2010) observed that majority of schools in Nigeria do not teach the indigenous Nigerian languages including Igbo language. Similarly, Anyanwu and Ikonne (2010) observed that it is usually difficult for indigenous language teachers to use such languages to engage in conversations, read out written items or write something meaningful.

The language a teacher uses while teaching the learners and his qualification to teach the language is of paramount importance in every language study especially the Igbo language, as this can influence students' performance which may result to negative achievement in their Igbo language examinations. This is because learners usually imitate whatever their teachers say. This is the major reason why an Igbo language teacher should make use of the standard Igbo variety while teaching Igbo and jettison the use of English language in its entirety. Worthy of note is that the teacher can bring in English language only when he wants to illustrate a point or give example in order to make his point clear to the students. Ugwu (2008) observed that some Igbo language teachers usually find it difficult to speak Igbo language to students, especially to the learners of Igbo language as a second language (L2). Thus Ugwu advised that Igbo language teachers should endeavour to be using Igbo language as a communication medium whenever they are with their students. The author also advised that every Igbo language teacher is supposed to be adequately prepared to teach the language by studying Igbo language as a course in the institutions of higher learning.

An Igbo language teacher is expected to be competent in the teaching of the subject. This will enable the learners to easily understand what he is teaching. This is in line with the view of Anyanwu (2002) that a teacher's qualification in the language he teaches is very important because no teacher can teach any language without having adequate knowledge of it. Besides, a teacher's knowledge of the language he teaches determines how well he is going to impart it to others. Furthermore, a teacher's qualification is not limited to his knowledge of the subject matter but includes his attitude and interest towards the language he teaches. This is because any teacher that does not have interest in the language he teaches must display apathy towards the language in one way or the other whenever he is teaching the language. Such a teacher might have decided to teach the language because he is desperately in need of money or due to other issues that have nothing to do with his interest in the language. This is why Osuala (2001) posits that some teachers are ashamed of being called Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba teachers. As a result, they lack new trends in the teaching of these languages.

On the other hand, Ndimele (2000) noted that it is only well-trained teachers that can bring solution to the problems confronting teaching and learning but it is unfortunate that some penalize their students for speaking Igbo language. Such teachers are responsible for the passive attitude of students towards the learning of Igbo language. Expressing dissatisfaction with the attitude of some teachers, Nwadike (1990) lamented that the attitude of some teachers in the presence of their students constitutes a stumbling block to the learning of Igbo language. The researcher observed that some teachers usually forbid their students from speaking Igbo in the classroom and even go ahead to collect fines from defaulters. This kind of attitude does not encourage the learning of Igbo language



in the school environment. It also makes students to lose interest in the learning of Igbo language. In corroboration of the above view, Fafunwa (1996) observed that the failure to speak Igbo language and the school environment are among the factors that constitute a stumbling block to the learning of Igbo language by the students.

It is important to note at this juncture that a teacher's qualification to teach a language includes his willingness to make use of instructional materials in his language class considering the numerous advantages. Anozie (2003) describes instructional materials as teaching aids in form of pictures, graphics, excursions, radios, tape recorders, among others. Adesina (2005) noted that a good teacher must have adequate knowledge of what he wants to teach and the method he would employ in teaching it. This means that before a teacher makes use of instructional materials or employs any teaching method, he should bear in mind the lesson objectives which the learners are expected to achieve at the end of the lesson. However, it seems that lack of interest among most Igbo language teachers in the language they teach makes them not to take the teaching seriously. This attitude negatively affects students in the learning of the language but if such teachers can change their negligent attitude towards Igbo language, students may begin to record positive achievement in the subject.

The truth of the matter is that secondary students experience a lot of difficulties in the learning of Igbo language. One of those difficulties has to do with the mixing of English and Igbo languages by the Igbo language teacher while teaching which usually brings confusion to the students. Teachers' qualification to teach the subject is another problem because if a teacher is not qualified or if he does not have good knowledge of Igbo language, he will not be able to impart appropriate knowledge of the subject to the students. It is therefore, necessary that every teacher of Igbo language be well-trained on the use of the standard Igbo variety while teaching the students. In other words, he/she is expected to be a graduate of Igbo language. This will not only help in ensuring that learners receive the needed sound knowledge of Igbo language but also promote the learning of Igbo language especially at the secondary school level.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to find out how the English language spoken by the Igbo language teacher and his qualification to teach the language influence students' learning of Igbo language.

Research Question

How do the English language spoken by the teacher and his qualification to teach Igbo language influence the students in the learning of Igbo language?

Research Method

The study employed a descriptive survey research design. According to Nworgu (2006), a descriptive survey design aims at collecting data on, and describing in a systematic manner, the characteristics, features of facts about a given population. This design was therefore, considered suitable for the study since it solicited information from the students on how the English language spoken by the teacher during Igbo language class and the qualification of the teacher to teach Igbo language influence students on the learning of Igbo language.

The study was carried out in the secondary schools in Anambra and Enugu states. Anambra state has 21 Local Government Areas while Enugu state has 17 Local Government Areas. Anambra

state has six Education Zones which include Aguata, Awka, Nnewi, Ogidi, Onitsha and Otuocha. On the other hand, Enugu state has six Education Zones: Agbani, Awgu, Enugu, Nsukka, Obollo-Afor and Udi.

The population of the study comprised all the senior secondary school two (SSS2) students in Anambra and Enugu states. The sample for the study consisted of 550 students from eight selected schools in four education zones. The sample was drawn from the population using purposive sampling technique. The instrument used for the study was a researcher developed questionnaire titled “Igbo Language Learning Questionnaire for Students (ILLQS). The instrument was subjected to validation by experts from the Faculty of Education and Department of Linguistics, Igbo and other Nigerian Languages both in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha method which yielded a coefficient of 0.88. The data collected from the respondents were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The mean of the responses on a 4-point scale was 2.50. Any item with mean 2.50 and above was regarded as agreed and item with less than 2.50 was regarded as disagreed.

Results:

The results were presented in line with the research questions that guided the study.

Research Question

How does the English language spoken by the teacher and his qualification to teach Igbo language influence the students’ learning of Igbo language?

Table 1: Mean Responses and Standard Deviation of Respondents on how the English Language Spoken by the Teacher and his Qualification to Teach Igbo Language Influence Students’ Learning of Igbo Language (N = 550).

S/N	Items	X	SD	Remark
1	Our teacher does not mix English language and Igbo language together while teaching us Igbo language.	2.49	1.11	Disagreed
2	Our teacher speaks English to us while teaching us Igbo language.	2.39	1.08	Disagreed
3	The mixing of English with Igbo language by our teacher while teaching us Igbo language does not bring confusion to me in my learning of Igbo language.	2.32	1.02	Disagreed
4	The mixing of Igbo language with English language by our teacher while teaching us Igbo language brings confusion to me in my Igbo language learning.	2.66	1.00	Agreed
5	I neither speak nor write what our teacher speaks or write on the chalkboard.	2.55	1.07	Agreed
6	I imitate what our teacher speaks and writes for us on the chalkboard.	3.12	0.90	Agreed
7	Our teacher does not explain his points thoroughly while teaching us for easy understanding.	2.02	1.01	Disagreed
8	Our teacher usually asks us questions to know whether we have understood what he teaches us.	3.21	0.98	Agreed



9	The way our teacher responds to questions while teaching makes Igbo language difficult to understand.	2.11	1.00	Disagreed
10	I do not understand what our teacher teaches us whenever he teaches us with English language.	2.83	1,03	Agreed
11	The way our teacher explains his points while teaching us shows that he is really qualified to teach Igbo language.	3.23	0.91	Agreed
12	We shall understand what our teacher teaches us more if he uses only Igbo language as a medium of instruction to teach us.	3.26	0.91	Agreed
13	The language our teacher uses while teaching us influences me because I do not perform well in Igbo language examinations.	2.53	1.05	Agreed
Total		2.67	1.01	Agreed

Table 1 shows the mean responses and standard deviation of the respondents on how the English language spoken by the teacher and his qualification to teach Igbo language influence the students on the learning of Igbo language. From the table, the respondents agreed on items 4,5,6,8,10,11,12 and 13. The items had mean scores 2.66, 2.55,3.12,3.21,2.83,3.23,3.26 and 2.53 respectively. On the other hand, the respondents disagreed on items 1,2,3,7 and 9 with mean scores 2.49, 2.39, 2.32, 2.02 and 2.11. the overall mean score 2.67 indicated that the respondents agreed that the English language spoken by the teacher and his qualification in Igbo language influence the students in the learning of Igbo language.

Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that the English language spoken by the Igbo language teacher and his qualification in Igbo language Influence students in their learning of Igbo language. The findings showed that teachers mix Igbo language and English language together while teaching Igbo language. The students, on their own part, imitate what their teachers speak or write on the chalkboard.

The mixing of English language and Igbo language by the Igbo language teacher while teaching Igbo language does not promote Igbo language learning. This is because students imitate a lot. They also imitate the behaviour of everyone that comes in contact with them including the teachers. This implies that if the teacher continues to mix English language and Igbo language together while teaching Igbo language, students will follow them by mixing English and Igbo language together while speaking or writing. This is in line with the social learning theory of Bandura in 1925 which explains that they have received the negative aspect of knowledge. This will cause them serious setback in the learning of Igbo language.

The respondents, from the findings of this study, agreed that the way their teachers explain points to them showed that they are qualified to teach Igbo language. They agreed that they will understand what their teachers teach them easily if their teachers use only Igbo language as the medium of instruction while teaching Igbo. They made it known that they do not usually understand what their teachers teach them if their teachers use English language as a medium of instruction while teaching Igbo. They also agreed that the language employed by their teachers while teaching

them influences them as they do not usually record positive achievement in their Igbo language examinations. This finding is in agreement with that of Ugwu (2008) and Nwadike (1990) who noted that Igbo language teachers usually find it difficult to speak Igbo language to their students and that the attitude of some teachers towards Igbo language causes a serious setback to Igbo language learning. If such teachers desist from their bad attitude towards Igbo language, the students will begin to record positive achievement in Igbo language. This will promote the learning of Igbo language.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Mixing Igbo language and English languages by teachers while teaching influences students in the learning of Igbo language. Students usually imitate what their teachers speak which makes them to get confused in Igbo language learning. Igbo language teacher's inability to use only Igbo language as a medium of instruction has made some students not to understand what their teacher teaches them very well. The mixing of Igbo and English languages while teaching the students has made the students to also mix the two languages while speaking and writing Igbo language in examinations.

Igbo language teachers should desist from mixing Igbo and English languages while teaching the students Igbo language. Students will understand what they are being taught more easily if the teachers put this advice into practice. Igbo language teachers should make it compulsory for all their students to be reading Igbo literature books regularly so that they will learn how to write and spell Igbo words correctly. This will make the students know how to write using the standard Igbo variety.

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