

**TOPICAL ISSUES IN
LITERACY, LANGUAGE AND
DEVELOPMENT
IN NIGERIA**



Edited By

JOHN I. OGBURN, JAMES O. OGBURN & LINDA J. OGBURN

Chapter Eleven	127
Perception Of Undergraduate Newspaper Readers On The Role Of The Media In Literary Development In Nigeria Taiwo H. Abioye	
Chapter Twelve	138
Students' Attitude And Perception Of The Effectiveness Of The Use Of English As A Foreign Language In Tertiary Institutions. Clement Olusegun Olaniran Kulawole and Chinfort Akechola Oyindoye	
Chapter Thirteen	157
Achieving Media 'Foreign' Literacy In Primary Education In Nigeria. Simone Oziri Ogburna	
Chapter Fourteen	165
Problems Of Teaching Reading Skills In The Lower Classes Of Primary School In Eastern Nigeria. Rufus Olusegun Akinkbote, Clement Olusegun Olaniran Kulawole and Amosoluwa Oluferanke Kulawole	
Chapter Fifteen	176
Effect Of Readability, Material Illustrations And Behavioural Objectives On The Comprehension Of Children's Prose Literature In English In Oyo State Nigeria Okeola Angela Odele	
SECTION THREE	194
PERSPECTIVES ON OLD AND NEW LITERACIES	
Chapter Sixteen	197
Teaching The Upper Basic Student To Write About The GSM In Yoruba Oladunjoye Oluwatomi	

Chapter Seventeen	211
Global System For Mobile Telec: A Positive Dimension To The Reading Habit Of Nigerians.	
Yemi Oluwalanle	
Chapter Eighteen	222
Global Library Compliance And Digital Library Development Of Civil Servants In Akwa Ibom State	
Asikele Akasi Otiaka	
Chapter Nineteen	233
Improving Reading Skills Through The Use Of Information Communication Technology (ICT).	
Nature Oyejide Waleye	
Chapter Twenty	239
Library Development: Without Books.	
Norah M. Christopher	
SECTION FOUR	257
THE READ CAMPAIGN & LITERARY CULTURE	
Chapter Twenty One	264
Let's Appropriate The Pearls In Reading: The We May Live And Not Dandy Exist	
Chukwunonso R. Onukwugu and Jolinda Wob	
Chapter Twenty Two	282
The Read Campaign And Man/2010 Career Development: Finding A Biblical Basis	
David O. Akabi	
Chapter Twenty Three	292
Read Campaign And Freedom Values	
Bubala Sunday Eumilola	
Chapter Twenty-Four	310
The Read Campaign And Moral Character Development	
Hassan Ojojobe	

Chapter Twenty-Five	270
Children's Literature And Cultural Literacy In Nigeria: A Critical Appraisal	
Franc Shittu Ayodeji	

Chapter Twenty-Six	284
Education Policy, Literacy Education And National Development	
Neuzi Callala Akpologbon	

Chapter Twenty-Seven	311
Charting An Overlapped Reading Culture In Nigeria: The Role Of Libraries	
Fatokun Omosola Ojewusi	

Chapter Twenty-Eight	351
Cultural Promotions Through Literary Reflections From Anche's <i>Purple Hibiscus</i>	
Ugoas Dabaweh Odoh and Oluwa C. Njemanze U.	

Chapter Twenty-Nine	360
Placing Children's African Religion In Anthropological Tales	
Uwakwe Uche David and Ubiokun Augustine Kinsola	

SECTION FIVE	365
LITERACY IN ACTION	

Chapter Thirty	376
Library As A Key To Human Dignity And Responsibility: Towards The Renaissance Of The Niger Delta	
Victorinus Iheanacho Chikemechaka	

Chapter Thirty-One	386
Achieving Unity In A Multicultural Nation Through Multi-cultural Literacy And Mass Language Approach	
Odaka Stella Ifeyinwa	

Chapter Thirty-Two	397
The Role Of Literature In Moral Development	
Anhuwa, H. I.	

Chapter Thirty Three Significance Of The Nigerian State As A Catalyst For Reading And National Development David Udofo	405
Chapter Thirty Four Effectiveness Of Reading As A Communication Strategy For Enriching People On Highways Kolawole Raphael Ojehanyi	415
Chapter Thirty Five Maternal Tongue And Peer Counselling Among Nigerian Adolescents On HIV/AIDS And Preventive Role For National Development Kudinat, B. Saheed and Felicia A. Akola	425
Chapter Thirty Six The Role Of Broadcasting In Health Communication For National Development Clementina Anantui	431
Chapter Thirty Seven Literacy And Technological Development In Nigeria A Multi-Lingual Perspective Samuel Akinpoje kanem and Afolabi O. Ogunodipe	447
Chapter Thirty Eight Labour's Appropriation And Technology Transfer For A Critical Examination Of Extension Services And Microfinance In Poverty Alleviation In Nigeria Charles Temimeye Jegede	465
Chapter Thirty Nine LITERATURE CIRCLES AND PRIMARY PUPILS' LITERACY DEVELOPMENT FOR NATION BUILDING Alice E. Ekosen	485

CHAPTER THREE

RETHINKING THE MEANING OF REFORMS: CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES FOR PRACTITIONERS IN LITERACY AND LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Felusa O. OKEBUKOLA (Ph.D)

INTRODUCTION

To reform something is to make it better than it was. A reform therefore is aimed at improving or extending something, consolidating the network, an ideology, an institution or a country. Reforms are fundamental to and constitute a pre-condition for national development.

Nations of the world continues to witness reforms from time to time to stabilize the countries and for developmental purposes. One of such is the current political reforms agenda being put forward by the current government of Nigeria.

The reform agenda was conceived as a package offering an integrated approach to "transforming the country and improving the quality of life of Nigerians, with a special safety net for the vulnerable and meet the needs of the citizenry economically" (NLEDS 2005: 60). According to the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) – a blueprint for the implementation of the reforms published by the Federal Government of Nigeria, educational reforms target six goals:

- Ensure and sustain unfettered access to education through the Universal Basic Education Programme
- Improve the quality of education at all levels
- Use education as a tool for improving the quality of life through skill acquisition and job creation for poverty reduction
- Ensure periodic reviews and effective implementation of the curriculum at the secondary level to meet the requirements of higher education and world of work

- Increase information and communication technology capabilities at all levels

I observe that these educational reforms are included in agenda of the National Policy on education and as such it includes specific proposals for implementing the changes inherent in each item of the package. There have been teaching implications for the entire education system and poses challenges for literacy practitioners. One such challenge is acquisition of literacy, numeracy and basic life skills after the acquisition of basic education can so concern because evidence abound that the implementation of the dictates of the National Policy on the use of languages below is that and have yielded unsatisfactory results.

Even though the policy stipulates that the indigenous languages be used as medium of instruction during the first three years of primary education and the two – year of post-primary, research has consistently shown that English retains its dominant position in the early literacy delivery system in most Nigerian primary schools. (Okechukwu 2006).

The implication of this is that the National objective of making primary school pupils bicultural in both mother tongue and English has not been achieved. The point being made here is that the key contention in Nigeria has been a difficult to even Nigerian children to derive any much benefits linguistically.

The connection between language, social equity and literacy is not a new idea for literacy educators. For decades language and arts teachers have been aware of the power of language in access of literacy power. Language equips man for the society and for societal cohesiveness. Language is an aspect of culture that is considered thought and is an instrument of thought for the expression of thoughts. It is only in a language that one can perceive, understand and express social experiences and social cohesiveness. (Okechukwu 2006) Language and literacy issues are therefore vital and indispensable for any reform.

Thus, if the average Nigerian student is to benefit from the current reforms, the language issue must be addressed. Reforms should transcend the global national barrier and be seen through the reference of learning achievement. Any discussion on the issue of language in a multilingual setting like Nigeria must recognize the liberatory potential of language and literacy.

Obafemi (1983) argued that learning English language is essential for anybody to get ahead in today's world. In fact not providing all students with English language skills is a subtle form of racism (1983).

However, recognizing the potential of English to improve social status and grant economic power does not make the learning of indigenous languages optional for schools. What we need to grapple with is the ideological and practical dilemma of how to teach dominant literacy practices to Nigerian Students while not isolating or rejecting their cultural and cultural literacy practices. I am of the opinion that placing our linguistic diversity education's question mark on having a 'ladder' (part of the classroom). The ladder can best be described as and in which 'the teacher (teacher and learner get power)'.
Ambitiously covering a considerable landscape in the new selection and research during out pre-primary and primary levels of education, this paper explores themes drawn in literacy education at 2 levels. Specifically, it notes the following themes concerning the two range of issues addressed.

- (a) Education must move beyond traditional, deterministic definitions of learning to address diverse structural needs.
- (b) Teachers and their personal pedagogies have a tremendous influence on students' literacy and language learning.
- (c) Literacy and language development are inherently and undeniably related.
- (d) the teaching of literacy and language is exceedingly complex, context specific and ideologically shaped.

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

The ability to communicate through language is what makes human beings stand out from all other God's creation. Language is the repository of all our knowledge and wisdom (except for what is stored in individual minds). All the information that one has is stored in, and researched through language. It is through language that all knowledge is transformed and transferred. The universality of meaning and the sharing of human experiences are both accomplished through language. It is the main medium of teaching/learning in schools thus, its importance can be fully be overestimated.

The acquisition of language is an extremely complex process. It involves much more than merely learning the noises of concrete or abstract entities. It consists of learning the system or systems that also governs, regulates, the transformation of the language. It is the system (grammar) or systems that gives language its tremendous power. Consider this simple sentence: "The leaf is the rain." The same words in a different order convey a drastically altered meaning: "The rain is the leaf." This is only one possible re-allocation.

By the time a child starts schooling, the development of language is well under way. One of the very important functions of the classroom teachers is to help enhance the development of language in all his/her students. At all times, language sophistication is very closely related to functioning well in school.

Research has shown that language has an integrative function. It can initiate actions and affect responses some prior to its actual ending (Germann, 1991). In the school environment, there is a high correlation between literary ability and performance. Children who can read and express themselves very well tend to out-perform those who cannot. This would not be surprising since most school subjects require some interaction through literary communication.

Language as a human resource comes through knowing a language well and the language one knows well is usually the mother tongue. Unfortunately because of the status of English as the official language and the medium of instruction in Nigeria, parents do not encourage their children to speak or learn the indigenous languages. Yet research has consistently shown that these children lack proficiency in English (Bamgbose, 1991; Ojagari, 1999; Odejinwa, 1991; Odejinwa, 2005).

This is noted by their widespread ignorance for students' low achievement in other school subjects, English being the vehicle of knowledge transfer across the curriculum. Literary development is an area of study that crosses all sectors of disciplines. Of note is the interconnectivity between reading and literary. In fact literary is defined as the ability to read and write. Thus the two words are near synonyms. Because of this, any line of inquiry or discussion of literary development must of necessity centre on reading. Current research about language and literary acquisition significantly shape our understanding of practical concerns (didactics, methods and interactivity).

DIAGNOSTIC AND METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES IN LITERACY ACQUISITION

Experimental and research findings of those who have academic and professional interest in the study and teaching of reading in Nigeria have shown that the methods of teaching reading in Nigeria vary widely throughout the country (Ukachi 1991). This is due partly to the problem of overpopulation and confusion plaguing the multi-lingual Nigerian society. It is a situation in which the teacher of reading is obliged to choose from methods and approaches in which s/he lacks competence (Okechukwu 1999).

Okechukwu (2000) found in a comparative study of the relative effectiveness of the phonics and look-and-say methods of teaching reading that using the phonics method students performed better in the task of word attack than by word analysis while those taught using the look-and-say method performed better in the test of identification of high frequency words. It was however found that emergent readers who were taught using a combination of phonics and look-and-say method performed significantly better than the other groups in fluency, word recognition and reading comprehension.

Ukachi (1991) stated that the methods adopted by teachers depend largely on the language course books available for use in their schools. He also observed that none of the basal English Readers commonly used in Nigerian is based on any of the synthetic approaches namely the alphabetic and phonics methods. According to the primers, and the accompanying guide to teachers, words or sentences without direction, visual letters or sounds are expected to be the initial teaching units.

Okechukwu (2000) found out that disabled readers performed significantly better in word attack skills when exposed to phonological awareness. She also found that emphasis on teaching the combination of letters and sounds in a prescribed manner with teaching and learning of sound patterns are increasingly useful in developing oral reading skills, word recognition and word attack skills.

It is worthy of note that in Nigerian schools, introduction to reading begins with the learning and memorisation of letters of the alphabet. This method has been widely criticised for being too tedious and requiring a lot of attention and discipline by both teachers and pupils. The criticism is that this method has little motivational

appears to be based on the premise that letters are meaningless and therefore uninteresting to the learner. Even when the letters are combined to form words and sentences they have little or no meaning to the child since the emphasis is on the letter combinations rather than their inherent value to the learner.

However, the problem persists in spite of its being largely unused in Britain and America because many Nigerian parents and teachers think that first reading task for their children is to be able to read and recognize all the letters of the alphabet. Perhaps this is logical considering the fact that most Nigerian children come in contact with English for the first time in school. It thus would seem to make some sense to first introduce the alphabet (which forms the smallest unit of the language) - an idea of starting from the simple to the complex. Although letters of the alphabet may not convey any meaning on their own but the Nigerian child begins by knowing that words and sentences are made up of simple letters which can easily be recognised and pronounced.

INTERVENTION

Children in today's classrooms in Nigeria come from myriad backgrounds educationally, linguistically and culturally. Some children enter school with several years of pre-school experience by rich experiences with literacy and a broad base of knowledge. Others enter a school speaking a language other than English although some of these learners have had a rich linguistic and cultural experience (Osawa, Harris & Griffin 1986). Most children enter to school understanding how to learn based on their specific culture, while others enter school with little or no pre-school experience, limited home literacy experiences and little broad based knowledge. Many children arrive at the doorstep of education with a cultural schema that is an organized knowledge of the world based on their previous experiences (Anderson, Gilman & Tindley 1984).

The essentials of knowledge that each child brings to school are increasingly more varied and the teacher is challenged to provide effective reading instruction to ensure that every child learns, especially when many students do not come to school knowing how to listen, decipher non-verbal messages and follow directions independently.

Students who for the first time go to another country to school without all the necessary tools to begin the complex task of learning to read will depend on the attainment of a highly qualified classroom teacher who can make use of what they do bring, their cultural schema.

Research on literacy learning clearly shows that the process of listening, speaking, reading, writing and thinking develop simultaneously as learners become literate (Geopier, 2003). Language arts methods recommended today capitalize on the fact that all aspects develop together, even or especially for high level students with visual schema. These students benefit from using multiple processes to build schema and increase schema. Using a variety of approaches to teach language allows teachers the discretion to select variable methods, and the concept of a balanced approach involves as a minimum attention to these students (Krohn, 1998).

A balanced approach includes direct and explicit instruction, as well as extensive opportunities for thinking and writing. Any approach that incorporates these goals and allows students to grow at their own rates can be viewed as a viable balanced method.

To this end, Chubbuck (2004) proposes a model for early reading acquisition which focuses tightly on the needs of two learners. Readers are grouped in accordance with their reading levels and needs as follows:

Group A (Below average) This consists of one group readers with little or minimal exposure to spoken English language. This could consist of children from areas of low socio-economic status and children who speak only their native language or children from illiterate homes. This group of children needs a whole year of oral language development programme promoting pre-reading and reading readiness skills.

Group B (Average) These are children who have had some knowledge of English acquired through spoken language in the nursery classes and acquaintance with books. They may be found in children from semi rural or urban schools, average socio-economic status, from semi literate homes. This group could be made to run oral language development programme with organized beginning reading instruction.

Group C (Above average / Beginning Reading Level) These are children who have not only acquired knowledge of spoken language in the nursery schools but they also speak English at home, have

ness as in spoken and written programmes on television, still through the mass media. The use of English in the primary and the English as a second language programmes is a problem for the children in this group, many of whom are not familiar with the language. Such is the case of most children in private schools. They are ready for learning and the rate of development is expected to be high.

The European level reading programme should be the Guided Reading Format, or classes in instruction drawn up by experts in Guided Reading Instruction.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

As primary schoolers work towards improving the learning achievement of our students, we share the growing concern about the quality of language and literacy education programmes (especially beginning readers) in our schools. So, let us determine whether culturally, socially, linguistically disadvantaged children are being treated as a disability that requires remediation.

Research shows that over the past decade the number of non-readers continue to soar (Uguzli 1989; Ozgenekci 2004). Public and private schools of literacy are not reaching disabled groups in disproportionate numbers (Okekechola 1999).

Perhaps the cruelest injustice is that the Nigerian child is denied the right to acquire formal education in his or her mother tongue. Nigerian public school children do not receive high quality language and literacy instruction that raise their levels of literacy achievement, read at par with children from elite homes.

This paper challenges the literacy community to rethink the meaning of reform, particularly as it relates to the implementation of the National Policy and students' language and literacy development in Nigerian primary schools.

Clearly, the research findings and inspiring discussions inspire us to re-examine the ways in which we must continually strive to expand our own subjectivities and model instructional practices that embrace diverse identities, experiences and, therefore, norms that should find place in our classrooms, so as to ensure that no child is left behind in early literacy acquisition.

REFERENCE

- Abiodun, J. O. (1977). Reading in Nigeria. *The Reading Teacher* 4(2/3), 509-511.
- Anderson, R. C., Osburn, E., & Tierney, R. J. (1981). Learning to read in American schools: local, national and content test. *Harvard, New York*.
- Baloghuse, A. (1992). Language and the nation: The language question in sub-Saharan Africa. *Edinburgh University Press*.
- Camper, D. J. (2001). Literacy: Helping children transition learning of their second language. *Journal of Multicultural Education*.
- Federal Government of Nigeria (2006). National Education Improvement and Development Strategy. Nigeria National Planning Commission.
- Obiast, I. (2006). The place of language in Nigeria's national Agenda. *Language and Educational Affairs in Nigeria* in O. Njima, P. Ekekeke and B. M. Oke (Eds). *Linguistic Association of Nigeria*.
- Ogonyi, E. C. (1999). Problems of teaching and learning the English Language. *The Voice* 10, 14.
- Oketokolu, E. O. (1979). A Comparative study of the performance of secondary students in public and private schools in reading skills. *Nigeria Education Review* 5, 18-21.
- Oketokolu, E. O. (2001). Teachers' perceptions on the adoption of the language policy in primary schools: An empirical investigation. *Educational Perspectives* 18(1), 18-21.
- Oketokolu, E. O. (2004). Re-evaluating "The Reading Wars": Literacy and Reading in Nigeria. *ELI* 11(1), 134-143.
- Oketokolu, E. O. (2004). Transition from L1 to L2 in upper primary classes: issues arising. *Journal of Applied Linguistics (JAL)* 3, 11-30.
- Oketokolu, E. O. (2005). Implementation of the language policy. *Dayang Obiora: An International Journal of Education* in Africa. P. A. Ezeikeogaku (in press).
- Oketokolu, E. O. (2005). A Clinical assessment of students' motivation to read. *Journal of Educational Psychology and Development (In Press)*.

- Okechukwu, T. O. (2004). Effect of phonological awareness on the reading achievement of disabled readers. *Literary and Reading in Nigeria* 1 (In press). Federal Government of Nigeria (2004) National Policy on Education.
- Okechukwu, T. O. (2005). *Acquisitional Perceptions: Phonological deficits in the acquisition of reading in Nigeria*. A publication of the Department of Curriculum studies, Lagos State University, Ikeja, Lagos 25.
- Okechukwu, T. O. (2005). A comparative study of reading achievement in first and second language learners. *Nigerian Journal of Counselling and Applied Psychology* 2 (In press).
- Omojowo, J. (1991). Developing reading in mother tongue and English in basic schools: Challenges in Practice. In T. O. Okechukwu, J. S. Ayo, and Y. Aloderin (Eds). *Literary and Reading in Nigeria* 1, 23-29.
- Omotayo, C. K. (1991). Teacher effectiveness as a factor in the reading empowerment of the nursery and elementary school African child. *Proceedings of the 1st Pan African Reading for All Conference*, Pretoria, South Africa.
- Shaywitz, U. K., Burns, M. A. & Griffin, P. (1996). *Preventing reading difficulties in young children*. Washington: D.C.: National Academy Press.
- Uwah, S. O. (1983). Reading improvement in Nigeria as a multidisciplinary problem and prospects. In Uwah, S. O., Omojowo, R. A. and Okey, S.K. M (Eds) *Literary and Reading in Nigeria* 1, 16-27.
- Uwah, S. O. (1985). Moving towards the year intellectual milestones: a psycholinguistic view of learning to read and reading to learn. In S. Uwah (ed) *Literary and Reading in Nigeria* 1, 1-14.
- Uwah, S. O. (1991). Reading for Intellectual Development: A psycholinguistic view. *Literary and Reading in Nigeria* 2, 1-14.