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Enhancing Indigenous Language Teaching and Learning Through Instructional Media

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ABSTRACT

One of the factors responsible for language ineffectiveness in schools is lack of adequate and appropriate instructional media in the teaching and learning of such a language. With the growing public awareness of the importance of indigenous languages in the education of the child, and the global transition into advanced technology, it is of necessity that indigenous language teachers improve their grasp of the language not only in the content knowledge but also in the pedagogical approaches with the ability to employ relevant instructional media to enhance teaching and learning of indigenous languages.

INTRODUCTION

The importance of instructional media to effective teaching and learning cannot be over-estimated. Many scholars have attested to the fact that the employment of teaching materials in proper balance would surely produce excellent learning results. Abiri (1980:35-41), Awoniyi (1982:116-125), Akinpelu (1993) and Adeleke (1996:6-10) have emphasised the relevance of electronic media in the study of Nigerian languages.

There is no doubt that the language of the twentieth century is education. This has resulted in the population explosion witnessed in the schools at the various levels today. Every instructional area (subject) must therefore be handled effectively. While experts in other fields are trying to meet the challenges of the modern age, the indigenous language teachers cannot afford to fold their arms. It has been established that development of skills and attitudes like curiosity, manipulative ability, spontaneous flexibility, initiative, industry, manual dexterity, mechanical comprehension and the co-ordination of hand and eye would be best acquired through the mother-tongue as a medium of education (Fafunwa, Macaulay and Sokoya 1989:10-11).

In this paper, instructional media would be examined not only as instructional aids but also as media of instruction for indigenous languages, especially in Nigeria.

Instructional media, also known as educational media, are described by Abimbade (1997:44-53) as a broad range of resources which can be used to facilitate effective and efficient communication in the teaching/learning process. They are educational and learning resource materials (which may be audio, visual or audio-visual) that convey information or message(s). Instructional media could be classified into non-print, print and electronic media.

Non-print media could be re-classified into projected media and non-projected media. The projected media include films (8cm - 16mm), microfilms, projector, OHP — transparencies, slides, filmstrips, opaque, etc., non-portable bulletin, models, puppets, etc. Activity (centred) media which could be classified under non-projected include, according to (Akinyemi, Talabi and Akinpelu 1992:91): experimentation, field trip demonstrations, dramatic programmed instruction teaching machine, computer assisted instruction. The print media could be in form of textbooks, fictions, journals, newspapers, magazines, posters, handouts, programmed texts, etc.

Electronic Instructional Media (EIM) could be audio media like audio tapes, records and radio or visual media like calculator, computer and electric board, and audio-visual like television, video tapes and films (Abimbade 1997:46). For language teaching and learning, language laboratory is an essential facility.

While audio media mostly appeal to the sense of hearing, the visual media rely on vision and the audio-visual media employ both sight and sound. It could be seen therefore that for effective teaching and learning especially the languages, it is essential to involve the sense organs. Abiri (1980:36) has it that language learning involves perception through the sense organs, and it is advantageous to promote multi-media perception in order to ensure lasting impression. The primary objective of employing instructional media in the teaching learning process is to amplify teaching, make it more effective and facilitate learning. However, it must be stressed that such materials cannot entirely be a substitute for the teacher in the classroom situation.

THE CONCEPTS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching is a dynamic process and complex activity which facilitates learning. Its complexity stems out of the fact that other variables such as the subject matter, methods, media and human factors are involved. While it should be noted that teaching can be viewed from the perspectives of doctrine, profession and instruction (Adeleke 1996:2), the instruction aspect would be more relevant here because of its pedagogical implications.

Ijaiye (1988:8) quoting Farrant (1980) explains that teaching and learning are opposites of the same coin. Hence, teaching is not complete until learning has taken place.

Learning is a relatively permanent change in behaviour arising from experience. For learning to take place, the learner must exhibit a response as a result of stimulus. That is to say that for any meaningful learning to take place, acquisition of information (knowledge, ideas, skills, experiences values), retention and utilization or recall of the acquired information are essential ingredients. Experience is an important ingredient to effective learning, hence, teachers must actually present learning experience in an exciting and stimulating way in order to make indelible marks on the minds of the learners. This could no doubt be achieved through a careful selection and proper use of instructional media. While selecting such materials, these factors must be noted: type of learners, their age, educational levels and interest, the learning situation and what they are expected to do based on the behavioural objectives.

INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES IN MODERN DAY NIGERIA

Yoruba language (like other major indigenous languages) has always had a place in the educational systems of the South-Western part of Nigeria right from the time formal education took off in 1842. It is noteworthy that most Africans consider the languages of the colonial masters as being neutral and prestigious while the indigenous languages are considered irrelevant to our national need (Essien 1981:5,9).

However, a change of attitude towards indigenous language has been witnessed in recent years following the efforts of Professors Ayo Bamgbose, J.O.O. Abiri, Wande Abimbola and others. The Ife Primary Education Research Project of 1970 to 1978 has been the boldest experiment in the use of mother-tongue (Yoruba) as a medium of instruction. While commenting on the six-year programme, Oderinde (1996:266) said:

It has been the boldest experiment in the use of mother-tongue at the primary education level, proving that primary education conducted in the mother-tongue (Yoruba) leads to greater result in permanent literacy and numeracy, has greater surrender value and makes the child a better integrated and adjusted citizen in the community.

From the above, the importance of language to education and human existence could be seen since communication between two or more people and in a teaching-learning situation is only realisable through language, every means must be employed to make communication more effective, more meaningful and more stimulating by the teacher to bring about an effective, purposeful and rewarding learning.

instruction, political, mass media and economic activities especially at the grassroot, there is the need for an effective application of modern technology that would enhance the teaching and learning of the languages.

INSTRUCTIONAL MEDIA IN INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

As indicated earlier, instructional media could be used as instructional aids and as a medium of instruction. There is no doubt that the language laboratory is invaluable in the teaching of language either at the first or second language level. It is unfortunate that this facility is lacking in many of our higher institutions, not to mention the primary and the secondary schools. However, there are other resources through which language could be taught and learnt effectively. Instructional resources used as instructional materials or aids would be considered first.

INSTRUCTIONAL MEDIA AS INSTRUCTIONAL AIDS

The following consideration should guide an instructor in media selection: the taste, the behavioural objectives, applicability of the materials, pupils' learning styles, availability of the materials and the ability of the teacher (Abimbade 1997:47 - 49).

In the teaching of grammar, a carefully prepared and well graded substitution table would help students in the mastery of language structural patterns (Obanya, Dada, Ilenado and Olowe, 1989:67). It also helps to control vocabulary and structural patterns in composition writing. For example, 36 sentences can be derived from the table below:

Table 1: To teach Awe gbolohun asaponle alasiko (adverbial clause of time)

Ni ale ana	Bola		amala
Ni Ose ti o	Baba agba	je	dodo ati ewa
koja	Oluko wa		ireso jolo ofu
Ni osan oni	Ore mi		

For effective teaching of both listening and speaking skills, (audio-lingual skills) especially in a multilingual situation, the use of audio media like audiotapes would help to teach correct pronunciation, stress pattern and tone. Pictures, flash cards, word charts, slides and slide projectors would help in teaching vocabularies. Of course, the chalkboard would do a lot in helping to develop writing and reading skills.

In the teaching of the linguistic variations and dialectology, the use of video tapes or audio-tapes would assist the teacher in handling that effectively since he might not speak all the dialects. For instance, the word 'Ta ni yan' in standard Yoruba has the following varieties in:

Egba: Le sii yan
Oyo: Ta nu un
Awori (Ota): Le si wa abbl.

Collection of oral genres on audio tapes would enhance the teaching and learning of oral literature. In Yoruba, there are professional rhapsodist such as Odolaye Aremu (dadakuada chanter) Alabi Ogundepo (Ijala chanter) Lanrewaju Adepoju (leading modern poet) to mention just a few. Recorded cassettes of some of the poets could be procured and relayed to the students. Headphones in the language laboratory could be used to control and correct articulatory problem of individual learners.

Electronic media like video, films and television would be effective in the teaching of written literature and topics on customs and traditional practices. For instance, play or novels in indigenous language could be acted and filmed or recorded on videotapes to supplement the teachers' explanation. Indigenous cultural practices like traditional marriage, birth, funeral, festival and technology like soapmaking, could be recorded on video-tapes to bring the learners in contact with the culture. Gone are the days when the classroom will be as silent and sombre as the graveyard. Teacher-student interaction is thus maximised.

INSTRUCTIONAL MEDIA AS MEDIUM OF TEACHING INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

Audio media, audiovisuals and printed media could be effectively employed as medium of instruction for indigenous languages and an area that readily comes to mind is that of distance learning programmes. The commonest is the printed media which could be supplemented by illustrations, diagrams, blueprints and sketches (Igbafe 1995:2). Correspondence education has become popular in recent years in Nigeria. Universities like the University of Ibadan and the University of Lagos award external degrees or the Nigeria Certificate of Education (NCE) while educational bodies like the National Teachers' Institute, Kaduna offer courses leading to the award of Teachers Grade II Certificate and the NCE. Print materials could be prepared in indigenous languages to help distant learners most especially the L2 learners.

Instructions in indigenous languages can be programmed in print (books, manuals, etc.) and or electronic media like audio-tapes, computer as programmed instruction is one of the innovations in education involving self-instructional strategy which would enable the students to learn at their own pace (Abimbade 1997: 126). Oral genres like Rara,

and others could be recorded on audio or video tapes for students to listen to or view at home for better appreciation as such recordings would be nearer to the life presentations of those genres. Aural clues such as intonation and pauses, paralinguistic information such as facial gestures, register, social setting and cultural behaviour would be depicted effectively (Bouman 1990:8).

Educational broadcast can be used to enrich the indigenous language curriculum or for direct instructional purposes (Abimbade 1997: 103). Educational broadcast could be made through radio and the television. Teachers could arrange their lessons to come up during such broadcasts: literary texts in Yoruba like the play *Efunsetan Aniwo* by Akinwumi Isola would be well taught if the students can watch the film through video gadget or the television broadcast. Closely related to this is interactive Radio Programme (IRP) and Tele-Lecture (TL) that is, lecture through the telephone.

On Radio Nigeria Ibadan, 'Oro O Nile' and 'Iri Aye' are interactive Radio Programmes. Other examples are 'Eyi Ara' (Radio O-Y-O), 'Eroya' (Radio Osun) 'Oro Sunnukun' (Ogun Radio) and 'Irinkerindo' (OGBC II FM Stereo). On these radio programmes, the producers interact with the audience (general public) through telephone conversation. At times, resource persons are invited to speak on a given topic or subject like 'Awon Aarun Gbajumo' (Sexually Transmitted Diseases). In case of mystical stories as in 'Iri Aye' and 'Irinkerindo' implicated or accused persons are allowed to defend themselves as they are subjected to cross examination before the public through the telephone.

Other instructional media are Games and Simulation. Simulation has to do with the use of a model — a simplified version of reality of only those essential features of the learning objectives (Abimbade 1997:156). Three basic methods: case-study, role-play and gaming could be used in simulation. Games refer to elements of competition involving two parties (individuals or groups). Akinpelu and Akinyemi (1995:134-40) designed a game called 'NIGERIANLAND GAME' to effectively teach some lexical items in Nigerian languages. Another example is the AKWABA development by Professor Akinyemi which was designed to teach a language in Ghana. Resource person is an example of role-play method in simulation.

From the foregoing, it could be seen that an expert in indigenous language teaching has a lot of resources at his disposal to employ in his instructional processes.

PERCEIVED LIMITATIONS AND SOLUTIONS

The following problems are perceived as militating against the effective use of instructional media for the teaching of indigenous languages.

Inadequate Manpower

In the first place, there is the dearth of qualified indigenous language teachers. Added to this is the fact that educational technologists who could design relevant instructional media for teaching and learning mother tongue are relatively few. Hence, there is the need for the Federal Government, educational administrators, and curriculum designers and planners to review the language education programme in such a way that there would be adequate provision of instructional media or curriculum materials. Even if teachers are trained but there is no instructional media to work with, no effective teaching of any language can be realised.

Finance

The issue of population explosion in many of our schools is a problem that can be effectively ameliorated with the provision of electronic media in the schools. The problem envisaged is that of availability of fund to produce or provide the materials for all the schools. It is clear that instructions programmed in audiotapes would assist the teacher in doing less talking in the class, the financial implications of making the provision for all schools with standard language laboratory might be unrealistic in a depressed economy. However, money expended on education is an investment that would eventually move the nation forward.

CONCLUSION

The thrust of this paper has been an attempt at raising and examining the issue promoting indigenous language teaching and learning through instructional media. The benefits of a proper application of the educational media have been highlighted. While there are constraints to the use of instructional media, it is axiomatic that an awareness of a problem is a prerequisite for solutions. It is hoped that government, curriculum planners, teachers and philanthropists would rise up to the challenge so that very soon financial assistance, attitudinal changes towards indigenous language, sustained academic activities and other problems confronting curriculum development and implementation, with regard to indigenous languages, most especially in Nigeria will be solved. For indigenous languages to occupy an incontestable place in the scientific scheme of things in the 21st century, there must be notable improvement and advancement in the area of instructional media usage.

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