



JOURNAL OF NIGERIAN LANGUAGES AND CULTURE

Volume 6, No 1-March 2004

ISSN 1595 - 4730

CONTENTS

ARTICLE	PAGE
LANGUAGE, DRAMA PRODUCTION AND CULTURAL IMPERIALISM ON NIGERIAN TELEVISION - SEGUN ODUKOMAIYA PH.D.	1
THEATRE AS AN INSTRUMENT OF WAR THE BIAFRAN ARMED FORCES THEATRE EXAMPLE - RAY EMEANA	8
IGBO SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DISEMPOWERMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE "PRISONERS' DILEMMA" CHINEDUM NWAJIUBA	18
CULTURE, WOMEN AND THEIR RIGHTS IN NIGERIAN SOCIETY. UDEZE, CHINENYE V.,	23
REFORM AND REACTION: DEMOCRATISATION AND ANNULMENT IN THE THIRD WORLD THE CASE OF RANGOONALGHERSABUJA AXIS 1989-1993 ADOYI ONOJA	30
THE CHANGING SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT FOR LANGUAGE TRANSMISSION AMONG MULTILINGUAL EGGON FAMILIES ANTHONIA E. DUGGA (MRS.)	38
IMPLEMENTATION OF LANGUAGE POLICIES IN AFRICA: THE NIGERIAN CASE - JOY O. UGURU (LECTURER)	48
UBE AND MOTHER TONGUE - IROKOTOLA, P. K. (MR)	53
OJO STUDENTS' LANGUAGE PREFERENCE FOR INSTRUCTION IN LAGOS JUNIOR SCHOOLS: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION (UBE) - MAKINDE, SOLOMON OLANREWaju	59 ✓
READING INTEREST OF JUNIOR SCHOOL PUPILS: IMPLICATIONS FOR LIBRARY PROVISIONS IN THE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION (UBE) SCHEME MAKINDE, OMAWUMI, O. (MRS.)	68
'FRANGLISATION' PROCESS: WHAT HOPE FOR NIGERIA'S MOTHER-TONGUE POLICY - DR. U. K. EKE (PH.D),	77
HISTORY, NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE UBE: THE WAY FORWARD - JOHN CLIFF NWADIKE SENIOR LECTURER,	85
DR. (MRS) OLUFUNMILAYO M. OGUNKY - THE LEXICAL ORGANIZATION OF YORUBA COMPOUNDS -	89
SOCIO- CULTURAL STEREOTYPING OF WOMEN IN TWO NIGERIAN HOME VIDEOS - HALIMAT BUIHARI A- SEKULA	100
THE LOGIC OF THOMAS HOBBS'S THESIS OF ABSOLUTE SOVEREIGNTY - ANOPUE, CALISTUS ELO CUSSONS	107
MASS MEDIA AND THE CULTURE OF POLITICAL PROPAGANDA. A CASE STUDY OF THE NIGERIAN 2003 GENERAL ELECTIONS. -	114

STUDENTS' LANGUAGE PREFERENCE FOR INSTRUCTION IN LAGOS JUNIOR SCHOOLS: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION (UBE)

BY MAKINDE, SOLOMON OLANREWAJU

DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM STUDIES,
FACULTY OF EDUCATION, LAGOS STATE UNIVERSITY, OJO.

ABSTRACT

This study examines the language preference of Junior Secondary School students in selected schools in Lagos State and the implications for the Universal Basic Education. A sample of 120 JSS3 students randomly selected from three secondary schools in Ojo Local Government Area were involved in the study. A researcher-designed questionnaire was used to collect relevant data. Analysis shows that most of the respondents preferred English Language for classroom instruction to the Nigerian languages. Students from educated parents and those who speak Nigerian languages at home differed significantly from their counterparts respectively. Recommendations were therefore made on the need to promote Nigerian languages and making them the media of instruction in the UBE scheme.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Language functions as a means of communication and self-expression. It also plays an indispensable or a vital role in education. It is a major aspect of a people's culture. It constitutes an instructional area in the school system and also functions as a medium of instruction. This goes to show that in any teaching-learning process, language is involved.

As indicated, language is crucial to education because it is the vehicle of thought (Vygostky, 1934, cited in Ayodele, 1988) that helps a child to understand whatever knowledge that is being imparted on him. In others words, the success of a learner is contingent on his ability to operate in the language of instruction.

Nigeria is a multilingual country with about 400 native languages (Osaji, 1979, and Bamgbose, 1994) out of which only three are recognized as major: Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa (Babajide, 2001). In spite of having three major Nigerian languages, none has succeeded in metamorphosing into a truly national language in the same sense as Russian is to the people of Russia, Swahili to some East African countries and Arabic to those in North Africa (Ayodele, 1988). As a result of this situation, English, a foreign language is serving that purpose. This has led to a situation whereby the thinking process of an average Nigerian child right from kindergarten is dominated by English language and this has resulted into the stunted development and growth in science and technology in Nigeria, judging from the unimpressive performance of learners in primary and secondary schools (Makinde, 2000).

As rightly observed by Bamgbose (1994), many children in Nigeria sit through classes to receive instruction in English without understanding what they are learning. He therefore asked rhetorically: "what sort of contribution can such products make to nation building?"

According to Akinbote and Viatonu (1996), many parents in Nigeria still prefer the English medium of instruction to the mother tongue in spite of the available psychological, linguistic and empirical evidence on the relevance of the latter. Such parents erroneously believe that fluency in English is an index of literacy and civilization.

In the National Policy on Education (1977) revised in (1981) and (1998), it is provided that the medium of instruction in the primary school shall initially be the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community but at a later stage English. The effectiveness of this provision has been put to empirical testing by the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) in the famous Ife Six-Year Primary Project where children who were taught in Yoruba were said to have performed better than their counterparts in English (Ojerinde, 1986). Olarewaju (1991) observes that any Nigerian language can be developed to be used in scientific writing, as it will make science learning more meaningful to the learners. He also believes that using a foreign language to teach science is inimical to intellectual development. In an experiment Olarewaju and Jimoh (1995) found that it was possible to teach and learn genetics with relative ease in Yoruba language as those taught in Yoruba language performed better than those in the English medium group.

As characteristic of the Nigerian situation, Ogunsiji (2001) observes that no serious follow-up programme to the Ife project has been carried out. It is pertinent to know that amidst this seeming apathy, the Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme has been launched in September 1999 by President Obasanjo.

As described by Okebukola (2000) it covers nine (9) years of compulsory education (primary + junior secondary) and it also includes adult and non-formal education and education of special groups like the nomad. The scheme is aimed at ensuring that all school-age children are enrolled by 2005. Emenanajo (2001) sees the scheme as:

Education for all, education for value and education for life-long living which aims at providing reading, writing and numeracy skills ... and it is designed to enable learners acquire functional literacy.

Acquisition of functional literacy is more easily achievable in the language one has the highest linguistic resources to communicate effectively.

This view is shared by Emenanajo (2001) when he opined that:

The bottom line of the UBE is learning as a life-long engagement for all who go through it in the formal and non-formal moulds of education. Such learning is best acquired in the language one knows and understands best.

It is against this background that this researcher finds it necessary to investigate the language preference for instruction among students in junior secondary schools as well as their attitudes towards the teaching of Nigerian languages and to discuss the implications for the UBE scheme. It is very important to conduct the study because students in the junior school are expected to benefit tremendously from the UBE scheme. Not only that they are expected to learn at least two Nigerian languages (one as L_1 and the other as L_2 taken from the three major Nigerian languages) as provided in the National Policy on Education (1998).

The following research questions were answered in this study:

1. Which language do the students prefer as a medium of classroom instruction?
2. Which language of classroom instruction is preferred by the students for teaching?
 - a) Science subjects
 - b) Social Science subjects (commercial subjects)
 - c) Art subjects
3. What reasons do students give for their language preference?
4. Is there any significant difference in the attitude of students of educated and illiterate parents towards the teaching of Nigerian languages?

METHODOLOGY

(a) Sample

The participants for this study were 120 JSS3 students drawn from three co-educational secondary schools in Ojo Local Government Area of Lagos State (66 males and 54 females)

(b) Instrumentation

A questionnaire on Students' Language Preference for Classroom Instruction (SLAPRECI) was constructed and administered to the respondents for data collection. It has three sections A, B and C. Section A sought information respondents' background (tribe, parents' educational qualifications, linguistic background, etc). Section B contains items that sought information on respondents' language preference for classroom instruction while Section C contains 23 items using four points Likert format of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD) on students' attitude towards the teaching of Nigerian languages. Using the Cronbach Alpha statistical method, the reliability of the instrument was established as 0.86.

(c) Data Collection and Analysis

The instrument was administered directly to the respondents by the investigator and three Nigerian language teachers in the schools involved in the study. The analysis was done by computing the responses on percentages where necessary and by computing the mean and standard deviation. Differences between pairs of mean scores were determined by the use of the t-test.

Research Question One

Which language do the students prefer as a medium of classroom instruction?

Table 1: Language Preference for Classroom Instructions

Item	Statement	English	Nigerian Languages				Total
			Igbo	Hausa	Yoruba	Sub-Total	
1	My best preferred language is	68(56.7)	19(15.8)	11(9.2)	22(4.3)	52(43.3)	120(100)
2	The language preferred for teaching	75(62.5)	12(10.0)	10(8.33)	23(19.2)	45(37.5)	120(100)

	science is						
3.	The language preferred for teaching commercial subjects is	65(54.2)	20(16.7)	11(9.1)	24(20.0)	55(45.9)	120(100)
4	The language preferred for teaching the art subjects is	66(55.0)	20(16.7)	11(9.1)	23(19.2)	54(45.0)	120(100)

*Percentages given in brackets.

From table 1 above, the language preferred by the students is English language as 68 respondents (56.7%) chose the language while 52 (43.3%) of them preferred Nigerian languages as media for classroom instruction.

Research Question Two

Which language is preferred by the students for teaching:

- Science subjects
- Commercial subjects
- Art subjects

In table 1 above, the language preferred by most of the students for teaching science subject is English. Seventy-five (75) of them (62.5%) showed preference for it while 45 of them (37.5%) opted for Nigerian languages.

For the teaching of commercial subjects most of the students 65 (54.2%) showed the preference of English while 55 (45.8%) chose Nigerian languages.

For the teaching of art subjects 66 (55%) decided in favour of English while 54 (45%) opted in favour of Nigerian languages.

Research Question Three

What reasons do students give for their language preference?

Table 2: Reasons for Preferring English for Classroom Instruction

S/N	Stated Reason	No.	%
1	It is an international language.	55	45.8
2	It is more popular than local languages.	47	39.2
3	It is a neutral language that binds the various tribes together.	58	48.3
4	It is used in teaching us in the school.	59	49.2
5	To be able to speak English more fluently.	49	40.8
6	Many of us speak different Nigerian languages.	45	37.5

Group	N	X	SD	DF	Calculated t	Critical t	Remarks
Speakers of NL at Home	71	25.38	10.85	118	2.56	1.96	P < .05 *Significant
Non-speakers of NL at Home	49	21.9	4.65				

* $t(df\ 118) = 2.56; P < .05$ *Significant

From the table 5 above, the calculated t value of 2.56 is significant at 0.5 level of probability. The null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the attitude of students from educated and illiterate parents is therefore rejected.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION

An examination of the result in table 1 as regards research questions one and two shows that most of the students preferred the English language to the Nigerian languages as medium of classroom instruction. It is unfortunate to observe that some Nigerian children do not realize the importance of their mother tongues. This situation is a contradiction of the observation of Bamgbose (1982) and Sanusi (2002) who in their studies on the causes of students' failures in science and technical subjects found that lack of proficiency in the language of instruction was an important factor. There is therefore the need to re-orientate the Nigerian child on the need to cherish and promote his or her cultural heritage. Hashim, (2002) believes that the imposition of a foreign language as a medium of instruction is one of the factors that militate against the meaningful acquisition of knowledge and skills among most African learners.

It is equally unfortunate that most of the respondents opined that English would be better for them in teaching the science subjects. This no doubt is at variance with the observation of Olarewaju (1991) who observes that any Nigerian language can be developed to be used in teaching science subjects more meaningfully. If the beneficiaries of the Yoruba medium of the Ife Six-Year Primary Project were not disadvantaged even up to the tertiary levels, it will be unthinkable for anyone to entertain any fear if indigenous languages are used as media of instruction in our junior secondary schools.

On why some respondents preferred the English medium of instruction to that of mother tongue(s), as displayed in table 2, it is quite true that most of our classrooms are heterolingual in nature and it might be difficult to use or choose a Nigerian language in teaching the learners. Obayan (1999) considers this situation to be a hindrance to education in indigenous languages in Africa's urban areas. But he equally shares the belief that languages (including African languages) by nature have a way of growing and adapting to the demands of changing times. Thus scientific and technological related concepts could be realized in these languages either by borrowing, phonological adaptations or by pushing into cultural resources.

It is necessary to consider the honest confession of a few of the respondents who in the table 3 submit that "they understand better when taught in their local languages" and that "they understood better when they were taught with a combination of English and their local tongue(s)". Ismail (1998) supports this situation when he observed that the use of foreign languages as media of instruction in schools has resulted in many problems like "low academic achievement and teacher's poor initiative in putting their best across to the learners."

From the analysis of research questions four and five, it is noteworthy that students illiterate parents and those who speak Nigerian languages at home are more positive in their attitude towards the teaching and learning of Nigerian languages than their counterparts. These findings are not unrelated to that of Akinbote and Viatonu (1996) who found that parents from various occupational backgrounds differed significantly in their attitude towards the use of the mother tongue in primary education. In other words, occupation and the social status of parents may be major factors in determining who favours the use or non-use of the mother-tongue as a medium of instruction in school and there is no doubt that parents can influence the attitude of their wards towards the teaching and learning of Nigerian languages.

In as much as education has to be the cornerstone or pillar of national development, it is apparent that Nigerian languages must be developed and promoted towards the establishment of an educational system on a stronger foundation (Elugbe, 1994). According to him, unless Nigerians' children are made to learn "the basic disciplines relevant to modern technology in their mother tongues, or at the very least, in a language they fully understand" the seed of transferred technology will no doubt be sown on barren ground with no fruit to show for it.

Mass literacy as envisaged through the UBE scheme that will ensure meaningful and fulfilling lives with the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative and life skills including ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a good foundation for life-long learning can easily be achieved if majority of Nigerians are literate in their local languages.

If the whole of formal and informal education from cradle to grave is given in the mother tongue in countries like England, France, Germany, Japan, Korea and China (Emenanjo, 2001), there should be no reason why instruction in the mother tongue in all Nigerian primary and junior secondary schools should not be pursued religiously.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

In order to achieve the objective of education for all (EFA) by 2015, the UBE scheme must be fully implemented and all tiers of government must fund education adequately towards making the school child friendly. A child friendly school according to Okebukola (2000) is:

A place where the learning environment is conducive, the staff are friendly to children, and the health and safety needs of the children are adequately met. Thus the school, which is community based takes cognizance of the rights of ALL children, irrespective of gender, religious and ethnic affiliation, physical and mental abilities/disabilities and other cultural dissimilarities (p.8).

The curriculum of such a school must reflect the culture, norms and values of the society as well as encourage the use of the language of the immediate community in curriculum delivery. In other words, educational materials, textual materials and learning resources should be provided that take care of the needs of the learners as well as encourage active knowledge acquisition in the language, which the children can comprehend.

The government at all levels must ensure that no indigenous Nigerian language is marginalized because no ethnic group will want its language to be stigmatized or dragged along the path of extinction (Ogunsiji, 2001). To regard the language of a people as of less importance is to destroy the psyche of its speakers. In this regard, all unwritten languages must be reduced to writing and the native speakers should be made literate in those languages.

The government should encourage (through adequate funding) scientists and science educators who are speakers of different Nigerian languages, to write books that will facilitate the learning of science and mathematics in the indigenous languages.

In order to inculcate the spirit of science in our students and be found at the vanguard of global move for scientific and technological development, all concerned (language and science teachers, educational administrators, curriculum developers, authors and policy makers) must join hands towards ensuring that instruction in the Universal Basic Education is given in a language that gives minimum difficulty to the learners in order to achieve desired results.

The elites and highly placed people in the society should be properly orientated on the importance and relevance of indigenous languages to basic education. They should be informed adequately on the fact that educating the child in the mother tongue will in no way inhibit his intellectual development and academic performance as proved by the Ife Six-Year Yoruba Project as well as other related studies.

REFERENCES

- Akinbote, O. & Viatonu, O. (1996). Parents' Characteristics and Attitude Towards the use of Mother-Tongue as Medium of Instruction in Primary Education in *The Beagle: The Journal of Lagos State College of Primary Education* 1 (1 & 2), 4 – 5.
- Ayodele, S. O. (1988). *The Problem of Language for Educating Nigerian Learners*, Faculty of Education Lecture Series No. 1 Ibadan: Claverham Press.
- Bangbose, A. (1982). Local Language Development in Ikara, B. (ed.) *Nigerian Languages and Cultural Development* Lagos: NLC.
- Bangbose, A. (1994). Language and Nation Building in Asein, S. O. and Adesanoye, F. A. (1994). *Language and Policy Essays on Language and Society in Africa*. Ibadan: Sam Bookman Educational and Communication Services. Pp 1-13.
- Elugbe, B. O. (1994). National Language and National Development in Asein, S. O. and Adesanoye, F. A. (eds.) pp 6-17.
- Emenango, E. N. (2001). *Language, NPE/UBE in Multilingual Nigeria: Implementation Strategies*. The Nigerian Academy of Education Seminar Series No. 2 Lagos: The Nigerian Academy of Education.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (1998). *The National Policy on Education*, Lagos: Federal Government Press.
- Samuel, H. (2002). Major and Minor Nigerian Languages and The Universal Basic Education (UBE) in Aofamole, O. (ed.), *The Development of the Minority Languages in Nigeria*. A publication of the Association of Nigerian Languages Teachers (ANLAT) Ondo: Complete Computer and Educational Services pp. 183.
- Ismail, T. (1998). Language Education for National Integration and National Development. Paper presented at National Conference on Teacher Education for National Development, Katsina, FCE, 23 – 27 May.
- Makinde, S. O. (2000). Subject Preference amongst Senior Secondary School Students in Lagos State. Implications for the Teaching of Nigerian Languages in the New Millennium. Paper presented at the 7th Conference on Educational Development in Lagos State. Lagos: Lagos State University, 18th – 21st July.
- Obanyan, P. (1999). *The Dilemma of Education in Africa* Education in Africa, Dakar: UNESCO Regional Office.
- Ogunsiji, A. (2001). Utilitarian Dimensions of Language in Nigeria in Igboanusi, H. (ed). *Language Attitude and Language Conflict in West Africa*. Ibadan: Enicrownfit Publishers.
- Ojerinde, D. (1986). Language of Instruction and Cognitive Attainment: A Case Study of Ise Six-Year Yoruba Primary Project in Ipaye, B. (ed.) *The Nigerian Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, Ilorin: University Press.
- Okebukola, P. A. O. (2000). The Child friendly School Initiative as a New Dimension in Educational Development in Nigeria. Paper presented at the Annual Conference on Educational Development in Lagos State. Lagos State University, 18 – 21st July.
- Olarewaju, A. O. (1991). The Language Factor in Learning Science in Nigerian Schools in *Journal of the Science Teachers Association of Nigeria* 27(1), 1 – 6.
- Olarewaju, A. O. and Jimoh, M. A. (1995). Effects of Two Media of Instruction on Students' Performance in Genetics. *Journal of the Science Teachers Association of Nigeria* 30 (1 & 2), 47 – 52.
- Osaji, B. (1979). *Language Survey of Nigeria* Quebec: International Centre for Research on Bilingualism