

ABOUT THE BOOK

The Development of the Minority Languages in Nigeria is a collection of assessed papers on the discussions, arguments, and counter-arguments by Nigerian Languages Teachers, Linguistic and Language Experts and Educators on the best ways of developing the Minority Languages and making them veritable tools of teaching and learning in our Schools, Colleges of Education and Universities in Nigeria.

This book was inspired by the fact that Nigerian Languages (Major/Minor) are important tools as well as vehicles of teaching and learning and that a child understands any school subject best in his/her own language (Mother-Tongue). The book, therefore, emphasised the need for the development of our Minority languages. It also examined the roles of Government Agencies such as the National Institute for Nigerian Languages (NINLAN), Ogbor Hill, Aba, Abia State, the Language Development Council and Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), Sherda, Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, in the development of Minority Languages.

This book is an indispensable research material for our students, teachers, researchers, educators and interested individuals for the teaching of Nigerian Language (Major/Minor), especially at the Primary Schools and Secondary Schools by Teachers, Colleges of Education and Universities by Students and Lecturers in Nigeria and all over the world.

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MINORITY LANGUAGES IN NIGERIA



Edited by

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CHAPTER

AN OVERVIEW OF YORUBA AS MOTHER-TONGUE IN THE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN OUR PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Makinde, S. Olanrewaju

INTRODUCTION

Language is essentially an important tool which we use to communicate with other human beings. It is the principal medium or vehicle of communicating ideas, emotions, attitudes, and information (Makinde, 1998). It is also a vehicle of thinking that helps a child to understand where knowledge is being imparted to him. It is also a means of expressing a people's culture and it is expedient to know that our most effective vehicle of communication (language), is a cultural trait. There is no doubt therefore that an effective study and teaching of a language can promote the education of the speakers of the language.

Language in Nigeria can be classified into two: the indigenous and non-indigenous. The indigenous are the Nigerian languages while the non-indigenous are the foreign languages. The foreign languages include English, French (official languages) and Arabic (The language of Islamic religion). The number of indigenous languages in Nigeria range between 250-500 (Ayelaagbe, 1996) and are also classified into major and minor. The major Nigerian languages are Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba. The minor Nigerian languages are too numerous to mention in this paper.

According to Fafunwa (1988), language plays two different roles in Education... it constitutes an instructional area, a subject... it is also the media of instruction generally. Hardly can we find a learning situation in which language is uninvolved. As a result of the multilingual nature of Nigerian societies a typical Nigerian classroom is composed of children from different linguistic backgrounds.

UNESCO Conference Reports (1953) recognizes the fact that the best medium of instruction for any child that lives in his linguistic environment is the mother-tongue (MT). The results of the Ife Six Year Primary Yoruba project as reported in Fafunwa, Macauley and Sokoya (1989) established the effectiveness of Yoruba language as a medium of instruction especially at the primary school level as children taught using Yoruba were not at a disadvantage when compared academically with their counterparts who received instruction in the conventional way.

In the National Policy on Education (1977) revised in 1981 and 1998, the language of the immediate community (LIC) is expected to be the medium of instruction in the pre-primary and primary schools.

Primary Education is the type of education a child receives when he is within the age bracket of six and eleven (NPE, 1977, revised in 1981 and 1998). It is being referred to as the bedrock or

the entire educational system (Adepoju, 1999) and as a result care must be taken to ensure that the level of education is not misplaced as this might lead to stunted academic growth (of the child) and stunted national development.

Yoruba, a major Nigerian language is spoken by the Yoruba people that occupy the South-West part to Nigeria. Its study started through the effort of the Christian Missionaries in the 19th century. According to the Yoruba Council of Elders (Igbimo Agba Yoruba) (2002) the following are the Yoruba people: Eko, Egun, Ajase, Awori, Egba, Yewa, Remo, Ijebu, Oyo, Ibadan, Ogbomoso, Osun, Igbomina, Ondo, Ekiti, Ikale, Ilaje, Edo, Itshekiri, Akoko, Owo, Apoi, Nupe, Igbo, Iyagba, Igalla, Ijumu, Owe, Bunu, Oworo, Ogori, Magango. The Yoruba people can be found in many of the West-African countries, West Indies, South America etc.

OBJECTIVES OF TEACHING YORUBA LANGUAGE IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Following are the cardinal objectives of teaching Yoruba language in the primary schools:

That pupils might use Yoruba language as a vehicle of thinking, speaking, reading and writing in the language

That they might be able to use Yoruba language competently for communication in speaking and writing.

That they might appreciate the importance of cultural and traditional heritage.

That they might speak Yoruba language with competence

To develop their interest in reading newspapers, short stories, poems, written Yoruba language.

To develop their creative ability by writing short stories, poems, composition etc.

To prepare them for academic work in the secondary schools (FME, 1987).

From the foregoing objectives, the following points should be noted:

Speaking skill in Yoruba is very important

Reading and writing skills must be attended to.

The mother tongue is a veritable vehicle of thinking

Literature and culture play very important roles in language development.

Teaching Yoruba language will reduce illiteracy.

YORUBA LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Yoruba language is expected to be the language of instruction in both pre-primary schools and the first three years of primary education in the Yoruba speaking states. Apart from that, it is also expected to be the language of instruction in the instructional area, that is, a subject. In this regard, primary school teachers who may be of Yoruba origin should be given enough exposure to the language for them to be good teachers of Yoruba because the teacher ought to know more than the learner.

According to Margaret (1978), the child's MT must be taught for the following reasons:

The child's ideas and thoughts are in his own language and will be long after he is speaking quite good English. To encourage the child to think for himself, he must first be helped to think in his own language.

- (b) The MT is the child's contact with his home, family and village and education given should help him to have better understanding and contact with the home and village.
- (c) The culture of his people is found in the child's language and the language should be at its purest and best, for him to appreciate the literature, stories, songs and poems of community and perhaps add his own contribution to them when he grows older.

It could be seen from the above that a foreign language hinders ideas from flowing from child's mind because his thoughts are in his own language hence, he must be helped to express himself well in his MT. He should be proud of his own language and learn to use it correctly.

Language teaching at this level includes teaching the skills of listening, speaking, reading as well as literature. Modern approaches to language teaching lay emphasis on the holistic integration whereby the various aspects of content and activity are integrated (Williams, 1970).

LISTENING SKILLS IN YORUBA (IMOOSSE NINU IFETISILE)

- The aims of teaching listening skills in Yoruba at the primary level are as follows:
- Recognition and discrimination of different sounds in the language
 - Understanding the language as spoken by speakers of the standard form of the language
 - Using the language for acquisition of knowledge.
- The teacher is duty bound to present stimulating experiences before the students like:
- Creating an awareness of the differences in artificial and natural sounds: bird, insects, animal train etc.
 - Discrimination of human sounds produced under various emotions-happiness, sadness, surprise, sorrow etc.
 - Recognition of different tones in Yoruba

SPEAKING SKILLS IN YORUBA. (IMOOSSE NINU ORO SISO)

- The aims of teaching speaking skills include:
- Ability to produce the standard variety of Yoruba language
 - Ability to produce the standard variety of Yoruba in normal dialogue
 - Ability to talk freely and coherently using Yoruba language
- The teacher can employ the following experiences that stimulate the speaking skills thereby sharpening the speech organs of the pupils.
- Imitating sounds produced by birds, animals and objects
 - Imitating sounds made under various emotional manifestations
 - Producing sounds with high, mid and low tones.
 - Narrating events, stories and folktales
 - Reciting poems and singing songs
 - Engaging in simple debates
 - The use of tongue twisters (language games).
 - Tape recorder can help them to hear how their voices sound to other people.

ing and speaking are oracy skills. The two can be taught together. For example, reciting the poem, others will listen. Listening and speaking skills tests can be given.

READING SKILLS (IMOOSSE NINU IWE KIKÀ)

Reading is the interpretation of the verbal symbols based on the ability of the reader to understand the purpose, thoughts and ideas of the author.

The aims of teaching reading skills include:

- Recognition of what had been learnt orally when seen on paper.
- Associating particular letter or groups of letters with particular sounds
- Engaging in silent reading in which the mind concentrates on understanding of the meaning while bothering less about the mechanic of the sentence-words and structure.

Methods of Teaching Reading include:

Phonic Method: (Ona Ikoni Amuroolo): Where pupils learn the sounds of individual letters or combination of letters. It helps learners develop competence in spelling.

Look and say method or word method: (Ona Ikoni Amorolo): Picture of familiar words with their names given underneath. This helps pupils to memorize words before reading them.

Sentence Method (Ona Ikoni Amugbolohun-lo): Like the 'look and say' pupils learn the whole sentence and phrases - later break them into their component parts.

To develop pupils' reading skills the teacher could use - auxiliary equipment like word-building games, matching set of pictures and words or sentences and pictures. Before reading, the teacher should endeavor to teach the vocabulary items, during reading the part of the teacher is important and after reading, the teacher should ask a number of questions based on the passage. Emphasis should be placed on comprehension.

It must be noted that some children learn better by sight as in look and say method others learn by sound as we have it in the phonic method. In this regard, it is believed that a better when an Eclectic Approach is used that is a mixed method.

WRITING SKILLS (IMOOSSE NINU IWE KIKO)

The aims of teaching writing include

- The ability to form the letters legibly and quickly
 - The ability to copy legibly and without spelling mistakes
 - The ability to write their thoughts (composition).
- The teacher can assist the beginners to write by teaching them to acquire manual skill - by helping them to draw shapes in sand with their fingers or sticks. Other strategies include drawing on small pieces of paper, making circles, sand curves on paper with a paint brush, pencil crayon etc.
- Teacher should give them a lot of exercises to copy.
- Teaching them simple rules guiding writing: acts of paragraphing, punctuation etc.
- Relatively advanced pupils could be taught the techniques and styles of writing, plan

structuring, and organization of essays, summary writing, letter writing etc.

THE YORUBA LITERATURE

There is a strong relationship between language and literature because literature is language in action. The Yoruba child is blessed with a rich literary environment. The teacher can utilize the literary resources to enrich the language development of the pupils. Teacher and pupils must be made aware of the characteristics and nature of Yoruba oral and written literature. On Yoruba oral literature, emphasis should be put on Yoruba poetic heritage like Rara, Oriki, Esa, Ekun Iyawo, Iweundere, Etiyeri. On Yoruba written literature simple texts like folktales; moon - light stories, fables etc. should be used. Exposing pupils to literary texts will encourage language development, use of literary terms like proverbs, simile, personification etc. The child will imitate him. Margret (1978) too, affirm that teachers could encourage the pupils' language development by telling them stories, helping them to dramatise short plays, recitation of poems, composition, picture talks, conversation, telling news and asking them to take oral messages from other teachers in the school.

TESTING AND EVALUATION

The purpose of evaluation is to be able to assess the pupils, self, the curriculum content, the method used in teaching. Mass failure is an indicator that something is wrong with either content, method used by the teacher or the learner.

Factors to be considered in drawing up a language test are: aims of the test; what to include; how to carry out the test, the scoring technique; announcing the test (individually, confidentially, publicly), economy of administration and values to be drawn by all from the result. Other factors include: avoiding ambiguity in questions, asking unbiased questions, using unbiased scoring schemes, wholesome testing environment; preparedness of the examinee and avoiding question leakages.

Language tests include: language aptitude test, progress in language test; language achievement test; proficiency test, reading test; verbal and non-verbal test; culture test; literature test; oral test; speaking and listening skills tests etc.

METHODS OF TEACHING YORUBA IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Methods are overall plans for the orderly presentation of language materials. Some of the methods include the following:

1.5.1. **Direct or Natural Method: (Ona Ikoni Taara)** Here the learner is taught using the target language. No translation is allowed. Strategies or techniques used include: demonstration, dialogue, illustration, imitation, the use of pictures etc.

Grammar Translation Method: (Ona Ikoni Onitumọ Girama)

This method emphasise how language works. Attention is given to learning the rules of the language, its structure, list of vocabularies, translation of the target language into the mother-tongue or vice-versa. Literary forms are used in teaching grammatical rules. Most of the students expose

method can write but they cannot speak as oral skills are not attended to. It will be a problem in a second language situation.

1.5.2. **Audio-Lingual Method (Ona Ikoni Alagboow)**

Emphasis is given to speech, pattern drills, habit formation, practice and repetition, content, the use of dialogue and language laboratory. Drills and exercises are emphasized rather than the rules governing the language. It gives the learner opportunities to be actively involved in the teaching learning process. Real life situations are brought into the classroom with activities involving the use of pictures, dramatization, role playing and the use of substitution tables which are presented and practiced with careful selection of and variation in the use of content. An example of drill using substitution table is given below:

Variables	Fixed	Variables
O		ni owuro yii
Bola		ni ale ana
Jide	De si ile	ni ose to koja
Egbon		ni osan yii
Iya		ni ba ti ojo n ro

1.5.3. **The Communicative Method (Ona Ikoni Ajemo Ibanisoro)**

Attention is given to the importance of communication in the teaching of the language. The main objective is to develop the learners' knowledge of Yoruba language and their ability to use it appropriately bearing in mind the social connotations of such usages. The use of language transcends mere grammatical competence because language is used in a social-cultural and socio-personal context or situations. Natural attributes of children are taken advantage of as they are engaged in language activities like role-playing, pair and group activities and language games.

Other methods and techniques include: field trips/excursion, the use of resource person, and instructional materials like audio aids, audio visuals, computer assisted instruction (CAI), programmed instruction, real object, pictures, charts etc.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that the teaching and learning of Yoruba language in primary school is both demanding and challenging. It demands interest of both the pupil and the teacher in the language, both the teacher and the people who speak Yoruba language. The teacher must be enterprising and knowledgeable in modern approaches and methods of language teaching as well as possessing the knowledge of relevant instructional material that could be used to amplify his teaching.

Teachers should be able to use their initiatives by improvising when they cannot lay their hands on a particular instructional material. Charts could be used to teach the speech organs. The teacher may dress like an Ifa Priest if he has the voice to chant the Ifa verse. Pictures of married couples clad in traditional attires might be used to teach Yoruba traditional wedding.

Headteachers should encourage the use of Yoruba and other Nigerian languages in teaching

children or in explaining difficult concepts to them where explanations in English language not suffice. They should also encourage Yoruba language teachers not only to teach the language but to always attend the meetings of the Association of Yoruba Language Teachers as well as workshops on the teaching of Nigerian languages.

The government through the relevant bodies should encourage the teaching of Nigerian languages by producing and employing more Nigerian languages Teachers as well as helping in the production of textual and instructional materials for primary schools.

Considering the fact that using a Nigerian language as a medium of instruction might not be viable in a heterolingual society or in urban cities, the government at the local and state level should establish model schools, colleges and universities where the language of the immediate community (LIC) or language of wider communication (LWC) will be used as media of instruction. English, French and other relevant foreign languages could be taught as subjects in such schools. As a way of making pupils and parents take the learning of indigenous languages more seriously, the Federal and State Ministries of Education should incorporate items on these languages in the National and State Common Entrance Examinations.

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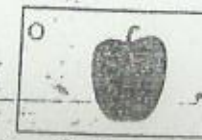
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APPENDIX

Phonic Methods

Using Sounds

Pictures can be made to look something like the shape of the letter as in:



Oronbo
(Orange)

Pictures could be made to reflect the particular sound to be taught as in:

(i)



Aja
(a Dog)

(ii)



Igi
(a tree)

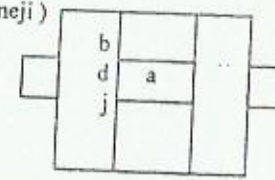
(iii)



Labalaba
(Butterfly)

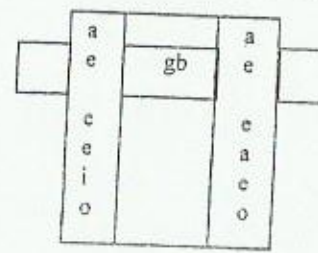
Word building cards

(i) Two letter words (onileta meji)



This can be used to make the words "ba, da and "ja" by moving the piece up and down

(ii) Three letter words (onileta meta)



The 'gb' sound can be moved up and down to make agba egbe egbe ogba igbe and ogbo.

(b) Look and Say Method

(1)

Picture reading



The Child might produce the following words
Odomode/Omokunrin (yii) n gba boolu
(The (young) boy is playing football)

(2)

Matching Words and Sentences

(a)

(i)

Oluko

lu

Agogo

(ii)

Oluko lu agogo

• The teacher rings the bell

(b)

Isola

lo

si

ile-iwe

Isola

lo

si

ile-iwe

Isola

goes

to

school