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Theatre and Drama Approaches in the Teaching of Igbo as a Second Language

Nwokeji S. Ngozika
and
Nwosu F. Chika

Abstract

This paper examines the need to teach Igbo as a second language using theatre and drama approach. Using the 'methodological principles' the paper examines the pedagogical shift from conventional teaching method to drama teaching method. To achieve this, survey design was adopted. Three hundred students were purposively selected from ten schools in Ilorin; thirty students were selected in each of the schools. Questionnaires were administered; while chi-square was used for data analysis. The study concluded that there is significant difference in the performance of students taught using theatre and drama approach and those using other method; there is also significant effect on both teachers and students interest on drama method of teaching as L2. The paper recommended that Igbo second language teachers should adopt theatre and drama as one of their teaching methods so as to motivate second language learners of Igbo.

Keywords: Theatre, Drama, Communication Methods, Teaching Methodology, Learning Motivation.

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Introduction

When we talk of instructional materials, what usually comes to mind are the common chalk, duster, textbooks, and other things shown by teachers to the learners in the classroom to clarify some difficult concepts. A resourceful teacher should be able to use anything including drama activities to aid learners in the learning of language (Owolabi, 2005, p. 45). However, drama in second language teaching offers students a wide range of opportunities to arouse their motivation, speaking skill, confidence and retentive ability. Again, students involvement in drama activities helps put the second language (L2) in constant use. This is in line with Olagoke's (1980) assertion as seen in Owolabi (2005, p.45) the psychological theory that second language retention is enhanced through its use and that forgetting it is as a result of the law of disuse. Drama is the experimenting stage of learning. It provides the second language learner with scope for making

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errors when consequences are not serious and for finding out by practical experience those activities that are satisfying and fruitful. In teaching Igbo Language as a second language, there are three important factors one has to bear in mind thus: readiness, motivation and activity. This may be achieved through the application of drama activities. This work therefore, tends to show how drama could be veritable tools for teaching Igbo as a second language.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used is the methodological theory otherwise known as behaviourist theory. It is a psychological theory by J.B. Watson, propounded in 1913. This theory assumes a learner is essentially passive, responding to environmental stimuli. The learner starts off as a clean slate and behavior shaped through positive or negative reinforcement. Both positive and negative reinforcement increase the probability that the antecedent will happen again. This theory allows the learner to imitate the teacher. In this regards, certain principles were adopted. Methodological principle of education is always double-edged. It refers to the children who are learning and to the teacher who is teaching. Principles are general and universal, but methods are particular and personal.

Some of the important principles are:

1. Children learning through activities that derive their motive power from instinctive tendencies.
2. Children learn by grasping regularly complex wholes.
3. The method and the rate of learning depend upon the metal qualities of each individual.
4. Children can only learn to develop their full power in a social atmosphere.

Method on the other hand, is the procedure by which a goal is reached. In whatever way the teacher causes change in his children or pupils, whether for the better or for worse the method is going on. In choosing a method, the following points has to be put in to consideration:

1. Type of lesson
2. The teachers' am of the lesson and expected result.
3. The subject
4. Class, age or maturity of pupils
5. The individuality of pupils
6. Books and other teaching aids available.

With respect to this, drama and theatre approach is based on dramatic approach. The goal of this is to make students communicate in the target language (Igbo) fluently. The Igbo language produced is employed in the classroom within a social context and it is appropriate to the specific participants. As a consequence, the communication has purpose and is

meaningful as it is sociolinguistic ally appropriate (Trabajo, 2014, p. 6) quoting Larsen-Freeman, 1990). Students are involved in pair and group activities; they have opportunity to delicate more time to speaking interaction with their peers and negotiate meaning in order to be understood. The teacher acts as a facilitator of the learning process, since the students are the true protagonist and the lesson is learner centered. In this approach, students are given the opportunity to express their feelings and opinions. Grammar mistakes are tolerated, since communication and fluency are given a man role.

Why Theatre and Drama Approach should be used in Teaching Igbo as a Second Language

It is beyond doubt that using theatre and drama activities has natural advantages for language learning and acquisition. In fact, it encourages students to communicate and give them the opportunity to interact even with restricted language using non-verbal expressions, such as body movements and facial expression. There are also a number of other responsible factors which make theatre a very essential tool in the language classroom: To expose learners to an experience (dry-run) of using the language for genuine interaction and real life purposes; and by generating a need to interact. Dialogue is an ideal way to persuade learners to guess the meaning of unknown language in a specific 'context'. Learners will need to use a mixture of language structures and functions if they genuinely wish to interact successfully.

There are many reasons supporting the employment of theatre and drama in second language teaching classroom. The first is its ability to foster speaking skill. However, drama allows the student to show his or her own feeling, personality and creativity. Theatre and drama approach in second language teaching fosters students' socialization, critical thinking, problem solving, and improves oral communication skill. Phillips (2003, p.5) is of the view that the use of drama brings shy students to participate actively. In this regard, if students experience the topics personally, these will be assimilated and not forgotten. According to Dougill (1987, p.145), drama activities manage to bridge the gap between the carefully controlled classroom work and the complexity of the second language, since they include the intellectual and the rational sphere on the one hand, and the emotional and the imaginative domain on the other hand. Desialove (2009) lists some of the reasons why drama approach should be introduced in learning Igbo as a second language below:

(i) Drama is an ideal way to encourage learners to communicate.

(ii) Learning Igbo as a second language an active motivating experience.

(iii) Learners gain the confidence and self esteem needed to use the language spontaneously.
(iv) To stimulate learners' intellect, imagination, and creativity.
(v) Develop students' ability to empathize with others and thus become a communicator.

For all these reasons, theatre and drama approach in second language teaching and learning enhances students' motivation and creates a pleasant environment, both for students and teacher (Trabajo, 2014, p. 8 quoting Desiatova, 2009).

Benefits of Theatre and Drama Approach

Desiatova (2009) as seen in Trabajo (2014, p. 11) confirms that students can learn a second language through drama by constantly interpreting meaning from a context, using their knowledge in a creative way, interacting with each other and working with imagination and fantasy. Another important benefit stated by Ashton- Hay (2005, p.3) is that drama is able to employ all the learning styles, thus: cognitive, affective and psychomotor domain. Trabajo (2014, p. 8) lists seven main advantages of drama when used in a second language teaching and learning as seen in Dougill (1987, p.8) below: -

(i) They provide framework for communication
(ii) They allow for unpredictability in language use
(iii) They provide a bridge between classroom and the real world
(iv) They allow for creativity and involve the whole person
(v) They provide physical involvement
(vi) They develop confidence
(vii) They help to cater for mixed ability classes and large members.

Drama is the appropriate method for teaching people with different learning styles and at different levels of understanding. No one learns in exactly the same way, we all have different methods of processing information. By actively involving one into learning process, dramatization allows each student to absorb the language in his/her own way. Similarly, children whose language skills are still very limited are given the opportunity to communicate using nonverbal cues such as body movement and facial expression. This implies that the success of drama within the language class lies upon a radical change in the relationship between the teacher and student (Maley and Duff, 1983, p. 220). Also, the use of drama enables students to explore their imagination, creativity as well as to express themselves through language and other forms of communicative activities. Drama activities are beneficial to second learners of Igbo in the following ways.

(i) Positive motivation and interest
(ii) Proper pronunciation
(iii) Authentic language use
(iv) Accuracy and fluency of expression.

Positive Motivation and Interest: partaking in dramatic activities arouse the interest of a second language learner of Igbo hence, boosts motivation.

Proper Pronunciation: this is achieved through dramatic activities. Children learn by imitation. However, a second learner of Igbo is like a child learning how to speak, as a result, mimicking or imitating the teaching enhance proper pronunciation.

Authentic Language Use: here a real- life language is practised in the classroom. However, drama puts language into context and gives second language learners of Igbo experience in real life situation.

Accuracy and Fluency of Expression: this gives opportunity for fluent speech hence drama is the imitation of life. For instance, during teaching and learning, the teacher allows the students to repeat after him or her the moment he or she speaks. By so doing, the second language learner may become accurate and at the same time fluent in expression.

Statement of the Problem

Many primary and secondary schools exhibit unpleasant deficiency in learning Igbo as a second language in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. This situation can be attributed to certain factors on the part the teachers and students/ pupils. However, this researcher tends to analyze the teachers' method of teaching second language learners of Igbo using drama approach.

Methodology

This paper adopts hypothesis theory as a major research method for its analysis and discussion of subject matter under consideration. A method of analyzing the hypothesis was developed.

Research Questions

(i) Is there any significant effect on the student interest on the drama method of learning Igbo as a second language?

(ii) Is there any significant difference in the performance between the students taught using dramatic method and those taught using other methods?

(iii) Will there be improvement on the students if they adopt the drama method of learning Igbo as a second language?

Hypothesis:

Ho1- There is no significant difference between the performance of students taught with drama method and those taught with other methods

Ho2-There is no significant difference in the teacher's interest on the drama method of teaching Igbo language

Ho3-There is no significant difference in the student's interest on the drama method of learning Igbo as a second language.

Population: 300 students were used out of 10 schools and 30 students each were selected from each of the selected schools.

Sampling Technique: The research was carried out in 10 schools in Ilorin, North Central Nigeria. This is because the researcher wants to use none Igbo speakers from that part of the country, bearing in mind the number of students in each primary school. Random sampling approach was used to select three hundred primary school students.

Procedure: Permission was sought from the head teachers of the schools to administer the questionnaire to the respondents. The guidance counselor, the teachers and each school were of great help including the research in the administration and distribution of the questionnaire which was achieved within the space of two weeks. Two hundred and fifty copies of the questionnaire were all collected and found useful for the research.

Data Analysis and Results

The Researcher chose the Chi-Square for the data analysis. This enabled the researcher to find out the relationship between the variables H_o1 (hypothesis1): There is no significant difference between the performance of students taught with dramatic method and those taught with other methods.

Table 1: Response of sampled teachers on the use of drama method in teaching Igbo Language as a second Language.

	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL
Teaching second language with dramatic method helps to achieve the stated objective	182(182)	20(48)	35(52)	10(18)	300
Dramatizing the lesson makes the students get involved	194(182)	25(48)	10(52)	21(18)	300
Students taught using dramatic method internalized what they learnt	171(182)	131(48)	26(52)	22(18)	300
The learning environment would be active drama for the students	181(182)	19(48)	31(52)	19(18)	300
TOTAL	728	295	105	72	1200

The calculated value of $X^2 = 26.07$ is used to be greater than the value of 7.815 hence the hypothesis is rejected. This is a significant difference in performance between students taught using other methods

Hypothesis (II) H_o2:

There is no significant relative effect in teachers' interest on drama method of teachers Igbo language.

Table 2: Response of sampled students on the use of drama method in teaching and learning Igbo as second language

	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL
Teachers of dramatic method are more productive than teachers of other methods	181(171)	32(54)	17(48)	20(27)	300
Teachers with good knowledge of the subject matter Igbo will motivate the students to learn the language	78(171)	10(54)	31(48)	26(27)	300
Dramatized class is more active and interesting	191(171)	121(54)	22(48)	122(27)	300
Igbo as a language is best taught using dramatic method	152(171)	127(54)	24(48)	47(27)	300
TOTAL	602	290	93	215	1200

The calculated value X^2=16.78 the table below revealed that the calculated X^2 value of 16.78
is greater than the X^2 table of 7.815 hence the hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is a significant relative effect in teachers' interest on drama method of teaching Igbo language.

Hypothesis (III) H_o3:

There is no significant relative effect in students' interest on drama method of learning Igbo language as a second language learner.

Table 3: Response of sampled students on the use of drama method in learning Igbo as second language

	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL
Students of dramatic class are more productive	281(196)	32(60)	17(23)	20(21)	300
Students acquire better knowledge of Igbo language when dramatized	260(196)	48(60)	31(23)	11(21)	300
Students love the dramatic Igbo class than other classes	191(196)	10(60)	19(23)	30(21)	300
Dramatized Igbo classes arouse students interest in Igbo as a second language	152(196)	51(60)	26(23)	21(21)	300
TOTAL	884	941	93	82	1200

The calculated value in the chi-square X^2 table is 50.11 is greater than the table value of 7.815 hence the hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that there is significant effect in students' interest on drama method of learning Igbo language.

Conclusion

This study was carried out to examine the need to teach Igbo as a second language using theatre and drama approach. Based on research findings on the study there is a significant difference in the performance of students who were taught using other methods and those using drama method. The research finding also shows that there is a significant effect on both teachers and students interest on dramatic method of teaching and learning Igbo as a second language. Therefore, teachers should capitalize on the opportunities and resources that are available in drama and use it more often in Igbo language.

Recommendations

In the light of the research findings in this study the following are recommended to improve dramatic method of teaching and learning Igbo as a second language in schools.

(i) Igbo language teachers should adopt effective teaching and learning environment that would enable them has interest in teaching methods at all times.

(ii) Teachers should adopt theatre and drama approach as one of their methods of teaching so as to motivate second learners of Igbo language.

iii) Teachers on their own should have interest in their profession and should be ready to give out their best at all times.

(iv) Students should be assigned to dramatise one of the drama textbook on their own while the teacher should always be ready to assist them as the need arises.

Besides, there is the need to inculcate in the learners a strong sense of the target language awareness through co-ordinate skills and proper utilization of the learners' static and dynamic learning qualities.

If the factors explained in this paper are well employed by the target teacher, Igbo language will be taught well as a second language and as well, the learners will achieve a near native competence which is one of the objectives of second language learning.

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