

The Use Of Language In The Teaching Learning Process

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Umoru-Onuka (2000) posits that the register of each discipline facilitates learning and without language there can be no meaningful interaction. That is, without the mastery of the language of learning, a learner's aspiration would remain just a mirage (Ayodele, 2004). The concern of this paper is to examine the appropriateness of language used at the primary school level based on empirical evidence.

1.02 Language, Learning

Language is the most valuable tool in the teaching and learning process (Iheakaram 2001). Successful teaching and learning in a normal classroom depends absolutely on the teacher's effective use of Language. No single subject can be learnt properly without the use of language and its appropriate terminologies/registers. It means that the mastery of language and its appropriate terms facilitate the understanding of whatever is being learnt.

To Robert Lado, (1964) Umoru-Onuka, 2000, language is the chief instrument in the teaching and learning process. Similarly, Osegha and Adelere (2004) citing Bamgbose, (1992), observe that language is without doubt, the most important factor in the learning process for the transfer of knowledge, skills or attitudes. Obamiya (2003) cited in Osegha and Adelere (2004) has it that:

Language is an instrument of thought necessary in any programme that takes the cognitive abilities of the human being into consideration. Seeking, using and giving in formation are the essential parts of the process of education and are usually carried out through Language (33)

Language therefore is very central to all situations that involve human learning. There is no substitute for language in education process.

Learning cannot take place without language. If we agree

that language is a vehicle of thought and of ideas, it can be easily established that thoughts or ideas emanate from the instinctive or deliberate motivation of an individual to share meaning with others, clarify issues, solve problems and transmit or, receive same from others, (Okediran, 2001).

Successful teaching and learning absolutely ^{depends} on the teachers' effectiveness in a normal, classroom ^{ness} depends use of language. Virtually, almost all teachers have articulated the relationship between language, ~~teaching~~ teaching and learning process. Appropriate use of language is a prerequisite to learning. Inappropriate use of language or use of imperfect language can hinder learning. Incidents of imperfection may occur in aspects of language such as homophones and homonyms, nuance of connotative; figurative, transferred or metaphorical meanings that run through language. To get out of this problem, mother tongue has been observed to be the most suitable medium of instruction in the primary school.

1.03 Mother Tongue in the Teaching and Learning Process

Mother tongue is the initial contact in which a child can best express him/herself and in which he can best understand when he/she is taught. Mother tongue (MT) is seen as the best medium for teaching a child for some reasons, which are: Psychological, Sociological and educational. Psychologically, it is the system of meaningful signs that works automatically in one's mind for expression and understanding of facts. Sociologically, it is a means of identification among the members of a community in which one belongs; and the language of such a community is the most potent symbolic representation of its culture. Educationally, one learns more quickly through it than in an unfamiliar linguistic medium. It is recognized by experts, Afolayan (1988) ^{who said} that mother tongue acts as a

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suitable avenue for the acquisition of any other language a person may be interested in.

There is the assert that mother tongue is the bridge to learning. This assertion stems from the pedagogical and linguistic point of view that learning results from the "Known and proceeds to the unknown". For the purpose of formal education in primary school, the community language or mother tongue whichever is more effective, for functional literacy purposes in defined area of a country should be used. A mother tongue or community language(s) is adopted at the first, two, three, or four years in school as a medium of instruction. In Nigeria, the use of indigenous language as a medium of instruction in the educational system is limited only to the lower classes of the primary school. As stated in the NPE 1981):

- (i) At the pre-primary level, the government will ensure that the medium of instruction is principally the mother tongue of the language of the immediate environment".
- (ii) At the primary school level, the government will see to it that the medium of instruction in primary school is initially the mother tongue or language of the immediate community at a later stage.

The language of the immediate community is considered good for the learner as it would aid their learning, enable them to use what they have learnt immediately, promote their ego (Okediran, 2001). Based on this therefore, educated native speakers as instructors or teacher could be recruited to teach the children. These teachers should, at least, be capable of teaching the children using the mother tongue.

The vocabulary used should be at the level of the learners bearing in mind that the teacher's vocabulary has a very big role to play as far as the teaching and learning process is concerned. That is, the teacher's effective use of language, his choice of words, and

sentences, what the teacher says, and how he says, it, all have direct effect on the teaching and learning process. , It is believed that once a teacher teaches, learning is bound to take place. There is therefore the need to take the learners into consideration. The point has to be made that whatever language is to be used, it should be borne in mind that children need a gentle hand and therefore the language used should be gentle and friendly. If on the contrary, the children are bound to be scared.

Subsequent reaction of the children might be crying or absenteeism from the school. Children who are unable to endure harsh instructions from their teacher or instructors usually get frustrated and are scared about going school. This trend is rampant in senior primary classes where wrong use of language by teachers either to "belittle" or disgrace learners make them get scared from classes. The question might arise, should the children not be corrected when they go wrong while receiving new knowledge, skill or attitude in any primary education programme? Children have to be shown the areas where they err in any teaching situation by the teacher (instructor). However, this has to be done in a gentle manner by the teacher, bearing in mind that they have to work in harmony to bring about meaningful teaching and learning that are beneficial to both.

In essence, language issues have to be given a high consideration in expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education. It is also important for ensuring that all children in primary schools have access to completely free compulsory primary education of good quality.

1.04 Conclusion

This paper has attempted a discussion of the importance of language in teaching and learning at the primary school level. It has tried to establish the fact that language and learning primary

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education are related and work hand in hand. One of the issues raised is that language is the vehicle of thought and/or action in terms of changed attitudes, increase in knowledge and skills.

Various aspects of language as regards teaching and learning have been touched. The kernel of the argument is that effective use of language as a medium of instruction in primary schools bring about positive learning. In this case, mother tongue stands as the best. This is to ensure full understanding by the pupil. At every point in teaching and learning, the teacher must always express him/herself clearly. Most children fail examinations because of their inability to understand the language of the teacher. In all, one has to understand that there is no substitute for language in the teaching and learning processes. As a result of this, language is meant to be the pillar in teaching and learning and it should be kept under constant review.

The policy that teaching in primary schools at the junior level (Pry 1-3) should be done through the use of mother tongue should be taken seriously. However, this can only be best achieved by recruiting native speakers as instructors/teachers so that can teach the children using mother tongue. It is necessary for teachers/instructors to ensure that they avoid the use of abusive or harsh language while instructing or dealing with children. The vocabulary used by teachers should be at the level of the learners. Foreign concepts to be taught should be done in indigenous languages, and language itself needs to be kept under constant review.

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