

Barriers to indigenous language learning and their use in Nigerian schools: the Yoruba language experience

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Abstract

It is a known fact that in most West African states and particularly in Nigeria, Indigenous language teaching and language use have suffered serious setbacks. The blame has been put severally. People who had their primary and post-primary education in Nigeria would agree that despite the emphasis laid on the teaching and use of English language in our schools today, a large percentage of school children, and students still fail the subject. This paper examines the barriers to effective Indigenous language teaching and language use in Nigerian schools, using the Yorùbá language as reference point. The paper goes into the past and investigates the socio-political forces operating within the history of the nation, Nigeria. It observes that a number of factors militate against effective learning and the use of indigenous languages in schools. These include speaker's comportment, non-availability of trained and qualified teachers, non-challant attitude of education administrators and the like. It also examines the possible consequences on the entire nation. Our findings reveal that partial or total neglect of the teaching and learning of indigenous languages brings the nation backward. The paper concludes that unless all stakeholders in the education sector have a re-think, emphasize and enforce the teaching and use of the child's native language in schools, the society may not be better off.

Keywords: Barrier, Language, Indigenous, Learning, Use

Introduction

The problem of language teaching and language use is a global one. Several studies have been carried out and several attempts have been made by individuals, government agents and other stakeholders in the education sector with several policies formulated, all in an effort to address the problems militating against effective language teaching and language use in our schools, with the aim of bringing an improvement to the much important phenomenon.

A detailed study of the attitudes of all stake holders in the education industry reveals that language learning and its use is at par with the sciences in our schools today (Primary, Post-primary and tertiary institutions alike). The reason for this is no other than the lukewarm attitudes of stakeholders to the teaching and use of language.

In some instances where the teaching and use of a language is emphasized, it is not the child's language but foreign language. This is not peculiar to Nigeria but to most West Africans countries who adopt the languages of their colonial masters namely the British and the French.

This paper closely examines these factors with a view to determining and identifying the problem areas in order to proffer possible solutions on the way forward. The paper is divided into parts. Part one is the introduction. The second part discusses what a language is, while the third part examines the importance of a language. The fourth part probes into the problems of language teaching and language use while the fifth and final part centers on proffered solutions to such emanating problems.

The Concept of Language

A language has been variously defined. A few examples are the following:

Language is an official and consciously organized method of control by the use of symbols or conventions which involves the notion of meaning.
(Wilson (1972).

The Random House Dictionary defines a language as:

The body of words and systems which are used to communicate by persons of the same community or nation, a system of formalized symbols, gestures etc. used as a means of communicating thought and knowledge.

For Humby, (1996), he states that:

Language is a human method of communicating ideas, feelings by means of system of sound and symbols.

Nwogu (2004) states that:

Language is a man's unique accomplishment. More than anything else, it sets man apart from animal world. It is the basis of all creative thoughts. Without language, there would be no progress, no civilization, no culture. The acquisition of language is of particular importance for the process of humanization and socialization.

From the above, language can be said to be a means of communication by which human beings do express their thoughts, feelings and norms within a community. This infers that the language we speak is a unique human attribute. Man is the only social being that is endowed to use language. He uses it to talk about a variety of things be it politics, religion, culture, scientific facts, historical facts social relationship among others.

The importance of language in the technological development of the world cannot be undermined. This infers that technology will not be possible without a language. Saruq (2005, p.112) states that:

Creation is the beginning of technology (the art of doing things). To create, one has to imagine in the first place, express through language in the second place, before the imagined expression can be brought into existence in the third place. It is therefore through language that man has access to science and technology which are essential aspect of development that can bring unity, progress and happiness to a nation.

Further on the importance of language, Akindélé and Adégbité (1992, p.80) cited the view of Sepir and Whort that:

Individual's experience of reality is functionally dependent upon the language and linguistic behaviour of a given society, that a particular language maps out the world for individual in different degrees of intensity and typicality.

The above view sees language as a filter to social realities, and it acts as an intermediary between cognitive processes. It affects peoples' perception of the world as a whole. It is also an instrument with which individuals or groups examine their social problems.

Teaching a Language: The Language Teacher

Fafunwa (1974, p.18) states that the child learns his or her language (the mother tongue) by imitating the mother with whom the child stays most of the time. The mother does not take note of this until the child makes simple sentences which are strange to the mother.

At school age, the child is taught how to speak (make use of a language), and write a language. Teachers are trained in the art of teaching in order to assist pupils/students learning through a competence-based practice in classroom instruction, using a method that will best suit individual skills, student's needs and the teaching resources available. The concern of the teacher is to make students learn. Therefore, he is expected to understand the subject matter. He should be able to transform the environment and content of instructions into functional values. He is expected to study his/her students, understand their characteristics and select the right method for his teaching of a particular topic. This will help him/her to achieve efficient and effective learning. In order to succeed in doing this, both the teacher and the learner have to be sufficiently motivated.

Akande,(2002, pp.88-89) highlights the objectives of the teacher education as:

- (i). the production of committed teachers who have conscience.
- (ii). to further encourage the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers.
- (iii). to help teachers to fit into the social life of the community and society at large and to enhance their commitments for national objectives.
- (iv). to develop the child's ability and talent to teach many important skills and provide knowledge that helps the child to be useful to himself and to the society at large.

Speaking on the roles of teachers in national development, Akande (2002, p.15) opines that:

It is a national suicide for any nation either by accident or by design to allow its best brains to cure its sick, design and build its road bridges, formulate and administer its laws, while its poorest brains teach its youths. It takes good and dedicated teacher to produce efficient doctors, competent lawyers, functional and creative engineers. Therefore, the education and training of the teacher particularly for the challenges of the 21st century should be an issue for serious national consideration and attention.

Furthermore, one of the characteristics of man is to transmit both social skills and cultural knowledge to its young ones. This is what Mead (1963:40) refers to as 'ENCULTURATION'. Here, the language comes in. Ocha (1988:10) states that: "children's speech behaviour over developmental time will be socially and culturally organized". As children are learning to become competent members of their societies, so also are they learning to become competent speakers of their languages. In other words, socialization and

language acquisition goes simultaneously in a child's experience. It is the duty of the teacher to work towards achieving this goal. A good education no doubt should make an individual remain viable within a socio-economic system which changes according to the basis of the cumulative knowledge in the society. This being so, it can be said that a sound education is language centered.

Communicating In a Language

It is pertinent to state here that some factors have to be considered before a language is used. For instance, the speaker of a language should be aware of the type of audience he is speaking to. In most cases, the relationship between the speaker and the listener (in terms of terms of age and position).

A speaker shows respect for the listener's responses and reactions. For instance, a Yorùbá oral poet counts on his audience as their response determine the acceptability or otherwise of his poems on one hand, and the oral poet switches from one speech to another as soon as a new guest enters the play arena. He should be able to make speeches that hold his audience in 'captive' until the end of his performances.

In Yorùbá culture, the age and position of the listener determines what the speaker says and how he says it. This is to say that to arrest the audience, there should be an element of humor in a speech as the absence of this makes speech a dry one.

The Yorùbá language for instance, is a language of respect. Therefore, the use of pronouns 'o', 'e', and 'o' are properly guided. An elderly person for instance, would not use 'e' to address a younger person. If he does so, it is certainly without sincerity. In like manner, when a younger person uses 'o' or 'o' for an older person, it infers that something unusual has happened. This is also used without any iota of sincerity. This is to say that there are some things to consider before one speaks. You don't speak just anyhow or without a reason.

The Yorùbá use other parts of the body such as the nose, the eyes, the hands, the beating of a drum and so on to speak. These however are not as effective as using the language proper. This is because language use is universal while the use of the parts of the body mentioned could be interpreted differently by different people. This is why the most effective and generally acceptable means of communication is the language we speak.

Why Communicating?

Communication as we know is one's ability to relate and relate well with others. Ability to communicate is one of the essentials in human life. Communication though, may have both positive and negative results depending on the way speeches are used. This is to say that utterances, if not properly guided, or well presented, could lead to chaos. This is why the Yorùbá are always conscious of the way they use proverbs. Yorùbá proverbs are capable of making or marring the society. (Ogúnolá 2002), but this is not our focus in this paper.

We communicate for the following purposes:

- (i). To air out our views: it is through communication that one's views are known (even if such views will be rejected). When this is accomplished, the speaker is relieved. It is not easy to know the views of a deaf and dumb person except those who are specially trained in it and this is not a universal thing.
- (ii). It is through verbal communication we worship and converse with GOD, the Creator of mankind. In happiness, in distress and in fact in any situation we may find ourselves, we communicate with God. This may be verbal in prayers or through songs, poem recitation and the like. It is believed that God knows the inner mind of man, yet, He requests that we should communicate with him, whichever language we may use notwithstanding.
- (iii). By communicating, we help others to solve their ageing problems, be it spiritual, physical, mental or psychological.
- (iv). It is through communication that the people's economy is boosted. In our day-to-day business transactions, the importance of language use cannot be over emphasized. On the radio, television, products, services and programmes are advertised. The language used for such advertisement is 'sweet language'. A language full of exaggeration, hyperboles, a language that will attract would-be customers'. An example of a song advertising S.T. Soap is given below.

Qşş S.T. ma re o, E eee	- this is S.T. Soap
Qkán dára fún'wè lásán, Eeee	-One is good for bathing
Qkán dára f'áşo fifò, E eee	- the other is good for washing clothes
Èlò S.T. k'èrídìròwà	-use S.T. and see the secret of our message
Gbogbo kòkòrò ara ẹ kàn jàngbòn	- all body infections are in trouble
Gbogbo ìdótí ẹ o lè rayè	- all dirt have no place
Èélá isáká ẹwá'bigbà lọ	- body rashes are to find their ways
Ó n fọsọ mọ kíf jásọ ó sá	- it washes clean without fading
Ó le koko kíf jẹwọ o jàrè	- it is hard and does not infect the hand
Qşş S.T. mà re o, eeee	- this is S.T. soap.

- (v). Mastery and understanding a language promote unity and understanding among people in a society.
- (vi). through language, we transmit knowledge. In the homes, in schools, (primary to tertiary), among peer groups, we use language to teach one another.

All these and many others are supposed to guide the actions of the language teachers in our schools. We want to emphasize that, it is language that makes man to be what he is. It is language that distinguishes man from all other living creatures on earth (animals, birds, reptiles, beast etc.).

As important as language and communication are, it is disheartening that there are still a lot of barriers to language teaching and language use in our schools today. This is what the next segment of this paper discusses.

Barriers to Indigenous Language Learning and use

As earlier mentioned, learning and using a language is faced with numerous problems among which are:

(i) Lack of Mastery of various Communication Skills

To be able to effectively use a language, mastery of some skills are inevitable. These include: speaking, listening, reading and writing, correct pronunciation, fluency and accuracy, good voice, clarity, knowing the audience and the commitment of a speaker to mention just a few.

A language that is not spoken regularly or frequently or is totally abandoned cannot be mastered. The child and adult alike cannot master the pronunciation skills in an abandoned language. This is the situation with the Yorùbá language. A Yorùbá native speaker does not know the technical skills of the language because he is denied the opportunity to use the language. In our homes and schools alike, children are denied the use of their native language which is supposed to form the basis of the child's education.

(ii) Correct Pronunciation Deficiency

To communicate effectively, the speaker of a language must adequately master pronunciation of sounds, words, and must be acquainted with the pattern (structure) of the language. The speaker's general aim is to talk intelligibly to others and this could be achieved through effective pronunciation.

(iii) Fluency and Accuracy

For a speaker of any language to be effective, he or she must be fluent. By fluency, we mean mastery of rules guiding the speaker of a language. This includes the selection of appropriate vocabularies, style, discourse, grammar and meaning. For instance, speaker of the Yorùbá language must master the tonal rules of low, high, mid tones because Yorùbá language is a tonal language. The speaker must in addition master the syntax rules of different kinds of sentences in the language as compared with that of another language such as the English language. Example is this:

(1) Mo pa eja òlò (Yorùbá).

(subj pronoun) (verb) (object noun) (adjective)

(2) I killed a big fish (English)

(subject) (verb) (adjective) (object noun)

The two sentences above cannot be arranged otherwise for the two difference languages involved. If this is done, the speaker will not be speaking language he intends to speak. This is to say that accuracy in terms of articulation of sounds and words form the hallmark of effective speaking as inaccuracy leads to distortion of the speaker's message. Fluency and accuracy brings clarity, unambiguous and straight forward expressions.

(iv). Speaker's Comportment

The speaker of any language needs to be confident of his ability to speak the language. By so doing, such speaker would capture the respect and interest of his audience. Self-confidence comes as a result of adequate preparation. Inadequate preparation on the other hand leads to nervousness. The purpose of making the speech must be achieved; hence, this determines what to say.

(v). Non-Availability of Trained and Qualified Teachers

Before now, teaching in Nigeria has been the last hope for 'the hopeless'. Students choose teacher education as their last resort and jump out of the job at the slightest opportunity. A would-be teacher needs to conduct a careful and honest examination of himself or herself. He or she should find out whether he possesses attributes such as competence, decisiveness, energy, enthusiasm, initiative and so on. (see Odeḡiran, 1999).

This infers that the entire teacher education programme should be competence and not experience based. A situation whereby an untrained teacher is employed to teach in schools is one of the major problems facing the teaching profession in Nigeria today. This is more noticed in the teaching of Yorùbá language. The teaching of Yorùbá language in most schools today is handled by incompetent and untrained teachers. The assumption is that a native speaker should be able to handle the subject. This view is wrong because teaching the language involves more than being a native speaker. The situation is made worse especially now that the Grade II Teacher Training Colleges are phased out. One wonders if the existing Colleges of Education can cope with the situation vis-à-vis the competence of the products of such Colleges of Education.

A teacher will teach very little until he himself has mastered the language he teaches. This means that inadequacies on the part of the teacher are more disastrous for the realization of educational objectives. Most teachers of Yorùbá languages teaching in Nigeria Primary and Post-Primary schools are themselves not versed in the language they teach.

The concern of a teacher in teaching is to make students learn. This being the case, the teacher himself must be well informed in the art of teaching. He must be prepared to face the challenges. Awoniyi (1979, p.19) opines that a teacher is never tired and children will sometimes have to listen all the day. According to him, all stake holders in the education

sector seldom throw their responsibilities to the teacher and sometimes expect him to do what is impossible. He then concludes that:

No nation in West Africa can be prepared to condone Ignorant and untrained teacher for very long. A professionalism approach is required and not a blind loyalty to rigid methods which become out of date before very long. Unlike the children of former days who were docile and passive, children of today cannot accept anything unquestioning. A teacher who is not well prepared may be cornered if not embarrassed.

This further confirms that the role of the teacher is evidently significant. Neither the school syllabus, method nor apparatus will make a good school without the quality of the teacher at the apex of it all.

(iv). Non-Chalant Attitude of Education Administrators

The non-chalant attitude of the various education administrators and curriculum planners also pose serious barrier to language learning and language use. Experience has shown that English Language is given priority in the schools' curriculum in Nigeria. A credit pass in English Language has long been and is still a prerequisite for gaining admission into higher institutions of learning in Nigeria. This is what Bamgbóse (1991) refers to as **language dominance**. It is a situation whereby a non-indigenous language is imposed from outside. Such imposed language becomes 'supreme' in its entire ramification, be it educational, political, social, religious and in the general running of the government. It is not a hidden fact that European Languages used in Africa are dominant languages. Spencer (1971b, p.542) opines that:

The Portuguese authorities discourage the indigenous languages to the extent of giving condition that nothing may appear in print in African Languages without concurrent translation into Portuguese.

Ođetokun (2010, p.6) makes reference to Biihler, a Christian Educationist (1861), who spoke on why Christian missions did not succeed in their efforts to interact well with the children in particular and the people in general so as to gain converts says:

What I consider a great disadvantage in our school in the Yorùbá Missions is too much teaching in the English Language which retards the progress considerably. It has been for most of the children an unknown tongue. (Biihler 1861).

He goes further to say that it was Late Chief Ọbafẹmi Awolowo who succinctly made a case for enlightened citizenry saying:

To educate the children and enlighten the illiterate adults is to lay a solid foundation not only for future social and economic progress but also for political stability. A truly educated citizenry is in my view, one of the most powerful deterrent to dictatorship, oligarchy and feudal autocracy

According to the record, Biuhler made the report because the pupils were always confused as a result of teaching them in English Language and that it took pupils quite a long time from four to six years before they could read their own language.

Adetugbo (1997, p.141-142) states that "language learning by imposition or by force has been found to be not as successful as language acquired by choice". Most Nigerian language students do not study language by choice but as their last resort as earlier mentioned. Our experience shows that most students of Yorùbá language are not proud of the subject. They hide their identities especially in our tertiary institutions.

In the same vein, those who study English language do so either because they had no option or because they are compelled to do so. No wonder why the nation records a high percentage of failures in English language at the senior school certificate level. Students of institutions of higher learning prefer to become an Accountant, a Lawyer, a Medical Doctor and so on to be a Linguist.

Ògúnlọ́lá and Ale (1988, p. 7) opine that in Nigeria, emphasis is laid on the study of the English language which is the official language (lingua franca) of the nation, thus neglecting indigenous languages. This makes the indigenous languages either 'sick' or 'dead' more especially if they are totally abandoned.

In addition to this, information dissemination in print media is largely dominated by the ex-colonial languages. In cases where a newspaper is published in an indigenous language, such newspaper is likely to be unpopular. Examples are: *Aláròyè* published by World Information Agency and *Ìròyìn Yorùbá* published by African Newspapers Limited. This unpopular situation has made others to fold up. It is disheartening that till today, no significant change is recorded.

Realizing the role of the child's language in the overall development of the nation, Òmọ̀lẹ̀wà (1995, p.107) states that:

Native tongue is immensely more vital than it is one of the chief means of preserving what is good in native customs, ideas and ideals...
All people have inherent right to their own personality however primitive they may be....
No greater injustice can be committed against a people than to deprive them of own language.

An Ìbàdàn-based Newspaper Magazine (*The Yorùbá News*) in its edition of 9th February, 1926 also affirm this claim in her editorial when it writes that:

The best arrangement for the present will be the teaching of Yorùbá or its employment as the basis for instruction in all schools up to Standard III, and side-by-side from Standard IV upwards to the highest classes of secondary schools and colleges.

In our own opinion, the suggestions above are necessary considering the fact that when a child is versed in his or her native language, the child finds it easy to learn other languages. For this reason, the use of the child's native language is paramount to the child's learning process. It is unfortunate however, and according to Awoniyi (2006, p, 10) that:

The clear failing of public policy on language via the 1977 National Policy On Education becomes apparent when it is known that years after the policy and its revisions, the bilingual policy which forces the Nigerian Secondary School child to learn in addition to English language and His mother tongue, an additional indigenous Nigerian major languages, is hardly enforced in private schools, many state owned schools and some Federal Government colleges. Worse still, the products of the secondary schools are admitted into tertiary institutions with the English medium. The addition of French as an additional official language has also had little impact as government publications are still in English and schools merely teach French as any other school subject. Consequently, many of the learners of French in schools are passive bilinguals.

What Awóníyí is saying here is that government itself does not make her policies clear and that they also fails to enforce those policies. A case that readily comes to mind is the idea of enforcing passing one native language as a condition for gaining admission into any Nigerian tertiary institution which was only found on the pages of the paper. One is therefore forced to inquire if government policy on language teaching has failed. If it has, how then can the government succeed in making adjustments by improving the quality of language learning and language use in schools?

What we expect is the teaching of indigenous languages as basis for the teaching of foreign languages. The principle of moving from known to unknown must be adopted. This will ease the teachers' teaching and eventually the use of the language taught by pupils and students alike.

(vii). Political Domination

When a group of people are politically dominated, they take orders from their political lords. They cannot refuse such orders. In the learning and the use of a language, they readily

give ascent to whatever their political lords say or wish. In such situation, their local languages are adversely affected.

Artists, foreign and local, also constitute a barrier to language learning and language use. The imported music and singing styles does not recognize the difference in the societies they are singing or playing for. Most of their songs are the type that does not teach good communication skills. The languages therein, are disgusting and in most cases not in line with what the society acknowledges.

Ògúnṣínà (1995, p.299), using Ládélé's *Ìgbà ló dé*, explains how the introduction of the colonial rule had eroded the powers of the king. He writes that:

The colonial masters have seized power from him and he lived in morbid fear of the "Ajélè". He is often filled with a deep sense of uncertainty and insecurity. Whenever the "Ajélè" visits "Ògbojò", there is always one problem or the other.

This is just one of the examples that the negative incursion of colonialism has thrown the entire Yorùbá traditional politics into disrepute. Adéyemí (2008, p.118) also agrees that there has been a conspicuous drift from moral accountability to moral degeneration in the Yorùbá society traceable to colonialism, modernization, western philosophy and life-style.

In like manner, Akínjógbin, (2009, p.20-24) asserts that the influx of foreigners from different parts of the world to Yorùbá land punctured her ethical principles. New religions, new system of education and politics, new trade and professions different from those of the pre-colonial era has emerged. This implies that the advent of foreigners marks the beginning of a new orientation not only in politics, economic and social life, but also in the ethical principles of the people. These experiences and the reasons that emanate from them have made the resuscitation of the classic social life of the Yorùbá people imperative.

Babátúndé (2013, p.88) observes that a situation where a child's language is ignored in the educational process leads to a feeling of cultural and linguistic inferiority which will largely prevent the child from reaching the peak of his potential in personal development and in contributing to societal development. He concludes that a child must be opportuned to learn his language and learn in it. He then suggests that a bilingual or even multilingual education policy is required to ameliorate such problems.

The Yorùbá society is not left out of these problems. The situation calls for urgent attention because the worst thing that can happen to a people is to allow other people's ideas and cultures to dominate their own culture. This is the case for the Yorùbá society. Ògúndèjì and Àkàngbé (2009, p.5) state that:

Though there could not but be some changes and modifications to the traditional systems in the modern

context, the changes and modifications should be guided so that the good aspects of it that has to do with the sole existence of the Yorùbá as a people will not be eroded.

Several reasons are given for the lapses, the most common being colonialism and the two religions which brought new and deviant moral ways of life. Ìṣòlá, (2009, p.96) opines that:

Colonialism completely took over the African mind through an unsuitable system of education. In schools, the Yorùbá child was not allowed to speak the mother tongue. The poor children were made to learn foreign lullabies such as "Bah, bah black sheep, have you my wool? This lack of competence in the mother tongue has led to the loss of some valuable literary genres and other precious 'souvenirs' of language. The mother tongue was enthusiastically degraded and English was moved to the center stage. It became the pride of anyone who could stammer some innocuous to the envy of the stupefied illiterates.

He goes further to say that:

Religion is intended to water culture, sanitize it to make cultural life more stable. You can change your religion and espouse a foreign one, but you cannot change your culture. The truth is that if your culture has not socialized you into acceptable standard of right and wrong, if you have not internalized those humane qualities of integrity, honesty, transparency, accountability through your own culture, there will be no foundation on which any religion can build. Being born again really means going back to your God-given culture to learn how to be a good person. (p. 96).

Bánjò (2009, p.135) opines that:

Indiscriminate cultural borrowing may produce deleterious effects, and the degree of impersonality which results from lack of diverse cultures may subtly encourage disloyalty to one's own culture, when little is done to reinforce that culture.

Ìṣòlá (2009, p.100) writes that:

The cultural education of the child cannot succeed in a culturally hostile environment. We must therefore adopt a holistic approach to cultural reorientation in the society to create a friendly atmosphere for the child to internalize the humane virtues in our cultural heritage.

This implies that no nation can prosper on false pretense. From the above, it is evident that culture plays a vital role in the achievements of a people or a nation. A people that dump her culture for a foreign one is not likely to make a headway in the areas of politics, economy and social advancement.

This situation according to Babatunde (2013, p.88) could be described as a socio-cultural problem which can manifest into a feeling of cultural and linguistic inferiority which is likely to prevent the child from reaching the peak of his potential in personal development and in contributing to societal development. According to him, a child must be given the opportunity to learn his/her language and learn in it.

The Way Forward

From the above, it is evident that there are lots of barriers militating against effective learning and use of a language. The damage has been done but it is never late to make corrections. Since only change is permanent, we want to suggest some ways forward on this issue.

First and foremost, emphasis should be laid on the teaching, learning and use of the child's indigenous language as the basis for the child's learning because as we mentioned earlier, such a step would largely assist the child in learning other languages and learn them well.

Further still, the child's parents and guardians, the school and all other stake holders in the education sector must encourage the child to use his or her native language to communicate wherever the child finds himself/herself. The school environment is not left out. This however is possible only if some conditions such as provision of trained and qualified teachers are seriously addressed. To succeed in doing this, the abolished Grade II Teacher Training programme must be resuscitated along the re-structuring of the National Certificate of Education programmes and curriculum to provide for more time for practical teaching programmes.

In addition to the above, government should give prominence to language teachers just as they do to the sciences. Language teaching is the bedrock of all learning; therefore, competence in language mastery on the part of the teacher is of high value to successful language learning and language use by the child. To ameliorate the socio-cultural constraints facing the child in the area of indigenous language learning, a bilingual or even multi-lingual education policy is required.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have tried to identify the various factors militating against effective language learning and language use, be it in schools, in our homes and even within the society at large. We have also pointed out that the most serious of those factors is the domineering role ex-colonial languages play over the entire African Indigenous languages.

Not only this, we have also established the fact that the child's language background affects his or her learning process especially as regards his/her effective use of language. To be fluent in the use of any language, the child must be versed in his or her local language. This is the best foundation for the learning of other languages.

We strongly believe that all stakeholders in the education industry have to give priority attention to the teaching, learning and the use of Nigerian indigenous languages in their work plans. This should not be on paper alone. For instance, a 'novices' such as an untrained teacher should not be assigned to teach any language or else, the effective and successful teaching of such language would be jeopardized.

The practice whereby anybody is assigned to teach a language probably because he speaks the language or because the language is his, should henceforth cease. We are no more in the 'yes age'; therefore, a language teacher should be able to proof his or her worth at all time. He must understand the task ahead of him and must always be prepared to accomplish those tasks.

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