

THE PLACE OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF IGBO LANGUAGE

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Abstract

According to Emenanjo (1996) and Aziza (1998) Nigeria is the most multilingual nation in Africa with about 400-500 indigenous languages which have various status- developed, developing and underdeveloped. It has been recognized that the use of indigenous languages has helped most developed countries of the world to attain desirable development. The efficacy of using the language a learner is comfortable with, a language in which he can express his thoughts and translate his ideas into articulate sentences has been established by many scholars. The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around is best done and realized in the language in which the children are most familiar. Language has been identified as a conduit for transmission of culture, ideas, thoughts etc from generation to generation for its perpetuation. The study explores the topical issue of how indigenous languages (Igbo) can contribute to the national development. The study recognized that 59 years after independence that English, the colonial master's language is still the language of education, governance, commerce and industry etc in Nigeria and as such has hindered equal participation of the entire citizenry in governance access to information and full involvement in government policies and programmes. In many respects, the acquisition of a foreign language gave many Nigerians the freedom to acquire new status and identities. The implication is the relegation of the indigenous languages to the background. The focus of the study is therefore to explore the extent to which the use and teaching of indigenous languages (Igbo) can bring about revival and vigour in the quest for national development. It mainly argues that development is mediated through local knowledge inculcated through indigenous languages. The study's main objective is not to lament on the dangers resulting from Nigeria's linguistic fragmentation or linguistic fascism of the English language but to highlight the positive role indigenous languages can play in national development. This predicates that the sustainability of national development cannot be achieved if the indigenous languages of the said nation is neglected.

Keywords: Foreign language, indigenous languages, national development, language fascism, linguistic fragmentation

Introduction

What Language is

According to Olaoye (2002), language is a distinctively human system of communication based on oral and written symbols which is a pan-human development, a behavioural aspect of human beings which serves as a point of differentiation from animals. He further points out that language is a purely human and non-instinctive way of communicating ideas, emotions and desires. It is vocal symbols which permits all people in a given culture to communicate and interact. The importance of language to national development is best deduced from the intelligible importance of education to national development.

Language is a distinctively human system of communication based on oral and written symbols. It is the vehicle through which people's culture is transmitted. It is an extremely important aspect of a community. Language is an index of identity which serves as a repository of people's culture, industry and exploits. It is a tool to national integration and development. Olaoye (2013) posits that language differentiates the Homo sapiens from other animals. This paper emphasizes that despite the multicultural nature of Nigeria, national development is achievable through the use of indigenous languages

Indigenous language or autochthonous language is a language that is native to a region and spoken by indigenous peoples but has been reduced to the status of minority language (Obi 2011). She goes further

to say that the language would be from a linguistically distinct community that has been settled in the area for many generations. It is the language spoken uniquely by an indigenous community or country. Government's programmes and policies reach the grassroots with the use of indigenous languages. Indigenous language may not be national language. Therefore, an indigenous language is the language of the people regarded as the original inhabitant of the tribe that owns it.

Igbo language is one of the indigenous languages and it is one of the three major indigenous languages recognized by the Federal government of Nigeria as official language to be taught and learnt in schools. Igbo language is spoken by the Igbo people living in the eastern part of Nigeria. It is most spoken by the people from these states; Anambra, Imo, Enugu, Abia and Ebonyi states and some parts in Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta states. Igbo language belongs to "kwa" group of Niger-Congo. Like other languages, Igbo language is not static and so desirable changes could be made in the light of knowledge and experience in this era of globalization. The efficacy of using the language a learner is comfortable with, a language in which he can express his thoughts and translate his ideas into articulate sentences has been established by many scholars. The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around is best done and realized in the language in which the children are most familiar.

Events have shown that the active participation and use of indigenous languages by the people have not been considered very vital in national development agenda. This shows that the notion of the success of the national development agenda is not taken seriously. Nigeria has not done well to promote and use the indigenous languages for the effective national development of the country. Advanced countries like China, Japan and Russia have achieved growth and development because they see their indigenous languages as tools for transformation and have made efforts in integrating them in their developmental strategies.

In his analysis, Omoregbe (2003) makes a link between language and national development. He states that there are interrelationships in-between language, words, ideas and knowledge; in other words, that they are closely related. According to his explanation, language is the means of human communication and it is made up of words; words are signs of ideas, that is, signs which signify ideas; ideas, in turn, signify and represent things, and they are the immediate objects of our knowledge (Omoregbe 2003). Since there is a link between language and knowledge, there is also a link between language and national development because knowledge is a sure key to national development. In fact, it is of common knowledge that national development cannot take place without knowledge. The importance of knowledge in the process of national development buttresses the importance of language, as knowledge is not only linked to language but is also transferred or imparted through it. The relationship between language and national development is stressed by Chumbow, in Emenanjo (1990:63) in these words:

The relation between language and national development should be obvious from the fact that since education is crucial in the training of manpower for national development and the language-medium is crucial in the educational process, it follows that language is important and in fact vital to national development as well.

Mu'azu (2014) posits that experiences from some developed countries like Mexico, Canada, Russia, Wales etc have however shown that the indigenous languages are fit for all rung and levels of education as effective media of instruction that is capable of eliminating pedagogical difficulties in learning and thereby enhancing better understanding. In fact, research results in the fields of education, linguistics, anthropology and cognitive psychology all agree that students who enter school with a primary language other than the national or dominant language perform significantly better on academic tasks when they receive consistent and cumulative academic support in the native heritage language.

Review of Related Literature

National Development

The term national development is a very important phenomena as regards the existence and well-being of the country. The condition, description and status of any nation is dependent upon the nature of the life of its citizen. In the words of Eyisi and Akaegbobi (2014:462),

if a country possesses the highest security missiles but is deficient in some basic amenities like water, electricity, good roads and a good communication network, such a country cannot be said to be developed. More so, in a country where a limited number out of a whole majority is living in opulence while the rest are famished, living from hand to mouth in a squalid and hostile environment, development cannot be said to have taken place

National development, therefore, entails some positive, quantitative and qualitative change in a society. By this, we mean the process of improving human life. Todero (1977) giving credence to the above meaning established three important aspects of development viz:

1. Raising people's living levels- their incomes and consumption levels of food, medical services, education etc through economic growth.
2. Creating conditions conducive to the growth of people's self-esteem through the establishment of social, political and economic systems and institutions which promote human dignity and respect.
3. Increasing people's freedom to choose by enlarging the range of their choice-variables, for example, by increasing varieties of consumer goods and services.

Nduka (2002) in consonance with the above, succinctly defines development as a type of social change in which new ideas are introduced into a social system in order to produce higher per-capita incomes and levels of living through more modern methods and improved social organization. In his own view, Obasi (1987) sees national development as a progressive economic, social and political structure of a society from relatively less complex, less efficient and less desirable forms using the inherent potential of that society

National development can be regarded as a situation whereby people harness the resources at their disposal in order to have meaningful life. This development ranges from growth in education (intellectual growth), politics, economy, science and technology. In the educational process the mother tongue (Igbo) is the pillar through which man has to plan, instruct and evaluate programmes. This development of individuals in respect of their aspiration in the society means development of a nation. Individuals develop educationally, socially, economically, politically and culturally through their interaction with the government agencies that disseminate ideas and policies through various media in the languages that individuals best understand.

Education is the tool that propels development- -human, spiritual, cultural, social, economic and industrial. An uneducated society is doomed to perpetual backwardness, retrogression and material decay, while an educated society is a salvager of its own future. This goes to strengthen what Olaoye said, that qualitative education in any nation is not a luxury, but imperative to national development. In order to achieve national cohesion and unity, Nigeria recognizes the importance of mother tongue education hence she states in her National Policy on Education (NPE) (1981)

Government will see to it that the medium of instruction in the primary school is initially the Mother tongue or the language of the immediate community and at a later stage, English. In selecting two Nigerian languages, students should study the language of their own area in addition to any of the three main Nigerian languages- Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba, subject to the availability of teachers.

Mother tongue is the language in which the child first learns to love and respect the mental heritage of his people and culture. Olaoye (2013:2) quoting Olaoye (2009) asserts that the indigenous language- mother tongue performs the following functions in child development:

- i) Instrumental function: Mother tongue is used by the child for getting things done. He uses mother tongue to navigate to maturity.
- ii) Interactional function: The child uses his mother tongue to interact with his parents, siblings, neighbours, peer-groups, classmates and the people he meets. He uses Igbo language to carry out speech act illocution, such as persuading, requesting, dissuading, apologizing, commanding, directing, warning, teasing or mocking and even abusing and praising. Even adults also use these speech behaviours to achieve international objectives.
- iii) Regulating function: Mother tongue is used for controlling people's behavior through the following ways: Prohibition, for instance, the child or even the adult says "don't take my pen", "don't forget me". For adults we have "don't urinate here", "don't give bribe", "don't engage in examination malpractice" etc. All these statements are to instill moral discipline or to mould people's behaviours. Mother tongue is being used as law enforcement agency.
- iv) Threat of reprisal: When children do what is wrong, mother tongue is used as a threat of reprisal for instance, "I will punish you if you do that again", "I will stop you from following your sister if you don't behave well". Disapproval of behaviour as in "that is bad", "that is not done here".
- v) Emotional blackmail: We can use mother tongue to black mail someone like "Eh! You will kill your mum like that", "you will give your father hypertension" (Olaoye (2002). When the child interacts with speakers of his MT, he learns more about the rules of speaking or socio-linguistic norms in the speech community, including of course the sanctions which go with the breach of the rules of speaking. He grows in native wisdom, knowledge and understanding. He learns societal ethos such as reciprocal respects for each other's opinions, humility, patience and other social values. He also imbibes positive moral attitude which makes him become a well-behaved, highly responsible, well-adjusted and disciplined citizen who shuns social vices like laziness, greed, avarice, corruption and other social vices. He thus becomes a man with high morality who can contribute positively to national development. All these regulatory statements help the child and even the adults to develop a sense of responsibility and refinement in behaviour.
- vi) Child rearing function: Igbo language is a powerful weapon or instrument for child-rearing practices. Through precepts, rules of speaking, the use of body language, socio linguistic etiquette, the children are initiated into their parent's speech community. Through indigenous songs, folktales, stories, proverbs, adages, literature, children learn age-old wisdom, adult conversational skills, moral lessons, how to engage in dialogue and constructive criticism. Bakare (2000) asserts that MT has the capacity to develop children's curiosity, manipulative ability, flexibility, initiative, industry, manual dexterity and mechanical comprehension, all leading to self-confidence, resourcefulness, creative reasoning and all-round development.

Indigenous languages, literature and culture have been well established and documented by Olaoye and Isyaku (2004) as what contribute immensely to national development. According to them, there is no literature without language. Culture and language too are inseparable and the trios are intricately interwoven. They play vital role in man's education and national development. Literature in Igbo or other indigenous languages is an art which entertains and instructs. It warns people of danger and instructs by opening people's eyes to a wide range of experiences and a deeper understanding of these experiences. According to Fatokun (1992) literature presents situations, interactions and oppositions. It suggests a wide

range of value and attitudes. To understand a people and their culture one may have to turn to their oral and written narratives, their drama and poetry. A good piece of literature can be regarded as an authentic mirror image of its society and time. Through satire, proverbs and symbolism, literary artists communicate ideas, thoughts and feelings about social ills in the society which they criticize with prussic diction. Proverbs, for instance, are a lesson in prudence, generosity, patience and wisdom which are indispensable to the guidance of mankind and the stability of society. Literary artists use Igbo language or other indigenous languages to ridicule or condemn anti-social behaviors such as corruption, assassination, political thuggery, religious intolerance, oppressive rule or dictatorship, any form of human degradation and undemocratic practices. Through historical literature our knowledge of the society is widened. According to Asade (2002) we learn from historical literature about seemingly immortal despots and their ignoble and sorrowful end, and that their mysterious death was engendered by the avalanche of atrocities and carnage they had masterminded and executed. This knowledge helps people in charting new and humanistic sociopolitical and economic course, which leads to a new world order. This is the contribution of literature to national development.

Culture is defined as the particular systems of art, thought and custom of a society. It is the whole way of life of a people, the social heritage that the individual acquires as a member of his group. It is the entire attitude, perception and specific traits of civilization that is conferred to a people and its place in the universe. These traits are speech norms, etiquette, ideologies, ethics, stereotypes, artifacts, technologies, intellectual production etc. Indigenous language is thus an indelible mark of a people's identity. According to Fani-kayode (2006) the core values of our people must be the pivot for national reforms. He enjoins that our traditional values should be embedded in honesty, transparency, respect for institutions, constituted authorities and the sanctity of human person and life. These core values are reflected in the people's identity, cultures, traditions and systems, most times encapsulated in their languages. A child that grows up guided by the positive values of the society will possess a healthy and progressive mind in adulthood (Opega (2004). Therefore, the teaching and learning of indigenous languages, literature and culture will afford the learner an understanding of the problems of the society, and indeed, Nigeria. We cannot, therefore, overemphasize the importance of a society's indigenous languages, literature and culture as three interrelated sociolinguistic variables from whose milk the youth must drink in order to develop a healthy soul in a healthy body.

Indigenous Languages play active roles in Civic Responsibility and Democracy. The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provides that citizens have among others the following: allegiance to the constitution, respect for its ideals and institutions as well as the National Flag, Anthem, Pledge and respects for properly constituted authorities. Other duties include protection and preserving public property, shunning fighting, official corruption and squander menial, contributing to the good name and defense of the country. Citizens have the right to vote and be voted for, freedom of movement, speech, association, and the right to human dignity, personal liberty and fair hearing. - It is only through civic education that citizens can know their rights and civic duties, and indigenous language is the instrument for political, social and cultural education. Government's policies and programmes are often couched in English language technical terms beyond the understanding of the teeming illiterate populace. Government uses terms like privatization, commercialization, deregulation, federal character, economic melt-down, geo-political zones, zero allocation, federation account, monetization policy, nascent democracy, national re-branding, attitudinal change, option A-4, gubernatorial candidates, restructuring etc. Translating government's pronouncements, policies, the National Anthem, Pledge and programmes into Igbo or any other Nigerian languages will make more meaning to the illiterate masses, and will bring about political awareness, which in turn will encourage participatory democracy which will reduce political apathy, and open citizens' eyes to their rights and privileges, thus reducing the chances of voter intimidation and rigging. The end result will be national development.

In the process of education, language is the medium of instruction. The effectiveness of the educational programme or a training programme depends to a large extent, on whether or not effective communication has taken place between the teacher and the learner. The knowledge, skills and value necessary for a person to become an effective agent of change are provided through education by an appropriate language medium. Therefore, the role of language in the process of national development is extremely very important. On this note the Renaissance philosopher Francis Bacon made this postulation that “knowledge is Power” (Omeregbe 2003). The universe or nature has to be conquered and dominated and the weapon with which nature can be conquered and dominated is knowledge. Knowledge itself is communicated through language. Therefore, language is a vital tool in the struggle to gain dominion over nature. In fact, the importance of language to national development cannot be over-emphasized since it is with language that the entirety of reality can be explained Agbanusi (2014) in Onu and Obianika (2019).

Some Problems Militating against the Growth of Igbo Language

The main reason for this ugly development is that the indigenous speakers of Igbo language do not show adequate interest in it. The indigenous speakers of Yoruba and Hausa languages show much interest in their languages. Finding the English language as the inevitable *lingua franca* in Nigeria, the indigenous speakers of Yoruba and Hausa languages accommodated the language as, and only as, the *lingua franca* which it is. In spite of the English language, they also speak their indigenous languages with pride and do not feel shy speaking them very well anywhere and any time. They ensure that their children learn to speak, read and write it. Hence, very educated and highly-placed Yoruba and Hausa speak their native languages fluently. Those of them in Diaspora are no exceptions. This positive attitude of the Yoruba and the Hausa towards their languages invariably endears these languages to non-native speakers and has thus won the languages a lot of admiration and recognition, both locally and internationally. This is exemplified in the fact that, for some time now, both languages have been enjoying the opportunity of air-time in both the Voice of America (VOA) and the British Broadcasting Service (BBC), (Agbanusi 2014).

However, the story of the Igbo people and their language is quite different. Experience makes it seem that the English language means more to the Igbo people than just a *lingua franca*. It is as if the people have even decided to replace their native language with English. This phenomenon is manifest in the fact that most Igbo people, unlike their Hausa and Yoruba counterparts, cannot write or read the Igbo language fluently. Many of them cannot even speak it well, let alone be able to write it well. Worse still, some Igbo youths, especially some of those who have, for a long time, lost contact with their cultural root due to long stay outside, treat the language with levity. In their ignorance, such youths would prefer to learn and speak the ethnic language of their place of abode. The reason for this lack of adequate interest in Igbo language by the Igbo people themselves is traceable to the ignorance of most of the indigenous speakers of the language. The ignorance here is not only their ignorance of the great importance of the language to the Igbo race and to the entire nation, but also that of the great danger its decline or extinction portends to the Igbo cultural identity, and its far-reaching implications to the socio-economic life of the Igbo people in particular and the entire nation in general. The immediate implication of lack of interest in Igbo language by the indigenous speakers is that it discourages some non-Igbo people who, for one reason or the other, have the enthusiasm to learn the language. Such people get dispirited when they observe the carelessness with which the very owners of the language treat it. An Igbo adage says thus: 'Onye kpqq qba ya mkpqkqlq, agbataobi ejiri ya kpoo ah[h'a'. This is directly translated as: 'if a person calls his vessel useless, neighbours will use it to pack rubbish'. Semantically, it says that if a person treats his vessel with levity, others will have room to treat it likewise. In other words, the adage expresses the view that if a person fails to accord adequate respect to a thing that belongs to him, others will also disrespect it. This is exactly the case with the Igbo language and its native speakers.

Another major reason for the decline in the learning and speaking of Igbo language is the misinterpretation or misunderstanding, or to be sure, the non-application of the National Policy on Education (NPE) as it concerns the medium of instruction at the primary level of education in Nigeria. On

this issue, Section 3; Paragraph 4 of the National Policy on Education states “Government will see to it that the medium of instruction in the primary school is initially the mother-tongue or language of immediate community and, at a later stage, English” (NPE 1981:13)

Nevertheless, in contrast with the above, in many primary schools in the country (especially in Igbo land), English is used as the major language of instruction. The situation is worsened by the fact that in many Igbo-based primary schools, not only that pupils are denied the right of being taught in their mother-tongue, they are even punished by corporal punishment or by payment of a fine for daring to speak it in the class. This attitude sends the wrong signal to a child about his or her mother tongue, and immensely diminishes his interest in it.

Thirdly, the iconoclastic attitude of most Igbo people gave rise to the emergence of an unreasonable fashion among parents: the fashion of encouraging early learning and speaking of English by their children without a corresponding encouragement in the learning and speaking of the Igbo language. According to Ezeani (2005:25),

The situation of the Igbo is made worse because, today, they are both the subjects (agents) and objects (victims) of the discourse, which belittles and disdains their own language. So, the Igbo of the present generation are the victims and victimizers of their own, thorough inherited, discourse.

The Place of Igbo Language in National Development

There are some qualities that qualify the Igbo Language for National development. These include among others: Cultural identity, Commercial nature, Enculturation and Language as mark of identity.

Cultural identity: Language is an essential means through which people communicate during interaction with one another. Kilgour (1999) in Onu and Obianika (2019:44) assert that apart from being a means of communication, language forges friendships, cultural ties and economic relationships. Kilgour also notes that language is not only a vehicle for the expression of thought, perceptions, sentiments and values characteristic of a community but also represents a fundamental expression of social identity. Because of all these roles that languages perform, there is no society without one or more languages. These languages are the carriers of culture in any society where they are found. To buttress the issue of the role of language in culture, Obahiagbon (2010) notes that language serves as cultural identity to a group of people. On the use of indigenous language (Igbo) in schools, Prezi (2013) identifies five reasons for the use of indigenous languages in our schools to include national consciousness and pride, cultural dynamism, psychological equilibrium, pedagogical efficacy and mass communication.

Commercial Nature: Obviously, knowledge is a key factor in national development, and since meaningful knowledge can only be transferred through language, it means that, as already noted, the importance of language to national development cannot be over-emphasized. The Igbo language is particularly crucial to national development because of the commercial nature of the South-eastern part of the country which harbours the native speakers of the Igbo language. People who do not possess the necessary knowledge are not likely to advance in social and economic spheres. Communication is most intelligible in a language with which the person is at home. It was in appreciation of this fact that the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) called on every European citizen to learn how to speak, read and write his or her native language (Ezeani 2005:23). This should be a lesson for Nigerians. It implies that even those without formal education, can imbibe a skill or knowledge better in their respective indigenous languages than in English. The issue should be of particular interest to Igbo people, considering the fact that the South-eastern part of Nigeria which is the geographical base of the

Igbo language embodies some of the largest markets in the whole of Africa. Owing to this fact, an improvement in the learning and speaking of the Igbo language, both among the Igbo and the non-Igbo, will ensure efficiency in communication and consequently lead to the enhancement of the economic growth of the nation. If the language is developed to international standards and made an international language, there is no doubt that it will attract foreign investor-companies which will find it easier to have their personnel trained in Igbo language before sending them to their industries and companies in Igbo land. In this way, communication with the local workforce will be easier and more effective, leading to greater productivity.

Enculturation: The most important role of the Igbo language in any society is enculturation of its citizens within the culture of its society so far, even though English is the official language of Nigerians, it is doubtful whether any Nigerian yet acquires it as a mother tongue. It is trite to observe that even though some Nigerian elites attempt to speak the English language to their children; this version of English is certainly not English as we know it. The English that most Nigerians teach their children are mainly literal translations of their mother tongues (Mbah,2012).

Language as mark of identity: Language is a mark of identity for any ethno linguistic group. Igbo language is not an exception to this view. Igbo people are identified by their language. Whenever a language user speaks his language, we will be able to identify his linguistic group and by so doing, we equally identify a person to be a Nigerian. It is in cognizance of the role of language that made Nwadike (2004) to conclude this way, “language is the key to the heart of the people. If we lose the key, we lose the people....” A close look at Nwadike’s statement will make one to understand that any ethno-linguistic group that loses their language automatically loses their identity as a people. Moreover, Igbo language provides great potential in the areas of social order, religion and politics. With an improvement in the study and learning of the language, Nigerians of other ethnic extractions, some of who complain that the Igbo language is complex, will be better guided in learning it. This will certainly enhance the spirit of brotherhood among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria, and ultimately heighten the level of social order, religious tolerance and political stability in the nation.

Furthermore, the Vice Chairman of Senate Committee on Housing, Lands and Urban Development, Senator Gbenga Ashafa 2013 emphasized the significance of indigenous languages, noting that if well harnessed , the language of each ethnic group in the country “is critical to realizing the national development goals.” He went further to say that the language of each tribe should be held sacrosanct for the nation to compete with other developed countries in the world. The lawmaker urged all parents and guardians to cultivate that habit of communicating with their wards in their indigenous languages with emphasis that preservation of indigenous languages would bring about rapid development.

Conclusion

The paper, thus far has been directed at justifying why and how indigenous languages (Igbo) should have a place in national development. On the schools front, primary schools must be equipped to teach Igbo properly. The pupils must be exposed to the appropriate folk tales, games and books to build up their knowledge and pride as Igbo children. At secondary school level, all schools in the Igbo-speaking states and local government areas must make Igbo a compulsory subject and provide adequate staffing, material and equipment to ensure effective teaching. At tertiary level the provisions and facilities for teaching and research must be vastly expanded.

Language is the means by which we communicate. The importance of communication as a factor in national development is most manifest with regards to trade. As a 'commercial language', Igbo language is not only a vital tool for national development but also very important to the on-going globalization which also considers trade as one of its major areas of focus. With renewed interest in, and enhanced learning of

Igbo language, championed by the native Igbo speakers, the language will soon be appropriately positioned as a vital instrument for national development and, by extension, global development

Recommendations

Ignorance and nonchalance on the Igbo people is the mother of this lack of interest which is the crux of the problem of the Igbo language. As soon as the Igbo begin to show adequate interest in the Igbo language, the non- Igbo will follow suit. When this happens, Igbo language will have been placed on the threshold of a new existence where its immense potential as a language of commerce will be realized.

As part of the efforts towards resuscitating and repositioning the language, it is of primary importance that concerned Igbo elites use every available forum or opportunity to educate the Igbo masses on what is at stake. They should be made to understand that language is the pivot around which the wheel of a people's culture rotates. Igbo people should be made to realize that language is a crucial index of culture and that it is culture that gives a people their identity as a people. The implication, therefore, is that the more a people's language dwindles, the more they are at the verge of losing their identity. Every Igbo person should learn to write, read and speak Igbo language properly. Igbo idioms and wise sayings, which add beauty to the language, should not be left out. One's proficiency or fluency in one's mother tongue is what establishes one as a true child of his father. An Igbo adage says: 'onye chefuo aha nna ya, q bxgh[nna ya mxrx ya'. This means that when a person forgets his father's name, then you can be sure the man is not actually his father. Parents should ginger their wards to learn to speak, read and write Igbo language. They should ensure that these children achieve a corresponding proficiency in Igbo language as in English even better in Igbo because English is for sure they must know it.

Parents should change their attitude towards Igbo language, the notion that it is only through the colonial master's language that one can progress in life should be discarded. The Nigeria Policy on Education should not be only on paper but should be practicalised and implemented in schools. School Inspectors and all stakeholders should be involved in making sure that the language policy is followed to the letter.

The teaching and learning of indigenous languages (Igbo) should be made interesting with the use of new technologies and strategies. Parents should speak to their children in their various indigenous languages especially those parents of Igbo origin who neglect their language and prefer English. Igbo language can be made richer, by finding ways of including new science and technology in the language. This will disabuse the minds of those who believe that it is only English that has means to explain such concepts.

Governments have multiple roles to play. With regard to education, they should ensure that Igbo is properly taught in our schools and that appropriate texts, materials and equipment are available and adequate. With their control of various media, governments are also in a position to promote Igbo language and literature through targeted programs at various levels. Some symbolic yet practical actions are also called for. There should be Scholarship awards to the interested Igbo, and even non-Igbo people desirous to study Igbo language in the University or any higher institution. Serious efforts should be made to make the Igbo language lucrative. This is necessary because it is of common experience that, in human affairs, incentives attract greater stimuli than mere exhortations. As soon as the monetary value of the Igbo language is increased, the zeal to speak or study it in school will rise tremendously.

Houses of Assembly in all Igbo States should use Legislation to stop the practice of pupils being punished for speaking Igbo (their mother tongue) during school period. Thus Governments in Igbo States can formally give Igbo equal status in the conduct of government business, through transactions and publications. The state assemblies and local governments should also do the same and designate at least one or two days in the week as Igbo language day. A similar arrangement is operational in some Yoruba states (Ukwu 2009). The findings of the Political Bureau (1987) section 53 of the defunct 1979 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which also state thus:

Government shall promote the learning of indigenous languages. The business of the National Assembly shall be conducted in English and in Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba when adequate arrangements have been made thereof. The business of a House of Assembly shall be conducted in English but the House may in addition to English conduct the business of the House in one or more other languages spoken in the state as the House may by resolution approve.

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