

INDIGENOUS IGBO NAMES: A VERITABLE PEDAGOGY TOOL IN FRENCH LANGUAGE CLASSES IN IGBO SPEAKING AREAS OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study discusses the choice of Igbo names as a pedagogy means of teaching and learning French in Nigeria most especially in Igbo speaking environments. In pursuing this concern, the study examines some selected Igbo names among numerous others. The names are translated in English and French languages. The study went further ahead in making use of them to show the extent to which Igbo names when examined, could be used to teach French vocabularies, construct French phrases and simple French sentences. The study concludes that making use of Igbo names to teach French language will go a long way in boosting French language learning among Igbo learners of French language.

Keywords: Language, French language, Igbo language, names, pedagogy, teaching, acquisition and learning.

Introduction

In any language acquisition or learning, proficiency and competence are judged not only by the knowledge possessed and exhibited by the learner, but also by the ability to communicate freely by using the acquired learned language. One big question that one might ask is why do we teach and learn French language in Nigeria. The answer to this question could be seen in Ihenacho (1983:303) that: “the primary aim of French in Nigeria was educational and cultural”.

According to Ade-Ojo (2002:3):

French is the official language of all our neighbours (Benin, Niger, Cameroun and Chad). For proper understanding, cordial relationship, reciprocal and rewarding socio-economic rapport... and transnational ability... and complete regional integration, Nigerians... owe it a duty to themselves, to Nigeria and to the whole of West African sub-region, to appreciate and appropriate French by learning to speak and write it.

Furthermore, on the usefulness of French language in Nigeria, Araromi (1996:225) opines that:

Nigeria plays important roles in international organizations such as UNESCO, ECOWAS and others. If our representatives in such international organizations are versed in French, they will be better placed in

putting forward our visions.

While Kwofie (2008:20) observes that learning French language in Nigeria apart from extending the students intellectual horizon... Enhances his/her marketability, that is improves his/her chances in the labor market.

However, despite all these noble aims of introducing French language in Nigeria, there have always been obstacles in teaching and learning of French. According to Alo (1995:1) French language teaching and learning have been facing series of problems. There are obstacles in the learning of the language and one of these problems is the problem of pedagogy as well as how to make French language attractive to learners. In sharing Alo's (Op.cit:1) point of view, for French teaching and learning to move forward, all these problems must be solved.

Based on the above, Alo's (Op.cit), many critical recommendation have been made and are still being offered, on how to improve the teaching and learning of French language in Nigeria (Ajiboye, 2010; Jimoh, 2010; Ajani, 2015 and 2018; Mbanefo, 2000; Alawode, 2007; Kizito, 1997 and Adeleke, 2018) just to mention but a few.

Definition of Terms

Certain terms as employed in this study require clarification by definition, they include:

Language: language according to Sapir (1972:8): is ...a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas,

emotions and desire by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols... It is a significant experience. From Hall (1968:158) point of view, language is: "The institution where humans communicate and interact with each other by means of habitually used oral-auditory arbitrary symbols".

Also from Oyelaran (1990:22) language, in addition to being the most important vehicle of people's culture it is also the most distinctive of all the traits which separate human being from other beings...

And from Nwogu (2002:22), language is the basis of all creative thoughts and without language, there would be no progress.

In addition, for Olayemi (1990:99) language performs several functions for both individual and the society and part of these functions are:

- a) It allows individual greater possibility of self-expression.
- b) It makes people full members of their community because language is a means of communication.
- c) It is a tool for expression and analysis of concepts and their processes.

Foreign language

According Akindele and Adegbite (1992:41): a foreign language... Could be second, third, fourth or fifth language of a multilingual person. It is also a language a bi- or multilingual person conducts only specialized activities and therefore one in which he/she has a partial linguistic facility of its four-language skill. The language has the socio-cultural function of serving as a means of voluntarily acquiring a new international culture.

French as a Foreign Language

And from Ajidoye (2002:9-10), a language which is geographically and politically exogenous to mother tongue(s) identifiable in the geographical community under reference and which is introduced into the community by choice as a result of a felt need for supra national cooperation integration.

Igbo language

From Eze (2014:166-167): Igbo language is a language spoken by the Igbo people... Igbo language is one of the three major Nigerian languages, the other two are Hausa and Yoruba.

Pedagogy

According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2015:1134), pedagogy refers to "the study of teaching methods".

Acquisition and Learning

According to Yule (2010:187) the term acquisition is used to refer to the gradual development of ability in a language by using it naturally in communicative situation with others who know the language. The term learning however, applies to a more conscious process of accumulating knowledge of the features, such as vocabulary and a grammar of a language in an institutional setup.

Indigenous Igbo Names

A name according to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2013:778) is "a word or words that a particular person... is known by" while Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2009:1090) sees name as "what someone is called". According to Eze (2009:) a name is "a word or term used for identification".

On Igbo names, Eze (Op.cit) opines that in Igbo land, Igbo names have a symbolic meaning. Furthermore, in Igbo language, while some names can be given to both male and female children, there are certain names reserved for a particular sex. He further noted that majority of Igbo names given to new born children are abbreviated statement of meaning and significant interpretation of life experience or of events in the history of the family.

From the above, one could see that in traditional Igbo society like any other African societies, there is more to a name given to a child than just ordinary tag or identification because Igbo names like other African names bear a message and a meaning (an information) to pass across.

Theoretical Framework

The model on which this study is anchored is Bloomfield's (1933) behaviorist model that states that language learning is a matter of associating words with things and Skinner's, 1957 behaviorist model that states that language is learning through social interaction as well as complex stimuli within the learner environment that is language learning comes from outside, from input from others and from interaction; and correlation.

Methodology

This study concerns the examination

of Igbo names in teaching and learning French language among Igbo learners of French language, our major means of collecting data, therefore is through direct insight into some selected Igbo names and meaning sought out through consultations that involved Igbo scholars.

For the purpose of this study, we observed that in Igbo land like any other African setting, names are very important and, in most cases, a powerful emotive thought of the family, hence names are not given anyhow

Presentation of Data

In this section, we highlight some of the data (Igbo names) collected for the study. The names collected were written down and translated into English and French language for the purpose of Igbo names, involved.

S/N	IGBO NAMES	ENGLISH TRANSLATION	FRENCH TRANSLATION
1.	Iheanacho	What we have been looking for	Ce que nous cherchons
2.	Chukwudi	There is God	Dieu existe
3.	Ijeoma	Safe journey	Bon voyage
4.	Nnenna	The fathers mother	La mère du père
5.	Ifeyinwa	There is nothing like a child	Rien ne vaut un enfant
6.	Nwakaego	The child is greater than money	Un enfant vaut mieux que l'argent
7.	Chetachi	Remember God	N'oublie pas Dieu
8.	Ogochukwu	God's favour	La faveur de Dieu
9.	Chinonso	God is near by	Dieu est proche de nous
10.	Nkemakolam	My own must remain with me	Que ce qui m'appartient, reste avec moi
11.	Ifechukwudelu	What God has written	Ce que le Dieu a écrit
12.	Ekwutosi	Do not speak bad of people	Ne dites pas du mauvais d'autrui
13.	Ifeanyichukwu	Nothing is impossible to God	Rien n'est impossible à Dieu
14.	Ihuaku	The face of wealth	Le visage du bonheur
15.	Eberechukwu	God's mercy	La miséricorde de Dieu
16.	Ejikeme	It is not by power	Ce n'est pas par la force
17.	Kelechi	Thank God	Il faut remercier Dieu
18.	Ezeudo	King of peace	Le roi de la paix
19.	Ekenechukwu	Thanks giving to God	La grâce faite à Dieu
20.	Ezejiaku	King that lacks nothing	Le roi qui détient tout

Analyses and Discussion

According to Cook (1994 :3), On successful teaching and learning of language all successful teaching depends upon learning, there is no point in providing entertaining, lively, well constructed language lesson, if students do not learn. Based on the above (Op.cit) on successful teaching and learning of language, in this aspect of our study, we want to take a look at indigenous Igbo names and examine to what extent they could be used in teaching French language among the Igbo learners of French in the area of French vocabulary development, formation of simple French phrases / sentences and other areas of French grammar.

To start with, let us take a look at the development of French vocabulary among Igbo learners of French through the case of indigenous Igbo names. The following Igbo words in indigenous Igbo names cited in this paper when translated into French language will give the following meaning in French and the words are:

Igbo	French	English
- Chukwu	Dieu	God
- Ebere	Miséricorde	Mercy
- Eze	Roi	King
- Udo	Paix	Peace
- Ego	Argent	Money

For more clarification, let us take a look into the following indigenous Igbo names:

- i. Ogochukwu – God’s favour – La faveur de Dieu.
- ii. Iheanacho – What is being sought – Ce qu’on cherche
- iii. Amarachi – God’s grace – La grace de Dieu
- iv. Chukwudi – There is God – Dieu existe
- v. Ijeoma – Safe journey – Bon voyage.
- vi. Ebere Chukwu : God’s Mercy – Miséricorde de Dieu.

From the above indigenous Igbo names, one could see nearly all component of French grammar like:

- i) Sujet: ‘‘noun’’.
- ii. Verbe : Like ‘‘cherchers’’ (to look for), décider (to decide), entendu (heard).
- iii. Noun: Dieu (God), voyage, journey, grâce (thanksgiving), faveur (favour).
- iv. Pronoun : on (some one)
- v. Article : La (the).
- vi. Preposition: ‘‘de’’, of

All the above components of French grammar and others could be brought to the French classes.

Formation of Phrases/Sentences

Indigenous Igbo names like all other African names as initially stated, are complete sentences and based on that, they could be used to teach formation of simple French sentences.

According to Dubois and Lagane (2014:3), French grammar is made of the following classes.

- a) The verb that is an action word, example: Ajani va au marche – Ajani goes to the market. The word ‘‘va’’ is a verb.
- b. A noun. Example: Ajani dort – Ajani is sleeping. The word Ajani is a noun.
- c. Article: a word that determine the nature of the noun. Example: L’enfant (the child).
- d. Adjective: A word that indicate the quality of a noun. Example: Une belle voiture (a beautiful car).
- e. Pronoun : A word that replace a noun. Example: J’ai perdu mon stylo, je l’ai perdu (I lost it).
- f. Adverb : A word that modifies an adjective, verb or another adverb. Example: Ade mange beaucoup – Ade eats a lot.
- g. Conjunction and Preposition: A link word between a word or a group of words. Example: Ade et Bola sont arrivés – Ade and Bola have arrived.

Le sac est sur la table – The bag is on the table.

Indigenous Igbo names are all loaded with all the above French grammatical classes because apart from the fact that indigenous Igbo names have symbolic meanings, they are also complete sentences, because they contain the marker that could be a noun or pronoun, a verb, a preposition or a conjunction, and in most cases draw the attention of Igbo learners of French grammar by making use of indigenous Igbo names in French class. And to make use of them, the lecturer gets those names translated into French language and goes ahead to point out various French grammatical elements as contained in selected Igbo names.

Furthermore, in the area of the formation of simple French sentences, indigenous Igbo names could be used, for example:

- i. Enweremchi: I have God (J’ai Dieu).
- ii. Chidaalu: Thank you Lord – Merci le seigneur.
- iii. Chidimma: God is good – Dieu est bon.

With the above three sentences, we could lead our students in forming three simple French

sentences. Let us take the example of the first sentences; we have the subject (Je) which is personal pronoun first person singular which mean “I” in English. We also have (ai) which stand for (have) in English conjugated first person singular from the verb ‘avoir’ (verb to have) in French and we have the object which is Dieu, God in English. Based on this, we could ask our students to form other simpler French sentences like ‘j’ai’ (un crayon), ‘J’ai’ (un livre), ‘j’ai un cahier’, ‘j’ai un sac’ etc.

Implication of the Study

In Bloor and Bloor’s view (1997:326), “the question of how to speak or write more effectively is one that has been of interest to educators and critics for hundreds of years. Most teachers and critics have something to say on the subject” interestingly series of teaching language methods have occupied the centre of teaching, most especially foreign languages. Despite the noble steps, more skills need to be developed so as to move the teaching of language most especially foreign languages like French language in our own case.

Furthermore, from Cook (Op.cit): “...One arrowed goal of language, teaching is to help people develop brain training and logical thinking”. The implication of this is that in line with UNESCO (Op.cit) the best way to promote foreign language is to lay emphasis on the mother tongue so as to let the

learner discover the true structure of a foreign language to be taught and learnt. What this is telling us is that a language, most especially a foreign language teaching method, should not be limited to the already existing conventional teaching methods like direct and indirect teaching or the communicative approach teaching or other documented ones known to specialist in language teaching. Making use of other well structured teaching methods like the focus of this work will go a long way in promoting French teaching and learning in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The study highlights teaching of French language in Nigeria most especially among the Igbo race of Nigeria and has put forward some teaching operations that could be used in teaching French language in Nigeria.

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