

This research is an ex-post facto aimed at establishing relationship between errors and some factors as a causative agent. The researcher looked at determinants of errors in written Igbo composition. The researcher work specifically went into identifying, analyzing and describing the mechanical and expressional errors primary school pupils make in written Igbo composition. The result of the study may direct the attention of Igbo teachers to the specific errors identified, thereby saving time on the teaching task and ensuring a greater level of understanding of the concept.

The data collected with written work was analysed with chi-square (χ^2) test statistics for the hypotheses that was tested.

1. There was no significant difference in the kind of error made in written Igbo composition
2. Rural pupils made more errors than the urban pupils
3. Male pupils made more errors than their female counterparts.

Suggestions were made with regards to what can be done to minimize the pupils errors in their written work. The findings shows that the types of errors committed by pupils in written Igbo composition are

1. Mechanical and expressional errors.
2. Rural primary pupils commit more mechanical errors than their urban counterparts.
3. Males recorded more mechanical errors than females.

The educational implications of the study were presented. The researcher based on the findings recommended that

- use error analysis as a teaching procedure
- Seminars, workshops, conferences should be organized for the pupils at classroom level to improve the learning and use of Igbo language.
- Use of teaching aids in classroom instruction
- Devotion of time to teaching Igbo mechanics
- Development of positive attitude to the study of Igbo language by parents among others. All the above should be taken cognizance of to avoid the occurrence of the problems as investigated.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The effectiveness of any educational system relies, upon the achievement of educational goals. Going by this, the educational system that operates in a given society is aimed at attaining proper development of the learner and the community where the school is located (Ogbonnaya, 2003). The primary medium of any educational programme is language. According to Hasen (2001), language is the vehicle for the implementation of the curriculum

of a given society in the classroom setting. It is when the language used is known and understood by the learners and the teachers that the content of the educational programme can be made more meaningful, practicable and relevant.

One of the broad aims of the primary school education is to expose the pupils to all areas of studies, including the development of language and culture. The Igbo language is very vital to the mental development of the Igbo child. It helps the pupils to be fluent in speaking as well as writing the Igbo language. It makes for the ability to criticize oneself and also to look at things critically. It is important to note that pupils who read more, think better and argue more intelligently. Yule (2002) states that "one of the functions of language is to interact". It is language that beings use to interact with each other socially or emotionally, indicate friendliness, cooperation, hostility, annoyance, pain, or pleasure. This means that if a child is acquainted with his language, he would be able to interact easily with his fellow human beings. Nwadike (2008) emphasizes that "a society without language is like that without culture". Language and culture are inseparable and to separate a child from his language at the early stages of his school education is to make him have no regard for his culture. It is important to start at early stage to expose a child to his language in order to make him cope with the societal demands. In further recognition of this fact, the International Institute of Africa Languages and Culture (ILLAC) (1998) states that for the first three years in school, the medium of instruction should be principally the mother tongue. The rationale for this decision, according to ILLAC, is that language and mind work together and where a child cannot speak his mother tongue, such a child is bound to do most of his thinking in a foreign language. For the purpose of promoting unity and progress in Nigeria, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) made it compulsory that every Nigerian should learn his or her mother tongue in addition to one other recognized language in Nigeria. This policy accorded Nigerian languages, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, important place in the school curriculum. In fact, there are reasonable speculations to the effect that if seriously taught in the school system, one of them will eventually emerge as a national language without government imposing it on the nation.

Though recognized and recommended, it is observed that Igbo language is neglected. Many people shun it and it does not receive the desired attention in our society and in schools. It is observed that the elites embrace English and treat their language with contempt. In schools, the language (Igbo) is not allotted enough time in the school timetable; instead, the English language is given more attention and is also used as a medium of instruction. No wonder the English language in Nigeria is taken as the yardstick for measuring literacy and even determining when the standard of education is rising or falling. English language enjoys the premier position of being the compulsory subject in the West African school certificate examination. For this reason, many educated Nigerians assume that there is nothing worthy of studying in Nigeria language, culture, history and art. The

negative attitude of the people towards the Igbo language is not limited to the learners and teachers alone but it cuts across all segments of the society. Students of the language at higher institutions are called Igbo B. K. To compound the neglect, the parental negative attitude also affects the achievement level of the pupils in schools (Okoye, 2003). Another problem is that majority of the Igbo text books are written in the English language and this brings confusion to the pupils. At the primary school level, the teachers are expected to teach all the subjects in the school including the Igbo language. This particular policy does not take cognizance of the area of specialization of the teacher. For instance, a primary school teacher who studied physics in higher institution is expected to teach Igbo language in his/her school. Due to the fact that it is not his/her area of study, he will not impart to pupils the knowledge that is required of him.

Apart from this handicap, the importance of the Igbo language in the development of our culture cannot be over emphasized. The Igbo language studies in the primary school incorporate such areas as grammar of the language, written and oral literature, traditions and institutions. All these are taught and learnt as one subject in the primary school. The objective of this policy at this lower level of education is to expose them to all the realizations of the Igbo language necessary. The primary school pupils study their mother tongue in order to equip them to cope with the demands of their native language.

There are complex problems encountered by the Nigerian learner of Igbo. Ugwu (2004) observes that there is always deviance when there is a contact between the mother tongue and variety. This means that the learner has to grapple with both inter-language and intra language difficulties. Inter-language, is the contact of two different languages while intra-language, is the linguistic idiosyncrasies of a given language that can cause learning problems. Other problems associated with the study of the Igbo language are dialectal interference and the gender view of the subject. For example in central Igbo an elephant is called Ele but due to dialectal differences, some people call it Ene and some Ere. All the aforementioned problems depict the level of errors committed by pupils in the written Igbo composition hence, the low achievement level on pupils continuous assessment. Another problem of Nigerian learner of Igbo is the mixture of Igbo and English (code-switching); and the standard Igbo dialect (written Igbo). It does appear that the case or flexibility with which the Nigerian Igbo grapple with the language codes and levels in the same utterance or piece of writing is the root of Igbo language learning difficulties.

The report on the achievement of pupils in the Igbo composition in their continuous assessment shows that most of the pupils could not write in Standard Igbo. They wrote their dialect and this made it difficult for the examiners to understand what they have written. While some pupils wrote their essays in English instead of Igbo, others mixed up both English and Igbo. This shows that many of them have not yet mastered the use of Standard Igbo. It is pertinent at this juncture to know the determinants of errors in written Igbo

composition in primary schools.

According to Corder (2004) errors are deviances caused by lack of competence. Errors are not mostly self-correctable instead further learning must take place before they are correctable. Errors in the written Igbo composition refer to deviances caused by lack of competence on the Igbo language generally. Odlin (2006) states that errors are important evidence for the strength and weakness of a particular native language influence. Written work is a particular weakness for primary school learners in Nigeria. One significant cause of the underachievement may possibly be the lack of knowledge in writing the Igbo language. Join (2005) in Chomsky (2007) defined error by differentiating between competence and performance. Mistakes are performance related deviances which can occur as a result of factors external to the competence of the speaker, such as tiredness or lack of concentration. These mistakes are due to a failure to utilize a known system correctly (Brown, 2001). By implication errors are deviances caused by a lack of competence systematic and noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker (Corder, 2004). This simply means that pupils commit errors due to lack of knowledge on the language but during the process of writing, the mistake that may occur is not due to lack of knowledge but as a result of external factors. These errors made by primary school pupils in the written Igbo composition may be overt or covert, which shows outright lack of competence. Some of the errors, usually made by primary school pupils may be spelling or punctuation error. Spelling errors include omission/wrong use of diacritic mark, omission/wrong use of pronoun etc. Errors according to Abonyi (2007) are those deviations that are systematic in nature. Errors are deviances resulting from ignorance and can be classified as grammatical errors, spelling, punctuation/structural, lexical and mechanical errors as earlier stated.

All these errors are dictated by certain factors which may be social or cognitive. The determinants of errors refer to what decides what or how errors are committed. In other words, determinants of errors are causes of error. The determinants of errors are social and cognitive factors. Both social and cognitive factors affect language acquisition and learning. According to Ellis (2004), research based on direct (self-report questionnaires) and indirect measures generally shows that learners with positive attitudes, motivation and concrete goals will have these attitudes reinforced if they experience success. Like wise, learner's negative attitude may be strengthened by lack of success or by failure. McGroarty (2000) states that there is a direct relationship between learner attitudes and learner motivation. Gardner's (2005) socio-educational model is designed to account for the role of social factors in language acquisition. It interrelates four aspects of learning: the social and cultural Milieu (which determines beliefs about language and culture), individual learner differences (related to motivation and language aptitude), the setting (formal and/or informal learning contexts), and learning integrative. Integrative learning of written Igbo composition involves a

desire to learn because individuals need to learn the target language to integrate into the community.

Going by this, the achievement level of primary school pupils in written Igbo composition is a function of their attitude, motivations and the goals, which they seek to attain. Precisely, the social factors, as determinants of errors committed by primary school pupils in written Igbo composition comprises negative attitudes towards the learning of the language, continued lack of progress in learning, a wide school and psychological distance between the learners and what is taught and finally, lack of integrative and instrumental motivation for learning.

Another determinant of errors in written Igbo composition is cognitive factors. Academic writing is believed to be cognitively complex. Acquisition of academic vocabulary and discourse style is particularly difficult. According to cognitive theory, communicating orally or in writing is an active process of skill development and gradual elimination of errors as the learner internalizes the language. Indeed, acquisition is a product of the complex interaction of the linguistic environment and the learner internal mechanisms. If the amount of lessons which the learners are exposed to is stressful, it negatively affects their skill in writing Igbo composition. Emotional influences along with cognitive factors can account for achievement of pupils in composition writing in Igbo language.

The behaviourist and mentalist perspectives of error, emphasized on the product, (the error itself) while the constructivist views, focus on underlying process (why the error is made). Errors may be identified by hypothesizing their possible sources (Bartholomae 2003) as it affects the achievement of primary school pupils in written Igbo composition.

There are 4 skills in language acquisition and learning. They are listening, speaking, reading and writing. What determines the error one commits in writing is cognitive and social factors.

Writing is higher order skill in language learning which requires thinking and problem solving ability. This skill can only be acquired through practice since language learning involves a series of habit formation. Writing can be defined as a communication process. This simply shows that writing is a means through which a person expresses his or her inner self to someone else. In support of the above, Hasen (2008) states that human beings have a deep need to represent their experience through writing. Writing is a productive skill in language use. Writing is a dialogue between the writer and the reader and so the substance of what is written must, when it reaches the reader, say what the writer intends to say as clearly as if the writer were there in person.

One cannot overlook the saying that clarity in writing is of primary importance as an effective means of communication. In support of this, Shunk and White (2008) state that since writing is communication, clarity can only be a virtue. And if the aim of writing is to deliver the message of the writer in clear and unmistakable terms, then, non-clarity might impede communication. This implies that if the writer could not convey in written form his

ideas, then his aim of writing is fruitless. It is this error that tells the teacher the areas pupils have problem with regard to writing. This knowledge will make the teacher adopt means and ways of helping the pupils solve this problem thereby achieving the objectives of writing composition and the Igbo language in general.

Composition is an act of creatively putting down all one has internalized in a language like his ideas, feelings, opinions, observations, logically concerning a particular thing so that the intention of the writer will be conveyed to the reader (Abonyi 2007).

Igbo composition is an aspect of the Igbo language study, which involves the use of the Igbo language in a skillful manner to explain or present clearly one's ideas concerning a particular thing, which can be an event, festival, objects, culture, or any other thing at all. There are many types of Igbo composition namely: descriptive, narrative, argumentative, or expository composition. However, considering the level and ability of the pupils, the researcher tends to use descriptive composition in testing them, since it is something they will look at and at the same time be able to express themselves about the object.

According to Okeke (2007), in his research work carried out in Ezeagu L.G.A, the incidence of poor spelling and punctuation errors persists among the students while writing Igbo composition. He further states that more than 95% of the students in Enugu State scored no mark out of 15 for mechanical accuracy in the Igbo composition in their SSCE of 2008. This present study will be carried out using primary six pupils. Whether these problems will manifest in the course of this research is not yet determined.

Gender has been pointed out as a variable that plays an important role in learning. In line with this, Uzoegwu (2004) quoting UNICEF, gender refers to the varied socially and culturally constructed roles, qualities, behaviour and so on that are ascribed to women and men of different societies. This implies that the roles and expectations of the male and female are defined by societies and cultures. He also notes that gender comes into play in writing composition if we remember that personal orientation and thinking styles play a crucial role in achievement. For instance, Kilosmeir (2006) opines that in terms of the performance of boys and girls in thinking task, the females have a general tendency to think in negative ways about the task in which they engage. Offorma (2004) states that girls have more flair for language than boys and therefore, perform better than their male counterparts in writing Igbo composition.

The location of a school is also an important variable in learning. Primary schools in Nigeria are located in both the urban and rural areas, and the location of a school determines the type of facilities, quality of personnel and classroom organization that are used in the course of teaching and learning; all these affect the schools and these have effect on the achievement of pupils in Igbo language and indirectly in writing Igbo composition. According to Umoh (2000), the intellectual development of children that pass through a school

is independent on location. The present study hinges on the determinants of errors in written Igbo composition in primary school and it will examine location as an important variable.

Statement of the Problem

The achievement of primary school pupils in Igbo composition is very discouraging. The pupils' failure in Igbo composition is due to different types of errors which they commit and this hinges on certain determinants of errors. Due to that, the percentage of errors committed is very high and disturbing and this calls for a long lasting solution which is the baseline of this research study. What are these errors that derail the achievement of primary school pupils in Igbo composition? How are they determined? The researcher is therefore interested in investigating the determinants of errors in written Igbo composition in primary school.

Purpose of the Study

This research work is intended to find out the determinants of errors in written Igbo composition in primary school. The study will look at the mechanical and expressional errors committed by pupils in written Igbo composition.

In specific terms the study strives to:

1. Identify the pupils' errors in written Igbo composition
2. Compare the errors in urban and rural primary school pupils in written Igbo composition
3. Find out the type of error committed by the male and female primary school pupils in written Igbo composition.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will be useful to the government and school administrators, curriculum planners, teachers and Igbo writers.

The result of this study may enable the government and school administrators to provide man and material resources for meaningful implementation of the ideas of the new basic education policy in Nigeria as it affects the language of instruction that influences significantly early childhood development/education and as well as check the quality of teachers they employ. All this should be done through workshops, conferences and seminars organized by the Government for the purpose.

The results of this study could provide useful information to curriculum planners on the need to make the Igbo language a compulsory subject throughout the primary school levels. This may help curriculum planners to take cognizance of the fact that the education of the child is rooted in the culture of the society, which the child comes from. This will be done through workshops and seminars.

The findings of this study may enable the teachers to extend the implementation of the language policy, which concerns the use of mother tongue or language of the immediate environment as a medium of instruction in school from the first three years to the sixth year of primary education. This will increase the level of the professional growth of the teachers during sensitization activities through seminars or conferences on the need to adopt the

findings of this research study. This will as well expose teachers to the current trends in Igbo language.

The findings of this study will also enable the authors of the Igbo language and literature books in Igbo to realize that they should no other language than Igbo in writing Igbo text books to ensure effective learning and understanding by pupils in schools. For instance, the Igbo textbooks on language and literature are supposed to be written in standard Igbo only and not in dialect or in any other language like English, Hausa. This will be done through a programme designed by the stakeholders involved in the education industry to educate them on the need to write texts in the language of the learner.

The result may help the pupils through the seminars, workshop or conferences organized for the primary school teachers based on this research study. This is because the teacher will impart the knowledge learnt from it to the learners on the written Igbo composition based on central Igbo and not dialect. This will go a long way in enhancing their cognitive development since one thinks faster in the language he is conversant with. The enhancement of the pupil cognitive development will enable the pupils to carry out coordinate order and even higher order learning tasks under the cognitive domain of educational objectives as well as gaining proficiency in the Igbo language. The pupils will acquire this knowledge through evening lessons as well as school debate organized by schools.

Teacher training colleges may also benefit from the results of the study because this research work would suggest a programme of training and re-training of teachers in the use of Nigerian languages such as the Igbo language in the teaching and learning of the other school subjects. Also existing language training facilities may need to be addressed to accommodate the various aspects of language learning, which would in turn create room for good performance in such subjects. This will be done through workshops and seminars.

Scope of the Study

The study is restricted to Nsukka Local Government Area in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State. The focus of the study is on determinants of errors in written Igbo composition in primary schools. It will examine the frequency of errors committed by pupils with regards to gender, school location as essential variables for the academic achievement.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study.

1. What are the errors committed by primary school pupils in written Igbo composition?
2. What are the comparative analysis of the errors committed by urban and rural primary school pupils?
3. What type of errors are committed more by male and female primary school pupils in written Igbo composition?

Hypotheses

Ho₁ - There is no significant difference between the frequencies of mechanical and expressional errors committed by urban and rural primary school pupils in written Igbo composition.

Ho₂ - There is no significant difference between the frequencies of mechanical and expressional errors committed by male and female primary school pupils in written Igbo composition.

DETERMINANTS OF ERRORS IN WRITTEN IGBO COMPOSITION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NSUKKA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ENUGU STATE

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