

PDF - INFLUENCE OF PARENTS' SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS ON STUDENTS PERFORMANCE IN IGBO LANGUAGE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN UZO-UWANI AND NSUKKA LGA OF ENUGU - researchcub.info

Abstract

This study was carried out to determine the influence of parents' socio-economic status on the students' performance in Igbo language in secondary schools in both Uzo-Uwani and Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State. This study was designed to find out the educational level of the parents, the socio-economic status of the parents, the influence of educational level of the parents and the influence of socio-economic status of parents on the students learning Igbo language. Four research questions were generated while two null hypotheses were formulated to guide the researcher. A total number of 660 respondents were involved in supplying data needed for the study. The data were obtained through a structured questionnaire of forty items. The data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and t-test. Based on the research findings, it was discovered that socio-economic status of the parents influenced the students' performance negatively in Igbo language. Moreover, it was established that most parents have low educational level and low socio-economic level which in effect influenced students' consciousness and willingness in learning the Igbo language. The researcher therefore, recommended that parents, teachers of Igbo language and the school guidance councilors should as a matter of responsibility help in sensitizing the students in learning the Igbo language. This would go a long way in creating positive attitude among the students towards the study of Igbo language in the schools.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Language is man's greatest asset and it is very fundamental to his self-fulfillment. It is the vehicle through which ideas, feelings, thoughts, information, skills, knowledge and culture are transmitted. This makes communication, interaction and learning very possible among people. Language plays an important role in teaching and learning. It is man's exclusive means of communication using signs and symbols to express emotions and wills. Ali (2000) defines language as "... a means of communication of ideas, facts, figures and thoughts. Consequently, it plays a very vital role in all aspects of human development". According to Trager in Mgbodile (1999), language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which the members of a total culture communicate. Also, other linguists like Brooks and Naldman as quoted in Huxley and Ingram in Azikiwe (1998), view language as a learned systematic, symbolic, vocal behaviour, and a culturally acquired and exclusive mark of man. Nwadike (1999) states that without language of its own, a nation becomes merged and lost in the foreign group whose language it is forced to speak. A nation identifies itself and ensures its perpetuation. It is man's greatest asset and it is very fundamental to his self-fulfillment.

Again, Radford, Akinson, Britain, Caltisen and Spencer in Anozie(2007) see language as a complex structure represented in the minds of its speakers. Likewise, Azikiwe (1998) views language as a means of social control, it is a collection of motor responses, it functions symbolically and so is used for verbal communication. Ajakobi (1997) states that, one of the notable functions of language is to record observations, incidents and processes. Language, he said has also been considered as a product and an integral part of culture. It reflects the culture of the people concerned and their worldview. However, with the advent of the English language and white man in Nigeria, the acquisition of the white man's language and culture, and the interaction with other people from other tribes in Nigeria, the Igbo man has been known to neglect his languages and cultural attire.

Besides, Nwadike (2000) asserts that the greatest problem that has faced Igbo from all times is the apathy of the Igbo man towards the language. He prefers to express himself more in English than Igbo. His attitude towards written materials in Igbo is negative. He further frowns at many Igbo parents who do not speak Igbo language to their children.

Igbo language is the language spoken by the Igbo people, an ethnic group that lives in the eastern part of Nigeria. Igbo language is grouped among the "kwa" language of Benue-Congo group of the language family. It is one of the three major languages recognized in Nigeria (Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba). Language and culture go together, therefore, any language be it Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba serves as conveyor belt that propels the culture of the people who own it. Ameh (1991) said that language in any society is an indispensable tool for unity and development.

Thus, the federal government of Nigeria realizes the importance of language and indeed the mother-tongue, and consequently states in Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004), among other things, that the medium of instruction in primary school should be the **mother-tongue** or the language of the immediate environment. The term mother tongue or mother language is used for the language that a person learnt at home usually from their parents. It is the first language learned at home in childhood and still understood by the individual at a later age. Mother tongue does not mean that the language is that of one's mother. Mother in this context probably originated from the use of "mother" as origin; as in mother-country or mother-land. In some countries like Kenya and India, "mother tongue" is used to indicate the language of one's ethnic group (ethnic tongue). This is very necessary since language is an effective medium for people to interact meaningfully as well as potent vehicle for them to express and transmit their culture. Thus, there is need to start from the primary schools to learn the cultures of the people who own the language, and it is believed that teaching these children their language from this early stage will aid the pupils to acquire the speaker's competence in the language.

In some schools in Igbo speaking region, the authorities debar their students from speaking their mother tongue even up to the tune of paying fines ranging from five naira to twenty

naira. Nwadike (2002) stated that others do not reckon with Igbo on the false pretence that it lacks certain kinds of technical vocabulary, either because of its inherent linguistic poverty or because as it is not used for certain kinds of discourse, its words will not assume technical significance in those discourses. But during the Nigeria/Biafra Civil War (1967 – 1970), continued, because Igbo language was used in technology, some Igbo names were developed such appellations as Ogbuniigwe, Bokeeti Ojukwu, Ogbunando, Igbokwe, Agbaraj, these names are just like the Japanese technology that introduced names such as – Yamaha, Toyota, Honda, Suzuki, Kawasaki, Toshiba and Mitsubishi.

Language unites and integrates people, for instance, the people who are not of the same language group but understand each other's languages are tied together as one by the language. According to Bamgbose (1976), teaching the pupils the Nigerian languages will enable them know as early as possible the culture of the people who own the language and their good ways of doing things. This will make them, right from primary schools, respect each other's ideas, values and beliefs. When they know all these, it will make them behave like brothers and sisters. When they eventually graduate with the spirit of oneness inculcated in them through language, they will build a society that would be tied together as one unity in diversity and there will be stability.

In buying and selling also, language does a very good work. Somebody who understands a language stands a better chance of buying and selling than those who do not understand such a language. They tend to speak with one voice, and agree with one heart. For instance, the mono linguistic approach to Hausa as a common language of the North makes them more united and stable than their southern counterparts who do not have a unifying language in transmitting cultural beliefs, norms and values, enhancing buying and selling, unifying and integrating people, among others, there is the need to constantly examine the state of language teaching and learning in our schools. Particularly, the state of the Igbo language study at the Secondary School level deserves attention. Okoye (1995) explains that at this level language learning is a conscious activity rather than behaviour acquisition and teaching the language is more of disorganization rather than acquisition, thus, learning becomes a tedious process which inspires repulsive attitude.

Furthermore, it is continued in the National Policy on Education (2004) that a child should be encouraged to learn any of the three major Nigerian languages such as Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba, this is to promote our culture and for national unity.

The federal government of Nigeria in an effort to promote the use of indigenous language in Nigeria, made a pronouncement that the business of the National Assembly shall be conducted in English language, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba languages until when adequate arrangements have been made. This was an effort to get a national language which was very difficult in Nigeria because of her multi-lingual nature.

Moreso, the document of Federal Republic of Nigeria (1979) places much importance to the

study of indigenous language, when it stated thus:

In addition to appreciating the importance of language in the education process and as a means of preserving the people's culture, the government considers it to be in the interest of national unity that each child should be encouraged to learn one of the three major languages other than his own mother tongue. In this connection, the government considers the three major languages in Nigeria to be Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba (FRN, 1979).

The potential role of these languages (if studied by the rising generation) for national unity is undeniable. 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 (Abba, 1976).

Nwadike (2002) further elaborates the current trend in Igbo studies. He said that following the introduction of the 6-3-3-4 education system in Nigeria, the National Education Research Development Council (NERDC), for example, has designed much improved syllabuses for Igbo at the primary and secondary schools levels, and which the WAEC has adopted at Secondary School level.

In spite of the government's effort towards encouraging the learning of the major Nigerian languages, Igbo language being one of them in schools, studies have indicated a declining trend in the enrolment and performance of Senior Secondary School students in Igbo language examinations. Some students who study Igbo language in secondary schools do so under the instruction of their parents. Even the few that study Igbo language, do not exhibit any interest in the language. This is believed by both psychologists and sociologists to have some influence on the student's learning. Wilkins (1974) was particular that such social factors influence language learning.

In Nigeria, education has been a major factor associated with social mobility. And the social class is a sociological (socio-economic) variable, which is seen to be an important factor in educational achievement. The educational development of the child can be perceived as an unfolding process governed merely by maturity and perhaps teacher's efforts. The background of the parents is also a strong factor in the child's reading readiness. In this parental background of the child, what is considered most is the educational and socio-economic status of parents which affect the child's readiness to learn. Uche (1998) states that family environment is the most important factor in the child's language learning. The child whose parents talk with him a great deal develops better in language than one who grows up in a family in which he is ignored or told to keep quiet. In addition to providing the child with language experiences, the family provides the language model that is the kind of language he is going to imitate. So the parents' educational level and socio-economic status are important factors that can influence the child's performance in Igbo language.

In language learning, it is understood that the best way of learning a language is by speaking it. This is done when the users of that language have both the linguistic competence and

performance in that language. In the case of first language or mother tongue learning, it is the acquisition process that goes on in the family of the child. The child first picks Igbo language by listening to the model speakers of the language. It is equally seen that most Igbo homes are not literate and poor that they cannot attend formal education where Igbo language is being studied. Secondly the economic status of parents is a sine quo non to the child's performance in the study of Igbo language. This is very evident in the sense that most parents do not have enough to eat let alone procuring Igbo texts for their children. This amounts to students' inability to perform creditably well in the language. Even some families that are financially buoyant do not have such willingness and awareness to channel their children's studies in Igbo language. The reasons abound that most of the parents do not have good knowledge of Igbo language owing to the fact that their educational level are very low. Some of them do not attend formal education; thereby use their core dialectical Igbo version which is only understood by people within that locality. The few parents that are literate enough suffer the problem of negligence and inferiority complex in their children's study of Igbo language in the school. Due to some flimsy reasons by the parents, they stop their children from speaking or learning Igbo language. Some parents and even students feel ashamed to tell their colleagues that they are studying Igbo language in the higher institution. Most parents feel satisfied with the Igbo language spoken at home, and shun their children whenever they use the language outside their families. Moreover, they feel elated to hear their children speaking second language or any other languages that are not commonly used within their locality.

In spite of this, therefore, the Igbo language study suffers negligence because of the value attached to the use and study of the second language in our country. For the fact that some parents want their children to study professional courses, they emphasize the study of English more than Igbo because a credit in it is a pre-requisite for admission in any higher institution. Even among the learners of the Igbo language, they are not motivated to learn the language. The flavour and will power to study the Igbo language are in shambles. They also feel bad; that people view them as unintelligent students who cannot study other better courses.

Igbo language, as a subject, requires its own share of mental work for proper assimilation and application. And going by the assertion of the educational psychologists and sociologists, the home environment, as created by the parents, may have profound influence on a child's learning. There is a need for the understanding of the influence of socio-economic status of the parents on the children's learning of Igbo language in the secondary school.

From the research work carried out by psychologists and sociologists, which were based on western countries though, the social class a child's parents belong to is a determinant of the child's performance in school. The better socially placed the parents are, the better the child's performance academically. As Bruner (1993) states, the social and cultural background

affects upbringing (of children) and thereby affects intellectual functioning.

The researcher has undertaken to investigate whether or not the socio-economic status of parents has any influence on the student's learning of Igbo language in secondary schools.

In a typical Igbo language classroom environment, it is observable that students perform differently both in participation and in achievement. What then is responsible for these variations in student's process of learning Igbo language?

The relationship between social class and the child's learning ability has been demonstrated by a number of works. Such works have observed, in conclusion that the higher a person's social class, the higher would be his or her level of academic performance and attainment Bruner (1989), Fayuyafan (1978) Nwachukwu (1997).

Researchers have pointed out earlier that gender is among the factors that contribute to poor performance in Igbo. Kilosmeir and Wiesman (1964) compared the performance of boys and girls in divergent and convergent thinking task. While boys were higher in convergent thinking, girls were seen in high performance in divergent thinking. This implied that boys are more likely to be neo-communicative concerning feelings and inter-personal motives which maybe associated with convergent thinking than their female counterparts. Hutt (1978) stated that girls use longer sentences and are better in language use than boys but as they grow into adults, the reverse becomes the case as boys, due to kind of activities they engage in the process of socialization and growing up, develop their verbal activities. Offorma (1990) stated that girls have more flair for language than boys and therefore perform better than their male counterparts. Azikiwe (1997) opposed the notion saying that education finally discredit and change the beliefs and that women have no mental ability and capability for science and technology subjects.

Moreso, Balarabe (1991) and Bodunde (1991) found no sex difference in motivation, learning and performance. Different scholars have diverse view on difference in male and female achievement in languages, Igbo language being one and this made the researcher find out the influence of gender on the secondary school students' attitude towards learning Igbo language.

It is against this background therefore, that the researchers are trying to find out how the educational level and socio-economic status of the parents influence students' performance in Igbo language, in secondary schools in Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area of Enugu State.

Statement of the Problem

It has been observed by the present researcher that students of Igbo language in Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area of Enugu State do not do well in their learning of Igbo language, contrary to popular expectations since Igbo language is the first language of these students. Presently, many students avoid the study of Nigerian languages like Igbo while some others who decide to study such language perform poorly especially in SSCE result. The problem

of the study therefore is: could the influence of parental socio-economic status in the students learning of Igbo language in secondary schools be determined?

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to determine the influence of the socio-economic status of the parents on secondary school students' performance in Igbo language. Specifically, the study is to determine:

1. The educational levels of parents of students learning Igbo language in secondary schools in Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area
2. The economic status of parents of students learning Igbo language in secondary schools in Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area.
3. The influence of educational levels of parents on the students' learning of Igbo language.
4. The influence of socio-economic status of parents on the students' learning of the Igbo language.

Significance of the Study

It is hoped that the findings of this study would be useful to those concerned with the education of the child; like the school administrators, teacher training colleges, institutions of higher learning, language teachers (Igbo language), parents, curriculum planners and school guidance councilors. Below are how each of them would benefit from this study.

The justification of the study stems from the significant role of the family in the education of the child. The school is an extension of the family, and the security acquired in the family enables students to cope with classroom tasks, which include the study of Igbo language. Morrish (1992) asserts that a parent who shows complete disregard for education, literacy, importance of social behaviour or any form of social advancement, is bound to have some adverse effect upon his children's educational progress.

Some Igbo language teachers do not realize that their students come from different socio-economic background, each of which exerts its influence on the child's learning disposition and hence on his learning of Igbo language.

School administrators would find the results of this research significant in that it would provide information on the various factors or variables that influence students' performance in Igbo language learning.

Teacher training colleges and institutions of higher learning would also benefit from the results of the study because it would suggest a programme of workshops, training and re-training of teachers in the use of Nigerian languages such as Igbo language in teaching and learning of other school subjects. Also, existing language training facilities may need to be addressed to accommodate the various aspects of language learning which would enhance the students' performance in Igbo language.

Language teachers in general and Igbo language teachers in particular would find the results of the study useful. These teachers, having realized that their students come from

varying home backgrounds, would then see each child differently and solve each child's problem differently as well. This, they could do by organizing remedial and extra-mural studies in Igbo language for students who need them.

To the parents, the findings would be valuable, since there is a significant relationship between parents' socio-economic status and the student's learning of Igbo language, then the school and educational planners can adopt and, or adapt appropriate innovative measures to bridge the yawning socio-economic gap of students. This could be done through the parents-teachers Association (P.T.A.).

Curriculum planners would also find the results of the study useful in addressing the contents, scope and learning activities and teaching materials that would enhance positive performance of the students in the learning of Igbo language in secondary schools.

To the school guidance councillors, the findings would also help them in guiding and informing the students about the need and areas of applications of Igbo language learning in their educational careers.

Finally, the findings would further be significant to existing literature on Igbo language learning. It would add to the new data that exist on the influence of parents' socio-economic status on the students learning of other schools subjects in general. This would be of great value to future researchers and language educators, particularly in Igbo language.

Scope of the Study

The focus of the study was on the influence of the socio-economic status of the parents on the students' performance in Igbo language in secondary schools in Uzo-Uwani. Therefore, the geographical scope centres only on the senior secondary school students in both Uzo-Uwani and Nsukka LGA of Enugu State. While the content scope centres on how the educational level and socio-economic status of the parents influence students' performance in Igbo language.

Research Questions

The following research questions would guide this study:

1. What are the educational levels of parents of students learning the Igbo language in secondary schools in Uzo-Uwani and Nsukka Local Government Areas of Enugu State?
2. What are the economic status of parents on students studying Igbo language in Secondary Schools in Uzo-Uwani and Nsukka Local Government Areas?
3. What is the influence of educational level of parents on the students learning of Igbo language?
4. What is the influence of socio-economic status of parents on the students' performance in Igbo language?

Hypotheses

1. There would be no significant difference ($P < 0.05$) between the mean responses of the male and female Igbo students on the educational levels of parents of students learning Igbo

language.

2. There would be no significant difference ($P < 0.05$) between the mean responses of the male and female Igbo students on the influence of parent socio-economic status on the students' performance.

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