

ADVANCING THE IGBO LANGUAGE USING ELEMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT (KM): THE ROLE OF ACADEMICS IN SOUTH-EASTERN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT: *Universities in the South-Eastern part of Nigeria have become the focal point of enlightenment for its people who predominantly speak the Igbo language. In the contemporary Nigerian society, universities manifest their increasing importance in the face of a failing academic system in a Federal Nigeria that has failed to advance the Igbo language. This paper argues that the elements of knowledge management (KM) can be used by academics to advance the Igbo language which has steadily become a dying language. Academics in South-Eastern Nigerian Universities where the Igbo language is spoken are in an advantageous position to advance this language given the advances in communication technology and opportunities for research collaboration. This paper further advocate developing a good research infrastructure in the Igbo language centered on the socio-cultural views of the Igbo society using elements of knowledge management will go a long way to advance and promote the Igbo language*

KEYWORDS: **Linguistics, Igbo Language, knowledge management, research, Nigeria.**

INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria's South Eastern region, the Igbo language is the indigenous language of its people and in the last few decades, it has competed with the English language, the country's official language. For a language spoken by over 40 million Nigerians at home and in the Diaspora, Ejiofo (2002) notes that things are not looking rosy. The Igbo language is in sharp decline. In the past, our parents spoke it to us and passed it on to us. In recent times, some parents spoke Igbo but have failed to pass it on to their children who have limited opportunities to learn it at school. The trend does not give the Igbo language a chance of survival and this may be a test case for a dying Nigerian language that can be revitalized. This article is situated within the linguistic domain that advocates the use of some knowledge management processes by academics in South-Eastern Nigerian universities to refine, embody, disseminate and use the language. This paper is written to serve Academics in South-Eastern Nigerian Universities with interest in promoting the Igbo language and also advancing the role of knowledge management to this cause. There is a need to sustain the distinct ethnolinguistic identity of the Igbos which reinforces their socio-cultural identity within the Nigerian state. The importance of Igbo as a written and spoken language cannot be underestimated owing to its potentials. This ranges from the employment opportunities it offers, to the economic potential that is represented by its functions.

This buttresses the views of some linguistic scholars (Adegbite, 2011, Bambose 2006, Okonkwo, 2013, Okeke, 2015) on the importance of indigenous languages. Asogwa and

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Asogwa (2014) found out in a recent study that there has been a decline in the number of people who wish to study the Igbo language let alone carry out research in promoting it. They advocated the use of information communication technologies (ICT) to promote the teaching and learning of the language. Without a doubt, the promotion of the language has to take into consideration the interplay of the physical locations where the language is spoken, the socio-cultural disposition of the Igbo speaking academics in South-Eastern Nigerian universities to champion this cause.

As Igbo speaking academics, we contend that there is the need to take on more advanced roles in order to advance the knowledge, speaking and writing of Igbo language. A contingency approach that will make use of the skills of Igbo speaking academics will support this cause. This becomes a best-fit approach that would consider the reality with regard to the state of the language. It takes into consideration the socio-cultural views of the Igbo society and using elements of knowledge management which should be grounded in the centrality of promoting the Igbo language. A search of academic journals, practitioner-oriented publications, and academic materials was carried out to establish the best fit approaches to promote and revitalize the Igbo language. It was found that there are limited empirical papers in the field. The literature search was guided by the objective to find the recent advances in promoting the language and to illuminate the issues surrounding the Igbo language. We contend that studies in Igbo linguistics have shown that it has a social element to it as a language of a people. We argue that adapting the interpretative elements of knowledge management would not only add to the growing literature on promoting Igbo language but it will bring a new dimension to understanding the potentials of this language which would further bridge the gap that currently exists in Igbo language research.

Knowledge management is an organizational concept that has elements that can be adapted to advance and revitalize the Igbo language. Knowledge management spans across various disciplines and this has been acknowledged by Steyn and Khan (2008) who based this on earlier works of Firestone and McElroy, (2005), Darroch (2003). They contend that knowledge management ensures the construction of a new knowledge with the broader goal of improving efficiency and performance of organizations. This paper adapts the socially constructed view of knowledge management, Okeke JP (2016), which hinges on Demarest (1997) as a prescription of some sort to sustain the Igbo language from its present predicament. The processes aim to refine, embody, disseminate and use the language in a bid to fulfil the potentials of the language.

The key contribution of this conceptual paper is that it prescribes a contemporary solution that combines key processes of knowledge management through a social cultural lens in the field of linguistics to sustain a dying language in the Nigerian State. The significance of this paper is subject to different opinions but it is reasonable to believe that this paper would stimulate interest that would help confront the challenges that face the Igbo language. We have made efforts to ensure a conflation of views that would avoid representing the paper as a monotypic portrayal the challenges faced by the Igbo language. As such, key concepts are succinctly clarified as well as other integral sections of this paper.

The authors' position this paper in their phenomenological world of experience as Igbo language speakers and use this philosophical background to understand the realities that confront the language. The experiences of the authors bring out the centrality that is

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necessary to situate the social reality about the Igbo language. It has to be said that this paper is ontologically relativist and this understanding is premised on the subjective world view of Igbo speaker which represents the system of thought across the Igbo speaking states of Nigeria.

We urge that reasonable care has to be taken as we recognize that within the Igbo speaking communities in Nigeria, there is a tendency to have a deluge of opinions when considering the dialectal differences in the Igbo language which varies across communities and States. Overall, this article is exploratory and prescriptive in nature. As such, it opens up possibilities for Igbo speaking academics in South-Eastern Nigerian Universities who can build on it to transform Igbo linguistic competencies. These are not limited to idioms, proverbs or even folklore. They have to embrace the innovations in information communication technology, numeracy which would embed the cultural norms and traditions of the Igbos.

THE LANGUAGE SITUATION IN NIGERIA

The country Nigeria is a multilingual set-up which, apart from English which is the national official language, possesses between 250 – 450 vernacular languages (depending on which parameters the concept of language is defined). But out of the so many languages, three majority languages, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba representing the three regions of the country (North, East, and the West) have been chosen to serve as indigenous official languages. This decision has been riddled with so many problems as unnecessary politics eventually crept in to remove any possible enthusiasm in the implementation of the scheme. Added to that, numerous teething problems (like the dearth of language teachers to implement the scheme, and the lack of zeal by unpatriotic minority officials meant to direct the process) cropped up to make the project unrealizable.

The Igbo speaking citizens of Nigeria are virtually everywhere outside the shores of Igbo land as within the country. We have more than four million of them in the United States of America, over two million in Britain, and several million citizens more in various other parts of the world. This characteristic likens them to the Jews who maintain an effective presence in every part of the Western world, another reason that tends to prove the assertion that the Igbos could be one of the lost tribes of Israel. Okeke V.O, (2015) contends with this view and points out that;

Most people call the Igbo the Jews of Africa by those same traits that characterize the Jews everywhere in the world: they are everywhere, they are very astute businessmen, they easily attract hate by their enterprise and finally because the very name of Igbo appears to be a corruption of the word “Hebrew”. p. 20

It is thus estimated that the Igbo speaking peoples of the world attain the 40 million population mark.

The National Language Policy

The most proactive language policy in Nigeria was enacted in 1977. By this policy, the Federal Government elevated only three out of the above-stated languages in the country to the status of National languages, while the English language remains the national official

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language of administration and education. The three languages, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba were chosen on the basis of their majority status, each spoken by over 20 million inhabitants, and added to the fact that they have attained good levels of description. These 3 languages each represents one of the tripods (North, East, and West) upon which the country stands, geographically speaking. The implementation of this programme was to start from the primary and secondary schools and later to higher institutions. It was made obligatory for every Nigerian child to speak, first his maternal language, next to any one of the three national official languages and thirdly, of course, the English language which is the official language of Government business and education.

The first challenge to this programme was the inadequacy of the language teachers for the effective take off of the scheme. And besides, no serious effort was made by respective State governments to tackle this challenge so that until now, there have not been teachers trained nor posted to various regions to teach the languages of the other majority languages other than the regional ones. Apart from the politics of people not interested in learning the other national indigenous languages other than their own, the insecurity in many parts of the country makes it quite unsafe for teachers to opt to be posted to many parts of the Northern region where various shades of insecurity are reported daily on violence perpetrated against non-indigenes for various reasons (religious, political or ethnic). And who could be the non-indigenes in question, outside the Igbo who are obliged by circumstances to earn their livelihood outside their region?

The beautiful national language policy has been enunciated and to be implemented. But in the South-East, who are the implementers of this scheme, other than the Igbo Diaspora children (now adults and back to the East). School teachers at all levels, primary, secondary and tertiary, were, for the most part, Diaspora children who equally have difficulties expressing themselves in that tongue that they are expected to teach. Also, most of our Igbo leadership in the age bracket of 50 – 70 years were born and bred in the West and North and most times speak Yoruba and Hausa with equivalent native speaker competence. They marginally speak Igbo. Thus the principal implementers of the National Language Policy in the South-East are not themselves ardent enthusiasts and pay lip service to the scheme.

THE DILEMMA BEHIND THE POSSIBLE IGBO LANGUAGE LOSS

A lot of factors have come to compound the Igbo language situation, now cited as an endangered language in Nigeria and this has been acknowledged by researchers such as; (Azuonye, 2002; Odinye and Odinye 2010; *Ositadinma*, 2015; Ezema, 2012) are keen to confront the demise of this language. It is necessary to note that this is one of the three major languages of Nigeria, spoken by over 40 million population!!! A lot of speculations have been advanced as to the real causes of such an eventual calamity. Why do people find it difficult to speak their language? Whose particular fault is a particular phenomenon? Is Igbo not adequately described to ensure sound communication for its speakers? Are the Igbos themselves less patriotic than the other language groups that steadily make use of and promote their languages in all possible forms? And finally, our paper tries to find out what could be done by both the owners of the language and the Governments of the South-East to forestall such a disaster?

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The disturbing thing is that a good number of Igbo people you meet in contemporary society (at least 70%) communicate in English or pidgin, finding it difficult to communicate effectively in the maternal language. Numerous reasons have been advanced for this trend but in our most recent research, we found out another striking reason for this lackadaisical attitude / indifference of Igbo speakers that tend to drown our language.

This phenomenon derives from what Nkwopara (2011) in his article on Igbo in Vanguard Newspaper summarized in the following statements:

'It may sound like a fairy tale but some decades ago, stories were told about school children being slammed with all manner of punishment for speaking the Igbo language in the classroom! Apart from this, any student who offered the Igbo language in school certificate examination was laughed to scorn. With this development, the speaking and writing of Igbo language started a slow but steady decline' p.1.

The above quotation aptly summarizes the genesis of the dangerous trend of the unholy attempt of the Igbo to be more English than the English nationals. And he continues:

Back in individual homes, parents no longer told the scintillating, entertaining and educative folktales to their children. Several families no longer find it fashionable to talk to their children in Igbo language or teach them Igbo idioms and proverbs. Local music and dance steps gave way to hip hop, reggae, rock, blues and jazz tunes. p.1

The Igbos are just allowing their language to drown by the forces of globalization and the fact that even the elders themselves are for the most part losing grip of the ability to express themselves in this language.

But in a generalized manner, the near-ignorance of the maternal tongue occurs more particularly with people of Igbo extraction who have been raised outside the Igbo land, since on the contrary every Igbo citizen who has spent early childhood and who has grown up in Igbo speaking areas is very competent in the language, and can interact in Igbo with native speaker competence, except for the now generalized phenomenon of code-switching and unjustified lexical borrowings (Ejiofo 2002). After a very critical analysis of the Igbo dilemma, we came out with yet another finding which we consider to be to a great extent responsible for this trend.

The Igbos had a very literate and active population of soundly educated men and women who occupied key positions in numerous governmental, industrial and political institutions in the country immediately after Independence. They readily accepted Western education before other regions and were more literate than any other ethnic group in the country. But the numerous industries and institutions that were meant to give them employment were almost completely located outside their native Eastern region. Thus, the Igbo engineers and functionaries who manned the various positions had to travel outside their homestead with their families. Their children attended schools there, interacted within another language environment and were eventually obliged to communicate in the prevailing native language or English/pidgin in school whereas their Yoruba or Hausa peers were at home with their maternal languages.

The present generation of Igbo youth could aptly be described as Diaspora children of the post-Independence era. They grew up on their homestead in the West, especially where the geographical position and the political status of Lagos got virtually all industries situated

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there and in all the adjoining States. Others cities included Kaduna, Kano, and Jos in the North and a few others scattered in other non-Igbo states. Thus these Igbos spoke Yoruba or Hausa or English. The idea of learning their native language out there was out of the question. They no longer had the habit of communicating in their native Igbo language and preferred to interact in alternative languages whereas their peers out there spoke in own native languages.

More than 60% of working class Igbos operates outside the Igbo land whereas less than 10% of working class Yoruba or Hausa people find themselves in a similar situation. The Igbos besides this reality, are vast travellers and have the habit of learning other people's languages and even marrying them as they move about. (Okeke V. O, 2015). It is estimated that over 5 million Igbos live in Lagos, and over 8 million in various States of the North such as Kaduna, Kano, Jos just to mention a few cities. And following the Biafra/Nigeria war and the numerous other crises (religious, political) targeted against the Igbos, the millions of refugees that fled from home, as well as the Diaspora children realized they could not interact in the native language but spoke the languages they knew best. It has now become difficult to assert the exact mother-tongue of these returnees as they cannot justifiably assert Igbo as their maternal tongue in situations where linguistic Competence is supposed to be inborn with all the attendant proficiency in Performance (Chomsky 1971).

The Diaspora children spend very little time with their very busy parents who only have less than three hours a day with them, while the rest of the day is spent at school and other venues with peer groups who interact with them in the prevailing native language. But one must assert that the Igbos who were raised within the homestead speak the maternal language with the competence of the native speaker. They communicate effectively in the mother-tongue, just like every normal child who has spent most of his childhood in his maternal language environment. Outside this peculiar context, it does not mean that the Igbos hate their language or are less patriotic than their peers from other linguistic zones.

But the fact remains that the Igbos are a proud people who want to show off with every new knowledge, as a form of achievement. They would not like to be associated with poor language performance in the native language and prefer rather to speak the tongue which rather promotes their ego than in the one where their performance cannot guarantee their personality. Besides, in other States, most of those people who always speak in the native tongue even in mixed class contexts which ought not to demand the use of a parochial mode of expression, do so not out of patriotism but simply because they cannot express themselves at all in English. You cannot figure this happening in typically Igbo environments.

Added to this, the more than eight million Igbo in the Western world environment (both parents and children) do not either have the opportunity of gaining competence in the native language? It is thus feared that in the next few decades if nothing tangible is done, the Igbo language may be relegated to the background (Odinye and Odinye 2010). The following section looks at the conceptual/theoretical background that has informed and shaped this paper.

CONCEPTUAL / THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Knowledge

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In the field of knowledge management, an understanding of what counts as knowledge has been acknowledged by authors such as; (Alavi and Leidner, 2001; Heisig 2014) as valuable to organizations while others such as (Nonaka, 1994; Churchman, 1972) argue that it resides in the human mind who is seen as the ultimate user. Despite the debate within this field, this paper acknowledges the definition proffered by Bell (1999) who argues that;

'knowledge is the capacity to exercise judgment on the part of an individual, which is either based on an appreciation of context or derived from theory' p.lxiv.

So in this sense, this definition considered relevant as it relates to the teaching and learning of the Igbo language within a community that speaks the language. This definition relates to knowledge that emanates from the understanding of the language which can only be enabled by the appreciation of the socio-cultural environment which as Okeke J-P (2016) contends, this happens through a sense of ethnomethodology. From this perspective, Igbo language speakers devise some sort of systemization that becomes explicit, that can be written down and which becomes a way of dialogue. This we argue agrees with Tacit and Explicit knowledge which were the types of knowledge put forward by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995). They argue that tacit knowledge is the type of knowledge that cannot be easily shared, which is often part of an individual's cognitive system. Explicit knowledge, on the other hand, is that which can be articulated, expressible in external repositories.

Interestingly, understanding the elements of what we contend as knowledge is helpful to appreciate the emphasis that in advancing Igbo language, knowledge in this context has to be viewed from the standpoint of meaning in buttressing this view, we argue that what counts as knowledge of Igbo language is espoused in the narratives of those who speak it and the context of interaction with the language in adopting this position, we take in interpretative view of knowledge management that will in this context press our arguments home.

Knowledge Management

In scanning for the available literature, a lot of researchers have made contributions on what knowledge management is. Authors such as Earl (2001) remind us that knowledge management is not easily defined just as the concept of knowledge. Lloria (2008) in her views argues that though knowledge management has been difficult to define, she acknowledges that it is made up of different activities, when in defining it, consideration is given to the idea of management. There is a need to acknowledge the limitations of limited literature on African/Nigerian-centred approaches to KM. This was recognised by (Abiagam and Usoro 2012; Bamgboje-Ayodele and Ellis, 2015) and to support this section; there is a reliance on the indigenous knowledge of the authors to provide an understanding of KM.

This paper takes into consideration our standpoint on knowledge that we see as meaning and for the purposes of this paper, we define knowledge management as;

'a set of processes that deals with the collective understanding of optimizing knowledge activities that are embedded in the routines of a group of people which are relevant in their knowledge economy, as such, enhances their construction and use of knowledge'. Source: Authors

This definition demonstrates that knowledge management is a collective effort that can be undertaken in organizations, a group of people with the purpose of improving their knowledge activities using what counts as knowledge for them. It is interesting to point out that we take into consideration the interpretative element of what counts as knowledge which in this case is embedded in the routines of any collective group of people which can range from organizations to family units and in this case, the Igbo people of South-Eastern Nigeria.

We adapt Demarest (1997) set of KM processes to language and linguistics. Here we note that it begins initially with language construction, it gradually overlaps with the language embodiment which also overlaps with language dissemination and finally this language is used. It is necessary to point out that in a socio-cultural setting, these processes have no demarcation.

Language Construction

The construction of language here is understood from a socio-cultural view that adapts Demarest (1997) and refers to the construction of the Igbo language that is based on the interplay between the knowledge people the indigenous Igbo people possess, which is known to them and relies that relies on their cultural memory. This would include the construction of various forms of nouns, which have been identified in the South Eastern part of Nigeria. We will not produce these illustrations here but we draw attention that this phenomenon is a blend of different phonetics, consonants, and vowels that have within them the possibilities of mutating into something different depending on the context of referral and the pitch in pronunciation. This blends into the work of Carroll (2014) which we use to deconstruct this, taking Igbo man whose identity means he speaks the language into consideration. Language construction here relates to how well the Igbo man/woman uses the knowledge they possess to portray new social connections that are interrelated and interconnected to their historical experiences as an Igbos within the Nigerian Federation. It is expressed in various dialects and nuances. This epistemological view has its effects on the varied forms of the Igbo linguistics and has informed the variations in the way Igbos across South Eastern Nigerian States have spoken and written the language.

Language Embodiment

The embodiment of language here, going by our interpretative stance, reminds our readers that this refers to the language that is embodied in the minds and hearts of those whose identity is Igbo. These we refer to as language memories in the simplest of terms but they are unwritten rules that help preserve the language for its use when relevant. For the Igbos, this is easily recalled through the traditional ways of storytelling which have been well captured in Igbo folklore such as “ego on, akuko ifo” Within Igbo linguistics, language. The use of Igbo language has been enabled language to be embodied in the form of proverbs which in turn become reference points for language embodiment.

Language Dissemination

The dissemination of language becomes important going by the potential benefits that the Igbo language has when it reaches those it is intended for. This refers to the systems that support the channelling of language through communication means from source to the intended recipient. In the traditional Igbo society, the Igbo language has always served as a language of knowledge dissemination but has failed to be seen as elitist regardless of the fact

that it is at the forefront of our identity and knowledge dissemination systems. We argue that the Igbo language can be a language of dissemination not only academic institutions in the South-Eastern part of Nigeria, in homes, at the workplace. This in our contemporary ICT enabled the world can be augmented with information technology platforms. We contend that in advancing the Igbo language, it is necessary, to reinforce the use of the language in dialogues, which will break the superficial barriers limit the use and dissemination of the language in the Igbo society.

Language Use

What counts as language use would vary across disciplines and we believe that this is subject to different opinions. We contend that the limited use of the Igbo language here has been one of the reasons there has been a steady death of the language as such seeing it listed as being endangered. In this context, we refer to this as the use of the Igbo language that takes into account the circumstances of the context in which it is constructed and is utilized to sustain, solve and achieve the purpose for which it existed which is communication amongst the Ibos. Here we are of the opinion that in advancing the use of the Igbo language, Igbo speakers, academics and public institutions in the South Eastern Part of Nigeria should encourage its use with the aim of addressing the gradual decline in the language has to be used for the sole purpose of sustaining and promoting the Igbo language.

It is important to acknowledge the importance of geographical proximity of these universities in the South-Eastern part of Nigeria where the language is spoken. Tapping into the potential of the Igbo language to take advantage of the links to science and the business world can inform the policy making of those in charge of education in the Igbo speaking states of Nigeria. Using the adapted KM processes will support the increase use of the language. It creates on its own an area that is significantly interconnected with a common language identity that would support inter-state science and cultural collaborations. The Igbo language should play a role in stimulating a new drive of interconnectedness among the Igbo speaking people of Nigeria.

THE PRESENT STATE OF IGBO LANGUAGE USE

The truth is that the Igbo language is fast deteriorating in its attributes of a big language. It is not easy to mention as many as twenty languages in the world whose native speakers attain 20 million without mentioning Igbo. Still, this language is undergoing enormous difficulties as no active steps are being taken by anyone, including native academics and government to position it effectively to face the ever increasing challenges of living up to increasing new lexical needs that crop up by the day. There are no such language authorities like the Académie Française of France or the Britain Council of Great Britain that are charged to superintend over the growth and survival of their respective languages. Thus, the earlier we established a language Academy like the types mentioned herewith, the better for the revival of the Igbo language. South-East university personnel could be used to achieve this. And Okeke (2015) put it:

Every meta-language resource that makes the minutest differentiation derives from the input of language. All the professional terminologies that give every discipline its distinctive relevance derive from experts in various languages. p.26

A language Academy which would be solely constituted of seasoned professional technocrats cum experts who would be charged with promoting the development of Igbo has become imperative. Its work would be to ensure on a daily basis that new lexical items and neologisms that feature in the international scene are immediately given native equivalents by various domestication processes. He continues:

And this cuts across all innovations that give relevance to every discipline, in the Sciences as well as in the Arts, Engineering, and Social Sciences, etc.... The purpose of this Academy would be to ensure national pride and independence so that the national language is not overwhelmed and drowned by foreign lexical items as is the case with all languages of the third world that use foreign European languages as their national official languages. p.26

If government and relevant University authorities in the 14 South-East Universities and the other tertiary institutions in the zone were to evolve this process, light could possibly be seen at the end of the tunnel. Thus, there are serious challenges facing the Igbo language use. Hardly can any educated Igbo youth talk of the modern areas of life without code-switching or large-scale lexical borrowing. In the area of Information Communication Technology (ICT), no efforts are made at all to address the dozens of neologisms that are created every day and which are just borrowed into Igbo. This is where the idea of Igbo language dying assumes a more disturbing proportion. Originally, there were such Bodies like the Society for the Promotion of Igbo Language and Culture (SPILC) and the Igbo Studies Association (ISA). These could be revived and made more active and relevant through appropriate funding. This is where a responsible government ought to come into enunciate sound educational policies.

The effectiveness of any country's educational system ought to be a replica of the governmental process that regulates it. A well-focused government with technocrats in power (instead of illiterate politicians and money mongers) ought to rise up to the challenge. In the third world, soldiers and the nouveaux-riches have been in control of governance since various dates of independence. They hardly embark on money intensive education ventures, whose relevance they may not fully comprehend. Instead of allocating the United Nations 25% budget to education, they readily allocate the greatest junk to arms purchase and personal security needs. Good language planning would ensure that native languages are taught in schools, at primary, secondary and tertiary school levels.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION ON THIS CHALLENGE

The Catholic Archdiocese of Owerri, under the pioneer directive of Archbishop A. J. V. Obinna has since 1992 established the Odenigbo Lecture series in which renowned Igbo scholars in varying fields of specialization yearly deliver lectures in Igbo on one aspect or the other of Igbo language and culture. Other social bodies like the Nigerian Institute of Cultural Orientation (NICO), the South-East zone has equally been organizing seminars aimed at revitalizing the speaking and writing of Igbo. This agency was established by in 1993 as a joint initiative with the UNESCO to promote the cultural dimension of Nigeria's national development. It was also part of the efforts of Nigeria to promote its cultural diversity. This Institute has promotes positive cultural values and takes active steps to harnessing the various

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cultures of Nigeria for national development. (Nico, 2013). Recently, the South-East zone raised a concern that it should not be the responsibility of government agencies alone in this task of preserving native languages and indigenous cultures. There is now a growing campaign to raise encourage families, parents, churches, children, and custodians of culture, stakeholders and culture practitioners must acknowledge their responsibility in preventing the demise of our indigenous languages.

Most Igbo state governments are waking up to the challenge of preventing this near predicament as they realize the gravity of such a possibility. In fact, just recently the Imo State government, as waking from a slumber, made it mandatory in a pronouncement for Igbo to be taught in all state institutions up to the end of secondary education course. Not only that, a credit pass in Igbo at the GCE or School Certificate or equivalent levels has been made a sine qua non for every child aspiring to gain admission into the University or other tertiary institutions. Besides, the teaching of Igbo as an elective in all tertiary institutions has been made imperative by an act of the State House of Assembly. By the same token, a newspaper IKORO was thrown to the public in view of promoting this zeal. This is a very laudable act which if implemented religiously would forestall the enlistment of Igbo in this endangered language club.

It is our hope that the enthusiasm of the present Commissioner for Education in Imo State will be sustained by succeeding administrations and that the same awareness will be sustained in other states of the South-East. If this laudable measure is sustained and implemented to the letter, I guarantee that with time, the Igbo language will come out of the dying languages list. All along, studying the Igbo language has not been perceived as a lucrative business as little job opportunities or incentives are attached to it. This trend could be reversed by government filling the great vacuum created by the decline of Igbo teachers and creating job opportunities for whoever is a trained Igbo language.

To achieve this act, there is the need to train more Igbo language teachers and stakeholders in our Universities, Polytechnics, and Colleges of education. More undergraduates will opt for Igbo studies if they realize that jobs creation can be guaranteed therein. Unless some incentives are attached to the possession of Igbo as an economically vibrant tool for advancement, many people will fail to see it as an economic tool for social advancement.

THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES IN IGBO LANGUAGE REHABILITATION PROCESS

Universities and other tertiary institutions in the South-East have the capacity to promote the Igbo language and forestall the impending disaster by way of publications by lecturers in the form of books, magazines, literature and other educational materials that will bridge the gap of pedagogical tools needed to propagate information on the language. Government and private agencies could establish newspapers and by specific policies promote literacy in the language. But here, unfortunately again, most of the people in this group were themselves Diaspora children and their competence and confidence in Igbo is not motivating and glorious enough to guarantee their confidence to write in the language. Academics could play a very vital role in the said generalized effort of language promotion.

The South-Eastern Nigeria at the present moment is hosting some 14 Universities and about an equal number of Colleges of Education and Polytechnics, all of which offer degrees and equivalent certificates. With all these institutions, the crossing of disciplinary lines is crucial for any institution that seeks to be a marketplace of ideas. University education is about encouraging the advancement of learning and to hold out to all persons, the opportunity of acquiring higher education, to promote academic pursuits to the highest possible standard while retaining community service as one of the cornerstones of its *raison d'être*. A university is a place of research in all disciplines of human endeavour.

The numerous problems that crop up in human development are observed, analysed and probed into for immediate solution. No social problem is beyond the research capabilities of university education which are supposed to proffer solutions. The university and other tertiary institutions in the South-East have the capacity to promote the use of Igbo and help forestall the impending doom. Lecturers can by way of their publications (books, magazines, articles, write-ups and other documentary materials) influence opinion and swerve people's misgivings as well as arouse patriotism among the population. The mere absence of literary materials and the inability of people to read fluently in Igbo could be improved upon through some pedagogical processes.

CONCLUSION

The paper has revealed the fundamental tenets of the KM field that has helped provide a basis for us to define concepts such as knowledge and knowledge management. In the South-Eastern part of Nigeria, the language of the people Igbo has been identified as been endangered. It becomes imperative that universities situated in the South-Eastern part of Nigeria where this language is spoken can play a significant role in the Igbo language rehabilitation process. This paper advocates the need to champion an interdependence between universities and the Igbo language rehabilitation in the South Eastern of Nigeria. Attention is required to promote the use of this language and develop it for use in formal education. This paper may confound those who do not have a linguistic insight into Igbo language but it opens up a world of opportunities with the Igbo languages in areas such as ICT, Academia, Research and its effects can go beyond the South Eastern part of Nigeria. It makes a case for Igbo language to become embedded in academic delivery with Universities in the South-Eastern part of Nigeria which has become have are recognised institutions of enlightenment for its people who are predominantly Igbo language speakers.

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