

## TEACHERS' MOTIVATION FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL LANGUAGE POLICY IN EBONYI STATE, NIGERIA

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**ABSTRACT:** *This descriptive survey was carried out in order to determine the teachers motivation for effective implementation of the national language policy in Ebonyi state, Nigeria. A random sample of 602 language teachers completed a corresponding copies of questionnaire designed for the study. Out of this number, 594 copies of the questionnaire, representing about 98.8% return rate, were used for data analysis. Mean and standard deviations were used to describe the teachers' motivation for effective implementation of the national language policy. Results showed that the respondents would be encouraged to teach effectively if incentives are provided for them to a great extent except in items 1 and 2 that indicates very great extent with the mean of  $\bar{x} = 3.03$  and  $\bar{x} = 3.03$  respectively. The results of the study showed that non-payment of special language teachers allowances, non-placement of teachers on special salary scale, no provision of books and other relevant materials (free of charge) lack of regular training to update the teachers' knowledge and lack of sponsorship to attend language seminars and workshops by the teachers. The study supports the need for government to provide incentives in form of allowances and special salary scale for Nigerian language teachers in the field.*

**KEYWORDS:** Motivation, Implementation teachers, Ebonyi State.

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### INTRODUCTION

Language is an important factor of human life as well as the most important tool in education. It has been variously defined by scholars. For instance, Adegbite (1992:2) opines that, "language can be described as a system of sounds or vocal symbols which human beings use to communicate experiences. It is a special characteristic of human beings". Language is the most important factor in identifying who is who, where one comes from, what one are made of, one culture, and tradition. It is a vehicle which is used to impart knowledge and so a vehicle of thought, culture and communication. It has a dual function; as a subject on the curriculum as well as a medium of instruction.

Language is the pivot around which every activity rotates hence it is an instrument of public relations, medium of imparting knowledge, means of national and political interaction and a gateway to national unity. According to Mgbodile (1998), language is the chief means of generating, maintaining and transferring culture and civilization. He stresses that man learns to speak a language in the way he learns to walk, to climb or swim. Consequently, language is the bedrock to nation building. For Aziza (1998:263), "Language is the most important tool with which society is organized and it is hardly possible to talk of national development without including the language with which the people formulate their thought, ideas and needs".

The aims of learning a second language are for effective communication, cultural understanding and cross fertilization of ideas. The issue of development and promotion of

Nigerian languages for the attainment of the aims and objectives of the National Policy on Education deserves serious attention especially in the present day Nigeria where political and religious upheavals are hitting the unity of the nation.

Therefore, it becomes necessary for the National Policy on Education (NPE) to make provision for language in education in its formulation. The National Policy on Education recognizes primary education as the foundation of the entire educational structure and prescribes as one of its aims, the inculcation of permanent literacy and numeracy with emphasis on effective communication Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2004). The language policy at best highlighted the importance of Nigeria's indigenous languages and their place in the educational system. Section 4 of the National Policy on Education (2004:17) dwells on language provisions on secondary education which is the main focus of this study. The provision in that section which relates to language includes the following:

The broad goals of secondary education are:

1. Develop and produce Nigerian language, art and culture in the context of world's cultural heritage". (Para. 17(d)).
2. "Language of environment to be taught as L<sub>1</sub> (Para. 19(a) iii).
3. "One major Nigerian language other than that of the environment to be taught as L<sub>2</sub>" (Para. 19(a) iv).
4. "At junior secondary school (JSS), two Nigerian languages are to be taught as core subjects, one of which is the language of the environment which shall be taught as L<sub>1</sub> where it has orthography and literature. But where it does not have, it shall be taught with emphasis on orality as L<sub>2</sub>" (para. 19(a) xi).
5. "A major Nigerian language as one of the subjects in the core curriculum at the senior secondary schools (SSS)" (para. 20(a) iii).

In order to achieve the specified objectives as in the relevant aspect of (A-E) above, Igbo, a major Nigerian language for instance is taught in Ebonyi state as the mother tongue/the language of the environment (MT/LIC) while Hausa and Yoruba are taught as L<sub>2</sub> or the second indigenous languages. This is meant to achieve the lofty objective of the policy, which is not only for the advancement of national development but also as a means of preserving people's cultural heritage.

Furthermore, related to language education at secondary level is the prescription of English language as the language of instruction for secondary school education. However, the 2004 policy stipulated that students in junior secondary school (JSS) should offer English and two Nigerian languages as school subjects. While at the senior secondary school (SSS) student are to take English and one Nigerian language. Regrettably government did not make policy statement as to how the language policy stipulated in the national policy on education (NPE) is to be implemented. This according to Bamgbose (1991:134) is elapse on the part of the government. Thus, he asserts Nigeria's official language policy about use of certain languages in the national assembly and education does not specify any implementation agency; but the national language center through funding provided by the assembly has been trying to work out legislative terminology by making use of experts in the universities..."

He went further to identify some specific problems of the policy at the implementation levels as well as efforts made by the assembly to see that the national language policy is being implemented in schools. In 1992, the then Minister of Education, Prof. Aliu Babatunde Fafunwa outlined what his Ministry was able to achieve towards the implementation of the language provisions contained in the National Policy on Education. They are as follows:

1. Provision of approved syllabus for Nigeria languages (Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba).
2. Provision of approved syllabus for English, Arabic and French.
3. Setting up a technical committee on the production of teachers for the three major Nigerian languages.
4. Funding of a national workshop on the production of teachers of the major Nigerian languages.
5. Organization of a National Curriculum Conference.
6. The production of texts on the vocabulary of primary science and mathematics in nine Nigerian languages.
7. The production of quadrangular glossary of legislative terms in English; Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba.
8. The development of orthography for thirty-one Nigerian languages.
9. The production of Meta-language manuals for the three major Nigerian languages.

Some of the relevant language projects were also carried out by the Nigerian Education Research and Development Council (NERDC). Unfortunately, the effects of these concrete achievements are not so much felt in schools. In addition to all these, the Federal Ministry of Education two years ago went ahead to establish the National Institute of Nigerian languages at Aba, Abia state of Nigeria. This institute was saddled with the responsibility of fostering the development and teaching of Nigerian languages (Epuchie, 2008).

The policy aims at making the Nigerian child bilingual at the end of primary and secondary education with the acquisition of at least one of the major Nigerian languages apart from the individual's Mother Tongue (M.T) or language of the immediate community (LIC) and English. This calls for the need to plan the educational system, so as to give every Nigerian child a sound and worthwhile education, which is one of the greatest legacies any nation can bequeath to her citizens. Supporting this view, Ugonna (1982:24) explains that: "Nigeria can benefit immensely from proper planning and adopting a virile language policy deliberately aimed at producing an indigenous lingua franca".

In Nigeria, the English language has acquired so much prestige that excellence and fluency in it is associated with academic brilliance. It is also a pre-requisite for admission into higher institutions. Furthermore, in the primary and secondary schools, more periods are allocated to the study of English. Unfortunately, many Nigerians particularly the rural dwellers and those of the lower class are not able to communicate in the English language. It is unlikely that such people would be carried along in the affairs of the government (Uguru, 2008). Therefore, in the early 1980s indigenous language awareness was created in the country. This followed a language conference held in Ghana in 1969 where a call was made for indigenous

African languages to be given paramount attention. Though the indigenous language awareness has aided the study and development of these hitherto relegated languages, it sparked off unhealthy rivalries among Nigerian language groups, culminating into inter-ethnic rivalries and conflicts. In the face of this linguistic chaos, the use of English as the official language has thrived and the end of it is not in sight. Several factors have contributed to the continued use of English as the official language. The factors are:

First, there appears to be a wrong understanding among most Nigerians of what language is all about. They fail to understand that no language is superior to the other. Most Nigerians, particularly those in the elite class are not enthusiastic about replacing English with an indigenous language. Such people tend to associate academic brilliance with competence or fluency in English. For them errors in spoken or written English are viewed as grave, humiliating and embarrassing. In contrast, such errors committed in any indigenous Nigerian language are dismissed with a wave of the hand. In fact, errors committed while speaking the indigenous languages are seen as indications that the speaker is a city dweller, “imported” (one who returned from any of the developed countries) or so much educated that he or she has begun to lose grip of the indigenous language. The more a speaker of language uses ‘big’ jaw-breaking and unfamiliar English words, the more elated he or she feels and the higher the esteem to which the audience holds him or her, regardless of whether they understand the words or not. Most Nigerians have not understood that the goal of language is communication which means, passing of information from speaker to hearer and so, would speak English to illiterate and semi-illiterate citizens when they could have spoken the indigenous language. This situation has placed a high prestige on English and the resultant effect is the unwillingness of those eloquent in it to welcome a change to an indigenous official language. Hence, many Nigerian families use English even at home.

Another likely factor to the one above is the undue priority and attention given to English language in the Nigerian institutions of learning. More hours are allocated to its teaching and a poor performance in English denotes a poor performance in the examination in question. For instance, a minimum of credit pass in English is a pre-requisite for entry into higher institutions and it is rarely possible for someone, who failed English language to be allowed to study any course at all. Thus in many primary and post-primary schools, the use of any language other than English among students is forbidden.

## **THE PLACE OF LANGUAGE POLICY IN NIGERIA EDUCATION**

Language Policy is the broad general principles or law, ideas and guidelines, objectives and stipulations, which the government has laid down for the use of the languages within its area of jurisdiction. The National Language Policy embedded in the National Policy on Education by FRN (2004) provides an insight into the aspirations of the Nigerian people towards the enhancement of interpersonal, inter-ethnic and international co-operation which are the major functions of human language. The Nigerian educational system needs a language policy, which will act as a regulation to our choice of language(s) that will be of benefit in realizing the Nigerian philosophy. According to Ubahakwe cited in Ngwoke (2010) in addition to appreciating the importance of language in the Educational process, and as a means of preserving the people’s culture, the government considers it to be in the best interest of national unity that each child should be encouraged to learn one of the three major languages

other than his mother tongue. In this connection, the government considers the three major languages in Nigeria to be Hausa, Ibo (Igbo) and Yoruba.

The place of language Policy in Nigerian educational system is therefore an important one. The objective of Nigeria's philosophy of education cannot be achieved without the instrument of language. Achilike (2007:110) asserts that: All educational efforts emphasize much on language training and the development of cognitive skills. It is believed that a good language base is a basic pre-requisite for successful achievement in school and adult life.

Since all educational efforts emphasize language training due to the importance of language, it is therefore necessary that language Policy be evolved especially in Nigeria where according to Ubahakwe in Ngwoke (2010) the number of languages spoken is not known for certain. What is certain is that there are hundreds of languages used in Nigeria. Ubahakwe in Ngwoke (2010) puts the number of languages in Nigeria at 400. With over four hundred languages spoken by the numerous ethnic nationalities in one country, it will be hard if not impossible, to achieve: a free and democratic society; a just and egalitarian society; a great and dynamic economy; a land full of bright opportunities For all citizens, without a well articulated and meticulously implemented language Policy, English though is Nigeria's Lingua Franca can only be used by a few educated people in Nigeria and for. that, a language policy becomes necessary. The South African experience is a lesson and should act as inspiration to Nigeria in this regard. According to Ngubane (2002:3) the (Language) Policy framework is fundamental to the management of our diverse language resources and the achievement of government's goal to promote democracy, justice, equity and national unity. It is in this spirit that the promotion of all II official languages of our country as provided for in the constitution (becomes necessary). For the above reason, the Federal Republic of Nigeria set to evolve a language policy that would lead to an enduring society. This understanding informed the formulation of the National Language Policy.

The educational system needs the language policy to inculcate the right kind of values, goals and national aspirations to Nigerian citizens so as to pursue and achieve Nigerian national philosophy. Inculcating these values will depend much on the methods we adopt in secondary school.

## **METHODS OF TEACHING LANGUAGES IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

Teaching constitutes the bulk of work, which the teacher does in the educational process. The teacher is therefore the orbit around which the implementation of any curriculum revolves. Agwu (2001) upholds this view when he said that the teacher is the stimulator of learning and that he goes about this through various strategies.

## **LANGUAGE ACQUISITION THEORY**

Opara (2004) noted that, there are many theories to explain how children acquire language. So far no theory has achieved satisfactory explanation of this wonderful achievement in the child. No theory, therefore, has been able to fully help teachers to understand and determine how to help children better with language acquisition. However, knowledge of theories of language acquisition can go a long way to helping teachers of language know how children

acquire language. Language acquisition theory is classified under three sub-heading namely: imitation theory, reinforcement and cognitive theory.

### **Imitation theory**

Skinner (1957) one of the founders of behaviourists psychology proposed the imitation theory. He said that, children learn languages by imitation of what adult say, imitating the sound, the derivation and use of grammar, the meaning and the type of language spoken around them. The babbling sounds children make early in life are shaped after the sounds made by adults. Hence, a child in Igbo land will learn the Igbo language, the child in Yoruba land where Yoruba is spoken will learn the Yoruba language etc.

However, the learning of languages by the imitation method only would demand a lot of time to learn the language. This is because the expressive language is narrower in breath than the impressive language. Associated with the imitation theory is the modeling or association theory whereby learning occurs faster when what is said is associated with the concrete representation of the object. The theory reveal that children learn languages by imitation of what adult say, imitating the sound, derivation and use of grammar, the meaning and type of language spoken around them. Therefore, this theory is relevant to this study as it shaded light on the process in the learning of the Nigerian languages; hence it is from this learning of languages that helps the teacher of language to pattern their teaching with imitational skills that will help the children in the acquisition and implementation of the language policy.

### **Reinforcement Theory**

Skinner 1957 also propounded this theory that children learn language by reinforcements because they are rewarded. Each time a child approximates a sound made by an adult, he receives a positive response e.g., a clap, a smile, a pat, a hug, etc. The child tries to repeat that sound several times over so as to be rewarded. He also associated that sound with the meaning it has evoked in the adult's reaction. The more often he makes the sound the more he proximate the correct pattern. Gradually the sounds become words and the words become sentences that are correct and intelligible. As he wishes to get positive response, he makes efforts to speak better. However, there is more to language learning than this theory can explain. If a child waits until he is rewarded, then he will spend eternity to learn a language. It is very useful though in improving language development in slow learners. However, the child can build internal mechanism for self reinforcement. The above theory is relevant to this study in the sense that reinforcement is very useful though in improving language development in slow learners. When the learners make good attempt to speak or write any of these major Nigerian languages well, they should be given a positive reinforcement from the teacher as stipulated by the theory. Such reinforcement could be relegated to a simple class of hand amongst others. This is the aspect of this theory that informs the basis of this study because it is an integral part of every good learning process.

### **The Cognitive Theory**

Chomsky (1957) showed that language is a complex cognitive system that could be acquired by behaviourist principles. This describes the theory that focuses on what the child does on his own to learn a language. He discovered or established a rule about what he hears according to his level of thinking and understanding. He tries out the rule based on observed movements, gestures, context, intention, etc. These help him to guess the meanings and rules

and applying them leads him to generate sentences he has never heard before. For example, when he discovers the rules for indicating past tense, that is, adding “-ed” to English verbs, he may add “-ed” to “come” to say “comed”. Hence according to this theory, the child listens, observes, develops a rule, tests the rule, receives feedback and applies the rules again or in a modified form. Though this may not be correct according to conventional usage, but the child has observed and understood the rule or pattern. He can apply it successfully to some verbs that can take “ed”. With more practice and observations, he begins to notice the exceptions to the rule and modifies them. When the child applies these rules and principles in learning language, progress is faster. The relevant of this theory to the present study lies in the fact that language is a complex cognitive system that could be acquired by behaviourists’ principles. This behaviourists principle implies that the child listens, observes, develop a rule, test the rule, receives feedback and applies the rules again or in a modified form.

## **METHODS**

### **Participants and setting**

Between August and September 2015, a descriptive survey was carried out among 602 language teachers of both genders drawn from 953 secondary schools in the area under survey. The first stage involved delimitation of the three education zones into three mutually exclusive clusters, namely: Abakaliki, Onueke and Afikpo. The second stage involved drawing 25% of the number of schools in each zone using the proportionate simple random sampling technique. In this case one out of four schools, irrespective of type and location of school was chosen from each education zone. This process yielded a total of 16 schools from Abakaliki zone, 15 schools from Onueke zone and 20 schools from Afikpo zone. The final stage involved a proportionate selection of 1% of the students from each of the three education zones. This yielded a total of 953.

### **Instrument**

The researcher used a self developed questionnaire, the national language policy assessment questionnaire (NLPAQ) which consist of 4-items. The respondents were required to indicate on a 4-point scale, the extent they get involved in the motivation of teachers using to a very great extent (VGE), to a great extent (GE), to a less extent (LE) and to a very less extent (VLE).

Five experts in English language from two institutions of higher learning in Enugu State, not included in the study, were used for validity the NLPAQ. Thirty secondary schools of both genders in one secondary school, not included in the study were used for test of reliability. The yielded a Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of 0.87. The reliability coefficient was higher than Ogbazi and Okpala’s (1994) criteria of 0.60 acceptable for good instrument.

### **Data Collection**

Permission was granted from the principal of each secondary school participating in the study prior to data collection. A consent note with the explanation for the research purpose, method of response and assurance of anonymity was attached to each copy of the NLPAQ. Six hundred and two copies of NLPAQ were administered on the language teachers during a break period and were collected immediately after completion.

## Data Analysis

The completed copies of NLPAQ were examined for completeness of responses and copies that had incomplete responses were discarded. Out of 602 copies of the NLPAQ administered; 594 representing about 98.8% return rate, were used for analysis. In describing the extent to which teachers are motivated for effective implementation of the national language policy among the teachers, mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) of 3.1 - 4.0 implied that the national language policy are implemented to a very great extent (VGE); 2.1 - 3.0 implied that the national language policy is implemented to a great extent (GE); 1.1 - 2.0 that the national language policy is implemented to a less extent (LE) and 0.1 – 1.0 implied that the national language policy is implemented to a very less extent (VLE). Standard deviation was used to determine how the responses of the respondent vary. All data analysis were done with IBM statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 20.0 for windows.

## RESULTS

**Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Extent to which Teachers are Motivated for Effective Implementation of National Language Policy as Perceived by Teachers**

S/N	Statement	$\bar{x}$	SD	Dec
1.	Non-payment of special language teachers allowances	3.03	1.20	VGE
2.	Non-placement of teachers on special salary scale	2.95	1.13	GE
3.	No provision of books and other relevant materials (free of charge)	3.03	1.15	VGE
4.	No regular training to update the teachers' knowledge	2.98	1.12	GE
5.	Teachers are not sponsored to attend language seminar and workshops	2.72	1.12	GE
	Overall	2.94	0.91	GE

Table 1 shows that items 1 and 3 indicate that teachers of Nigerian language would be encouraged to teach effectively if incentives are provided for them to a very great extent. On the other hand items 2, 4 and 5 indicate that the respondents rated encouragement of the teachers to teach effectively to a great extent. The overall mean score of 2.94 implies that the teachers of the major Nigerian languages would be encouraged to teach effectively to a great extent, if incentives are provided for them in secondary schools in Ebonyi state. The standard deviations (range 0.91 – 1.20) indicate that the responses do not vary so widely.

## DISCUSSION

Data in Table 1 showed that the teachers of the major Nigerian languages like their counterparts in science education would be encouraged to teach effectively if incentives are provided for them to a very great extent. This result implies that for the teachers of the major Nigerian languages like their science education counterparts to teach effectively in secondary schools in Ebonyi State. The implication of finding could be that if incentives are not adequately provided for the teachers, they would not be motivated to teach effectively and this might in turn affect the implementation of the national language policy. Hence, finding



agrees with the observation of Epuchie (1990) when he noted that there is a significant relationship between the existence of incentives to teachers and the quality of their product. If really given incentives like their science counterparts in science education they would be encouraged to teach effectively. Still on this, the result of the Isekiri language project lends credence to the discussion above. For example, Omamor in Chidi-ehiem (2015) in reporting the problems militating against the success of the Isekiri language project also noted, among others, that during the course of the project teachers were not happy since the training they received could not afford them any professional/material gain in terms of incentives.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the present study provide evidence that the teachers of the major Nigerian languages like their counterparts in science education would be encouraged to teach effectively if incentives are provided for them. The result of the study contributes to the factors affecting the implementation of the national language policy in Ebonyi state and Nigeria at large and provides a reliable basis for proper planning of the language policy programme among the students language teachers/educators can teach lessons to help students understand the importance of language and build students' skills, attitude and interest to avoid society's ambivalence to the study of language. Governments should embark on a realistic programme to train, employ and retain enough language teachers in the field. Books and other relevant materials should also be provided for these Nigerian language teachers free of charge. The Nigerian language teachers should also be sponsored to attend conferences, seminars and workshops and as well as sent on government sponsored regular training to update their knowledge.

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