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Eclecticism in the Igbo Language Classroom

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Abstract

This study examined the applicability and effectiveness in the use of code-mixing and eclecticism in the teaching and learning of basic and elementary Igbo for general purposes. A sample population of ninety three students was derived in the second semester of 2014/2015 academic session. A simple diagnostic test administered at the beginning of the course revealed a level of inability (22%) in oral skill in Igbo. Observations and interactions during the teaching process revealed the programme's excessive dependence on grammatical and structural patterns. Hence, the students' poor attitude towards Igbo and their unfamiliarity with the tenets of the current approaches to language teaching and learning, like, learner-centeredness. These were observed through their over-dependence on the teacher, insistence on handout materials and scepticism about personal active participation. Also revealed include the problems with large classes, lack of classroom space and inadequate coverage time. A seen written Igbo text was administered in an examination condition to elicit the data evaluating their reading comprehension ability. The result of their performance yielded

approximately 85% success. This result has strong pedagogical implications for Igbo to be tailored towards current global L₁/L₂ trends of communicative approaches to the teaching and learning of languages for general and specific purposes.

Key Words: code-switching, communicative, eclecticism, formalist, learner-centeredness

Introduction

In Anambra State, the Igbo language has been accorded full status as a second language (L₂) to be taught at all levels of education and learned by all who have a first language (L₁) other than Igbo (Anambra State House of Assembly, 2009). Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka (UNIZIK, hereafter), has established a Basic Igbo Programme (Igbo GS, hereafter) under her School of General Studies (Nnamdi Azikiwe University Senate, 2012). In addition, some departments, especially in the Faculty of Arts, have also mounted Elementary Igbo courses to enable learners of Igbo participate fully in the classroom and develop basic communication skills, especially in the social aspects of Igbo life both in the university and elsewhere. Teachers of the Igbo programmes, particularly the departmental Elementary Igbo courses, need to recognise the implication of the new status of Igbo on its teaching and learning, and identify ways to promote the development of the language. As such, every opportunity of helping the students to improve their Igbo language skills needs to be explored.

Learners of the Elementary Igbo courses need to derive added advantage, given that over 33% of them are English dominant and never came in contact with Igbo until they gained admission into UNIZIK. Again, the Igbo GS alone, still at the basic level, may not suffice to offer them the effective communication skills they require. The adoption of an eclectic approach and the use of Igbo medium, at least code mixing in Igbo and English, is necessary to engage students in active participation which is essential for their achieving success in communication abilities in Igbo (*cf.* Baker, 2010; García, 2010). Thus, this investigation is embarked upon to create the awareness which will improve classroom interaction that will support the Igbo language development of UNIZIK students. The study assumes that the learners' age group, intelligence quotient, cognitive ability and level of understanding are at par, given that they were admitted through a common entrance examination.

Problem of the Study

The language provisions of the National Policy on Education (NPE) (FRN, 2004) recognised Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba as regional official languages (ROLs) each of which should be taught, learned and used in its own immediate environment. Relevant portions of the policy provide that every child should be immersed in the language of the immediate environment or community (LIE/LIC) up to primary 3. By this mandate, Igbo is the ROL as well as the L₁ and LIC/LIE in the Southeast (SE). Its use as the

medium of instruction (MOI) in the education of Nigerian children in the SE starts from the pre-primary to primary 3 levels. From primary 4 to the junior secondary (JS) level of education, Igbo as LIC/LIE is to be primarily taught and learned as a subject, both as L₁ and L₂. Though this policy is fraught with a number of challenges due its subtractive nature (García, 2010). Over the years, even the provisions made were not being implemented. Above all, there are no such language provisions in relation to Nigerian languages and their general teaching, learning and use in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The situation led to the current generation of Nigerians, particularly the Igbo, being highly English dominant (L₁ English). Consequently, the Igbo language has been identified as an endangered language and well meaning people have called for its rescue (Ohiri-Aniche, 2002; 2007; Okwudishu, 2010; Ejiolor, 2013).

In Anambra State, the Government has enacted a law for the teaching, learning and use of Igbo as L1 and L2 at all levels of education (Anambra State House of Assembly, 2009). Igbo is emerging as a second language (L2) in tertiary institutions in the State; notably, Federal Polytechnic, Oko; Odimegwu Ojukwu University, Uli and Nnamdi Azikiwe University through the Basic Igbo Studies (Igbo GS) programme. Communicative abilities that engender the oral use of Igbo by the learners constitute the focus of attention in the Igbo GS. However, the productive (especially, oral skill) and receptive abilities (especially, reading skill) of the learners are seen to fall below expectation. This assertion is buttressed by the observations made in the second semester in the Elementary Igbo II course, after the students had passed through the Basic Igbo I and Elementary Igbo I in the first semester. Teaching Elementary Igbo strictly in English medium the way it is structured, places weighty emphasis on the traditional practices that bequeath to the students only structural abilities. Thus, it is believed that this does not motivate the students and also does not consolidate the envisaged UNIZIK Igbo GS stipulated communicative abilities in their learning Igbo. This state of affairs suggests the need to redesign the Elementary Igbo I and II courses.

Purpose of Study

Basically, the study set out to investigate the implication of the new L2 status of Igbo in the teaching and learning of Elementary Igbo courses in some departments of UNIZIK. The study is interested in checking the possibility of enabling the Elementary Igbo courses to consolidate the Igbo GS in enhancing the learners' Igbo communication skills, in order to contribute to promoting the development of the Igbo language. Specifically, a number of activities were undertaken in the study:

-to test the students' level of abilities, especially reading comprehension ability in Igbo which they have studied under the Basic Igbo I and Elementary Igbo I in the first semester, 2014/2015;

- while interacting with them, to observe their general attitude towards the use of Igbo as part of an English/Igbo medium of instruction and their eagerness to use Igbo;
- to observe how they employ their mixed ability in Igbo to the benefit of all, especially, the non Igbo and the English dominant Igbo students;
- to inculcate the eclectic approach in teaching the course in order to activate interest in the learners and get them to practise different skills by performing a number of tasks which aid their learning and use of Igbo versus using Igbo to learn Igbo;
- to evaluate the outcome of the exercise, determine what pedagogical implications emerge, and thus proffer suggestions towards improvement in the relevant areas.

Research Questions

To guide this study, we provide answers to the following research questions:

- i. What is the implication of the new L₂ status of Igbo on the teaching and learning of Elementary Igbo courses in some departments in UNIZIK, Awka?
- ii. In what ways can the Elementary Igbo courses consolidate the Igbo GS in enhancing the Igbo learners' communication skills, in order to promote the development of the Igbo language?
- iii. What language teaching approaches can be introduced in the course for enhancement purposes?
- iv. What outcome is realised from the exercise and what pedagogical implications emerge?

Significance of the Study

Inculcating eclecticism into Igbo GS has invaluable benefits. This is because while the weaknesses of a specific approach are liable to impede or stagnate students' learning, the strengths of the various approaches complement one another. Among other benefits, the study would provide valuable information for linguists and teachers to appreciate the need for current language teaching approaches in the teaching of Igbo to activate learners' interest and enhance their communicative abilities. The result of the analysis would help to engender a better understanding of the students' characteristics or Igbo language learning behaviours and how to motivate them effectively. It will also serve as a guide to policy makers, course designers, language teachers and all interested parties in the growth of the Igbo language.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

Having conducted an oral diagnostic test of the learners' performance at the beginning of the course, the scope of this evaluative study is on the analysis of the learners' reading abilities mirrored through the comprehension of various activities constructed around communicative translation tasks. For want of space, though lesson observations and classroom interactions were used for insight and practical ideas about the students' level of Igbo language abilities, their analyses were not fully included in this study. Similarly, the analyses of the learners' classroom behaviours and general attitudes towards Igbo were not fully adopted for this study. Again, the transcription and analysis of the audio recording of classroom activities of one lesson period were excluded from this paper.

The study could not investigate the Elementary Igbo courses of all the departments that offer such in Unizik. The study is therefore, delimited to one such programme taught by one of the researchers. The students' non familiarity with teacher-centeredness posed a challenge to the teaching process. They were expecting the usual structure-centered course outline, lectures and the teacher's handout materials.

Literature Review

In reviewing the literature for this study, an attempt would be made to point out the approaches utilized in the teaching and learning process, particularly the relevant techniques and strategies drawn from the approaches. A brief description of the current teaching situation will also be undertaken.

Eclecticism

Spolsky (1998) described eclecticism as a major innovation in language teaching. He holds that eclecticism is a generally accepted language teaching approach because it tends to relax the pressure put on theorists by language teachers. Stern (1985), in Spolsky (1998), remarked that it helped the teaching profession to get over the obsession with the right method(s) and to focus on a more sophisticated and independent analysis of pedagogy. Richards and Schmidt (2002, p. 173) viewed the eclectic method of language teaching as the practice of using features of several different methods in language teaching. In assent to this, Dudley-Evans (2005) restricted the selection of features to those of grammatical syllabuses and task-based approaches. He noted that since the late 1980s both applied linguists and course designers have favoured the approach; and that there was renewed interest in it, particularly in teaching vocabulary to beginners. Dudley-Evans' (2005) view appealed very strongly to the situation under study. Stressing the importance of the approach, Spolsky (1998, p.15) attributed this distinguishing quality to good language teachers who recognise that languages can be learned and taught in many ways. Such eclectic language teachers are always "open to new proposals, and flexible to the needs of their

students and the changing goals of their outcome”. Eclectic teachers use a core set of principles to guide the selection of techniques, strategies and teaching procedures.

Language Teaching Strategies

Certain strategies are adopted by both teachers and learners in their effort to succeed in the enterprise. However, strategies are used more in relation to learners. Good language learners are known to employ certain strategies or procedures to help them succeed (Richards and Schmidt, 2002; Larsen-Freeman, 2008; Cohen, 2010). Strategies are students’ active and creative participation in the learning process through the application of individualised learner strategies/plans. Learners’ strategies can be for language learning and/or use. According to Cohen (2010, p. 164), language learning strategies refer to “the conscious and semi-conscious thoughts and behaviours used by learners with the explicit goal of improving their knowledge and understanding of a target language.” He defines learners’ language use strategies as those meant for using aspects of the TL that have been learned irrespective of how incomplete the learning is. He identified four types of language use strategies: retrieval, rehearsal, communication, and cover strategies. This paper is more interested in the communication strategies.

From the teachers’ perspective, Herrell and Jordan (2004, p. 5), in Thomson (2012, p. 4) saw strategies as the approaches across curricular areas that teachers can use to support students’ learning. Brown (2010, p. 341) agreed with this position and described grammar-translation method (GTM), direct method (DM), audio-lingual method (ALM), and so on, as approaches, which he says “describe a set of options in which all language curriculum developers must take an interest”. This position is seen to support eclecticism to promote the development of Igbo L₂.

Mixed Ability of the Students

A mixed ability class is one in which “learners of the same age ... vary in their intellectual, physical and emotional development” (Hess, 1999 & Koutselini, 2008) in Tzotzou, (2014, p. 64). Again, considered are the learners’ foreign language (FL) aptitude that consisted of four abilities: “to identify and memorise new words, understand the function of words, figure out grammatical rules from particular samples and a good memory for new vocabulary in the FL” (Lightbown & Spada, 2002), in Tzotzou (2014, p. 64). Hutchinson & Waters (1987, pp. 166-167) supported a mixed ability in the English language classroom. They argued that the narrow angle English for specific purposes (ESP) depresses students. As such, students should be grouped in mixed ESP classes and materials should be drawn from topics in various specialist areas. This practice, they say, will make the students aware that there is no specificity in their needs.

The mixed ability of the subjects of this current study is such that though they are still at the elementary level of language for general purposes (LGP), for 33% of them; UNIZIK is the first place of their encounter with Igbo. Also, as was applicable in Nwankwo (2015), some of them, particularly the Igbo students, possess only oral competence in the language; while some possess achievement certificates in Igbo up to senior school certificate (SSC), in spite of which they still need to attain an academic level of proficiency in Igbo (Ahamefula & Mbah, 2013). During the teaching and learning process, topics were drawn from the daily Igbo social life, and vocabulary development was based on the Igbo names of common scenes, animals' and things. Yet, they were observed to fall into Hutchinson and Waters (1987) category and to draw linguistic strength from one another. This observation lines up with Hutchinson & Waters (1987) that both learners of languages for specific purposes (LSP) and those of LGP have very similar characteristics.

Mixed Code Approach to Language Teaching

According to Richards & Schmidt (2002, p. 80), code mixing is a phenomenon prevalent in bilingual or multilingual communities, and is used as a mark of solidarity. It consists in the mixing of two languages or codes without a change in topic. It usually involved different levels of language: phonology, morphology, grammatical structures or lexical items. In some cases, a special name may be given to the code mixing, as in the case of "Ngiligbo", mixing English and Igbo. Bhatia (2010, p. 416) agreed with this definition but restricts it to intra-sentential mixing, while referring to inter-sentential mixing as code-switching. Trinder (2012) noted that code-switching as a communication strategy used by learners in immersion programmes, has a lot of advantages like, motivating learners, encouraging them to develop fluency and a sense of accomplishment leading to active participation in TL learning and use. Bhatia further explains that some authors use the two terms interchangeably. This study adopts this position and as well, accepts the term 'strategy' as referring to both learners and teachers.

Code-mixing has been used in some countries as a positive way of language development. Wales is a typical example of where instructional code-switching is highly encouraged, as Welsh and English are used in teaching all subjects in order to contextualise Welsh for non-natives and natives who have undergone language shift (García, 2010, p. 305). This kind of situation (language shift) is very similar to what obtains in Igbo and informs the use of the approach in the Elementary Igbo course under study. Nation (2010, p. 204) supported this approach and stated, "One of the clearest and simplest ways of providing a meaning for a word is to give a first language translation." In the mixed ability class under study, the use of a mixed code implies translating terms and concepts from Igbo into English and vice versa, right from the onset. In this regard, translation, a GTM technique, was used without restraint in teaching the course which leans very much on GTM tenets. This informs our reason to

discuss in some detail GTM and a number of its techniques in developing reading skills in Igbo.

Grammar Translation Method (GTM)

GTM is the oldest language teaching method. It emphasises the tenets of the grammarians who were the precursors of the formalists. Their tenets were seriously criticised, giving way to the functional approach. However, in current times, as Larsen-Freeman (2008), Schmitt & Celce-Murcia (2010) reported, GTM resurfaced and was used earlier in the century to help students read and appreciate foreign language (FL) literature. It was used to teach students the grammar of TL to enable them become more familiar with the grammar of their native language. This familiarity was to help them speak and write their native language better. This particular situation is very contrary to that of the Elementary Igbo course which is designed for using English medium to teach the structure of Igbo to a mixed group of learners, both natives and non-natives. In the context of study, over 33% of the natives have English as their L₁ and need to speak and write Igbo, their native language, for the first time. Another reason put forward by scholars for reintroducing GTM, is their belief that foreign language learning (by extension, learning an additional language) develops students' intellect; and that the mental exercise of learning it would benefit them even if they do not use the TL. These reasons are in consonance with the position of this study. Note that this paper uses FL and L₂ synonymously.

Translation as A GTM Technique in Language Teaching

Richards & Schmidt (2002) saw technique as different kinds of classroom activities, used more in relation to the teacher. Translation is a major technique of the GTM under the formalist approach. In traditional settings, either the teacher carefully designs a passage to include the desired or suitable grammar rules and vocabulary, or texts from the TL literature are used. The learners translate a reading passage either from TL to NL or NL to TL. The translation can be oral, written or both. The teacher then draws up vocabulary and grammatical structures from the passage for subsequent lessons. Due to its great advantages, it has been described as a very effective method of teaching the grammar of TL as well as reading in TL; and it has been sustained till date (Sakai, 2012; Larsen-Freeman, 2008; Schmitt & Celce-Murcia, 2010).

One of the criticisms against GTM's translation technique in modern times is that "students learning by GTM usually do not have enough time to internalize what they study because the method focuses too much on translating a text, it does little to help students acquire the language" (Kanatani, 2004, in Sakai, 2012: 12). In teaching the Elementary Igbo course, we tried to overcome this shortcoming by turning translation exercises into meaningful tasks, and using code mixing as a form of translation technique. This is what Trinder (2012, p. 186) called mother tongue mirroring, "a technique of literal translation or, word-for-word translation for pedagogical purposes".

In the case under study, mother tongue has a different meaning because many of the learners concerned have English as their L₁, while Igbo, the mother tongue of 98% of them, is the L₂ of over 33%. In the classroom, several strategies were adopted. For instance, if a student said something in English, the student was encouraged to supply the Igbo translation or gloss. Where difficulties were experienced in using Igbo, English was used or the more proficient speakers of Igbo among the students came to the rescue.

Importance of GTM in Developing Reading Skill

Traditionally, in GTM, reading and writing are the primary skills emphasised; with little attention to speaking and listening; and least attention to pronunciation. In helping the learners of this Elementary Igbo to read in Igbo, translation and some other techniques in the reading method of language teaching were used, as would be illustrated shortly.

The Reading Method

The reading method is described as a programme of foreign language teaching that emphasises comprehension (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). Activities in a reading method start by selecting and using short passages with simple vocabulary and structures in introducing the TL; translating the passages into the learners' L₁; and analysing the grammar of TL. All these are geared towards teaching or fostering learners' comprehension of TL. Apart from giving little attention to grammatical analysis, the techniques were used along others in teaching reading in the Elementary Igbo course. The method corresponds with the first stage of reading comprehension strategies in which learners read a passage and answer some questions based on how they understand the information in the passage. To enhance the Elementary Igbo course in terms of the students' communication abilities, the important tenets of the communicative language teaching (CLT) incorporated in the course are discussed below.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

CLT present the pedagogical position that classrooms should supply a rich source of meaning-based and understandable language exposure to the learners. CLT techniques used include authentic materials, scrambled game, project involving fieldwork and report writing. These CLT techniques are in agreement with certain aspects of task-based language teaching (TBLT). The technique of scrambled game engaged learners in carrying out some interesting tasks in the translation exercises. Students were asked ahead of time to read (or have some colleagues read and translate to them) one of their Basic Igbo texts in preparation for the class activities. Translation tasks, as seen below, were used to exemplify Prabhu's (1987), in Larsen-Freeman, (2008) approach which Long and Crookes (1993), in Larsen-Freeman, (2008) identified as procedural.

Methodology

Research Design

The study was designed to use the eclectic approach to teach an Elementary Igbo course, and particularly to examine the learners' reading comprehension ability in Igbo at the end of the second semester, as a follow-up to the Igbo course in the first semester.

Population of the Study and Sampling

A total population of ninety-three (93) first year regular undergraduate students of a department were all conveniently selected in the second semester, 2014/2015 academic session.

Procedure

This study is a small-scale or class-specific study by three researchers, one of whom taught the course. They aimed at investigating the communication abilities of the learners of a departmental-based Elementary Igbo elective course. The study went on from the beginning to the end of the course in the second semester, 2014/2015 session.

The descriptive research method is adopted. It is a type of research in which data are collected, among other methods, through questionnaires, interviews and/or observations, to answer questions relating to the current status of the subject(s) of the study. This study collected information through field notes, observations of and interactions with the subjects, and an end of semester examination. The data were analysed descriptively in order to ascertain the current status of the learners, especially their reading and comprehension abilities in Igbo.

Data Collection

Sampling Technique

Non-probability sampling technique was used because the participants belonged to the same class and were selected non-randomly to derive a convenient sample of the population since they were taught by one of the researchers. The researchers decided to examine the students based on the assumption that since they were taught the Basic Igbo I and Elementary Igbo I courses in the first semester, they would be able to exhibit appreciable communication abilities in Igbo. The study also revealed to the researchers the current or real status of the students and the level of effectiveness of the existing course content, so as to revise it where necessary, as well as the teaching approaches and strategies that would lead to greater achievements in learning Igbo.

Data Collection Tool

Field notes, lesson observations and classroom interactions, with one of the researchers as the teacher, were used. Lesson observations and classroom interactions were used

so as to gain insight and practical ideas about the students' level of Igbo language abilities, their classroom behaviours towards learning and use of Igbo and using Igbo to learn Igbo. An audio recording of one lesson period was made to record the classroom activities. But the analysis is not used in this study.

Activities

Task 1: Stage 1: Home work: Students were asked to read Ogbuagu, Udemmadu, na Anedo (2012, pp. 1-15), a source material used in the Igbo GS programme, in preparation for class activities.

Stage 2. A short Igbo text (source text: ST) of not more than five sentences was drawn from Ogbuagu, Udemmadu, na Anedo (2012, pp. 1-15) to form Text 1.

Stage 3: The researchers adopted a technique they termed "sentence carving" and carved out short sentences from portions of the sentences from the prescribed Igbo source text. These carved out sentences (Text 1) were not given or shown to the students at this stage.

Stage 4: The sentence carvings (Text 1) were translated into English on their merit/face value, that is literally, and not necessarily retaining their full meaning in the original Igbo or ST. They formed an English text (Text 2).

Stage 5: The English sentences (Text 2) were scrambled and numbered and formed Text 3.

Stage 6: The students engaged in identifying, from Text 1, the exact Igbo equivalents of Text 3; and copying them out to form Text 4 (Igbo), retaining the same numbers in Text 3.

Stage 7: The students then unscrambled, i.e., rearranged the Igbo sentences in Text 4 according to their correct positions in Text 1. This formed Text 5.

Stage 8: Next, the students unscrambled the English sentences in Text 2 to align with their Igbo equivalents in Text 1. This formed Text 6.

Stage 9: Finally, the students translated the remaining portions of Text 1 based on merit or face value.

Classroom Observation of Learners' Behaviours

At first contact the students were given the modified course outline, a reference list, and encouragement to access any material written in Igbo and/or English on the available topics. Despite these facts, the students persistently requested for the old course outline and materials which they were suspected to have collected from their predecessors. They wanted to compare these with the lecturer's own copy, which they persistently requested for. On seeing that there was no head way, some of the bolder

students came with their flash drives, requesting a softcopy from the teacher/researcher's own material in the laptop. Of course, all these were in opposition to the purpose of the eclectic approach, and were not heeded to. It was obvious that they simply wanted to be sure that it was the usual thing. They would have been satisfied to sit at home to memorise the ready-made materials as in the grammar translation method they were used to. This would obviously have encouraged them to boycott lectures and distort their learning and communication abilities; and ultimately, the aim of the exercise.

Teaching Context

As a form of an emergent research design approach (Dörnyei, 2007; in Small, 2012), the course outline of an existing course was adjusted before the course started and the aims and language teaching methods refined after the diagnostic test and some classroom interactions. Rather than being satisfied with using English to explain the Igbo grammatical patterns or points the way they were presented in the course outline, the researchers, code mixing in Igbo and English, took this phase of the teaching process as the pedestal or foundation on which the communicative approaches was laid. The students were assigned different tasks to facilitate their use of Igbo in a number of contexts and for different purposes. In the long run, their interest was stimulated as the researchers maintained the new plan and position. The students settled down and regular absentees from lectures started attending.

The approach is adopted because a good number of the students have similar characteristics with the group Dudley-Evans (2005, p. 538) called false beginners, defined as "people who have had some experience of the foreign language (Igbo L₂ in this case), and usually some tuition, but who, for one reason or another, have not progressed beyond elementary level, or have forgotten what they had learned". Though the Elementary Igbo course is not a proficiency course, the learners needed to read and understand Igbo examples of structural or grammatical points taught in the class or written in their reference materials. These they usually memorise for purposes of passing examinations, which is a far cry from the aim of the researchers.

Result Analysis

The skeletal background information of the students showed that there were 20 males and 77 females, totalling 97 students on the roll. Four students (2 males and 2 females) did not attend the final examination which result is being discussed. As shown in Table 1, the total population of the first-year students that participated in the second semester examination was 93, 18 males (19.35%) and 75 females (80.65%). Their place of origin in Table 2 shows that 91 (97.85%) students are Igbo, while 2 (2.15%) are non-Igbo students. Their mini language background (Table 3) shows that 60 members (64.52%) of the population have an achievement certificate in Igbo (SSCE or NECO) while the rest 33 students (35.48%) had no contact with Igbo. Of this number only two students

(2.15%) are non Igbo and had no prior exposure to Igbo. Thus, the population of English dominant Igbo students (Table 4), without any knowledge of Igbo is quite amazing, 31 (33.33%) students.

Students' Background Information

Table 1. Students' Gender

Gender	Male	Female	Total
Population	18	75	93
Percentage	19.35	80.65	100

Table 2. Students' Place of Origin

Origin	Igbo	Non Igbo	Total
Population	91	2	93
Percentage	97.85	2.15	100

Table 3. Students' Achievement Level in Igbo

Achievement	Igbo in SSC	No Igbo in SSC	Total
Population	60	33	93
Percentage	64.52	35.48	100

Table 4. Students' Place of Origin and Achievement Level in Igbo

Origin and Achievement	Igbo, Igbo in SSC	Igbo, No Igbo in SSC	Non Igbo, Igbo in SSC	Non Igbo, No Igbo in SSC	Total
Population	60	31	Nil	2	93
Percentage	64.52	33.33	Nil	2.15	100

Table 5. Frequency Counts of 2nd Semester, 2014/15 Examination Result Scores

Range of Exam Score	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70- 74	Total
Frequency Count	08	06	13	13	18	13	22	93
Percentage (%)	8.6	6.4	14	14	19.3	14	23.7	100

For the purposes of this analysis, and as shown by the diagnostic test, that a greater percentage (78%) of the class has oral ability, 50% was taken as the minimum pass for the end of the second semester examination. A look at Table 5 shows that this measure yields a total percentage pass of approximately 85% (79 students). This is obvious because of the high rate (64.52%) of those with achievement certificate in Igbo (*cf.* Table 4). Hence, a total of 22 students (23.7%) scored 70% and above (Grade A). Interestingly, only 15% (14) of the students scored below the 50% minimum pass level set for this analysis. It is worthy of note that 20.43% (19 students) of this 85% are among the students who have just encountered Igbo for the first time in UNIZIK (*cf.* Table 4). There is a remarkable improvement of over 13% in the students' performance when compared with the diagnostic test result. The communication abilities of the students improved by 13% within the short time frame of one semester. This gain is an indication of the relevance of eclecticism for greater effect in the Igbo language classroom.

We noted that at the beginning of the learning process, the students, who are 97.85% Igbo, exhibited negative attitude towards Igbo in many ways, like, being very sceptical about the 50% Igbo medium. Surprisingly, on investigation, 64.52% of them were found to possess achievement certificate(s) in Igbo, having taken it at the Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) and/or other examinations. Of the 35.48% who were never exposed to Igbo at the lower levels of education, only two students (2.15%) are non Igbo: from Cross-River and Bayelsa States. However, with motivation, students became interested in Igbo. Another positive indication is that many non-Igbo speakers were very enthusiastic about learning Igbo and improved in their oral ability. A typical example is the student from Cross Rivers State who became receptive.

It is important to note that only the result of the final examination is used in this analysis. The results of other activities carried out, for instance, that of a project (field work), have not come into play. Also, the specific analyses of the classroom observations, language teaching strategies and techniques were excluded for want of space. Moreover, extensive analyses would be in the nature of a cross-sectional analysis or triangulation of results, as well as subjecting the results to more sophisticated statistical analyses to substantiate the claims further.

Implications

The analysis implied that the initial sceptics are all Igbo people; thus exposing their negative bias towards Igbo. The reason is that many are English dominant/L₁. However, resoluteness yielded positive results that revealed the need to review the existing course content and the teaching and learning patterns of this important Igbo language course. No Igbo course should be termed a non-proficiency course. There is need to bring in the learner-centered approaches, like CLT, TBLT and eclecticism into the teaching of all Igbo language courses to consolidate all the Igbo L₂ programmes in the SE and

beyond, enhance learners' communication abilities and develop the Igbo language optimally. The numerous advantages cannot be over emphasized. Hence, whatever motivates the learners should be used to promote their learning. No matter the level of the Igbo language course or programme offered to students, it should be geared towards proficiency to specificity.

This view suggested the need for training and retraining of lecturers in different departments, particularly those who are involved in teaching the Igbo courses. Furthermore, there should be a change towards resourcefulness and collaborative or team-teaching (Eme, 2011 and 2015) geared towards delivering the content of the core departmental, academic and professional courses in Igbo.

The learners of such an Elementary Igbo course got motivated and became involved in their own learning of Igbo. This implies the adoption of learner-centeredness and needs analysis (NA). The process revealed to them that personal factors, like self-realisation and identity are seriously considered. For instance, the individual's overall knowledge and use of Igbo, not just the structural knowledge, created a new awareness and offered them the opportunity to progress towards their different levels of proficiency (*cf.* Tzotzou, 2014), though the course is not for proficiency.

Recommendations/Areas for Further Research

The researchers recommended change in orientation and approach that will bring about curriculum review; adoption of current language teaching and learning methodologies and the training and retraining of manpower. There should be no restraining or constraining in teaching Igbo to any class of learners. Rather than dissuading lecturers and others from moving towards the positive direction, they should be motivated by positive governmental and organizational support. A full needs analysis is also recommended.

Elementary Igbo, as a language course, can be examined in a number of ways to check the effectiveness of the course in line with its traditional point of view. The implementation of the different methods and techniques under the formalist approach can be investigated in full. A full needs analysis should be done to fully document the different views of stakeholders about the course. Ultimately, a whole lot of activities can be adopted and investigated if the course were to be a proficiency course. There is need for deliberate teaching and learning of the Igbo vocabulary, with relevant areas of further research like the learning burden, word form, meaning and use, involvement load, and so on (Nation, 2010). The learners' level of bias and/or attitude in general for Igbo can also be investigated.

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