

**Attitude of Non-Igbo Speakers to the Study of Igbo
Language: A Case Study of School of General Studies,
University of Nigeria Nsukka**

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Abstract

The study is on attitude of non-Igbo speakers to the study of Igbo language. Language is so important in teaching and learning such that the Nigerian Government appreciates it as a means of promoting social interaction and national cohesion. The Igbo language is one of the three major Nigerian languages meant to be studied in schools in Nigeria; the others are Hausa and Yoruba languages. This implies that Igbo language occupies a very important linguistic position in Nigeria, hence; the Federal government approval of it. The study investigates some attitudes or behaviour showcased by non-Igbo speakers towards the study of Igbo language. The

objectives of this study therefore are to find out the causes and effects of non-Igbo speakers' attitude towards its study. The scope of the study will cover the non-Igbo students in GS 208 class of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The theoretical study adopted for this study is Tolman cognitive learning theory. The theory emphasis that individuals not only respond to stimuli but also act on belief, thought, attitude, feelings and strive towards goals. Descriptive survey method with a four-point Likert scale designed questionnaire was used to elicit information used for the study. A total population of one hundred out of two hundred and thirty-six non-Igbo speaking students in various departments offering GS 208 at the University of Nigeria Nsukka campus was used for the study. The study adopted random sampling technique in obtaining a representative sample of the population for the study. Descriptive statistics was employed to analyze the data that was collected for the study. Findings revealed among other things that; some Igbo lecturers do not have the necessary equipment needed to motivate the students and this invariably makes the teaching too abstract for easy assimilation. Again, a lot of these students see the study as an academic venture that cannot take them beyond the University environment. The researcher recommends that; the non-Igbo learners' need to be equipped and motivated for effective communication. Finally, simplification of teaching approach should be made to enhance students' interest towards learning.

Keywords: Attitude, Learning, Language and Igbo Language

Introduction

Communication cannot take place without language. Language is an arbitrary code which people use to communicate. It is a set of convention shared by a speech

community. Language consists of dialects. For instance, we have among others Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba, and Tiv languages. They are languages but there are dialects that make them up. According to Agha (2006), language is the ability to acquire and use complex system of communication, particularly the human ability to do so, and a language is any specific example of such a system. Language is so important in teaching and learning. Ohaegbu (2010) further states that language is a powerful means of verbal transmission of ideas from the speaker to the receiver. It is an organized system which means that its elements are well organized and integrated. Language is one of man's most remarkable attributes. It is a vehicle for communication and learning.

Abekah (2009) asserts that any development that takes place in any nation is executed with language, adding that, without the tool of language teachers, no nation can experience any kind of development. According to him, teachers generally train the manpower for their nations but language teachers arm students with the tool of communication and a business. Having acquired a language, the individual enters the university and other institutions to read all kinds of academic disciplines and begin to contribute their quota to national development. The world is an embodiment of languages, and each of these languages is being used to identify one language group or race. The importance of Igbo language in achieving Igbo identity cannot be over emphasized (Igbokwe 2013). Language according to Obayi (2018), is not something to be toiled with. People from every race are known from the language they speak. In support of the above, Oyelami(2008) cited in Obayi(2018) observed that there are many languages in the world; some are termed major and others minor depending on the number of

speakers. This implies that every language is important and unique and should be guided jealously.

The Igbo language is one of the official languages in Nigeria and also one of the three major Nigerian languages which are to be used in teaching and learning and for social interaction, while the others include Hausa and Yoruba languages respectively. It is spoken in South-Eastern states like; Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo as well as some part of Delta and Rivers state. The standard written form of Igbo is based on Owerri and Umuahia dialects. (Umo 2013). In addition, Onukawa (2014) opines that it is quite disheartening that most native speakers of Igbo language are illiterates as it relates to the reading and writing of Igbo language. They speak English language and other languages of their choice forgetting that he who lost his language has automatically lost his identity. This implies that Igbo language occupies a very important linguistic position in Nigeria hence, the Federal government approval of it. The study of Igbo language in our various schools in Nigeria has become a common issue of discussion in the society.

The teaching of Igbo language in schools will help in giving our children sense of belonging. It will help them to understand that apart from the official language (English Language) which they study in school, their mother tongue is also very important because one's indigenous language is his or her identity, it is obvious that in every society there must be non-indigenes. They attend the same school with the indigenes. The study of indigenous language (Igbo) has invariably developed phobia for non-Igbo speakers especially as it concerns the GSP208 course in the school of general studies of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. They see the study of indigenous language of which Igbo language is one of them as abstract teaching, thereby, making them to pay less

attention to its study. Inasmuch as the westerners brought English language to us and we were able to learn, then, read and write with it, it is then possible for non-Igbo speakers to learn the language without stress but with kin interest. The study of students' attitude towards the study of Igbo language will create an in-depth consciousness in students and teachers of the university especially those in the school of General Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. It will create awareness to the indigenes in the society of the importance of their mother tongue.

Statement of the Problem

Language is a very important tool with specific structure essential for communication purposes. This implies that every language has structure, that is, the way it is written and spoken. Every society has their own indigenous language which is the mark of their cultural identity. It is no longer news that reading and writing with indigenous language of which Igbo language is inclusive, is one major issue facing our society. Interaction between two or more persons with the use of Igbo language which is one of the indigenous languages, is a complex issue. The present study will look into some certain determinant factors like unseriousness and nonchalant attitudes/behaviours of the learners which are seen to be some of the problem facing the speaking and writing of Igbo language, especially as it relates to the non-Igbo speakers. Most of these students see the Igbo studies as that which cannot take them beyond the walls of the university hence, they pay little or no attention to it.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of the study is to examine the attitude of non-Igbo speakers to the study of Igbo language in GSP208

class, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Specifically, the purpose of the study include to:

- ascertain the causes of non-Igbo speakers' attitude towards the study of Igbo language.
- identify the effects of this attitudes to the study.

Research Questions

- What are the causes of the non-Igbo students' attitude towards its study?
- To what extent has it affected the students?

Research Hypotheses

Two null hypotheses were formulated to guide this study and was tested at 0.05 probability level.

Ho1: There is no significant difference in ratings of attitudes of indigenes and non-indigenes towards the study of Igbo language.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in rating of the effects of non-Igbo attitudes towards its study.

Conceptual Clarifications

Concept of Attitude

Attitude is a psychological construct or an emotional entity that identifies a person. An attitude can be positive or negative evaluation of a person. According to Eagly and Chaiken (1998: 273) "... attitude is a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some

degree of favour or disfavour.” It is conveniently conceptualized either as enduring internal affective or evaluative predispositions which have a casual influence on behaviour (Mansur, M. A. Tan, K.H, & Lee, S. L. 1984). It is a predisposition or a tendency to respond positively or negatively towards a certain idea. Again Strauss (1996: 180) opines that “... an attitude is a process of individual consciousness which determines real or possible activity of the individual in the social world.” It is the social action of the individual that reflects his attitude-enduring systems of positive or negative evaluation emotional feelings, pro or action tendencies with respect to social objects.

Concept of Learning

Learning is conceptualized in various ways by different authors. It is seen as a process by which an activity originates or is changed through reacting to all encountered situations, provided that the characteristics of the change in activity cannot be explained on the basis of nature, response tendencies, maturation or temporary state of the organism (Hilgard, 1962). Several other authors and researchers such as Mbanugo (2006) and Onwuekwe (2014) see learning generally as a process which causes a change in behaviour of an individual as a result of experience from interaction between the individual (the learner) and the environment. Learning can be positive or negative. Socially acceptable learning behaviour could be termed positive learning while socially unacceptable learning behaviour could be termed negative learning. Learning behaviour can therefore produce desirable or undesirable consequences. For instance, experienced/intelligent member of a society may through learning, come out with an adventure that will bring progress and stability to the society. This kind of knowledge could be

considered as positive development and worthwhile, whereas a gang of robbers may be busy transmitting some information that will lead to killing or destroying some installation within the community. Based on societal standards, this type of knowledge is negative and anti-society. Learning involves understanding, remembering, motivation, reinforcement, creativity and application. Before learning can take place,

... there must be an individual who is willing and ready to learn (learners) in addition certain mechanisms such as the teacher, the environment (classroom) and materials (equipment) must be put in place for the learning to meet its goal objectives (Udensi, 2015: 12).

Concept of Language

Language is an arbitrary code which people use to communicate. According to Ezema (2007), language is the vehicle of communication and expression which is used in all interactional situations. These interactional situations include education, commerce, politics, and culture. Obanya (1989:27) in Ezema (2007) believes that "... it is man's most important gift." He further observes that language is a good instrument for thought and creativity. Similarly, Bodi (1995:17) assert that "... language is a means of identification and self-identification of individual and social system." Yusuf (2012) on the other hand, sees language as a symbol system based on pure or arbitrary conventions... infinitely extendable. From all indications, language is very important to man, this is because without language, communication cannot take place and without communication, there will be no development in society and country at large.

Finally, Hammond (1975) in (Bewaji, 2002) crowns it all by saying that language is central to the sustenance of a group of people for it is the vehicle through which other constituents of cultures are communicated. It is the primary vehicle through which human culture is acquired, shared and transmitted. Language is central to the interactive process which can bring about development in the society.

Theoretical Framework

Tolman Cognitive Learning Theory

Cognitive Learning Theory is a broad theory that explains thinking and differing mental processes and how they are influenced by internal and external factors in order to produce learning in individuals. Tolman (1886-1959) has contributed significantly to the Cognitive Learning Theory. According to him, individuals not only respond to stimuli but also act on beliefs, thoughts, attitudes, feelings and strive towards goals. In other words, an individual creates a cognitive map in his mind, i.e., an image of the external environment, preserves and organises information gathered, as a result of the consequences of events encountered during the learning process. Thus, the organism learns about the event and objects on the basis of a meaning assigned to stimuli. Tolman was the first behaviourist who challenged the conditional theory on the belief that stimulus-response theory is unacceptable, as reinforcement was not necessary for the learning to happen and asserted that behaviour was mainly cognitive. He believed that the environment offers several experiences or cues which are used to develop the mental image i.e., cognitive map. Thus, cognitive learning theory is based on the cognitive model of human behaviour, i.e., it emphasizes on the free will and positive aspects of human behaviour. Cognition refers to the individual's thoughts, feelings, ideas, knowledge and understanding about himself

and the environment. Thus, an organism applies this cognition in learning which results in not merely the response to a stimulus, but the application of internal image of the external environment, so as to accomplish the goal.

Empirical Studies

Okediadi (2011) undertook a study on literacy in the mother tongue: policy versus preference. The aim of the study was to find out if pre-primary and early levels of education in the country are using the mother tongue or the language of the immediate environment as stipulated in the government policy. The data collected shows that most of the private schools teach all the subjects in English language, none of them use either the mother tongue (Igbo) or admixture of English and Igbo for teaching purposes. It is important to note that 5 out of the 10 schools used for the study do not even teach Igbo language at all not even as a subject. The claim they do not have competent teachers to teach the subject. The result of the study showed that all the teachers in private schools would prefer to teach their pupils in English language. They did subscribe to the NPE provision at all. This study is very important to the present study because it tries to identify some causes of students' negative attitude to the study of Igbo language.

Adesoye (nd) undertook a study on students' attitude and proficiency in Yoruba language in Nigerian secondary school. The aim of the study was to highlight the influence of sociolinguistics, socio-psychological, instructive cognitive factors and socio-educational policies on the Yoruba language attitude. This case study revealed that the home and school have a strong influence on the students' language attitude and their negative attitude towards the Yoruba language subject. The findings reveal that students' attitude might have some degree of influence on their proficiency in the Yoruba language. The result obtained from the analysis highlights the

recommendation of the concept of content and language integrated learning (CLIL) (Coyle 2006), in teaching and learning the Yoruba language. The study will be of importance to this study in that one would like to know if there would be some aspect of similarities in the two studies since both are dealing with two different indigenous languages.

Methodology

The design for the study was descriptive survey method. According to Nworgu (2015), descriptive survey research method studies both large and small population by selecting and studying a sample chosen from the population to discover the relative incidence distribution and inter-relationships of sociological and psychological variable that make up the population. The research design was considered appropriate for the study because the researchers are interested in investigating the attitudes on non-Igbo speakers to the study of Igbo language in GSP208 class at University of Nigeria Nsukka campus. The choice of the study area is because GSP class is general for students of particular set irrespective of their department of faculty. Among them are the non-Igbo students needed for the study. The total population of 236 non-Igbo speaking students in various departments offering GSP208 at University of Nigeria, Nsukka campus was used for the study. A total of 100 non-Igbo speaking students were randomly sampled for the study. Descriptive statistics was employed to analyze the data that

Item Statement				Std. Devi ation	Remarks
	Gender	N	Mean		
item1. There are inadequate materials in Igbo language	Male	43	2.20	1.26	Disagree
	Female	54	1.79	.80	Disagree
item2. The teaching of Igbo language to	Male	43	2.18	1.23	Disagree

non-Igbo students is not proper	Female	54	1.87	.95	Disagree
item3. The structure of Igbo language is confusing	Male	43	2.11	1.15	Disagree
	Female	54	2.81	.84	Agree
item4. Igbo language speakers equally despise their language	Male	43	2.73	1.18	Agree
	Female	54	1.83	.88	Disagree
item5. The teachers are making learning of Igbo language so difficult for students	Male	43	2.16	1.21	Disagree
	Female	54	1.85	.91	Disagree
item6. Practicing to read and write Igbo language is a tedious activity for us	Male	43	3.27	1.11	Agree
	Female	54	3.59	.78	Agree
item7. Am learning the language just to pass my examination	Male	43	2.20	1.26	Disagree
	Female	54	1.83	.90	Disagree
item8. The language cannot take me to anywhere	Male	43	3.32	.60	Agree
	Female	54	3.59	.49	Agree
item9. Igbo language is gaining ground globally	Male	43	3.41	.49	Agree
	Female	54	3.40	.49	Agree
item10. Assignments are not given in Igbo language to extend learning	Male	43	2.11	1.15	Disagree
	Female	54	1.85	.91	Disagree
Overall Mean	Male	43	2.61	.79	Agree
	Female	54	2.54	.56	Agree

was collected for the study.

Twenty-item questionnaire with two clusters were developed by the researchers. The questionnaire titled “Attitude of non-Igbo speakers to the study of Igbo language” (ANISSOIL) was used in collecting data for the study. The questionnaire was structured on a four-point rating scale with the response options of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). Numerical values of 4, 3, 2 and 1 were assigned to the response options in descending order. The instrument was validated by three experts, one from Measurement and Evaluation and two from Department of Linguistics; all from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Results

Research Question One: *What are the causes of the non-Igbo students’ attitude towards the study of Igbo language?*

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of the ratings of the male and female non-Igbo students on the causes of their attitude towards the study of Igbo Language. Table 1 shows that mean ratings of the male and female non-Igbo speaking students on the causes of their attitude towards the study of Igbo language. It shows that the mean ratings of the students on items 1, 2, 3, 5, 7 and 10 are less than the 2.50 bench mark mean, while their mean ratings on items 4, 6, 8 and 9 are more than the criterion mean of 2.50. This implies that students agreed to the statements of items 4, 6, 8 and 9 as the causes of their attitude towards the study of Igbo language. However, the overall mean ratings of 2.61 and 2.54 for the male and female non-Igbo students indicate that the male students had higher mean rating than the female.

Ho₁: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female non-Igbo students on the causes of their attitude towards the study of Igbo language.

Table 2: t-test analysis of the difference in the mean ratings of male and female non-Igbo students on causes of their attitude towards the study of Igbo language

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	t	Sig
Male	43	2.51	.79	95	1.247	.216
Female	54	2.34	.56			

Table 2 shows that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female non-Igbo students on the causes of their attitude towards the study of Igbo language, $t(95) = 1.247$, $p = .216$. Thus, the null hypothesis is not rejected since the probability value of 0.978 is greater than the 0.05 level of significance.

Research Question Two: To what extent has the attitude of non-Igbo students affected their study of Igbo language?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of the ratings of the male and female non-Igbo students on the extent to which their attitude has affected their study of Igbo language

Item Statement	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remarks
item11. Learning of Igbo language made me to integrate well in the community where I leave	Male	43	3.53	.73	VHE
	Female	54	3.61	.49	VHE
item12. Understanding Igbo language made it easier for me to interact with every Igbo persons, hence they are more in number	Male	43	2.18	1.23	LE
	Female	54	1.83	.88	LE
item13. I can read and write in Igbo language	Male	43	2.09	1.15	LE
	Female	54	1.77	.83	LE
item14. The L2/non-Igbo class helped me in learning the language	Male	43	3.39	1.04	HE
	Female	54	3.53	.92	VHE
item15. I practice the reading and writing of Igbo language with ease	Male	43	3.60	.90	VHE
	Female	54	3.79	.52	VHE
item16. I do not fear anybody in the environment I am living hence I understand Igbo language	Male	43	3.67	.77	VHE
	Female	54	3.59	.71	VHE
item17. I enjoy the teaching of Igbo language	Male	43	3.41	1.07	HE
	Female	54	3.61	.81	VHE
item18. Learning of Igbo language has helped me to understand the Igbo culture	Male	43	3.58	.82	VHE
	Female	54	3.64	.67	VHE
item19. Learning of Igbo language has made the buying of things easier for me	Male	43	3.44	.54	VHE
	Female	54	3.66	.51	VHE
item20. I feel at home whenever I stay with Igbo people	Male	43	3.69	.46	VHE
	Female	54	3.53	.50	VHE
Overall Mean	Male	43	3.26	.35	HE
	Female	54	3.23	.25	HE

Table 3 shows the mean ratings of male and female non-Igbo students on the extent to which their attitude has affected their study of Igbo language. The analysis shows that the overall mean ratings of both male and female non-Igbo students are 3.26 and 3.23 respectively, indicating that their attitude

towards Igbo language to a high extent affect their study of the language.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female non-Igbo students on the extent to which their attitude has affected their study of Igbo language.

Table 4: t-test analysis of the difference in the mean ratings of male and female non-Igbo students on the extent to which their attitude has affected their study of Igbo language

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	T	Sig
Male	43	3.26	.35	95	.027	.978
Female	54	3.26	.25			

Table 4 shows that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female non-Igbo students on the extent to which their attitude has affected their study of Igbo language, $t(95) = .027$, $p = .978$. Thus, the null hypothesis is not rejected since the probability value of 0.978 is greater than the 0.05 level of significance.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that respondents agreed that negative attitude of non-Igbo students to its study is the reason they see Igbo language as a difficult course to study, as evidenced by the fact that 4 items on the causes of the non-Igbo attitude scored means higher than the criterion mean of 2.50. The finding is in line with Adesoya (nd) who opines that students' attitude to the study of second language might have some degree of influence on their proficiency in the language. With regards to the effect of their attitude to the Igbo study, the findings equally revealed that the overall mean ratings of both male and female non-Igbo students are 3.26 and 3.23 respectively, indicating that their attitude towards

Igbo language to a high extent, affect their study of the language. This agrees with Tolman cognitive learning theory which emphasis that individuals not only respond to stimuli but also act on belief, thought, attitude, feeling and strive towards goals.

The findings on the null hypotheses revealed that for null hypothesis one on the causes of male and female non-Igbo students' attitude to its study. The findings indicate that there was no significant difference between the respondents with regards to the causes of non-Igbo students' attitude to its study. The result showed among other things that attitude of non-Igbo students affects them negatively towards its study. The finding on hypothesis two shows that there was no significant difference between the respondents with regards to the effect of non-Igbo students' attitude to its study. The result shows that the non-Igbo students' attitude towards its study affects them seriously in their study of the language.

Conclusion

The attitude of non-indigenes to second language study can be identified through their level of concentration, commitment and participation in the study. The study revealed among other things that unseriousness, tedious activity, attitude of language teachers and lack of instructional materials were challenges to non-Igbo students towards the study of Igbo language. From the findings of the study, it can be concluded that a lot of these students see the study as an academic venture that cannot take them beyond the university environment. Again, some Igbo lecturers do not have the necessary equipment needed to motivate the students and this invariably makes the teaching to be abstract for them.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers made the following recommendations:

There is need for simplification of teaching approach to enhance students' interest towards learning.

The non-Igbo learners' need to be equipped and motivated for effective communication.

Extra time should be given to non-Igbo students' to enable them understand the language more.

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