

Igbo Animated Cartoon Videos as a veritable Instructional tool for Enhancing Upper Basic Students' Proficiency in Igbo in Lagos, Nigeria

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Abstract. This study examines the use of Igbo animated cartoon as a veritable instructional tool for enhancing upper basic students' proficiency in Igbo.

The study used a quasi-experimental research design which made use of pre-test/post-test method; a comparison was made between teacher didactic instructional based method of teaching and Igbo animated cartoon based instructional method of teaching. A hundred and eight (108) upper basic 7 Igbo students and four (4) Igbo language teachers from a Federal Government College in Lagos made up the population of the study. Two intact classes of 54 students each constituted the sample which was selected using purposeful sampling technique.

Two sets of questionnaires for both teachers and students and structured oral interview for teachers were also used in collecting data for the study. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics while the hypotheses were tested using the t-test statistics.

Result from the pre-test and post-test that tested the upper basic students on the four language skills indicated that the treatment group was highly motivated to learn Igbo language leading to a better proficiency in

Igbo language than the control group at the end of the study.

The study therefore, recommended that schools should encourage their teachers to make use of animated cartoon to motivate their students and make teaching/learning of Igbo language more interactive, more interesting and less difficult for students.

Keywords: animated cartoons, development, instructional tool, proficiency and Igbo language.

1. Introduction

Language is the hallmark of any group of people, community or society. It gives man the power to deal with changes in his environment, to organize his society, to face various emergencies in life and to control his environment. Language defines man's humanity and enables him to survive because it is the binding force for people within a particular geographical entity (Opara, 2004).

The acquisition and ability to use one's language is one of the most impressive pieces of learning that an individual achieves in life. The socio-economic development of a child depends essentially

on the development of his language competence because it is the major means of communication and interaction. Man's ability to speak his language makes him unique and it is a potent factor in his intellectual and cultural effulgence (Emenanjo, 2001; Maduekwe2007).

Language is a human second skin because it is a natural possession of every human being with which he expresses his hopes and ideas, articulates his thoughts and values, explores his experience and customs, and constructs his society and the laws that govern it (Ngubane, 2003). Language therefore, is a resource of the people that should be harnessed appropriately to benefit the people.

Excellent and effective teaching of language demands a host of devices, techniques and strategies by the teacher, not only to achieve cross critical outcomes, but because variety itself is necessary in life (VanWyk,2011). VanWyk's statement draws attention to the need to add variety which is lacking in the teaching/learning process of our indigenous Nigerian languages which Igbo language is one of them. The greatest deficiency in the teaching of Igbo language is the lack of vibrant methods and the lack of use of appropriate instructional tools. Recently, advancement in technology has lent a helping hand to the provision of experiences needed in language study. The scientific advancement in educational tools for language teaching has significantly contributed to the learners' progress in both foreign and local languages. The efforts to adopt these educational tools in our day to day classroom operations/processes have become very necessary in education (Franklin, 2008). The study of Igbo language therefore, requires continuous efforts to make it attractive, retain its place as one of the major languages in Nigeria and

to reduce the extinction treat by UNESCO 2009.

The use of songs, cartoons, films, videos, and many others, makes audio-visual tools very essential in the teaching and learning of Igbo language for the survival of Igbo language. Proper utilization of audio visual tools is effective in concretizing learning. Not only do they enable students to acquire the desired information more quickly, they also make information acquired more permanent (Lindon, 2006)

Of all the modern educational tools, cartoons seem to be one of the most useful and most important in the teaching/learning of languages. Cartoons attract students' attention, develop and motivate their interest in learning language skills and their acquisition of various types of language properties are quicker through the use of cartoons especially animated subtitled ones. (Taiwei, 2008; Abdolmajid & Firooz 2013)

Against this background of the accrued benefit of cartoons in language learning, this study therefore, proposes an alternative approach of teaching and learning Igbo language in a fun way that can motivate student's interest, enhance their proficiency in the Igbo language and also increase the varieties of techniques of teaching Igbo language by developing animated cartoons in Igbo language and assessing the effectiveness of the developed animated cartoons as a motivational learning tool as well as proficiency stimulator to enhance the proficiency of Igbo language students in upper basic schools.

2. Statement of Problem

The prevalent traditional didactic method of teaching Igbo language at the upper basic schools seems not to be yielding the desired

result in achieving proficiency in Igbo language. The teaching/learning of Igbo language in schools is saddled with lack of motivation, poor attitude, and low level of proficiency and poor performance of students in Igbo language both in internal and external examinations (Asogwa, 2014).

Urban migration of Igbo people and their subsequent adoption of English language or the language of the immediate communities where they reside have put further pressure on the decline of the use of Igbo language as a means of communication in the homes of people of Igbo origin residing outside Igbo land. This has led to non-acquisition of Igbo language by children of Igbo origin (Ohiri-Aniche, 2008). The implication of this according to UNESCO (2009) is the possible extinction of Igbo language as a major Nigerian language in the next four/five decades if urgent steps are not taken to awaken people's interest in the Igbo language.

Again, technology has offered a lot of modern instructional tools like cartoon in the teaching of languages for motivation and proficiency enhancement but Igbo language teachers are yet to explore the use of cartoons in the teaching of Igbo language at the upper basic level or any level at all. If the stakeholders of Igbo language continue to neglect the integration of these modern instructional tools that have been proven to possess strong motivational ability in the teaching of other languages, the extinction threat of Igbo language by UNESCO will cease to be rhetoric but a reality.

3. Theoretical framework of the study

This study is guided by three theories: - Jean Piaget's 1964 theory of constructivism which shifted learning from teacher centered

approach to learner centered approach. Constructivism believes that people construct new knowledge through previous knowledge and experiences. Learners therefore should partake in knowledge construction and not given knowledge through instruction. Learners should observe process and interpret knowledge and the feedback of information received will be creation of new knowledge. Applying this theory to the new one, the use of animated cartoon will make the learners create new knowledge easily by applying their previous knowledge to the new one.

Lev Vygotsky (2000) theory of interaction which emphasizes that language learning is determined by the degree of interaction a learner had with the speakers of the language. According to Lev Vygotsky, our sense about the world is made through our day to day interaction with others from birth. This theory applies to this new study in that the Igbo language teacher should do everything possible to use animated cartoons to create activities for classroom interaction so as to enhance the students' proficiency.

Myers and Wilson's (2000) theory of Situated Cognition point to the fact that learning occurs only when situated within a specific context. They believe that learning is a process of interaction between the learners within the community, the tool available within the specific situation and the physical world. The application of this theory to this new study is that the teacher must make sure that a lot of activities must be created in class to enhance the learners' proficiency.

4. Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

(i) To what extent will the use of IACV intervention package motivate the student's interest in the learning of Igbo language and culture?

(ii) What difference will the use of IACV make in the proficiency skills of students who received learning with IACV and those who did not received learning with IACV with regard to:

- Listening skill
- Speaking skill
- Reading skill
- Writing skill

5. Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested in the study:

(i) There will be no significant difference in the motivational level of upper basic students exposed to IACV and those not exposed to it in the learning of Igbo language and culture.

(ii) There will be no significant differential effect of IACV on the proficiency skills scores of students exposed to IACV intervention package and those not exposed to IACV with regards to their:

- Listening skill
- Speaking skill
- Reading skill
- Writing skill

6. Literature review

Literature relating to the study was reviewed along the following headings:-language and language learning, language proficiency, language and teaching methods, audio visual materials, concept of cartoons classification of cartoon, importance of cartoon in language learning, guidelines in the production of cartoon, guidelines in the use

of cartoon in the class room, empirical studies on the use of cartoon for effective teaching, Igbo animated cartoon and the motivation of students' interest and proficiency level of upper basic students in Igbo language in the four language skills.

7. Methodology

7.1 Research Design

The study adopted two research designs; the descriptive survey and the quasi experimental design. The descriptive survey was used for the baseline study which gives a critical overview of the phenomenon being studied by eliciting information from subjects through the use of questionnaires for students and the teachers and a structured interview for the teachers. The quasi experimental design method was used to evaluate the effectiveness of IACV in enhancing the proficiency skills of upper basic 7 students in Igbo through the use of pre test and post test. The design features two groups of subjects; the treatment group and the control group. In the treatment group, learning was facilitated with IACV intervention package while in the control group learning was facilitated without IACV package but with the traditional chalk and talk method.

7.2 Sample and sampling technique used for the Study

A total of one hundred and eight upper basic 7 students(108) comprising two intact classes of Igbo language class and four (4) Igbo language teachers in one of the Federal Colleges in Lagos was purposeful chosen for this study. All the participants were part of the survey design, while only the hundred and eight students were part of the quasi-experimental design. An intact class of fifty four students (54) was used for the control

group and another intact class of fifty four (54) students was used for the treatment group.

7.3 Research Instruments

Five research instruments were used to gather data for the study. They are:

- (i) Researcher’s Cartoon Instructional Teaching Questionnaire (RCITQ) for the Igbo language teachers.
- (ii) Researcher’s Cartoon Instructional Learning Questionnaire (RCILQ) for the Igbo language students. These questionnaires were used to obtain demographic data of both the teachers and the students, teacher’s teaching strategies and instructional materials; and also to ascertain the teacher’s and student’s perception of IACV as an adequate tool for motivation of student’s interest as well as proficiency enhancement.
- (iii) Structured interview for the Igbo language teachers was used to obtain their personal views on the adequacy and motivational level of IACV in the teaching of the Igbo Language.
- (iv) The researcher’s developed Igbo animated cartoon video (IACV) intervention package.
- (v) Pre-test and Post-test assessment tasks were also used to gather

information on students’ proficiency level in the Igbo language before and after treatment with IACV intervention package.

7.4 Data Analysis and Presentation of Results

The data collected from the study using various research instruments were coded and subjected to both descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. Data were analyzed along the lines of stated research questions and hypotheses. All the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The means and standard deviations for pre and post treatment assessment were measured and computed.

8. Analysis of Research hypotheses

Research Hypothesis

Ho₁: There will be no significant difference in the motivational level of upper basic 7 students exposed to IACV and those not exposed to it in the teaching of Igbo language and culture.

This hypothesis was tested with independent t-test at 0.05 level of significance after the mean(x) score and standard deviation of the students’ pre-test and post-test were computed to determine whether there was significant differential effect of IACV intervention package on the students’ motivation to learn the Igbo language.

Table 1: Independent t-test difference in the motivational level of students exposed to IACV and those not exposed.

| Variable | Experimental Grps | N | Mean | Sd | df | t-cal | t-crit |
|--------------------|-------------------|-----|------|------|-----|-------|--------|
| Motivational Level | Treatment | 54 | 2.25 | 1.42 | 106 | 2.26 | 1.96 |
| | Control | 54 | 2.11 | 1.39 | | | |
| | Total | 108 | 2.16 | 1.26 | | | |

Significant at 0.05, DF= 106

Table 1 shows a calculated t-value of 2.26 as the difference in the motivational level of students exposed to IACV and those not exposed to it. The calculated t-value of 2.26 is significant since it is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 given 106 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Since there is difference in the mean scores of the treatment group and the control group in favour of the treatment group, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant differential effect of IACV on the motivation of the students is rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted. This implies that there is a significant difference in the motivational level of students exposed to IACV in the teaching and learning of Igbo language and culture.

Research hypothesis 2:

H₀₂: There will be no significant differences in the Igbo language proficiency skills scores of upper basic 7 students exposed to IACV and those not exposed to it. .

To test this hypo thesis, the mean(x) score and the standard deviation of the student’s post-test proficiency skills scores were calculated and independent t-test statistical technique used to verify whether or not there is significant difference in the Igbo language proficiency skills scores of the upper basic 7 students exposed to IACV and those not exposed to it. The results of the analysis of the data are presented on table 2.

Table2: Independent t-test difference in the Igbo language proficiency skills of students exposed to IACV and those not to it in terms of; listening, speaking, reading and writing abilities.

| Variable | Experimental Grp | n | Mean | Sd | Df | t-cal | t-crit |
|-------------------|------------------|-----|------|------|-----|-------|--------|
| Listening Ability | Treatment | 54 | 2.48 | 1.36 | 106 | 2.24 | 1.96 |
| | Control | 54 | 2.37 | 1.27 | | | |
| | Total | 108 | 2.53 | 1.23 | | | |
| Speaking Ability | Treatment | 54 | 2.67 | 1.05 | 106 | 2.41 | 1.96 |
| | Control | 54 | 2.31 | 1.14 | | | |
| | Total | 108 | 2.52 | 1.10 | | | |
| Reading Ability | Treatment | 54 | 2.69 | 1.29 | 106 | 2.33 | 1.96 |
| | Control | 54 | 2.37 | 1.17 | | | |
| | Total | 108 | 2.53 | 1.23 | | | |
| Writing Ability | Treatment | 54 | 2.68 | 1.25 | 106 | 2.30 | 1.96 |
| | Control | 54 | 2.47 | 1.33 | | | |
| | Total | 108 | 2.52 | 1.26 | | | |

Significant at 0.05, df= 106

Evidence from Table 2 shows a calculated t-value of 2.24 as the difference in the listening ability scores of students exposed to IACV and those not exposed to it. The calculated t-value of 2.24 is significant since it is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 given 106 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that there is a significant difference in the listening ability of students exposed to IACV and those not exposed to it in the teaching and learning of Igbo Language and culture.

Comparing the speaking proficiency skill of the treatment group and control group, a calculated t-value of 2.41 was the difference in the speaking ability of students exposed to IACV and those not exposed to it. The calculated t-value of 2.41 is significance since it is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 given 106 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that there is a significance difference in the speaking ability of students exposed to IACV and those not exposed to it in the teaching and learning of Igbo language and culture.

The proficiency skills table shows a calculated t-value of 2.33 as the difference in the reading ability of students exposed to IACV and those not exposed to it. The calculated t-value of 2.33 is significant since it is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 given 106 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significant. This implies that there is a significant difference in the reading ability of students exposed to IACV and those not exposed to it in the teaching and learning of Igbo language and culture.

The table shows a calculated t-value of 2.30 as the difference in the writing ability of students exposed to IACV and those not exposed to it. The calculated t-value of 2.30 is significant since it is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 given 106 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significant. This implies that there is a significant difference in the writing ability of students exposed to IACV and those not exposed to it in the teaching and learning of Igbo language and culture.

9. Discussions of Findings

The result showed that teachers do not use modern instructional materials like interactive boards, films, radios, cartoons or games, songs and drama in teaching the

students Igbo language in class. They only use project method and this doesn't give room for proper interaction and proficiency development in Igbo language hence, they are not highly motivated. The lessons are boring, non motivating and less interactive. These make the students have poor attitude towards Igbo language and this affects their proficiency level in Igbo language. This finding asserts the findings of Egan, (1998), which says that learning is based on the abstraction process performed through experiences obtained from concrete materials. Animated cartoons consist of abstract visual symbols, attract and keep interest of the learners on the topic of study as they are abstract representatives of the reality. Apart from teaching events, facts and objects in a simple and explanatory manner, Cartoons presents visual learning possibility to students, provide observation and discussion possibility to them (Greenberg, 2002).

9.1 Igbo animated cartoon videos (IACV) Motivational ability

The students and the teacher showed great interest in teaching/learning the Igbo language with animated cartoons if they are made available to them. They all agreed on the motivational ability of animated cartoons in the teaching and learning of Igbo language and culture since they observed that the students were excited learning with animated cartoon videos. The cartoon videos wrapped their attention and made them focus on the lessons. This finding indicates that animated cartoon has motivating ability, which was obtained from responses from the teachers and students questionnaires and teachers' oral interview. This supports the findings of (Yaman, 2010; Dougherty, 2002; Chin & Teou 2009) on the motivational ability of cartoons.

9.2 Igbo animated cartoon videos enhancement of proficiency

There is a significant difference between the post-test mean scores of the treatment group and the control group ($f=87;1df=108;p<0.05$) in favour of the treatment group. Both the control and the treatment group performed poorly in their pre-test proficiency skills test. But at the end of the treatment group exposure to animated cartoon instructional learning, there was a significant difference between their post-test proficiency skills score from that of the control group that was not exposed to animated cartoon instructional learning. This shows the effectiveness of animated cartoon in improving students' proficiency in Igbo language. The use of animated cartoon in teaching Igbo language was fun for the students. The visual elements made the message clear and concretized; information put across to students were easily absorbed. This finding is in line with Yaman and Yildiz (2008) research which asserts that the language instruction carried out with the aid of materials based on visual elements enhances the students' success. It therefore shows that Igbo animated cartoon videos are efficient tool for enhancing proficiency in Igbo language.

From the transcription of teachers' structured oral interview, responses show that all the teachers agree to the motivational ability of cartoons and its power to impact positively on the students' proficiency level. However, some challenging issues like epileptic power supply in the country, financial implication of cartoon production were raised among other challenges.

10. Conclusion

The motivational ability and the effectiveness of cartoon to enhance learners' proficiency in Igbo have been established by

this research. The Igbo language teachers are therefore encouraged to use this veritable instructional tool in the teaching of Igbo language in order to make their Igbo language teaching interesting, interactive and effective. Stakeholders in Igbo and International organization that have interest in the promotion of mother tongue should step in and render financial support to the production of animated cartoons in our indigenous languages.

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