

THE ROLE OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF IGBO

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Abstract

Language serves as a major medium for the transmission of knowledge, culture, and identity, and its role in sustainable development cannot be overemphasized. This study examines the role of the Igbo language in promoting sustainable development in Nigeria. The study adopts Language Ecology Theory as its theoretical framework. Data were collected through oral interviews, focus group discussions, textbooks, and online sources. A qualitative research approach was employed to analyze the data using thematic and content analysis. The findings reveal that the Igbo language contributes significantly to sustainable development by serving as a medium for the transmission of indigenous knowledge, cultural values, and social mobilization. However, its full potential is constrained by its underutilization in formal education and government, as well as by negative attitudes towards indigenous languages. The study concludes that achieving sustainable development requires the active promotion and utilization of indigenous languages such as the Igbo language. It therefore recommends the integration of the Igbo language into the formal education system, government administration, the media, and digital platforms, supported by deliberate language policies and systematic documentation efforts.

Keywords: Indigenous language, Igbo language, sustainable development, culture, language ecology, language policy.

Introduction

Language is widely recognized as the primary medium through which culture is transmitted and sustained, while culture, in turn, shapes human communication, identity, and social life. Scholars in linguistics have consistently emphasized the marginalization of many Nigerian languages and the urgent need to preserve, develop, and empower them. Numerous studies have argued that Nigerian languages are increasingly endangered because of the hegemonic influence of dominant languages such as English and French. Consequently, every language requires a vibrant community of speakers to ensure its continued use and prevent underutilization or eventual endangerment.

The greatest problem that faced Igbo Language and is still facing it is the Igbo man's attitude to his Language. He wants to dress and express himself outside his Language and culture. Hardly, is there any Igbo man that can make a statement without code-switching. One thing is realistic, no matter how much European, Yoruba or Hausa, the Igbo man makes himself, he remains an Igbo man.

Furthermore, language can be seen as a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group co-operates. The definition above brings lucid function of systematic role based on opinion or impulse, language remains the most linguistic and fundamental means of communication. Every human language contains the vocal symbols which are voluntarily produced; every language makes a society or ethnic specific. This is because language is a social phenomenon, which accounts for social togetherness. Society gives the language the necessary dynamism, any language that has no society that speaks it will certainly die off.

More deceitful is the fact that almost every Igbo man believes that his language is not complete. But they refuse to know that every language is not solely complete but can serve whatever use depending on the users of the language, whatever developmental height the Igbo language must achieve depends solely on how much interest and committed the native speakers are to the language. This negative attitude of the Igbo native speakers to the Igbo language has been the bane of the language, the same problem stirs us at the face.

The main problem facing the political leaders of most nations of Africa is that of language policy, hence diglossia is extremely widespread. Thus, instead of trying to cope with hundreds of local languages dialects as instruments of government, education, industrialization, etc., Most African Nations have decided to assign all of them to their respective home, family and neighborhood domains and to utilize a single major European language (usually English or French) for all more formal occasion.

We wish to point out that this does not argue well for sustainable development for any nation. Henceforth, this paper is divided into the following sub-headings for proper elucidation: Government and its Language Policy, Multiplicity of Dialect, Attitude of Igbo people towards Mother Tongue, Religion and Media, Education, Language and sustainable development of Indigenous Languages etc. The paper points out some reasons for the under-utilization of language, these can be seemed in: mode of greeting, code-mixing, neglect of Igbo textbooks

and novels, decline in reading and writing in the Igbo language etc. The paper concludes by calling on the stakeholders to do something urgently to avoid hampering sustainable development.

Government and Language Policy

Government policy on language has powerful impact on the development of any language. This is because for the public to accept and update language policy should be through consultation with language scholars, linguists and the government need to be careful as to whatever they produce as language policy. Hence, whatever it holds and teaches surely reflects on the society which is the practical ground and assimilation venue of the proceeds of the academic institutes. This is therefore why a nation without a defined language policy is bent on experiencing a linguistic holocaust in such a world of technological and scientific advancement.

For the young children, all instructions should as far as possible be given in their vernacular. The free development of their minds must not be hampered by making the assimilation of ideas unnecessarily difficult by presenting them in a language not easily understood. The vernacular should be the medium of instruction where its use will aid in the thorough assimilation of other school subjects.

Mbanze (2007) states that: "... to worsen this situation was the thirty years Orthography controversy, which left many confused. The inability of the government to develop or evolve an Igbo language education policy, has left the students and their teachers in a confused state".

It is for this reason that in 1977, the Anambra state government approved the language policy, which states that Igbo should be compulsory in the first school leaving certificate (F.S.L.C). Weekly newspaper also reported that "Igbo language shall become 9 compulsory first school leaving certificate subjects with effect from June 1979". The same laws were also imitated by Imo state government, but the 1976 policy which Imo state government also adopted could not account for how the Igbo language could be furthered in the post primary institutions, nor did it make any room for such enterprising language academy like society for promotion Igbo language and culture (SPILC).

Also decided after the 1975 policy, the government, awakened under the pressure of concerned citizens, and in recognition of the national educational policy on mother tongue, which states that, in addition to appreciate the importance of language in the educational process and sustainable development, considers it to be in the interest of national unity that each child should be encouraged to learn one of the major language other than their mother tongues, which are usually Yoruba and Igbo.

Multiplicity of Dialect

As have been pointed out the varieties of Igbo dialects seriously affected the development of language. This is because every community claims her dialect to be superior to others. Afigbo (1982) states that, "Igbo language consists of many dialects; as such every community has a language to preserve at the expense of a pan-Igbo language". For example, there are Onitsha dialect, Owerri dialect, Abakaliki, Nsukka and Udi dialect and each claim to be superior to the other dialects. Afigbo also added that, "this obsession of preservation of fragmented dialect at the expense of pan-Igbo language, has made it impossible for a vocabulary enhancement". If the Igbos have left the confrontation over dialects and has used the zonal quest of preservation of individual dialects, for the updating of the languages itself, one would have seen that the divergent dialects would have been a good vocabulary enlarging sources and thus enhance sustainable development.

Research objectives

The objectives of the study are to;

1. Identify the domains in which Igbo is under-utilized in sustainable development.
2. Assess the challenges facing the use of Igbo in development.
3. Suggest ways for full utilization of Igbo language in sustainable development.

Research questions

The study will be guided by the following research questions.

1. In what domains is the Igbo language under-utilized in sustainable development?
2. What are the challenges militating against the use and promotion of Igbo in achieving sustainable development?
3. What strategies can be adopted for full utilization of Igbo for sustainable development?

Theoretical Framework

The study adopts Language ecology Theory as an appropriate theoretical framework. The theory was propounded by Einar Haugen in 1972. It is a theory in Linguistics that sees languages in the same way biologists see animals

and plants in their environment. The main focal point is that languages depend on the cultural, economic, social and political factors to survive. In other words, when the environment is healthy, the language survives, but when the environment is unhealthy, the language goes into decline or extinction. In the words of Hauen (1972) *'Language ecology is the study of interaction between any given language and its environment.*

Language Ecology argues that to save a language, you must save its environment; this includes the people who speak it, the domains of utilization and values placed upon it. As it pertains to the current study, Igbo thrives in homes, markets, music, and informal and cultural events. The dominant use of English, negative attitudes, poor documentation and lack of enough Igbo content online are unhealthy to the ecology. Since Igbo transmit indigenous knowledge and culture, full utilization of Igbo protects the Knowledge. Hence, protecting the ecology of Igbo means protecting and promoting sustainable development.

Attitude of Igbo People Towards their Mother Tongue

The inferiority complex affects Igbo in the use of their language. The Igbo people feel proud speaking other languages, such as English, Hausa, Yoruba and feel shy speaking their local language or dialects. The greatest problem facing Igbo languages, the Igbo man's attitude towards his language. He dresses and expresses himself outside his culture and language. Hardly, is there any Igbo man that can make a statement without code switching. One thing is bound to happen to any Igbo man no matter the length he goes in speaking English, Hausa or Yoruba, is that he remains an Igbo man down to his grave. Our attitude towards our language is the major factor to its under-utilization. It is almost anathema hearing one speaking Igbo in any of tertiary institutions. It is almost anathema hearing one speaking Igbo in any of tertiary institutions, the few students who opted for such course as linguistics Igbo are disregarded by colleagues, they regard the students of Igbo language as unintelligent and inferior to other students.

The attitude of people towards the Igbo language affects teaching and learning of the Igbo language in all levels of education. Students shy away making choosing Igbo as their career. because people, even their parents, look down on them as lazy and unbrilliant students. Those who decide to make Igbo a career do not feel proud to claim to be Igbo students. The Igbo language is as good as other languages; it requires an intelligent or brilliant student to study and perform well in it. Hardly a dull student can do well in Igbo just like in English, French, and others. Nneka (2002) states that, "it is a matter of great regret that Igbo teachers and educational counsellor in both primary and post primary do not encourage their students to study and make Igbo a career choice".

Igbo people neglect their mother tongue in school while they promote and encourage the study of foreign languages and even compel their pupils and students to speak to them. Worst still is the instruction given to students by some heads of schools that no students should speak Igbo while in school. These contribute to the killing and underutilization of the Igbo language.

Religion and Media: Discouraging the Use of Local Language

Apart from the educational sector, one major potentially rich domain for the propagation of indigenous languages, but which has not been utilized is religion. Generally, people acknowledge their mortal nature and, therefore, depend on a higher being (God Almighty), to guide and sustenance through the journey of life. Interestingly, some parents do everything to uphold their faith, as they strive to bring up their children in their chosen faith, entrenching the local languages. But the reality is that the hegemonic influence relegated Igbo to the background, especially in the practice of Christian faith. What on avenue for urban centers, the medium of transmitting messages is English where as the largest percentage of the congregation are speakers of Igbo. Of course, there could be some non-Igbo speakers who ordinarily would not get the translation of the messages from English into Igbo, speakers who indeed regrettably, the messages are mainly English with a translation into Igbo, if considered necessary. And for Christians in Igbo speaking communities, buying a Igbo bible, dealers in the Holy Bible would certainly have a personal report to give when they compare the negligible number of Yoruba bibles they sell to the unpleasant increasing demand for the English Bible.

... many Nigerians church goers believe that attending English-speaking churches can improve their English; hence they would rather worship in an English speaking church even when they have been more blessed in a church where their native language is the medium of communication.

The efficacy of the media in the dissemination of the information of the people at the grassroots in order to mobilize them to participate in local and national affairs is largely dependent on the intensive use of local languages. In this regard, Bamgbose (2003:84) notes: "The test of the efficacy of the media for empowerment should be how far they can reach the widest audience possible, and obviously, this must involve the intensive use of African languages".

Despite the fact that some of the existing magazines and newspapers are geared towards engineering the politics of self-determination for, especially those ones that sprang up in the wake of struggle for the entrenchment of democracy in the mid-1990s, which play the roles identified under the general headings of information, correlation, continuity, entertainment and mobilization as put forward by Salawu (2004). Yet, despite these functions, how many educated people buy those newspapers and magazines for their children when they themselves cannot even decipher their content. In bemoaning the situation, Salawu (2004:6) writes:

...It has already been settled that African, especially the educated (western), do not seem to appreciate their languages as being fit for serious matters of education, business, governance, etc. as such they do not patronize it. Unlike the broadcast media, the print media require repeated purchase for use, so if the educated who are more likely to have the economic power to purchase, are not appreciative to their language, then they cannot patronize the media either in terms of copy purchase or placement advertisement. This, actually, is the reason why newspapers especially those published in indigenous languages have not been viable.

The problem does not seem to derive from just developing the interest in patronizing the newspapers, but from the doubtful proficiency of the elite in the indigenous language. With reference to the electronic media, the author of these lines has observed that some radio and television stations based in Igbo-speaking states first call their news in English before giving an abridged version in Igbo. To shortchange the supposed illiterate television viewers for whom the Igbo reports are meant, the newscaster also doubles as a reporter. As such, one would realize that the abridged version mostly do not match the pictures displayed while reporting. It is meant, explaining away this marginalization tendency, a director of new, while finding questions from the viewers on a live programme, argued that news in Igbo has to be abridged because the rural dwellers do not need the details and technicalities in the English version. If we are genuinely interested in developing our indigenous languages and wish to demonstrate the value we have for them, what is wrong with casting the news first in native language and then rendering the English version later? After all, the events reported are tied to the people's intermediate environment. From the foregoing, what then can linguists do to ensure that the insightful proposals, suggestions and legislators made at the conference arena, and in academic papers do not turn out to be more fantasies?

Education, Language and Sustainable Development

Habbot and Ramirez (2004:427–38) emphasize the central role of international development organizations and conferences in rationalizing a discourse that strongly links sustainable development and education for national and individual development goals. According to the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals, a major goal of education is poverty alleviation. However, recent studies emphasize the social, political and cultural aspects of development in addition to economic gains from development. The declaration of Education for all, signed by more than 150 nations, including Nigeria, reaffirmed the close link between education and sustainable development at the individual, national and global levels. In this context, a pertinent question asked by Brock-Utne (2000) states that: 'Education is for all – in whose language?' Brock-Utne argues, rightly in our view, that, 'The concept "education for all" becomes a completely empty concept if the linguistic environment of the basic learners is not considered'. The complex relationship between language, power and the personal and its consequences is highlighted by Chambers, (2004:156) a development specialist. He asks:

"Whose language and whose words count [?] in whose language do we or are we – compelled or induced to co-ordinate our behavior? And in whose language do we together bring forth our world?"

As English is now widely recognized as a lingua franca or a 'world language', it seems pertinent to examine the relationship between English and development. In a report commissioned by the British Council, Coleman (2010:15) has tried to bring out this relationship using examples from language and development conferences held in different parts of Asia and Africa since 1993. He concludes that English plays many roles in development, including:

- Increasing individuals' employability
- Enabling international collaboration and co-operation
- Providing access to research and information
- Facilitating the international mobility of students, tourists, workers and others
- Facilitating disaster relief and disaster preparedness
- Acting as an impartial language in contexts of disharmony

Therefore, unsurprisingly, English is considered by donor agencies as the de facto language for development. Often a lot of aid money is spent on improving the English proficiency of people and communities in the recipient nation states before or alongside other development work, particularly in the field of education. The aim, ostensibly, is to improve the effectiveness of teaching – and therefore the overall quality of education – in non-

native English speaker contexts. Examples include the ten-year Teaching Support programme for Tanzanian secondary school teachers, funded by the British Council through the former Overseas Development Administration (now the Department for international Development) Arthur (2001:347-62) and the English Language Improvement Programme for Ethiopian teachers of English and other subjects, also funded by an international donor agency in educational development.

From the foregoing different kinds of relationship exist between language and sustainable development. Appleby et al (2002) identify at least four kinds:

- Language in development, where English is viewed as playing an essential role in the socio-economic development of the country
- Language as development, with English being taught 'as an end in itself'
- Language for development, where 'English is used as a tool for other domains of development'
- Language of development, 'the discourses that construct the ways in which development happens'

In Nigeria, English is viewed mainly as the language for sustainable development at both the individual and national levels. Indeed, the race for individual prosperity and economic development at the national level seem to have overtaken issues of class, identity and fear of cultural invasion from an erstwhile colonial language.

Misuse of Nigerian Indigenous Languages

The 21st edition of the national festival of arts and culture (NAFEST) held in Markurdi, Benue State, Nigeria, between 3rd and 10th September 2007 was an avenue to showcase Nigeria's diverse cultural heritage as embodied in the art, craft, dance, music and colourful attires, among others. Yet, it was an auspicious moment to reawaken the preserved, all other cultural traits (embedded in them) would go into extinction. So, amidst the fanfare that should be the hallmark of such a ceremony, an issue of serious national concern was still touched upon; for, according to a Yoruba proverb, "Bi ina o ba tab laso, eje ko lee tan leekan", meaning that: Until the clothes are rid of lice, the fingernails will remain blood-stained.

Thus, at the colloquium session of the festival with the theme 'culture, job creation and Youth Empowerment', Professor Akinwumi Isola, the first professor of Yoruba language in Nigeria, formerly of the university of Ibadan, in his paper 'cultural Education and Development', lamented the neglect of indigenous languages in Nigeria. He attributed this pitfall to the fatal effects of interventions like the slave trade, colonialism, and the advent of two foreign religions upon Nigerians, and consequently to the fore the linguistic phenomenon of bilingualism.

To this end, one could argue that African communities might have regained their sovereignty from colonialists, creating the impression that we have the physical empires in our possession, but it is rather pathetic that we are fast losing and in some cases have lost the empires of our mind because we have lost touch with our local languages- the only tool with which we can explore, understand and dominate the African world, underscoring the place of local languages in national development. Okwudishu (2006:135-36) says:

"It has been rightly observed that a national development that has not given a pride of place to indigenous languages as vehicles of national development is likely to be a wasted effort ... sustainable development in Africa should focus on the cultivation of a literate citizenry that can participate effectively in the socio-economic, political and cultural life of the nation. Development in this sense is human based and languages chosen for that purpose must be those that will facilitate access to the information for the masses at the grassroots."

Achieving this target in Africa has turned out to be a wishful fantasy in view of the apparent disuse of African local languages in our development processes.

Of course, we must admit that expert in linguistic studies have raised their voices to alert the world in the disuse of such items as 'language endangerment', 'language death', vanishing voices and tongue tiredness. All of which have been characteristically used to define the sorry state of some African languages. In this regard, the hegemonic influence of English on Nigerian indigenous languages has attracted the attention of linguists.

Writing on hegemony and the English language, Awonusi (2004:85-102) notes:

"The notion of hegemonic English implies the perception of the English language as significant linguistic superstructure that has a wide usage and acceptance as well as influence. Thus hegemony with relation to language connotes a fairly complex interplay of a number of variables such as power (socioeconomic power of its users), control (how the powerful users of a particular language use it as a weapon of linguistic domination of communities especially those that are multilingual or multicultural), literacy (the dependence on a language as the basis of social and political acceptance) and the influence (the exercise of power...)"

Awonusi's (2004) view in the quotation above aptly captures the linguistic situation in Nigeria vis-a-vis the relationships between English and Nigerian indigenous languages. In this circumstance, language shift is then inevitable. According to Jibril (2007:284), language shift is "the process by which a community more or less gradually abandons its original language and via an intermediate shift in bilingualism adopts another". Thus, bilingualism is but a transitional stage towards language shift or language death. However, the hue and cry raised by linguists and their efforts at improving the status of local languages have not found significant expression in practical linguistic situations. And for our present purposes, our focus here is on Eastern Nigeria where we observed that in certain spheres of life, the dream of entrenching the indigenous languages in the scheme of developing the African world is far from being realized.

Thus, linguists in Nigeria have so much touted the national policy in education amended in 1981, which states that the language of instruction at the primary school level should initially be the child's mother tongue; that one would ordinarily think that it has become an inseparable part of the educational system. Education policy maker who approves the establishment of private schools would certainly not feign ignorance about the reality and use of English as a medium of instruction in such schools to the detriment of Igbo. It is, therefore, apparent that the government's policy on the preservation of indigenous languages in Nigeria has been inconsequential. Among the factors which have led to the failure of Nigeria's educational language policy are the dearth of qualified teachers, lack of commitment and the granting of waivers. Bamgbose, (2003)

The consequence of this linguistic situation in relation to the status of the indigenous languages is that the native speakers, who should appreciate and extol the languages and cultural patterns they embody and are supposed to preserve and transmit, but they do not take a pride in using the languages, such as English has caught their fancy. Hence, casting light on the phenomenal dimensions of the continued dominance of imported languages in Africa on the indigenous languages, Bamgbose writes:

"The efforts of the continued dominance can be seen in alienation resulting in unfavourable attitudes to African languages. The attitudes may be illustrated in the preference for early acquisition of these languages (with two-year olds being made to speak English or French in elite homes), taking pride in proficiency in the imported languages at the expense of a sound knowledge of ones own mother tongue, preference for written communication in an European language, addiction to information disseminated in imported languages by electronic and print media, and lack of interest in, and concern for, the development of indigenous languages."

The question that now arises is: how come those language/education policy makers who have made so much noise at workshops and conferences about the need to teach the child first in the local language fail to act by enforcing it at the level of implementation? Adegbite (2003:188) blames this ugly development on the Nigerian elite:

"Since it is the elite that dominate policy making in Nigeria, the interest of the elite has always been equated with public interest. Consequently, the dominance of English over the indigenous languages in Nigeria and the attendant positive attitude towards the language can be attributed to elitists' interest."

It is, however, ironic that beyond the boundaries of Nigeria, there has been renewed interest in the study of Nigerian indigenous languages. Adewole (2007) points out that "although Yoruba is one of the minority languages in the United States of America, the universities where the language is being studied is more than the universities where Yoruba is being taught as a subject in Nigeria". According to him, whereas there are about ten universities in Nigeria where Yoruba is taught as a subject, there are about sixteen universities in the United States where students learn Yoruba. Commenting on the phenomenal growth of the study of Yoruba at this level, Adewole (of cit 23) says:

"The United States Department of Education also gave a research grant for the development of a Yoruba living dictionary on the internet. The address of the dictionary is www.yoruba@georgiasouthern.edu. It is also gratifying to note that the articles in the Yoruba Wikipedia, a free encyclopedia on Yoruba on the internet, at www.yo.wikipedia.org, has grown to over three thousand".

If foreign learners have had this deep interest in learning Yoruba, an indigenous African language, and in developing it to meet the challenges of a globalised world, the owner's of the language need to have a rethink.

Greetings

The under-utilization of Igbo language started with using English language in every session of the day greeting. Majority of Igbos in every state of Igbo land do hardly use Igbo language to greet one another. They prefer saying, "Good Morning", "Good Afternoon", "Good Night" instead of "Ututu-oma, Ehihie-oma, I boola chi? Ma o bu I saala chi? Kedu ka gi mere? Gi oputakwara chi, Kachi boo" e.t.c.

An Igbo man prefers saying sorry to “Ndo” in Igbo, thank you to “Daalu” in Igbo. The use of English language in greeting makes every Igbo man not to express the feelings of respect to elders while greeting. Igbo contains some expressions of greeting, examples “Eze I ga adi”, Ututu-oma Nna anyi”, with some gestures, just like in Hausa or Yoruba man that ignores greeting his elder in the local language with degrees of gestures. It is believed that the use of one local language helps to create good human relationships, humility, respect and sincerity in greeting. It also makes the greeting to be more homely. The survey indicates that Igbo man feel proud when one greets him in English Using “Good Morning Sir, Thank ma” e.t.c. he feels neglected or provoked if one greets him in Igbo. Most Igbo people do not respond, or do not know how to greet in Igbo language. A child prefers saying, Thank sir, Thank ma, to “I mela mama, daalu Nne oma, I mela nnanyi, daalu” this is because the child was brought up using English word “thank sir”, sorry, good morning, sir” e.t.c.

Greeting approach in Igbo land is the starting point of underutilization of Igbo language. It has been the habit of every Igbo man both in rural and urban area. Parents admire their children using English language to greet them rather than Igbo language.

Mixing English with Igbo

Hardly have you seen an Igbo man speak Igbo language straight forwardly without mixing English language. For example, “Nye mu twenty naira, Nye mu cup ahu, Nye mu plate ahu” instead of Nye mu ugu ego iri abuo, or ugu abuo, Nye mu iko ahu, Nye mu efere ahu”, “onye ahu enwero sense, onye ahu enwero respect, instead of onye ahu enwero uche, onye ahu enwe ugu”, “anyi ga –abia tomorrow morning, anyi ga-abia today evening, instead of anyi ga-enwe ututu echi, anyi ga bia n' mgbede taa”. “were ego a zutara m cream na soap n' ahia ma l loba, instead of “were ego a zutara m isha, ose na nnu, biko zutara m ude na ncha n' ahia ma l loba” etc.

Neglecting of Igbo texts Books and Novels

Government should make all their possible best to support the Igbo authors and writers by making their books and novels available to reach both private and government schools, Principals, headmistresses, and headmasters of both private and government schools have to promote and encourage the effort of the authors and writers for their writing and improvement on Igbo textbooks and novels by making all their efforts fruitful, ensure that teachers are making use of these textbooks and novels in schools and also make sure they give students assignments to write from those textbooks and novels recommended by government. Also make sure that every student should have his own textbook and novel when the teacher is teaching in the classroom and those that do not have it will be sent out and it might even cause or stop them not sitting for school examination.

Furthermore, government should build Igbo library in all schools and make those textbooks and novels available for students. Schools should map out time for students to go to the library and read and make use of those books there in the library.

With these, our students and children will not be neglecting our Igbo textbooks and novels, even our language. These will improve the standard of Igbo language in education.

Reading and Writing in the Igbo Language

Reading and writing in Igbo novels, Igbo bible, Igbo textbooks, etc., have caused a lot of problem in our society. Majority of Igbo do not know how to read and write in Igbo language. In some places like church, and school, for instance, in secondary school, where they read Revised Standard Version Bible always during moral instruction or during Christian Religious Knowledge (C.R.K) and other English novels instead of reading Igbo bible in place of English bible, so that those who do not know how to read, would start learning how to read. This reading of English literature has made some people not to know how to read Igbo again.

Even in churches, they do not read Igbo bible rather reading English bible also, our constitution was written in English, instead of written in Igbo language so that those who do not understand Nigerian constitution in English would understand like old men and women. E.t.c.

In social, political, government gathering, minutes are no more written in Igbo language rather in English language and read out in English language. On the other hand, you can hardly see an Igbo man write letters, text messages or type something in Igbo, even in primary and secondary schools where teachers dictate to their students in Igbo. Rather they prefer dictating in English language. Since we are Igbo, let's read and write everything in our own language. This attitude is killing and affecting our language and sustainable development.

From the foregoing, the following findings can be deduced:

- Igbo language is underutilized as medium of exchange in Nigeria
- The Europeans encounter was one of the serious causes of underutilization of Igbo language
- The attitude of Igbo man towards the Igbo language contributed greatly to the under civilization of Igbo language

- The multiplicity of the Igbo dialects and scattering of Igbo communities affect the development of the Igbo language have negatively affected Igbo language.
- The advent of English language through visit of the early missionaries, merchants finally culture and language of Igbo people
- The colonial masters introduced formal education and only the English language was used in teaching pupils and students.
- Even Igbo language scholars borrowed some names from English in naming items example ball (boolu), table (tebulu), cup (kopu), book (buku), etc
- Our ancestors learned parts of the English language to enable them communicate with the British merchants, missionaries and colonialists.
- Parents attitude towards their children when speaking English language to them at home in a bid to improve their words learning, without knowing that they are unlearning their children in Igbo language. Meaning that parents contribute to the under-utilization of Igbo language by speaking English language to their children at home.
- Because Nigeria is a multilingual society, travelers and business men need other languages than theirs, so as to communicate effectively. That is why many Igbos can speak Hausa and Yoruba fluently because of transactions with the Northern and western people of Nigeria respectively. Those who cannot speak Hausa language. It is not surprising to see Igbos speaking pidgin English “also referred to as “broken” or “Engligbo.”
- The Igbo textbooks and Igbo novels are not used in the primary and secondary school levels as other text books are used, example English textbooks, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, agriculture and economics e.t.c.
- Government does not patronize or encourage the Igbo writers on their works on Igbo textbooks and novels.
- Students are commanded and levied when they speak Igbo in the classroom and in the school environment. They are prohibited not to speak Igbo but English.
- Dictation on Igbo language is not done as English is done in school.

Conclusion

This study examined the role of indigenous languages in sustainable development, using the Igbo language as a case study. The study addressed the three research questions and demonstrated that the role of the Igbo language in promoting sustainable development cannot be overemphasized. The findings revealed that the underutilization of the Igbo language is influenced by several factors, including negative attitudes among Igbo speakers towards their language, dialectal variation, government language policies, inadequate patronage, the influence of religion and the media, the dominance of English, code-mixing, and the migration of Igbo speakers to other parts of Nigeria and abroad.

The study further established that the underutilization of the Igbo language has adverse consequences for education, political participation, economic development, and the preservation of Igbo cultural identity. As the primary vehicle of identity, culture, and social cohesion, language loses its vitality and significance when it is not actively used and transmitted across generations. Continued language decline or loss threatens the cultural heritage of the Igbo people and may impede sustainable development. The study therefore recommends the active promotion and utilization of the Igbo language in education, government, the media, and digital communication as essential strategies for achieving sustainable development.

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