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## Cultural Education and Impediments of Foreign Languages in Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

The focus of this paper is to examine the relationship between English language as the major foreign language and ineffective indigenous Cultural education in Nigeria. Social problems including corruption, leadership ineptitude, and moral laxity among others are an indication of the failure of cultural education in Nigeria. This paper, therefore, examines the impacts of foreign language on cultural education in Nigeria. In the process, a study was conducted using questionnaire among working class parents within the three senatorial districts of Lagos State and the results of hypotheses testing using inferential statistic reveals that adoption of English Language as a major medium of instruction affects significantly the effectiveness of cultural education in Nigeria. The paper suggested that the trend can be reversed if attention is paid to the promotion of indigenous languages by training more indigenous teachers and more funding of cultural education both in the schools and informal levels.

**Keywords:** Foreign Language, Culture, Education, Cultural Education.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Culture is taken seriously in any country because it is the basis of social relations. In most cases, it is a major source of law and order; a vital reason why it becomes an educational issue. Various societies design different ways of sustaining its culture by consciously passing it from one generation to another whether formally or informally. Language is a major element of culture and at the same, the medium through which culture is expressed. In Nigeria today, mostly among the elites and urban schools, English Language is rapidly becoming the major medium of Communication and by extension means of imparting cultural education on younger ones. The reality on ground revealed that the challenges of development facing Nigeria today is deeply rooted in social values which are supposed to be derived from culture. The question therefore is why is it that various efforts at educating the Nigerians are not yielding the desired result that can engender satisfactory positive attitude? It is very necessary to examine the effectiveness of the medium of communication or medium of instruction both at formal level and informal level.

Therefore, this paper intends to examine the impact of English language as a second language and major foreign language, on the achievement of the objectives of cultural education in Nigeria. The paper is divided into the following parts; introduction, operationalizing the concepts, foreign language as medium of instruction, effects of English Language on cultural education in Nigeria, suggestions and conclusion.

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## 1.1 Operationalizing The Concepts

### Culture

Culture is an indispensable phenomenon in any social milieu with varied definitions by different authors. Otite and Ogionaro, (1979) identifies two conceptual usages of culture; colloquial and scientific usage. In the former, it refers to acquisition of good manners or behaviour. In this sense, somebody that is not cultured is a person that is not refined. In the latter sense, it refers to total ways of life of people in a particular society. In this perspective, Anderson (1964) sees culture as a way of life developed by members of a particular community to enhance adaptation to their social and material environment. Also, Kammeyer (1979) defines it as a set of ideas and material objects that shapes the life of the people always.

National cultural policy (1988) describes culture as the entire way of life acquired by the people in their environment due to challenges of living which shapes their total life and distinguished then from other society. Mallinowski, (1945) categorized the constituents of culture into three which are human, spiritual and material. The humanistic elements include knowledge, idea, values, philosophy, laws etc. Spiritual elements include beliefs and religious practices. The materialistic include artifacts and consumer goods. Similar view was enumerated in the Nigeria National Culture policy as characteristics of culture which are materials, institutional, philosophical and creative aspects. Materials consist of artifacts in a broadest sense, Institutional consists of social, political, economic and legal structures, and Philosophical consists of ideas, beliefs and values, while Creative deals with literature, visual and performing arts. However there is another view that typifies culture into individual, community, national, world, material, non-material, visible, invisible, tangible and intangible culture (Effects of Education on Cultural Development, n.d.).

Culture is very significant in the efforts toward initiating, guiding and sustaining level of economic activities in any society for three reasons, namely; development is precipitated on Culture, Culture provides basis of the individual capabilities, and this influences and conditions other forms of production (Bello, 1991). Symbolic cultures assist in differentiating human race as means and ways of controlling conflict (Goldthorpe, 1985). Characteristically, Culture is a product of social interaction and provides socially recognized ways of seeking biological and social desires. It is cumulative in nature, reflecting in every developmental process, not genetically transmittable and above all, universal. Culture becomes an educational issue because of its sterling qualities which include; being a learned behaviour, transmissiveness, and social relevance, basis for conformity, gratifying and integrating values. (Alake, 2004)

### Education

Education is central in the process of human development and connotes many meanings. Peter (1967) sees education as a process of socialization, enculturation and transmission of what is beneficial or worthwhile to individuals that are committed to the exercise. It is socio-political and acculturation processes by which individuals acquire competencies in his culture, adaptation to socio-political environments and ability to initiate changes (Odiagbe, 1986). Education is virtue earned by individuals and a consequence of experiences encountered (Bowen, 1974). Education can be formal i.e. received in a formal setting like school system, non-formal i.e. outside school system like correspondences and informal like those conducted at home, churches, markets etc. The objectives of education are; to produce well informed individuals, improving physical and mental health, acquisition of knowledge and skills, stabilizing personalities, developing and transmitting values, and attitudes .

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## 2. CULTURAL EDUCATION

Cultural education is the process of providing and preserving valued heritage to enhance the societal ability to invent and innovate for the benefit of overcoming challenges (Bello 1991). It is an educational programme meant to impart cultural values, ideas, traditions and beliefs on the younger ones. It is a means of transmitting culture from generation to generation. It facilitates transfer of knowledge, competencies and values among individuals, by developing awareness in morality and ethics, to promote personality development, improved living conditions, and goals attainment (Kapor, 2019). It can be formal or informal in process. Cultural Education is geographical or environmental specific depending on the cultural attributes of each community. It may be a whole subject in the school or sub-topic as incorporated in subjects like social studies and citizenship education. It encompasses the four sub-systems or classification of cultural system namely political, social, economic and technological sub-systems. The teaching-learning processes and instructional strategies designed to facilitate formal cultural education may be through academic lesson or through cultural skills acquisition among students.

In academic lesson plans, students pedagogically gain knowledge and information with cultural contents. However, cultural skills involve acquisition of cultural skills and values through arts and crafts, music, singing, dancing, and other creative activities (Kapor, 2019). Cultural education is beneficial in several respects to different nation. Battista identifies five major reasons why cultural education should be thought in school and at home; when students learn and understand effectively, they appreciate and adapt it to their life activities. Also, students are motivated to be creative and dedicated to their learning when they are emotionally attached to their learning. In addition, it facilitates transfer of cultural heritage to future generation by passing cultural concepts, ideas, literature and beliefs learnt to younger members of their community. Students feel secure when they are bonded to others by learning cultural values. The entire society is safe because students attachment to culture would encourage sense of preservation and protection of their cultural heritage that would be destroyed through large scale violent conflict (Battista,n.d).

### 2.1 Foreign Language

Foreign language in this context refers to other languages that are not indigenous but widely used in Nigeria. The most commonly used foreign language in Nigeria is English language. Language involves application of gestures, grammar, signs, Sounds, symbols or words in representing and communicating concepts, ideas, meaning and thoughts. Language consists of an acceptable speech sounds within a cultural or geographical area (Adeseye, 2006). Language is worldwide acceptable means of human communication through manipulation of words and rules of grammar. It entails acquisition of knowledge of the system and workings of language, basic communication skills, knowledge of the environment and knowledge of use of language in every communication situations (Alo, 1998). The elements of language in communication can be located in vocabulary, level of grammar, meaning and orthography. Language enhances acculturation because the children acquire the language of their immediate environment as the language recognized by their immediate environment as they are growing, and this assist in cultural understanding. Language through literary medium is a tool for mobilizing the citizens towards national development.

### 2.2 Foreign Language As A Medium Of Communication In Nigeria

The concern here is on foreign languages, for instance languages of other countries adopted as primary, first or official by members of the indigenous Communities or secondary language by others. The common examples of those languages in Nigeria are English and French. The former was due to the colonial experience of Nigeria, while the latter was a result of contiguous geographical location of Nigeria to French speaking countries.

According to Bashorun (2002) English is prominently used as the official language of the community, medium of instruction and as a subject of study in Nigeria educational system. Also, it is becoming increasingly pre-eminent in other countries without colonial link with British like China, Russia, Thailand etc. (Adeseye, 2006). According to Punch Newspaper (2006) 72% of Internet sites are in English, German 7% while French, Japanese and Spanish were 3%. It was introduced to Nigerians by colonial masters who settled initially as explorers, but later as traders and missionaries. It remained the most important of the British heritage bequeathed Nigerians after the independence. Citing other studies Igboanusi (2001) revealed that 70.63% of respondents in a study have positive attitudes towards usage of English in their daily transaction in Nigeria. A critical examination of the domain of usages of English in Nigeria revealed that it is the language of government and administration, commerce and trade, media and mass communication, education, social communication and interactions. Sybil James (as cited by Adeseye) classified the domain of English usage in Nigeria into three. They are; domain of accommodation in which people of different cultures and linguistic backgrounds interact for various reasons. The second is in the domain of participation in which individuals willing to participate in government and international interactions must be versatile in its usages. Last is the domain of social mobility, to facilitate access and other social perquisites. It is frequently used at both formal and informal gatherings like home, office, school, market and social gatherings.

### **2.3 Impacts Of Foreign Languages On Cultural Education In Nigeria**

We had established earlier that cultural education is essential in Nigeria for the purpose of propagating our heritage and that government is equally making effort to achieve this goal by introducing it at various school levels. Also, we had established that English language is prominent as a language of communication most especially among the elites as revealed in the study of Igboanusi (2001) earlier. It has been asserted that in many countries it was the settlers, or conquerors that usually introduced formal education, which makes it difficult for students to develop a sense of belonging, hence the need for education through indigenous language for them to see commonalities within the context of their own life and condition (Team One International, 2016).

This shows that English is frequently used as language of communication at the informal educational level for primary socializing process, even without considering the negative effect of code-mixing and code-switching in the process and the differences in the cultural background of language itself and language user. Also, at the formal educational level, English is the major language of instruction in general and cultural education in particular as secondary socialization process. It is not in doubt that in Nigeria, English Language impacts greatly on communication functions, namely Informative, referential, personal, relational, regulative and creative functions (Alo, 1998), though, the present situation of Nigeria demands for an assessment of its effect on cultural education. Nigeria is presently facing the challenges of leadership, corruption, values and order which raise the question of ineffectiveness of cultural education.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

A study was conducted using questionnaire among working class adult parents within Lagos State. The sample comprises of 150 respondents, (married adults) selected through convenient random sampling. 30 Students were given 5 questionnaires each to be distributed in 30 different organizations within Lagos State. 10 students per each of the three senatorial districts namely; Lagos West, Lagos East, and Lagos Central Senatorial Districts and all the questionnaires were returned.

### 3.1 Test of Hypothesis

The hypothesis is as follows:

H<sub>0</sub>: English Language does not contribute significantly to the ineffectiveness of cultural education in Nigeria.

H<sub>1</sub>: English Language contributes significantly to the ineffectiveness of cultural education in Nigeria

The above hypothesis was tested using chi-square (X) which is given as

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(fo - fe)^2}{fe}$$

Where:

X = Chi-square

Σ = Sum of

fo = Observed frequency

fe = Expected frequency

Decision rule: reject H<sub>0</sub> if calculated value is greater than tabulated value. Accept

H<sub>0</sub> if calculated value is lesser than tabulated value.

**Table 1: Responses to Questions**

Response	Q2	Q3	Q5	Total
Agreed	a 132	b 123	C 114	369
Undecided	d 12	e 12	F 30	54
Disagree	g 6	h 15	i 6	27
Total	150	150	150	GT 450

**Table 2: Chi Square Analysis**

Cell	Fo	Fe	Fo-fe	(fo-fe) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(fo - fe)^2}{fe}$
A	132	123	9	81	0.6585
B	123	123	0	0	0
C	114	123	-9	81	0.6585
D	12	18	-6	36	2
F	30	18	-3	9	0
G	6	9	-3	9	0
H	15	9	3	9	0
I	6	9	-3	9	0
					X <sup>2</sup> = 13.317

Source: Research Instrument

The calculated value X<sup>2</sup>c is 13.32 and the tabulated value X<sup>2</sup>t is 9.47 at 5% level of significance and degree of freedom 4. From the decision rule, since the calculated value X<sup>2</sup>c is greater than tabulated value X<sup>2</sup>t, we therefore reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. Thus, English language contributes significantly to the ineffectiveness of cultural education in Nigeria.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The realization of objectives of cultural education in Nigeria is dwindling because of neglect of the place of language as vehicle of culture in our educational system. Indigenous languages were not given its prominence as it was enumerated in the national language policy: at pre-primary education level the medium of instruction is supposed to be mother tongue (MT) or the language of the immediate community (LIC); that at the primary level, the initial medium of instruction is supposed to be MT or LIM and English language later at primary 4-6; that at the secondary level, English language is the medium of instruction but at junior secondary level two Nigerian languages, among major Nigerian languages i.e. Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. At the senior secondary level at least one major Nigerian language; and at the Tertiary education level, English language is the medium of instruction.

This problem is partially due to inadequate specialized teachers in indigenous languages and the urge to satisfy the misplaced elitist values by private school operators. As posited, in most cases cultural education is not always conceived as a long time programme and that is why there has not been a continuous single curriculum for both primary and secondary education (Eusden, 2016). In another study Unoh (1986) argues that English Language is foreign and not Sustainable for the purpose of propagating indigenous culture. He added that its usages amount to the usurpation of roles of Nigerian languages and this can cause considerable negative effect on indigenous language development in Nigeria.

Fafunwa and Diop (as cited in Agbo, 2003) demonstrated how indigenous languages can effectively serve as medium of education and instructions in school. Fafunwa used Yoruba language in his Li experiment, while Diop demonstrated similar study using Wolof language. In the two experiments, indigenous languages were used as medium of instruction at elementary classes. The findings revealed positive impact on students' educational attainment at this level including an effective mastery of English language. The above conclusion aligns with submission of Kapor (2019). According to him, research finding has shown that in some cases, students do not express interest and enthusiasm in academic learning due to their inability to understand academic concepts, problems and challenges, however, such students developed motivation towards learning of academic concepts when culture was introduced to the school curriculum. Another consequence of English language as major means of cultural education in Nigeria is the devaluation of language as an aspect of culture and the threat to sustenance of indigenous developing languages. It can also be argued that the effect of English language facilitates preference for British and other foreign cultures to the detriment of indigenous cultures. The widespread dominance of English language in school affects the image of the country as a truly independent entity with its own cultural identity, because it is an indication of cultural imperialism.

Also, finding of the study shows that Nigerian government is only paying a leap service to promotion of indigenous culture. It is adduced that in endorsing cultural education, government plays a significant role in regional co-ordination (Basis for Cultural Education, 2017). This view is in agreement with the position of UNESCO on Netherland cultural policy as a reference. The Cultural Policy (Special Purpose Funding) Act granted the Minister power to develop, preserve, disseminate and propagate cultural expressions within the entire country. This policy is implemented at three levels for effectiveness: the government directly fund basic national infrastructure of institutions (BIS), Six cultural funds for creative industries and cultural participation, and collaboration among the ministries like Interior, Foreign Affairs, Economic Affairs, other tiers of government (provinces and municipalities) and private sectors to propagate cultural education, entrepreneurship and other Policy programmes. In concrete term, the combined cultural budget in 2009 (2009 exchange rate) was over USD 4.2 billio; national government provides USD 1.2 billion, provinces contributes USD 364 million and the municipalities jointly provides USD 2.6 billion (UNESCO, 2013).

Furthermore, majority of Nigerians are living in rural areas, this leads to communication breakdown between the rural primary socialization agent i.e. family and the children trying to acquire foreign culture associated with English language in the school. The same problem exists between rural children and the children of the urban elites and elitist private schools. As a medium of instruction in schools, problem can arise due to difference in background of indigenous culture to be taught and the foreign language to be used. This can be identified in grammars, lexis and structure, idiomatic expression and orthographies of the foreign and indigenous languages as it affects the teaching of cultural terms, concepts and values. Akinbote and Ogunsanwo (2003) as cited in Oluwole (2008: 41-49) added that adoption of mother tongue in teaching and learning assists in preserving and promoting culture, as well as lexical development. Acquisition of mother tongue enhances comprehension of the content and adaptation to changes in larger society. Consequently, foreign language leads to indigenous language inefficiency. As asserted by Okebukola and Oladotun (1992), cited in Oluwole (2008), language inefficiency leads to poor academic performance including performance in cultural education.

## 5. RECCOMENDATIONS

The present situation can be improved if the following measures are implemented:

1. There must be renewing effort to propagate the teaching of indigenous languages in our primary and secondary schools and adopting it as a medium of instruction at the lower level.
2. There must be proper monitoring by the educational authorities to ensure that schools comply with recommended educational policies and curricular.
3. There is an urgent need to establish an intervention programme and short-training programme to produce teachers in indigenous languages in our schools to reverse the inadequacy.
4. Orientation agencies should embark on programmes that can regenerate cultural values among the elites and the need to interact with their children at the family level through indigenous languages
5. Scholars should intensify the effort to evolve and sustain Nigerian English and English for Specific Purpose (ESP) because of its ability to convey the meanings and values in our culture.

## 6. CONCLUSSION

This paper examines the effect of English language as a foreign language on indigenous cultural education in Nigeria. The educational process is at two levels: family and the school levels. It was established that English has taken a pre-eminence place over the indigenous languages in our educational process. As a vehicle of culture, foreign language indirectly frustrates our effort to achieve the objectives of cultural education in Nigeria. Study also confirmed this position. It is the responsibility of everybody and not only the government to prevent our cultural heritage from being relegated. Therefore, it is necessary to implement the above suggestions for the purpose of reversing this negative trend.

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