Hybrid teaching and the learning of the Igbo language in the 21ST century

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Abstract
The paper discusses hybrid teaching and learning of Igbo language in the 21st century. Language is like any other living organism that has time to start living, growing older and finally dying or change into something else. That notwithstanding, the world is changing fast and there is need to embrace hybrid teaching and learning of Igbo language. Hybrid teaching of Igbo language is an approach that can combine traditional teaching methods with modern technologies and innovative strategies to enhance effective teaching and learning of Igbo language and culture preservation because Igbo language is an integral part of Igbo culture and identity. Hybrid teaching and learning can help preserve this cultural heritage. To do a thorough work on this, descriptive research method was adopted in conjunction with existing literature to widen the horizon of the researcher. Findings reveal that for a language to become internationally valuable, it has to be enrolled with modern technologies in other to survive. The paper further raises a number of suggestions that could help to improve hybrid teaching and learning of Igbo language in our Education system.

Introduction

The word Igbo is used as a double signifies. It can be refers to one of the three major Nigeria languages, (Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba). On the other hand it can be used to designate the language of the Igbo ethnic group. Igbo language belong to the Sudanic Linguistic Group of the Kwa division, (Nwoye, 2011). It is the language spoken by a majority of the Igbo people, which is expected that all Igbo people speak Igbo and understand the language, (Apakama, 2019) and (Oparah, 2018). The language is widely spoken in the state where Igbo people are found and the state where they occupy. Apakama further stated that speakers of Igbo language are numerous to mention and has the population of 5.5million living in Igbo land.

The language has a lot of dialects but yet they understand themselves. According to Nwaozuzu (2007), the language has West Niger Group of Dialects, East Niger Group of Dialects, East Central Group of Dialects, Cross River Group of Dialects, South Eastern Group of Dialects, North Eastern Group of Dialects, South Western Group of Dialects, Northern Group of Dialects and including dialects spoken across the Western bank of River Niger. All these dialects differ from one locality to the other and despite the importance of these dialects in Igbo language it has been creating confusion in Igbo language learning in school which is a source of worry to non Igbo language speakers.

Despite the millions of people speaking Igbo language in the country, the language is still facing a lot of challenges, which include the decline in usage and proficiency among the younger generations. In the other hand, the increasing influence of globalisation, urbanisation and technological advancement affected the growth of Igbo language and led to a shift toward more widely spoken language like English which is threatening the existence of Igbo language.

Nwokoye (2013) Observed that Igbo language is still struggling between death and life, this is because the people that is suppose to promote the language hold English language in a higher esteem and also the policy to promote indigenous language was not implemented, thereby repressing the teaching and learning of Igbo language in school. The use of vernacular is not allowed in school and any student speaking vernacular in the class will be punished and flogged even till today, especially in our private schools. How many of our children today can speak Igbo language? Our teachers are not helping matters. They are busy punishing and flogging student who speak Igbo language in the class, at the same time promoting English language, (Emenyonu, 2008).

In our primary and secondary's today, instructions are given in English language. To many teachers and parents, Igbo language is just an identity not a medium of instruction. They believe that teachers in the school are doing well only when there ward can speak English language. They forget one Igbo adage that said "Onye ga-aracha ọnụ ya, ụgụrụ arachara ya". If you did not lick your lips, harmattan will lick it for you. Learning starts from known to unknown, from simple to complex. They don't know that the knowledge of Igbo language will be of help to their ward in order to be prolific in English language. Nwokoye (2013), agreed that Igbo language is being taught as a subject in school not a medium of instruction. This attitude towards Igbo language affected the percentage ratio of student gaining admission into the university to study Igbo language as a course.

Igbo language is a well established language that has its culture and fundamental aspect of human identity and well accepted language for communication, a compulsory subject for senior secondary certificate examination and a gate way to university admission in the country. This means Igbo language has all it takes as a language. Therefore the death of any language means the death of a vital part of a community's culture, identity and sense of belonging of the speakers. That is why Uyanne, Onuoha and Onwe (2013: 352) insist that language "is the seat of human knowledge which controls the centripetal and the centrifugal force of communication". Language represents a society and all the philosophies of a language lie on the language output which gears towards politico-sociocultural interaction and growth. Language is a sole system for human interaction and human behavioral relativism, whereby human ideas, feelings are embedded into the language. Therefore it is necessary to diverse innovative and effective strategies for teaching and learning of Igbo language to ensure its relevance in the 21st century.

Definition of Terms
Concept of Hybrid Teaching and Learning
The term hybrid can be defined as the combination of two or more things in order to get something new. Encyclopedia Britannica defined hybrid as an offspring of two parents that are different in one or more characteristics. Hybrid can be a mixture of two or more different things be it person or animal to get a different variety or species. That is by combination of two or more different things will typically produce best qualities of each. In the context of teaching and learning of Igbo language, hybrid teaching and learning is the combination of traditional method of learning with technology enhanced learning activity in order to promote teaching and learning thereby offers a promising solution to the challenges facing the growth of Igbo language. The technological approach to teaching and learning will enhance the learner's motivation, engagement and give room for language proficiency in various contexts therefore the application of hybrid teaching and learning of Igbo language remains highly profitable in this era of globalization.

Hybrid teaching and learning can be defined as an instructional approach where traditional face-to-face teaching is carried out with online or digital learning. In this situation physical and virtual learning are combined and the learner engage with course materials, instruction, and peers. Linder (2017) refer hybrid teaching as a method of teaching that uses technology to create various learning environments for students. In this type of teaching and learning the instructor will employ hybrid pedagogies to incorporate technology tools to enhance student learning and to respond to a wide range of learning preferences. This approach allows the combination of traditional method of teaching and the integration of technology and digital resource into teaching which offer a flexible approach in education. The method allows educators to incorporate technology and digital resource into teaching at the same time maintaining face-to-face interaction with their students. This is what is called blending learning.

The process of hybrid teaching is used to describe the integration of e-learning in the traditional classroom where technologies are required to facilitate teaching and learning. In this situation student will be in the class room physically in person, while some student will join virtually through video conferencing, software simultaneously. Student in the hybrid teaching have the option of attending the assigned classes in person and then can follow the programmed content online because of computer mediated instruction and mixed mood learning are used interchangeably.

 Teaching is a process of imparting knowledge skill and value to the learner in order to gain new knowledge and understanding which is the outcome of teaching. It can be the act of creation and provision experience for learning. It is also a deliberate effort by the teacher to provide directions, guidance, activities and materials to promote learning. Pupils acquire new attitude, new skill, new knowledge, new value and appreciation through teaching. In order words, learning occurs through the process of teaching. Therefore, teaching is a goal-oriented activity which is all about learning. Teaching involves planned action designed for effective learning. The teacher will pass information through performing a function by selecting or formulating an objective suitable for learning experience and content directed towards ensuring desirable learning outcome. Teaching can be the transferring or passing of knowledge to the learner. It can be inform of skill, attitude, habit which will be guided to achieve positive result. According to Obiefuna, Okoro and Iwuamadi (2010:2) teaching is "passing of knowledge, acquisition of facts and skills, training and guidance". Based on these definitions, before learning takes place there must be a learner and a teacher to balance the process. Smith (2007) agreed that 'Teaching is an interaction between teacher and student of a subject matter. The student can be one or more, young or old, average or above average or below average, bright, normal or physical challenge, may be highly motivated, rich or poor, it can be male or female. The subject can be complex or difficult, easy or straight forward. It can be physical or computer assisted instruction'. In any situation the most important thing is that teaching took place and knowledge transferred. Learning is the process of initiating, changing and modifying behavior. The process through which learning takes place is ranking from physical to mental and from simple to complex, which is from known to unknown. According to Obiefuna, Okoro and Iwuamadi (2010) learning is teacher's ideas which bring about a more or less permanent change in learner's attitude and sense of value. Learning does not take place in isolation that is why Obiefuna, Okoro and Iwuamadi (2010) added that" before learning takes place there must be a stimulus to ignite the process and there must be a learner that will react to the stimulus. After the learner must have reacted to the stimulus any behavior exhibited becomes the outcome of what learnt. The behavior can be positive or negative. If positive it means that stimulus is positive in the order way round,

Negative behavior indicates that the stimulus is negative". So what learned can be the outcome of positive or negative behavior.

The Challenges Facing the Teaching and Learning of Igbo Language in the 21st Century

 In our private schools today especially primary and secondary schools, only one teacher will be teaching Igbo language to the whole classes. The teacher is not even grounded in the study of Igbo language. Their presence there is just to say the school have Igbo teacher. While in our Government owned schools, there are a lot of qualified Igbo language teachers but have few students. This is because of constant strike and nonpayment of salaries as at when due, thereby Parents prefer taking their ward to private schools instead of Government schools. According to Eze (2017) the teachers who are proficient in Igbo languages and the use of modern technologies in teaching are very few and instructional material such as textbooks, audio visual aid and digital resource are lacking in our school today. This makes it difficult for teachers of Igbo language to coup with the new hybrid system of teaching and learning in this era of technology.
Nwosu (2020) observed that in some of our school today there are no computers to access internet and other technological tool to meet up with the modern standard of teaching. The gaps between those who have access to technology are on increase than those that did not have access. There is frequent power failure, no or slow internet connection which hinders the effective use of technology in Igbo language teaching and learning.

Sociolinguistic Challenges: This is as a result of language shift and the potential of the language are lost. There is an increasing influence on the use of English language than Igbo language. Prezi (2005) observed that students find it difficult to speak their mother-tongue because they are learning it as a second language. Again, movement of people from Igbo speaking areas to other parts of the country, they may prefer to speak English language instead of Igbo language because it is an official language everybody will understand. At times, people find it difficult to access works written in Igbo language in the internet whereby promoting English language and other international languages.
Cultural Challenges: Culture and language are intricately intertwined in the sense that Igbo language is deeply tied to Igbo culture, identity and heritage, whereby making it crucial to promote the language for cultural continuity. Apart from all these, the transmission of Igbo language and culture from one generation to the other can decline due to urbanization migration, (Okoro, 2018).
Economic Challenges: Lack of funding Igbo for education, supply of instructional materials and inadequate technology infrastructure in schools and community, can hinder the effective use of digital resource. At the same time, poverty and inequality may hinder quality of good Igbo language education.

The Approaches that will Enhance Acquisition of Igbo Language in Hybrid Teaching and Learning.
Integration of Technology: This involves the utilization of digital tools, such as leverage of technology to create interactive environment for lessons, quizzes and games to motivate the students to engage in language practice. Eze (2020) agreed that by this, they will take advantage of online resource; language learning apps, video, and podcasts can be used as supplement to traditional face-to-face teaching method.

Task-Based Learning: The use of real life scenarios will promote practical applications, for instance, to engage student in cultural festival. According to Okoro (2019) Student will be encouraged to work on project that will require the use of Igbo language to carry out assignment. By this students can develop fluency, comprehension and also incorporating cultural activities. This can help the students to use Igbo language and culture in its fullness.

Blended learning Model: By implementing flipped classroom model, which will help students to learn Igbo language online and practice in the classroom. These approaches can promote effective hybrid teaching and learning environment that can enhance the acquisition of Igbo language.

Role of Technology in Hybrid Teaching and Learning of Igbo Language in the 21st Century

According to Okoro (2020), Okoro (2019) and Ude (2018) Technology plays a great role in teaching and learning in the following ways:

Enhancing instruction through digital content such as video, podcast and interactive simulation to supplement traditional teaching method.

Technology can facilitate online discussion forum, enabling student to collaborate and communicate with pears and instructors.

Technology can facilitate video conferencing and enable student to participate in classes and collaborate among themselves. It can also facilitate online discussion forum where student can collaborate and communicate with each other and both with instructors.

Technology can provide language support to translate tool and language learning software in order to support language diversity.

Technology can provide real-time feedback where student can track their progress and adjust their learning style. In order words improve their learning performance.

Technology can provide Igbo language video and podcast. This is like Igbo language television which can provide interactive Igbo content, such as Igbo language quizzes and games inform of quiz let which can help the learner to practice Igbo language vocabulary and grammar in a funny and interactive method.

In Igbo language learning management system like module and canvas can help Igbo language instruction to manage Igbo language course, check learner's progress and provide feedback on the performance of the learner.

All these show that technology can make instruction in Igbo language more effective, accessible and improve student learning outcome.

Conclusion

The study demonstrated how hybrid teaching and learning can enhance the acquisition of Igbo language skills, promote cultural awareness and foster sense of identity among learners. Apart from diverse benefits enacting from hybrid teaching and learning, there are diverse challenges that lie in the technological and pedagogical dimension ranging from audio and video disruption (Racs, Detienne, Windey and Depaepe, 2019). The implementation of hybrid teaching and learning approaches in Igbo language education requires careful consideration of the challenges involved. These include the need for adequate infrastructure, teaching training and technical support. Therefore by working together to implement effective teaching strategies can help to ensure the continued vitality and relevance of Igbo language and culture in the 21st century.

Recommendations

These recommendations can help to ensure the relevance of Igbo language in hybrid teaching and learning:

For effective instructional delivery in hybrid teaching and learning of Igbo language the educators and policy makers should promote cultural awareness among learners by highlighting the importance of Igbo language and culture.

Government should provide adequate infrastructure and technical support to facilitate the effective use of technology in Igbo language class. Teachers also should endeavor to use these infrastructural materials in their lesson to reduce the use of verbal instruction in the classroom.

Teachers should be receiving training/workshop in order to learn how to integrate technology and hybrid approaches into language teaching for effective instructional delivery and to be breasted with the changes arising from the facilities.

Government should work together with the teachers to implement hybrid learning approaches which is the combination of traditional method of teaching and modern technological method of teaching which will help to promote the survival of Igbo Language in the 21st century.

Government should review national policy on language education and give the indigenous people the right of education in their own language which will be appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning

Government should equip technological facilities in the schools and organize practical sections to ensure systematic training on the use of visual instructional aides.

There is need to tailor education in the country toward the needs of the people in this era of information and technology and what citizen require to develop as members of the society.

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