Cultural Education in the Nigerian Languages: The Issue of Igbo Teaching Methodology

Z. Iwuala
Department of Igbo
Federal College of Education, Yola Nigeria
+2348(0)38305123

Abstract
The paper examines the importance of teaching students of Nigerian languages in tertiary institutions using the modern Igbo Language methodology. Culture which has been referred to as a totality of peoples ways of life (Uzochukwu, 1985) is not static but changes as man, evolves new ways of existence in the light of the above changes, Igbo Language teachers should disregard some aspects of cultural and old methods of teaching them which appear to be obnoxious. The paper also suggests modification of the old methods to suit modern times. There is need therefore for cultural education to be given a priority in the Igbo Language teaching; In this regard, this paper shall look at the following: Concepts of cultural education, methodology and modern cultural methods. By this attempts language and cultural educators would use the relevance of methodology in the teaching of culture in the Igbo Language.

Introduction
In recent times the government has made tremendous steps in creating cultural awareness amongst the various ethno-cultural groups in the country. Some of these steps are in the area of curriculum development, cultural education and other related programmes geared towards uniting the diversified geo-ethnic groups in the country. In pursuance of its programmes of national mobilization, self reliance, re-orientation, integration and economic recovery through the use of culture and its component, the Federal government, launched the National Culture Policy whose aims and objectives are to:-

i. Mobilize and motivate the people by disseminating and propagating ideas which promote national pride, solidarity and consciousness.

ii. Evolves from our Plurality a national culture, the stamp of which will be reflected in Africa and world affairs.

iii. Promote on educational systems that motivate and stimulated creativity and draw largely from our traditional values.

iv. Promote creativity in fields or act, science and technological skills and their progressive updating to save modern development needs as our contribution to world growth of culture and ideals.

v. Establish a code of behaviour compatible with our tradition of humanism and a discipline moral society.

vi. Sustain environmental and cosier conditions which enhance the quality of life, produce responsible citizenship and ordered society.

vii. Enhance the efficient management of national resources through the transformation or the indigenous technology, design resources and skills, and

viii. Enhance national self-reliance and self sufficiency and reflect our cultural heritage and national inspiration in process of industrialization.

These national aspirations can be realized if the teaching and learning of culture is given a methodology that will address life realities of modern methodology becomes inevitable, since its medium of transmission is language, be it verbal or non-verbal.

Concept of cultural education
A very useful starting point for this presentation is to define what culture is in what is claimed to be more embracing less elitist definitions. Linton (1947), Broon and Selznick (1963), Mair (1967), Biobaku (1982), Agada and Okonkwo (1991) summarized the definition of culture as that complex whole which include knowledge, belief, art, moral, law, custom and any other abilities acquired by man. Culture is dynamic and therefore is in state of perpetual evolution-transmitted from generation to generation. This is so because the life experience of the cultural adherent are not static because it differs with the passage of time.

A major goal of education is acculturation helping the individual learner to grasp the essential of the culture of his immediate society, to observed value and behavior pattern peculiar to the culture and to leave the culture of his society (Obanya, 1985). By cultural education we mean the process of helping the learner to lead a fuller life. He will not only acquire knowledge but will also develop his feelings, his values and human relationship to that extent, every discipline that goes into the curriculum of the school can be said to be cultural subject. If a subject is not relevant to the culture of society, it should not be taught or learn at all. While such argument is valid, some school does appear to be more deeply rooted in the indigenous culture and others. This points to the fact that one need to study cultural education if one needs to be fully educated.

Concept of methodology

In trying to explain the concept of methodology, it is necessarily to say it from the perspective of science as a well of teaching. It is the study of teaching methods. The person studying the subject in question endeavours to understand some of the various methods adopted in teaching different subjects. This method by the teacher/students studies are usually those that have been trying or used by educators or famous teachers in different part of the world usually with a view to knowing and perhaps using them.

Some of these methods are the symbolic translation methods, the reform methods, the audio-lingual method, the direct method, the audiovisual method and the dramatic methods. It may not be necessary to discuss all the methods and certainly not all that have ever been referred to as methods. For the purpose of this paper at least four methods will be discussed. Some of these methods like dramatic and translation methods have been existing but what is needed is a reformation to suit the modern times.

Modern cultural education method

1. Dramatic Method: - As the name goes, the dramatic method involve dramatizing or acting of ideals or event by the students or the teacher himself in order to ease learning. But fact and skill can be converted into drama by a teacher in order to make the process of learning such fact and skill more practical and interesting. The dramatic method unveils reality and present situation to students as a problem. Topics in all subject areas can be reorganized and dramatized by the students in order to make them clear and easier to understand and make learning a pleasurable venture. Remarkable progress has been made in the last two decades in comprehending drama as a tool of education.

Realizing the pedagogical potentials and the epistemological position of life, contemporary educationist have press it into service, but again two faults have been identified in the procedure. The first is the preoccupation with children – most of the studies done in the area of drama in education have concentrated on children with only occasional references to adults, (Alaezi, 1990). Therefore, the need to in cooperate both parties with the methods is essential. This could be done if teaching takes into cognizance in psychological and philosophical implication. It is pertinent to emphasize that plays examined in subsequent period have been deliberately chosen because they
offer the possibilities of the type of the cultural education we have tried to enunciate.

Therefore, drama in modern times should be such that will not only be pedagogical or epistemological but also awaken the social and political consciousness of the people (Ubahakwe, 1979). For instance in teaching marriage ceremony using drama method such as:

Onwere x'dara chara acha………………
(There is an apple that has repened)

Onwere osisi toro eto………………
(There is a tree that has grown)

Onwere agbqghq toro eto……………
(There is a lady that has grown)

The teacher could dramatise the above expressions by expression substitution of characters. This done would make the subject see the meaning from the deep structure level instead of all surface level. The items Udara and Osisi are two contrastive objects but they are in complementary distribution. The specificity of ‘Udara’ disambiguate one from the complexity of seeing ‘Osisi’ as whether it is that of economical or uneconomical. This then culturally may represent a marriageable and unmarriageable lady. With this method, an indigenous language speaker or learner vis-à-vis Igbo should be able to be consider utterances he/she make at any particular time; and the context in which it is used.

2. Translation Method

The translation method is also called the traditional method. It has been and still is extensively used. The term translation method relates to the fact that this method is a nearly perfect reflector of the way Latin and Greek have been taught for countries. When they ceased to be most commonly used languages among scholars their continued study was motivated by the great educational value attached to reading the classics and by the relate argument that study helped to further a certain intellectual discipline the mind being trained, it was asserted by logical analysis of the language, extensive memorization of complicated rules and paradigm and the application of these rules and paradigms in translation exercise. The reason why Nigerians language were taught in the same way as the classical languages was partly that in the competition between the two, it had to be made clear that, the educational value of the Nigerian languages was at least equal to that of classics.

Therefore in our everyday interactions with other people, we use hundreds and thousand of symbols to communicate and to work together. By this interaction of symbols we evaluate each other, our selves and our society. An example can be found in the arguments that feature in the Igbo marriage institution concept:

Onwere x'dara chara na ebe gi m chqrq [ghoro
(There is a ripped apple in your place I want to pluck)

Phonologically, there is a careful mixture of high, low and mid tones, which tend to suggest that udara possesses all the nutrition’s on appetizing quality a well repined fruit ought to possess. Also the morphology and syntax of the sentence give the idea of “Chara” as having a covert complementation ‘acha’ to make its meaning comprehensible (Ikeokwu,1996). It therefore emphasizes that the girl is not only beautifully grown up for marriage but also has the relevant characters any Igbo adult male would love in a wife.

In teaching therefore, one should consider meaning so as not to distort the meaning, hence the need for descriptive and prescriptive approach when teaching cultural concepts.

3. Acculturation Method
A major goal of education is acculturation helping the individual learner to grasp the essentials of the culture of his immediate society to absorb values and behaviour patterns peculiar of his society. To that extent, every discipline that goes into the curriculum of a school can be said to be a cultural subject. If a subject is not relevant to the culture of the society, it should not be taught or learnt at all while such an argument is valid, some school subjects do appear to be more deeply noted in the indigenous culture (or geared towards cultural enrichment we mean the process of helping the learner to lead a fuller life. He will not only acquire knowledge (developing his, head, or intellect) but he will also develop his feelings, his values and human relation steps (that is his heart). There are subject which help to develop the heart more than others, even though they also contribute to the development of head.

Educating individual through cultural subjects

One major purpose of education is the production, the preservation and full appreciation of beauty. To make this point clear, we shall begin by looking very closely at the expression “full appreciation of beauty”. Appreciation is a term which education avoids. To show evidence of appreciation, the individual has to be attracted to something which is sticking the lines, patterns, forms, shapes, colours and their combination). Such questions include:
(1). Examine interrelationships between the factors which make an object sticking the lines, patterns, forms shapes, colours etc.
(2) Relate the object to some concrete object (eg a pot, a market sense, a flower etc).
(3) Expression in words (or in writing) his impression of the character and messages of the form of art to which he has been exposed.

One thing that makes this method unique is the relaxed, informal way by which the learner interacts with her ‘teachers’ nobody times or tags the learner. Above all, both the teaching and learning are voluntary. Nobody feels guilty when an error is committed; rather, it is laughed ever. Learning is costless as the teachers are not even aware of their teaching. The learner is also saved anxiety as this learning is less evaluations tensed free. What is remarkable about the end product of this method is that the learner master the new language, accent free, speaking it with the same ease as the owners of the language.

4. Eclectic Method

This is a method whereby the Igbo teacher combines different methods in one lesson’s objectives, in any given topic therefore, the teacher is encouraged to combine lecture with other methods like questioning, drilling, dramatization, translation, contextual and other methods in order to reach the individuals in the class. This is based on the theory of learning that emphasizes different cognitive that styles by which human beings approach learning one learner can master just by lecture method, another one would need demonstration or illustration or a combination of all of them. a teacher who adopts eclectic method in teaching culture is giving the best opportunity for every student in the class to learn.

Conclusion and recommendation

The time has come when the principles of syntactic and paradigmatic relations should be used teaching of culture in Nigerian languages. This will assist not only in making meaning contrast between, the native speakers choice of linguistic items, but also bringing to bare complementary distribution, free variation, synonyms abound in that linguistic context. We would also like to see
a situation where Igbo cultural concepts are contextual and therefore any linguistic item(s) used in expressing such concepts should equally be subjected to their original situations. The principles of prescriptiveness versus descriptiveness should be attempted when teaching cultural concepts. This however is a clarion call to language and culture educators to attempt this approach in teaching cultural courses. These done will help to bring out the place of culture in language teaching and learning.

Apparently, the details of cultural education in the Nigerian languages thus far discussed have been useful at least for the purpose of this paper. A thorough survey therefore requires years of research to collect more relevant fact that can be analyzed and used to improve the teaching of Nigerian languages.

References