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INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE UTILIZATION IN THE TEACHING OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE AT THE UPPER BASIC LEVEL IN EBONYI STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study focused on indigenous language utilization in the teaching of agricultural science at the upper basic level in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. Three research questions guided the study. The population of the study comprised 350 agricultural science teachers. The sample for the study was 210, comprised 52 teachers and 158 pupils in the public primary schools in Abakaliki Education Zone of Ebonyi State. The research instrument used for the data collection was questionnaire developed by the researchers and validated by three experts. The reliability of the instrument was established using Pearson product moment correlation. The reliability coefficient of the instrument was found to be 0.79 which was considered highly reliable. The data analysis was done using mean ($\bar{x}$) and standard deviation. The results of the study showed that adoption of indigenous language (Igbo) in teaching of food crop production, farm animal production and maintenance of farm tools and equipment will help in solving food insecurity in the state. Based on these findings relevant recommendations and suggestions were made.

Keywords: Indigenous Language, Agricultural Science, Teaching, Primary School, Food Insecurity.

Introduction

Language is a phenomenon that distinguishes human beings from lower animals. Many scholars have tried to define language from different linguistic perspectives. Some see it as purely human and instructive method of communicating ideas, desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols. Saphir in Oyedeji (2018) defines language as a vehicle for conveying the culture and tradition of the people that owns it. According to Nwigwe (2020) language is not only a medium of communication but also a matrix through which the culture, values, norms, and mores of people are transmitted. Language is one of the most enduring artifacts of culture. It serves as an important element of human identity and evaluation of traditional societies and therefore plays a crucial role in the overall human and social existence (Ndem *et al.,* 2020). Language are of different types. It may be classified into foreign and indigenous language.

Indigenous languages are the languages native to a country and spoken as a mother tongue by indigenous people. It also signify people's knowledge, culture, and identity. Ohiri-Aniche (2014) defines indigenous language as the language which a group of people considered to be the inhabitants of an area, acquire in their early years and which normally becomes their mutual instrument of thought and communication. Communications in indigenous language has been observed to enhance social harmony thereby encouraging African culture to be preserved. Nigeria is a multilingual and multi ethnic society with over five hundred (500) indigenous languages spoken within her borders (Blench, 2012). Three of these indigenous languages are considered to be major. They are; Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba (Federal

Republic of Nigeria, 2014). Others include; Edo, Igala, Ogoni, Birom, Nupe, Anang, Echie, Efik, Kanuri, Urhobo to mention a few (Emenanjo, 2007). The importance of language in human communication can hardly be over emphasized. It is through language that one communicate with the world, define one's identity, expresses one's history and culture, learn, defend one's human rights and participate in all aspects of the society and understand different subjects such as in agricultural science.

Agricultural science is an area of study which involves the science and art of studying the basic principles in production of crops and animals for the utilization of man (Ndem & Akubue, 2018). Agricultural science also means the science or practice of farming including cultivation of soil for growing of crops and rearing of animals to provide food and raw materials for the use of man and industries.

Agricultural science has tremendous importance in human and the society. Agricultural science helps in production of raw material, food, development of rural areas, provides employment opportunities, foreign exchange, income to the farmer and many others. Agricultural science teaching is carried out at the primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. This work is focused in primary schools. Primary schools in Nigeria context is one of the basic education level after the nursery school. Teaching on the other hand is the process or a profession of those who give instruction especially in schools to the learners. Teaching is an act of helping a person to acquire knowledge, competences, values and ideas (Ndem, 2016).

Through agricultural science, food insecurity can be eliminated or reduced in the society. Food insecurity has been defined as lack of consistent access to enough food for an active and healthy life. In other words, there are millions of people all over the world who suffer from shortage of food and cannot feed themselves.

Food insecurity is a dangerous concept as it does not exist in isolation. For instance, low income families could be affected by multiple overlapping issues such as social isolation, acute and chronic health problems, lack of affordable housing, low wages and high medical cost among others. People experiencing food insecurity often consume nutrient deficient food stuff, which may contribute to the development of some malnutrition diseases such as kwashiorkor, diabetes, Armenia, among others.

Food insecurity, a part from leading to malnutrition diseases, has led to anti – social and immoral behavior among the individuals. Many people, in a bid to get their daily bread have engaged in stealing, kidnapping, drug, and child trafficking, prostitution among the ladies and many other anti – social vices. It is on the above premise that this work is designed to investigate whether the adoption of indigenous language (Igbo) in teaching of agricultural science at the primary school could be a panacea for food insecurity.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine the adoption of indigenous language (Igbo) for improving the teaching of agricultural science at the primary school. Specifically, the study sought to ascertain;

- The adoption of indigenous language (Igbo) for improving the teaching of food crops production as a panacea for food insecurity.
- The adoption of indigenous language (Igbo) for improving the teaching of farm animal's production as a panacea for food insecurity.

The adoption of indigenous language (Igbo) for improving the teaching of maintenance of farm tools and equipment as a panacea for food insecurity.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How will the adoption of indigenous language (Igbo) improves the teaching of food crop production as a panacea for food insecurity
2. How will the adoption of indigenous language (Igbo) improves the teaching of maintenance of farm tools and equipment as a panacea for food insecurity

Research Method

This study was carried out in Ebonyi State of Nigeria. The design of the study was a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was 210 comprised fifty two [52] agricultural science teachers and one hundred and fifty eight [158] pupils in the public primary schools. The instrument for data collection was the researchers' structured questionnaire designed in 4-point rating scale, to elicit responses from the respondents. The response option were; strongly agreed, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. (4, 3 2, 1) respectively. The instrument was validated by three experts in agricultural science education and measurement and evaluation of the University.

The reliability of the instrument was established using Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.79 which was considered highly reliable. The 210 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents with the help of the school headmistress, in each of the primary school. Out of 210 copies of questionnaires distributed, 200 were retrieved which represents 95.4% return rate. For data analysis, the research questions were answered using mean ($\bar{x}$) and standard deviation (SD). In taking decision, the mean scores of any item that is 2.50 and above are regarded as agreement, while anyone below 2.50 shows disagreement for respective items.

Results

Research Question 1: How the adoption of indigenous language (Igbo) will improves the teaching of food crop production at the primary school act as a panacea for food insecurity?

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation of the respondent on adoption of indigenous language for teaching of food crop production at the primary schools as a panacea for food insecurity

S/N	Item: Indigenous language helps in teaching of	Mean $\bar{x}$	Standard Deviation SD	Remark
1	Preparation of lands for food crops	3.57	0.50	Agree
2	Planting of food crops	3.45	0.51	Agree
3	Application of manure on food crops	3.48	0.52	Agree
4	Diseases and pests control in food crops	3.42	0.53	Agree
5	Harvesting of food crops	3.38	0.57	Agree
6	Processing of food crops	3.47	0.51	Agree
7	Storage of food crops	3.38	0.53	Agree
	Grand Mean =	**3.45**		

Table I revealed that mean scores of the respondents ranged between 3.38 and 3.57 and the standard deviation range of 0.50 and 0.57, with a grand mean of 3.45. This shows that the respondents were of the opinion that the adoption of indigenous language (Igbo) for teaching of food crops production at the primary school will help to solve the problem of food insecurity. The scores of the standard deviation indicates that the mean scores of the respondents did not deviate far from the central mean.

Research Question 2:
How will the adoption of indigenous language (Igbo) for teaching of maintenance of farm tools and equipment at the primary schools act as a panacea for food insecurity?

Table 2. Mean and Standard Deviation of the respondents on adoption of indigenous language (Igbo) for teaching of maintenance of farm tools and equipment at the primary school as a panacea for food insecurity:

S/N	Item: Maintenance of farm tools and equipment	Mean $\bar{x}$	Standard Deviation SD	Remark
8.	Knowledge of identifying the appropriate tool and equipme for any farm work	3.46	0.58	Agree
9.	Skills in lubricating movables parts of tools and equipment	3.48	0.53	Agree
10.	Competency in tightening and losing nughts of equipment	3.51	0.50	Agree
11.	Knowledge of daily maintenance of tools and equipment	3.45	0.57	Agree
12.	Ability to replace worn out parts of tools and equipment	3.33	0.62	Agree
13.	Knowledge of cleaning the tools and equipment after use	3.46	0.53	Agree
14.	Ability to store the tools and equipment at the conducive pla to avoid spoilage and damage	3.52	0.50	Agree
	Grand Mean =	**3.45**		

Table 2 indicates that all the items had their mean scores above 2.50 which is the criterion for agreement and the standard deviation range between 0.50 and 0.62. This is an indication that the respondents agreed that adoption of indigenous language (Igbo) in teaching of maintenance of farm tools and equipment at the primary schools is a panacea for food insecurity. Also the scores of the standard deviation indicates that the opinions of the respondents did not deviate far from one another.

Major Findings

Based on the analysis of the data generated, it has shown that:

- Adoption of indigenous language (Igbo) in the teaching of food crop production at the primary school can help act as a panacea for food insecurity.
- Adoption of indigenous language (Igbo) in teaching of maintenance of farm tools and equipment will help in solving food insecurity.

Discussion of Findings

The Results of data analysis presented above in table 1, 2 and 3 revealed that the adoption of indigenous language (Igbo) in the teaching of food crop production, farm animal production and maintenance of farm tools and equipment at the primary schools will help in solving food insecurity. This agrees with the views of Lawal (2015); & Ondondo (2020) who in their separate studies asserted that the use of indigenous language by the field instructors and extension agents for proper dissemination of information on government programs to the people will help in solving the problems of food insecurity in the country. According to them, any policies and programs that do not factor in indigenous language towards their implementation will remain dormant. Indigenous language can help in disseminating new innovations and technologies in agriculture to the rural people, leading to food security.

Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it has been established that adoption of indigenous language (Igbo) in the teaching of food crop production, farm animal production and maintenance of farm tools and equipment in primary schools will help in solving the problems of food insecurity. Indigenous language is the language people are conversant with, their mother tongue. There are lots of benefit in using the indigenous language in teaching of agricultural science which will help in solving food insecurity.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following Recommendations are put forward.

- Teachers in Ebonyi state should be encouraged to teach and facilitate agricultural science teaching and learning by using the indigenous language always in their schools.
- The Ministry of Education in Ebonyi state should set up monitoring team to ensure that Igbo language is used by the teachers to teach agricultural science at the primary schools
- The Ministry of Education in Ebonyi state should offer scholarship to students studying Igbo at the tertiary institutions to ensure that enough Igbo teachers are produced in order to encourage the application of Igbo language in teaching at the secondary schools.

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