Unubi, Sunday Abraham
Department of Igala Language
and Culture, Kogi State College
of Education, Ankpa, Nigeria

Akonti, Christopher
Department of English, Kogi
State College of Education,
Ankpa, Nigeria

Teaching Igala and English Languages Effectively in Primary Schools in Igala Land

Unubi, Sunday Abraham, Akonti, Christopher

Abstract

This article expfalores teaching Igala and English languages effectively in primary schools in Igala land. Actually, the outcome of teaching effectively is that which leads to change in behavioural knowledge. Although the old adage which says "Somebody can lead a horse to the river but cannot force her to drink water" is still relevant here, if the teaching is done effectively, the serious-minded pupils will study hard to ensure a productive and satisfactory learning outcomes. Today, it is not an overstatement to say that some primary school pupils can neither write and spell simple Igala names/words properly nor construct simple sentences in English correctly. Judging from their classroom experiences, the researchers have indeed, observed that teaching these languages effectively in our primary and secondary schools is necessary for maximum learning outcomes.

Keywords: Igala, English, teaching effectively

Introduction

Indeed, teaching is a noble profession; it is not only a profession but also a calling. There are people who are knowledgeable or brilliant in their subject areas but they cannot teach. And even when they do, no matter how they teach, learners find it extremely difficult to understand what they teach, and as such, it does not provoke any tangible and visible change in learning behaviour or behavioural knowledge. This is because they lack the prowess or ability to 'transfer' or 'pass' knowledge to others. Therefore, to teach effectively is to induce understanding in the learner, which also goes further to produce change in learning behaviour or outcome that is satisfactory to the learner, the teacher and even the guardians of the learner. This paper occupies a centre stage as far as teaching and learning are concerned because it informs the readership of the fundamental importance of effective teaching, which is a direct consequence of change in learning behaviour in most cases, if not all.

Igala and English: A Brief Survey of Historical Origin

❖ **Igala**: Igala is a dominant language in Kogi State spoken by over two million natives in nine Local Government Areas (namely – Ankpa, Bassa, Ibaji, Idah, Igala-mela/Odolu, Ofu, Dekina, Olamaboro and Omala) of Kogi East Senatorial District, North Central Nigeria.

Furthermore, the language is equally spoken in some communities outside Kogi State, which include: Èbú in Delta State, Ólóhí and Ìfèkù in Edo State, Ógwúrúgwú, Ọ̀jọ́, Ìgá and Àsàbá in Enugu State, Òdòkpè, Ńjàm, Ìnọ́mà, Àlá, Ígbédọ̀, Ónúgwá, Òdè, Ìgbòkényí and Ìlá in Anambra State, but certainly not outside Nigeria (Omachonu, 2012:8).

Geographically, Igala land is located within the triangle formed by the confluence of the Rivers Niger and Benue. The Igala people are found east of the confluence of these rivers. The land is bounded on the west by River Niger, on the east by Enugu State, the south by Anambra State and on the north by Benue/Nassarawa States. It is 120 kilometres wide and 160 kilometres long. It is located approximately between latitudes 6' 80° and 8' north and longitudes 6' 30° and 7' 40° east and covers an area of about 13, 665 square kilometres as one of the African languages; Igala has been indicated by Negedu (2013:116) to belong to the Kwa subgroup of the Niger Congo language family.

Correspondence:
Unubi, Sunday Abraham
Department of Igala Language
and Culture, Kogi State College
of Education, Ankpa, Nigeria

The Niger Congo languages constitute one of the world's major language families and Africa's largest in terms of geographical area and number of speakers. Igala is also a language of the Yoruboid branch of the Defoid. The Defoid languages constitute a branch of the present Benue Congo language family. It comprises the Yoruba, the Igala and the Itsekiri groups of south-western Nigeria.

The name (Yoroboid branch of the Defoid) derives from its most widely spoken number, Yoruba. It is therefore note-worthy, at first instance, that the Igala and the Yoruba almost share the same view in their notion of God. There is a very thin line in pronunciation of words that depict divinities with their qualities. Research has shown that the concept of the 'Ata' may have relational connection with a Yoruba word used to refer to kings both in Ayede Ekiti and Oshogbo respectively. Armstrong, as cited by Negedu (2003:117) is emphatic in saying that "the most definite statement that can be made about the Igala is that they had a common origin with the Yoruba and that separation took place long enough ago to allow for their fairly considerable linguistic differences". It is more preferable to say that there is a relational connection between cultures than to say that one emanates from the other since humility has not proven to be a virtue where cultures and civilisations contest for relevance.

Like any group of people, the Igalas are ruled by a figure called the 'Ata'. The word Ata means 'father' and the full title of the ruler is 'Ata Igala', meaning, the Father of Igalas. The popular way of greeting the Ata is 'Agaabaidu' or 'Gaabaidu', literally translated to mean 'lion, the king of the forest/head of all animals'. The new **Ata Igala** is HRM Idakwo Michael Ameh Oboni II. He ascended the throne of his fore fathers in February, 2013, after the demise of Ata Aliyu Ocheje Obaje.

❖ **English**: Historically, English was spoken first in England about 1,500 years ago. However, it was in existence before then. Geographically, the English language was confined to 'the British Isles', a group of Islands lying off the north-west coast of the continent of Europe in the northern temperate zone of the world. Furthermore, there are two main islands, namely Britain, the larger of the two, and Ireland, the smaller. Politically too, the British Isles today also comprises two main parts, namely the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, made up of England, Wales, Scotland (i.e. Britain), and Northern Ireland, with its capital at London; and the Republic of Ireland, with its capital at Dublin.

Associated with the British were the Celts, the Romans, the Anglo-Saxons and the Danes. The Celts were the first inhabitants of the British Isles about 500 and 100 BC. The age in which they existed is called 'The Iron Age'. Having spread through central and Western Europe, they arrived in south-eastern England. They did not speak English, but their languages belonged to the Indo-European family of languages, to which English also belongs. The Romans were a succession of peoples of the Ancient World who invaded Britain from the Middle East around the Mediterranean in the period of 3000 BC – 500 AD (3,500 years). They developed a literate civilisation based on agriculture and slave labour, and through military prowess brought other peoples under their control. The Roman Empire with Latin as its language and its capital at Rome in Italy, was the most extensive of all, and with the conquest of Britain, it reached almost its fullest extent. By the end of the fifth century AD, the Roman Empire in Western Europe had disappeared and had been replaced by 'barbarian' kingdoms. The Anglo-Saxon invaders arrived in Britain in large numbers with the intention of settling, when with the Roman withdrawal, the native British were left to fend for themselves. The Anglo-Saxons were chiefly interested in the fertile eastern and southern parts of Britain, which were also closest to their homeland in Germany. They set up a number of kingdoms which included: Kent, Sussex, Essex, Wessex, Northumbria, East Anglia, and Mercia. The whole area occupied by the Anglo-Saxons later came to be referred to as 'Angla-land' ('the land of the Angles', the Angles being more in number than the Saxons), and from this word, 'England' is clearly derived. Finally, the Danes were warlike, heathen and Norwegian beings from Scandinavia, popularly known as Vikings, who attacked the British Isles or England around 800. They descended on the English coast and penetrated far inland, plundering and burning. Later in the ninth century the Danes finally came to England to settle, especially in the eastern parts of the country after the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms had virtually disappeared (Jowitt, 2009:1-10).

According to Wilton (2001:1), the English language typologically belongs to the West Germanic branch of the Indo-European family of languages. This broad family includes most of the European languages spoken today. The Indo-European family includes several major branches, as follows:

- Latin and the modern Romance languages;
- The Germanic languages;
- The Indo-Iranian languages, including Hindi and Sanskrit;
- The Slavic languages;
- The Baltic languages of Latvian and Lithuanian;
- The Celtic languages; and
- Greek

The influence of the original Indo-European language, designated proto-Indo-European can be seen today, even though no written record of it exists. The word 'father', for example, is 'vater' in German, 'pater' in Latin, and 'pitir' in Sanskrit. Obviously, these words are all cognates, similar words in different languages that share the same root.

Statement of the Research Problem
The researchers' decision to embark on this study is not without burden or deep emotional concern. Examination malpractice has become rife or common among students at all higher levels of education in our society today (NCE, ND, HND, Degree, PGD and Masters). And reverse is not the case among pupils at the primary level of education. In fact, it begins from this level of education, and from here it spreads its dangerous and deadly tentacles to all levels of higher education. This is due to the fact that the wrong notion of 'you cannot do it alone' or 'heaven helps those who help themselves', which we cannot explain how it came into our society's educational system, has been implanted in as well as imprinted on the tender hearts of our young ones in primary schools in Igala land in particular and Nigeria in general.

Therefore, it is high time we contained or curtailed this hydra-headed problem, which has become a shame and

embarrassment to us nation-wide. And one important and potent tool to employ is that of teaching effectively. This is because through effective teaching we can disabuse the minds of our young ones from examination malpractice, and provoke confidence in them both to stand alone and do it alone without helping themselves or anybody helping them during examinations. By this, it is certain that the virtues of hard work and self-image that exude inner confidence and ability, which are gradually being eroded can be rebuilt, promoted and upheld to restore the lost glory of academic norm or standard particularly for the betterment of Igala land and the entire Nigerian society generally.

Brief Literature Review
• **Definition of Teaching Effectively**
While seeking to define teaching effectively or effective teaching in education, we must recognise that a focus on outcomes reflects the value-driven choices and priorities about the goals of education that are deemed to be important in the wider education system, especially at the secondary level of education. This means that defining teaching effectively must be done in relation to understanding the objectives of education as well as promoting learners' cognitive development, which is one of the prime purposes of education and teaching. In this study, our focus is on the teacher's influence on learners' outcomes as well as classroom behaviours and practices that teachers adopt to promote better outcomes for learners. In view of this, Tomic (Date?:247-48) reports that teaching effectively is the case when teachers are trained to use certain instructional behaviours effectively. The word effectively in this context means that the teacher is capable of applying the instructional behavours s/he has learnt. In other words, the extent to which the teacher can apply newly acquired behavours, that is, the instructional behavours applied by the teacher constitute the dependable variable, as far as teaching effectively is concerned. In a similar fashion, Barry (2010:3-4) remarks that the concept of teaching effectively is better understood by studying the models of instruction that capture and define what it is that an effective teacher knows and does, that is, a set of behaviours that an effective teacher incorporates into his/her daily professional practice. These involve a deep understanding of subject matter, learning theory and learner differences, planning, classroom instructional strategies, knowing individual learners, and assessment of their understanding and proficiency with learning outcomes. They also include a teacher's ability to reflect, collaborate with colleagues and continue ongoing professional development. Also, Ko, Sammons and Bakkum (2014:13) state that teaching effectively is generally referred to in terms of the focus on learner outcomes, teacher behaviours as well as classroom processes that promote better learner outcomes. Furthermore, Al-Ani, Al barwani and Al-Balushi (2012:80) quotes Beach and Reinhartz (2000) as saying that the new perspectives on teaching effectively have focused on issues such as (a) the dynamics of teaching and learning within the overall context of the classroom; (b) the nature of student learning; (c) the nature of subject matter teaching; and (d) new classroom data-collection procedures. According to them, these researchers assert that teachers should be encouraged to engage in a reflective process that helps them move from holding a more

structured or technical view of teaching to becoming reflective practitioners with a more complex view of instruction. Besides being reflective, the teacher's ability to create a pleasant atmosphere in the classroom where learners will be safe physically and secure psychologically to explore the world of learning, are also considered to be extremely pivotal to effective teaching in the 21st century. In addition, Centra (1993) as cited in Sajjad (Date?:3) defines teaching effectively or effective teaching as that which produces beneficial and purposeful student learning through the use of appropriate procedures.

From the forgoing, it is obvious that the teacher is the driver of teaching effectively. In other words, although the pupils have a part to play by cooperating with the teacher for desired worthwhile outcome, the teacher is the main role-player. For this reason, the researchers see teaching effectively as the adoption or application of teaching skills, insights, instructional behaviours, methodologies, practices, tactics and strategies for teaching to achieve productive or successful learning outcomes or effects that are satisfactory to the learner, the teacher or even the learner's parents. If teaching is effective, both the teacher and the learner's parents will definitely notice the change in the behavioural knowledge of the learner thereby bringing joy and satisfaction to them.

Allusion to the Experiential Instances of the Researchers on What Teaching Effectively should be
There have been divergent views among educationists on what constitutes an effective teaching. Rather than dissipating our time and energy on that, we would like to cite our classroom experiences here.
In teaching the Igala language, on one other hand, there are basic essentials the teacher must pay attention to, and two of such are the application of tone and diacritics to vowels in the words of the language. However, these, especially tone continue to be ignored and so left out in major Igala texts like the Igala Bible. We could still remember that the old Igala text our teacher used to teach us while in school had no tone marks. This, instead of helping the learner to understand the language ends up confusing him/her. Little wonder then that a lot of educated Igala natives, especially the present generation of youths can neither read Igala texts nor write complex Igala names and words. Tone simply means change in the pitch of the voice, which affects meaning lexically. This means that Igala words that look alike in spelling now have different meanings when tone is applied to them. For example, consider these Igala words: ágbá 'a type of tree', āgbā 'thank you', àgbà 'jaw', àgbá 'handcuff', ágbâ 'basket' ágbā 'reader' (one who reads); gbā 'to read', gbà 'to collect/receive/take', gbá 'to sweep'; ókó 'money', ókò 'husband', òkò 'millipede', ókô 'ship', etc. In the case of diacritics, they must be indicated under the /ẹ/ phoneme to differentiate it from /e/ and /ọ/ from /o/ in Igala words and names, as in Ọjọgbanẹ (name), Odoma (name), Ojọmajẹ (name); ọgẹdẹ 'banana', igede 'key', angẹjẹ 'tortoise', etc. When we indicate this, especially on Igala names, any educated person who has elementary knowledge in sounds of a language can pronounce them correctly anywhere in the world. So, for effective teaching of Igala to take place, the teacher must emphasise to the learner the importance of tone and diacritics to the orthography of the language. We understand the very fact that many generally lack the patience required to apply tone

to texts because it actually takes a painstaking effort to do so, especially when typing, we however encourage our scholars and teachers to take the pain because it is a worthy one. If we fail to do this, the teaching of this language would not be done effectively; the learning outcomes would also continue to be unproductive; and both meaning and correct pronunciation of certain lexical items in the language would as well continue to be adversely affected.

One the other hand, in teaching English at the primary level of education, the teacher is duty-bound to define or make known to the learner what parts of speech are. And they are usually defined thus: "A noun is a naming word"; "A determiner is a word which is used at the beginning of a noun group to indicate which thing one is referring to, or whether one is referring to one thing or several". "A verb is a doing or an action word"; "A pronoun is a word used instead of a noun to avoid unnecessary repetition"; "An adverb is a word which modifies, completes or adds to the meaning of the verb, adjective and another adverb"; "An adjective is a word which qualifies or describes a noun or pronoun"; "A preposition is a word which shows relationship between two entities or things"; "A conjunction is a word used in joining or connecting words, a group of words or clauses together"; etc. Defining parts of speech this way has already become part of the learner from this level, even to the secondary level of education.

From our dealings with both pupils and students over the years, when asked to define any of these parts of speech, they usually do so with ease but when a teacher makes a sentence and asks them to show which one is an adjective, an adverb, or a verb, etc., they either start guessing or stare at the teacher. This is largely due to the fact that from the primary level of education, the teacher seems to lay more emphasis on definition than on identification or recognition or detection of these parts of speech in sentences. As a matter of fact, words 'jump' from one grammatical class (part of speech) to another through derivation. For example, the word grace or disgrace which belongs to a dual class of noun & verb, can also be gracious, ungracious, ungraceful, disgraceful, graceful or graceless (adj), graciousness, gracefulness, gracelessness, ungracefulness or ungraciousness, (n), graciously, gracefully, gracelessly, disgracefully, ungraciously or ungracefully (adv). Furthermore, notice the differences here: graces (pl. n), graces (3sg. v), graced, gracing (v) and grace's (poss. n); disgraces (3sg. v), disgraces (pl. n), disgraced and disgracing (v). Therefore, for teaching of English parts of speech to be done effectively at the primary level of education, much emphasis should be laid on both their definition and recognition in sentences to the learner by the teacher. If this is the case, one would notice that the learner would pay equal attention to both. And to teach these languages effectively, we find out that the teacher must possess some golden qualities in order to achieve golden education objectives. In view of this, we have outlined below such qualities that both an Igala and English teacher must possess.

Qualities of an Effective Igala Teacher
On one hand, for effective teaching of the Igala language in our primary schools, and for achievement of change in behavioural knowledge or learning outcomes, the teacher must possess the following qualities:
1. S/he must be interested in the language, its people, history and culture. Such deep interest will make him/her to teach the Igala language the way it is naturally, that is, Igala is a tonal language, and therefore tone must be indicated on its lexical items clearly to enhance the learners' behavioural knowledge of the language.
2. S/he must have the inner desire to learn. This means s/he must devote time to scholarly efforts such as getting materials, travelling to increase his/her knowledge, asking questions, reading as well as writing.
3. An Igala teacher must be an efficient speaker of the language, and be up to date in the development of the language. This means s/he must be an active member of any association that is formed to foster the growth of the language, or form one himself/herself if none exists.
4. An effective Igala teacher must attend seminars, workshops, public lectures, radio talks, television appearances and comment in newspapers regarding the culture and history of the language, and possibly, s/he should be an author.
5. Such a teacher must be prepared for frustration, setbacks and unsavoury from those who hate his/her unflinching love for the Igala language despite the activities of those who disparage and dismiss the Igala culture with a wave of hand.
6. S/he must show in words and deeds that s/he lives by what s/he preaches, believe in himself/herself as well as the cause to improve his/her people's language, history and culture.
7. As far as language teaching is concerned, an effective Igala teacher must be prepared to work with colleagues whose subject areas overlap with his/hers, e.g. English, History, Hausa and Yoruba teachers in order to draw insights from them.

Qualities of an Effective English Teacher
On the other hand, for effective teaching of the English language in our primary and even secondary schools, and for visible worthwhile learning outcomes, the teacher must possess the following qualities:
1. **Interest in the language**: It is practically impossible for any language teacher to impact positively on his/her learners if s/he is not interested in the language. Interest here entails constant inner drive to read, learn and know more of the English language. When this is the case, the teacher will be endowed with passion to teach the learners actively for worthwhile productive learning outcomes.
2. **In-depth knowledge of the subject**: An effective teacher must possess in-depth and adequate knowledge of the subject s/he teaches. The subject here is the English language, and the teacher must have, at least the basic knowledge of its sound system (phonology), the formation of its words (morphology) and how its words combine for construction of grammatical or acceptable sentences (syntax) in order to teach at the secondary level of education.
3. **Imagination**: A teacher who is imaginative can do wonders in the English class. Without imagination, education becomes a kind of intellectual recycling of the same knowledge passed from teacher to the learner and back to teacher in a test or examination. An

imaginative can teach any language skill interestingly and effectively. They can develop students' creative self-expression. Teachers who are imaginative explore and create new things, and students enjoy being guided by imaginative teachers.

4. **Innovation**: An innovative teacher dares to go off the track in order to be on the track. In other words, s/he goes farther in reading, studying as well as attending seminars and conferences with a view to fetching knowledge that will keep him/her on the track of effectiveness in teaching. To be innovative means: to introduce changes and new ideas; daring to be different and unique; experimenting new things; and freshness in knowledge at all times.

5. **Interaction**: Teachers who promote interaction in the English class do justice to their profession by empowering learners and helping them to develop their communication skills. They motivate their pupils and create opportunities for them to interact with one another through 'commutainment' (communication through entertainment) activities such as role plays, group discussions, mock interviews, etc.

6. **Independent thinking**: In a world where knowledge is doubling every few years and what once was a fact can become out of date so quickly. So, equipping young people with the mental tools to succeed in such a world is very vital. This is achieved by giving the learners tasks that can make them think individually and independently. Independent thinking implies: thinking on your own; being critical of what you see or hear; and questioning information and irrational assumptions. This is because language learning tasks should aim at developing learners' thinking skills.

7. **Interdependence**: Interdependence is essential for a successful person. Taking learners from dependent stage to independent stage and then to interdependent stage is very important. Man is a social animal and interpersonal relationship is the key to success in today's competitive world. The one who knows how to relate with others can climb up the ladder of success. The teacher should cultivate this habit and inculcate it in his/her learners. This is because those who are interdependent use positive language and win people. They are polite, pleasant, practical, persuasive and powerful.

Factors Inhibiting Teaching Effectively
Here, we are not going to mention one after the other those factors that hinder teaching effectiveness because they vary from society to society. However, the one that has become peculiar to Nigeria in general and Kogi State in particular for few years back is lack of payment of salary syndrome. Many teachers in the primary schools have not been paid for months. Imagine a teacher who cannot feed his family, pay his children's school fees, pay house rent and provide basic necessities for the home, etc., how then can he think of effectiveness in his teaching assignment or duty? Teachers are not spirit beings but humans with blood running in their veins. For purposes of teaching effectiveness and to save our education system from total collapse, government must reverse this evil trend.

Conclusion
As mentioned early earlier on, teaching is a noble profession, and it must be approached nobly to produce the noble outcome of change in the behavioural knowledge of the learner. Although the teacher is the main role-player as well as the driver of the vehicle of teaching effectively, the learner also has a role to play. If the teacher does all s/he needs to do to make his/her teaching effective but the learner fails to cooperate with him/her by going beyond the four corners of the classroom to burn the midnight candle, the learning outcome and impact on him/her (the learner) will not be productive, visible and worthwhile. Therefore, if teaching must be done effectively, and if it must produce excellent outcome of change in learning behaviour of the learner in such a way that the teacher, the learner and the guardians or parents of the learner could feel fulfilled and satisfied, both the teacher and the learner must be real partners in progress.

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