

IGBO LANGUAGE AND THE YOUNGER GENERATION: THE NEED FOR MOTIVATION

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Motivation and learning are inseparable – attention, interest and inspiration are emotional points along a continuum of learning, part and parcel of the process itself... Finding the act of learning rewarding is possible for everyone – in all subjects areas.

- Wlodkowski & Ginsberg (2017:ix-x)

Abstract

It is important to consider how effective our parents (the older generation, especially the elites) have been able to make the Igbo language attractive to the younger ones. Have they given the younger generation reason(s) for learning, understanding and speaking the Igbo language? On the contrary, they have given them reasons to develop cold feet for their identity, that is, their Igbo language. For this reason, this paper seeks to bring to fore, the failure of the older generation in handing down the Igbo language to their children and the need for professionals to make the learning of Igbo very appealing to the younger generation such that they will be self-motivated to learn and use it. The research is a descriptive one and adopts intrinsic motivation theory for data analysis. Data for the study is got from observation and various social media platforms. Findings show that the older generation insinuates to the young ones that Igbo is of lesser importance and that English is the elitist language. It was also discovered that the young adults at home and abroad appreciate and would love to learn the Igbo language. Another finding is that people could be motivated to learn Igbo on their own by providing learning resources on different social media platforms like facebook, instagram, twitter, youtube, podcast and so on. The paper therefore concludes that Igbo children love the Igbo language but are discouraged by their parents (the older generation) and as such, professionals should give attention to providing learning materials that appeal to this digital age.

Introduction

Language is a people's identity. It is their heritage and embodies their distinctive, self-defining civilisation and symbolises their exclusive contributions to human knowledge and development, as captured by Usman (2014:10) in Nwakwere, Mmadike & Eme (2017). This means that the natural language of a people is like a name as well as a face to them; which if they do away with, the people will be missing among other peoples of the world. That is, they will be a people without a name and a face.

People do not suddenly throw away their language. It starts with negative attitudes like seeing their language as a symbol of illiteracy, thus leaving it to be spoken only by the uneducated or not so educated people; code-mixing to brag about their knowledge of a foreign language, in the case of Nigeria, it is English; refusal to teach their children their language etc. These put together endanger the Igbo language. According to UNESCO (2012), "A language is endangered when its speakers cease to use it, use it in fewer and fewer domains, use fewer of its registers and speaking styles and/or stop passing it on to the next generation." This could lead to the eventual death of such a language. A language dies when its speakers neglect it and do not care to pass it to the next generation (Okolo, 2015).

Talking of passing on a language to the upcoming generations, particularly as it relates to the Igbo language; the older generation is failing in its duty. This is made obvious in the report shown in *The Nation* of November 2013 as contained in Nwankwere, Mmadike & Eme (2017:168), that "a research was carried out in Imo and Lagos States to test the Igbo competency level of three age groups, aged 1-5, 6-11 and adults which shows that a grim picture awaits the language; 70% of children between 6-11 years and 90% of children aged 5 years and below were unable to speak the Igbo language. 50% of the Igbo parents in Imo State and 80% in Lagos State spoke mostly English or a mixture of English and Igbo to their children."

This, therefore, makes it impossible for the upcoming generation to know about natural language value, growth and vulnerability. They are likely not to do anything to ensure its maintenance and continuity because they were not made to see any value in their native language. This is why there is a need to direct the awareness being raised about the vulnerability of the Igbo language towards the children and young adults. This will help them to see reasons for acquiring the rudiments of Igbo. Thus, it is the crux of this paper to encourage the professionals in the field of Igbo Studies to find ways to motivate the younger generation to fancy and learn the Igbo language. The Igbo language learning needs revitalization; which is a process that demands strong motivation and courage at individual level.

This paper is a usable resource for teachers, trainers, educators, professional learning specialists, Igbo language activists, whose primary goals are to teach Igbo and help young people get motivated to learn it.

According to Denham & Lobeck (2013), “The social aspect of learning a second language is crucial. Adults learning a second language bring to this task a much different set of tools than those that children bring to the acquisition of their L₁ and to the acquisition of L₂. Another important factor is motivation. We acquire our first language without conscious motivation, but we often learn a second language for a specific reason: a job, interest in a culture, cultural integration and so on (Selinker 1972) in Denham & Lobeck, 2013).

The Concept of Motivation

Motivation is the reason for people’s actions, willingness and goals. It could also be said to be the process that initiates and maintains goal-oriented behaviours. Weiner (1992) as in Wlodkowski & Ginsberg (2017) states that motivation is a concept that explains why people think and behave as they do. Rately & Galaburda (2001) sees motivation as a force that binds emotion to action. According to him, it creates as well as guides purposeful behaviour involving many systems and structures within the brain and body. This means that motivation is basic to our survival. It is the natural human process for giving behaviour its energy and direction (Reeve, 2009). As educators Wlodkowski & Ginsberg (2017) have this to say:

Being motivated means being purposeful. We use attention, concentration, imagination, passion and other processes to pursue goals, such as learning a particular subject or completing a degree.... Seeing human motivation as purposeful enables us to create a knowledge base about effective ways to help adults begin learning, make choices about learning, sustain learning and complete learning.

Motivation refers to reasons that underlie behaviour that is characterised by willingness and volition. Intrinsic motivation is animated by personal enjoyment, interest or pleasure.... Traditionally, educators consider intrinsic motivation to be more desirable and to result in better learning outcomes. Research suggests that motivation can be manipulated through certain instructional practices (Lai, 2011:1).

Adult Learners

The use of adult learners here is culturally and historically relative. Some cultures regard puberty as entry into adulthood, whereas others use legal codes to permit and promote adult behaviour. In the United States, according to Wlodkowski & Ginsberg (2017), people can vote at eighteen but cannot drink until twenty-one and in particular instances, can be tried in the court as adults at fourteen. In Igbo culture, a person is seen as an adult upon attainment of puberty. Thus they say, he or she has reached what a human being is used for (*O ruola ihe e ji mmadu eme*). In conventional terms, being an adult is often associated with having multiple major life responsibilities, such as a full-time work and dependents. In contrast, Wlodkowski & Ginsberg (2017:30) say that chronologically, adults can be divided into three groups: younger adults (eighteen to twenty-four years old), working-age adults (twenty-five to sixty-four years old), and older adults (sixty-five and older). However, in this paper,

adults are referred to as young people from sixteen to forty years of age. Any young person that learns independently is seen here as an adult learner. One outstanding characteristics of this group is captured in the words of Wlodkowski & Ginsberg (2017:32) thus:

They are technologically exceptional. They have physically and psychologically fused themselves with computers, cell phones, online videos, the internet and wireless technology. They use technology to learn constantly, to make their lives meaningful and enjoyable and to sustain important relationships with friends and family. Their relevance is found in an electronic world, often of their own making and we must use this structure and contents to achieve challenging learning with them.

Theory of Intrinsic Motivation

Theory of intrinsic motivation was developed by Deci and Ryan in 1975 but did not gain acceptance until the 1980s. Intrinsic motivation is the energising of the behaviour that is within an individual, out of will and interest for the activity at hand. No external rewards are required to incite the intrinsically motivated person into action. The reward is the behaviour itself. Logically, this seems like an ideal, for people to act as “origins” of their behaviour (deCharms, 1968).

Educators are of particular interest when it comes to intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation, particularly because of the different outcomes that researchers have shown to result from intrinsic motivation: more interest, excitement, confidence, enhanced performance, persistence, creativity, self-esteem and general well-being (Deci and Ryan, 1991). Why do some students pursue academic learning for its own sake while others are motivated by external factors? Over the years, several theorists have offered insights into the phenomenon through their conceptions of intrinsic motivation.

Self-Determination Theory

One of the most widely cited contemporary theories of intrinsic motivation is Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan. Deci (1975) states that humans beings have three innate psychological needs: a need to feel competent, a need to feel related and a need to feel autonomous. Intrinsic motivation develops out of the support of these needs. The authors go on to say that when people feel competent, autonomous and self-determined, they will freely seek what interests them. According to the authors, intrinsically motivated learning can only occur when an individual feels freedom to make choices in the process, when the activity is challenging, and when the challenge can be conquered. Whether these conditions are met depends on the person as well as the environment. After all, different circumstances afford different perceptions.

The authors stipulate that individuals can perceive specific events as informational (preserving a sense of competence and freedom), controlling (conveying a pressure to think, feel or behave a certain way), or a motivating (conveying personal incompetence and a sense that particular outcomes are impossible to achieve). Further, the environment in general can contain any mixture of elements that could be defined as autonomy supportive, controlling or motivating. For example, professionals in the field of Igbo studies and promoters of the Igbo language can make available learning materials in the form of videos and provide incentives respectively. The ultimate effect of the person and environment fit depends on the saliency of each element to the individual. If a person perceives his environment as informational and feels competent and autonomous, intrinsic motivation can be sustained or enhanced.

In his 1975 publication, Deci presented a variety of reward studies with variable results. In two of his investigations involving college students, intrinsic motivation decreased when rewards were task contingent (each puzzle/headline completed earned another dollar), but not when they were task non-contingent (participants got money for showing up, regardless of how many puzzles they solved). In a similar study with children, when rewards were expected, intrinsic motivation decreased (Lepper et al., 1973), but when they were unexpected, intrinsic motivation was unaffected (Lepper, Greene & Nisbett, 1973).

Strengths and Weaknesses of Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation comes from within oneself and does not require external factors. Intrinsically motivated people get the best results from being involved because their motivation is from within. The activity is performed by the individual because he or she finds the activity eternally rewarding. Intrinsic motivation can be applied to all areas of life. It also improves performance. When adults can see that what they are learning makes sense and is important according to their values and perspective, their motivation emerges. Such circumstances elicit intrinsic motivation and probably facilitate a mind-body state conducive to learning. On the other hand there are weaknesses associated with intrinsic motivation theory. If one does not have interest in a particular thing, one does not see the need to learn that thing. Different individuals might require different approaches to get intrinsically motivated.

Discussions and Findings

This study assesses how well the older generation have passed down the Igbo language to the younger generation and shows that adult learners are intrinsically motivated to learn Igbo. In this section, data are analysed and findings stated.

Failure of the Older Generation

As earlier insinuated, language is the life-wire of every society. The failure to use a language is a failure to carry on as a people. There are reasons why one should study the language of one's parents. Top on the list is communication. Language is used for communication and once someone fails to understand the language of his people, communication becomes a

serious problem. One becomes unable to communicate with his people, especially the illiterate ones. Despite many benefits of the mother tongue, many Igbo parents have done little or nothing in ensuring that their children learn and use their mother tongue. The conversation below is analysed to exemplify this.

Scenario 1

Researcher: Chisom, kedi?

Chisom: O di mma.

Father: No, Chisom say, I'm fine.

Chisom: I'm fine.

Researcher: Daddy Chisom i mara na i na-agwa nwa a na Igbo aduro mma?

Father: No oo sister Edith, rafu a ka suva oyibo e mecha o ga-amuta Igbo.

Researcher: Hmmm, oo mgbe i gwachagolie na o nwere ive Igbo vu?

Scenario 2

Mother: Heee! Edith nnoo.

Researcher: Kee nke na-eme?

Mother: Ifee greet aunty. Say aunty good evening.

Ifee: Aunty good evening.

Researcher: Ifee kedi?

Ifee: Fine.

Mother: Ifee go and call your sister.

Mother: Edith kee ka I mee?

Researcher: O du mma.

Researcher: Unu anaakana asulu umuaziji Igbo?

Mother: Hahaha sister Edith, rafukana ive anwu. Nya suva nnoo Oyibo. Achoo m ka o nwee ike

na-asu oyibo ma nya na umuazi ibe e na-akali uka.

The above conversations depict what happens in many homes of the Igbo people. We see the Igbo parents changing the psyche of the children to believe that Igbo is the language of illiterates. They give them the impression that only English should be spoken. This impression registers in the child's brain as seen in the society today that children do not speak Igbo but English, even though they are in Igbo land. The worst of all is that these parents do not see anything wrong with what they are doing.

Analysis of Adult Learners' Motivation

According to intrinsic motivation theory, people look for ways to learn anything they are interested in. For a long time, the awareness on learning and using the Igbo language seem to be directed to the older generation that is the parents, government, NGOs and so on. These tend to have failed in what is expected of them. However, it was discovered as shown in the screenshots below that, adult learners, Igbo and non-Igbo alike who were not privileged to be taught the language as children seek to learn and use it as adults. The

following screen shot of request and comments on LinkedIn and YouTube channels respectively show this.

Fig 1: Igbo teaching request on LinkedIn

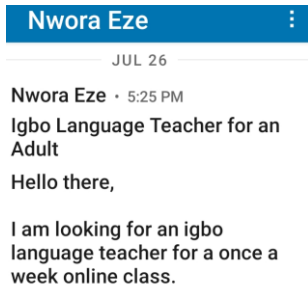
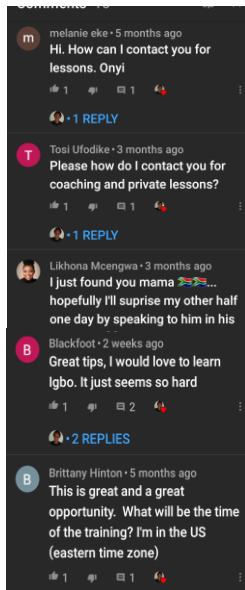


Fig 2: Igbo teaching request on 'Igbo Study'



From the comments in Figs. 1 and 2 it is discovered that in spite of the training received as children, the people are interested in learning the Igbo language. This is because they are intrinsically motivated. There is no reward for learning or using it. It is also not required as a prerequisite for any joy, yet young adults are very much motivated to learn and use it.

Fig. 3: Showing request for more contents on the Igbo language

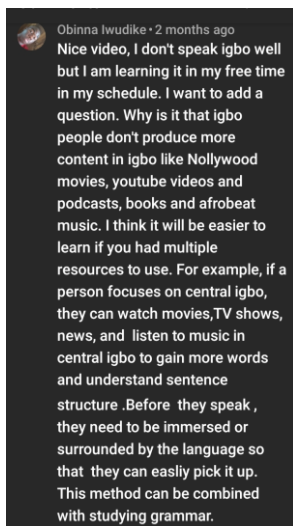
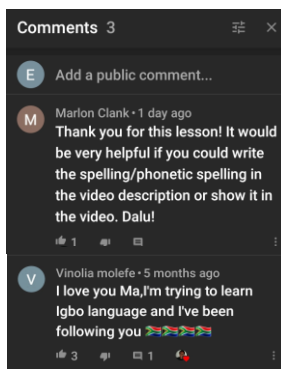


Fig. 4: Showing the learners' appreciation and recommendation



From the comments in Figs. 3 and 4, it is discovered that adult learners are very much self-motivated. The comment in Fig. 3 shows a learner recommending the availability of contents in various social media and learning platforms. In Fig. 4, it is discovered that the learners love the Igbo language contrary to the emotion imbued in them by their parents. This shows how urgent it is for professionals and Igbo language activists to channel their energy and resources towards motivating and providing learning materials for this young generation of Igbo learners, who are internet freaks.

The above comments on YouTube channels that teach Igbo – Igbo Online College and Igbo Study is an evidence of self motivated adult learners, who seek such resources to learn Igbo.

Motivating the Adult Learners

From the foregoing, it is discovered that despite the ideologies people grow up with they tend to do or learn what they like. Specialists in the field of Igbo study should wake up to the challenge of promoting the Igbo language. This means that there is a need to motivate people to learn and use Igbo. The following actions will help in motivating adult learners.

1. **Awareness Creation:** Creating awareness will be done by going on rallies to schools – primary, secondary and tertiary; churches and other forms of gathering to talk to the young people on the importance of native languages. This will change their perception of our native language and motivate them to seek the knowledge on their own. Also, flyers should be printed with write-ups on the need to uphold one's heritage and distributed to the adult learners. These will help them to see reasons themselves and thus be motivated to learn and use Igbo on their own without waiting for their parents and older generation to aid their learning.
2. **An in-depth knowledge of the subject matter:** There is no substitute for the subject matter by the teacher. An in-depth knowledge of the subject enhances the confidence, flexibility and creativity of instructors or teachers. They can be more open to questions and new directions that may come from our learners. That is to say that when a person has really mastered a concept or a skill, that individual can be playful with it; spontaneity and improvisation will become more possible.
3. **Making Learning Resources Available:** This is a digital age. A time when people are much acquainted with technology. These available technological avenues should be used by professionals in the field of Igbo studies to make learning resources available to the young people who seek to learn the Igbo language. There are many advantages of online teaching and learning. Flexibility - learners can log on when and where they like. Flexibility means that learners need to be disciplined and self-motivated. Learners have access all day. Learners may expect the teacher to be available 24/7. Learners may expect instant responses and feedbacks. Geographical location is not an issue. It may be difficult to meet in real-time across time zones. Many learners are familiar with the internet already. It can be cheaper for the learner. There are many visual and audio learning environments that could be used for this purpose.
4. **Other Subjects Written in Igbo:** There is a need for other subject matters to be translated into the Igbo language. Also, professionals in other fields should publish articles in the Igbo language. This will go a long way in building the Igbo language vocabulary and multiplying the available materials in Igbo. Animators should make cartoons available for children as this will help them in learning Igbo.

Virtual Learning Environments

There are various Virtual Learning Environments to be used in online teaching. A Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) is an online platform which is accessible to learners, and in which course resources (such as documents, video, audio, etc) can be stored. They are online course management systems designed for teachers to run online courses. They usually include course contents, communication tools (eg forums, chat, wikis, blogs), grading tools, learner tracking, grouping facilities and control over who can access the course (Hockly & Clandfield, 2010:20).

Social Networking Sites: Social networking sites are websites that allow members to create their own profile pages and links to other members in the site. The most famous examples are MySpace, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc..

Wikis: Wikis consist of a series of collaborative web pages to which anyone with permission can contribute. One can add text, images, video and audio to wikis. One can also upload documents.

Blogs: Blogs are online journals or diaries. They consist of a series of posts, which appear on a web page in reverse chronological order (so the latest post appears at the top of the page). Blogs can be on any topic. Blogs used in education are called ‘edublogs’.

Chatware: Chatware is software for communicating in real-time over the internet. Chatware includes *text* chat, *voice* chat (like the telephone) and *video* chat (or videoconferencing). More sophisticated forms of chatware include 3D virtual worlds [1]. The more sophisticated the chatware, the better one’s internet connection needs to be. Very simple chatware (such as text chat, also called ‘instant messaging’) can take place on low bandwidth or dial-up connections without too much trouble. High-end chatware, such as video-conferencing or virtual worlds, needs a fast broadband connection to work well, as well as a computer with a video graphics card (these can be installed with all modern computers).

The kind of chatware one chooses will depend on the aim of the activity (several of the activities in Part B suggest using text chat, which can be excellent for language practice) and one’s own and one’s learners’ hardware and internet connections.

Comic creator sites: Comic creator sites allow one to create strip cartoons or comics. Examples include: <http://www.makebeliefscomix.com/>; http://www.toondoo.com; <http://www.comicbrush.com/>

Podcasting sites: Podcasting sites allow one to record and share media files (usually audio, but also video - these are known as ‘vodcasts’ or ‘video podcasts’). Your podcast ‘episodes’(recordings) then appear on a web page, in reverse chronological order (with the latest at the top of the page). You can also add text and pictures to your podcast episodes.

Poster sites: Poster sites allow you to make posters online. Because they are web-based, one can add a range of media to one's poster, such as text, images, audio and video. This makes for a rich and engaging multimedia experience when viewing the poster online.

Summary and Conclusion

The present study was designed to show the failure of the older generation in passing down the Igbo language to the younger generation and how motivated the adult learners are in learning and using the language. One of the more significant findings to emerge from this study is that adult learners are intrinsically motivated to learn the Igbo language despite the impression they were made to have as children. It was also shown that parents, especially the educated ones have failed in their duty to pass the language to the younger generation. Evidence from this study show that there will be revitalisation of the Igbo language if awareness is directed towards the young people and learning resources made available on the internet. Taken together, these findings suggest a role for specialists in Igbo Studies in making sure the younger generation get and remain motivated to learn Igbo. Therefore, there is a definite need for concrete action plan geared towards getting and sustaining the interest of the young people in learning and using Igbo.

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