

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING *EDO* LANGUAGE IN SCHOOLS

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Abstract

Edo language is the mother tongue of most of the children in Edo South Senatorial district of Edo State. It is also the first language of the immediate linguistic environment of the Edo child. By induction therefore, Edo, though a minority language, is the main indigenous language of the immediate multi-lingual Edo society. Though the language is not used as a medium of instruction at the pre- primary and primary school levels (like in the western and northern parts of Nigeria) in the state, it is taught as a subject to the pupils. It is also taught as one of the five core subjects in J.S.S. 1-3 classes at the secondary school level alongside one major Nigerian language in some schools. Recently, Edo was added to the subjects written in the senior secondary school examination, though not as a core subject. However, the teaching of Edo in the multi-ethnic set up of Ikpoba-Okha L.G.A as in the Oredo L.G.A, is not without its attendant problems. In this paper, attempt is made to identify and discuss the most obvious problems encountered in the teaching and learning of Edo language at the junior secondary school level in Ikpoba-Okha L.G.A of Edo State. Three schools were selected for this study. At least thirty questionnaires containing close-ended questions were administered to both students and the Edo teachers in each of the schools to elicit information and thereafter processed using the simple percentages. The study identified a variety of factors militating against the teaching and learning of Edo language in the J.S.S schools. Such factors include the great influence of English language and its pidgin counterpart, scarcity of adequate and well trained Edo language teachers, lack of adequate teaching materials amongst others. The study recommends amongst other things that the teaching of Edo will be less cumbersome and very successful if the students, teachers and other stake holders develop a better and more positive attitude towards the language. The study further identifies some of the prospects of such a venture to indicate the fact that it will give the students a proper sense of belonging and fosters unity among the multi-lingual Edo society.

Introduction

Language permeates our lives from birth to death and it is the medium through which we experience our most important human relationship (Okolo and Ezikeojiaku, 1991). Language is a very important tool for human communication and integration. It occupies a special place in the history and culture of the people (Omole, 2002).

Ikpoba-Okha is one of the seven Local Government Areas (L.G.A) that constitute the Edo society in Edo State. The other six L.G.As are Oredo, Egor, Orhionmwon, Uhunmwuodé, Ovia South-West and Ovia North-East. Edo language is the main indigenous language spoken in these areas amidst varieties of the language which can be identified in some of the L.G.A's. Edo is one of the several languages in Nigeria, classified as minority languages and it is rated as one of the first few of the twenty four Edoid languages (Elugbe 1986) in Edo state and its environs like Delta, Ondo, and Rivers States in addition to English and Pidgin (Emenanjo, 1990). It is obvious from the foregoing that Edo State has a multi-ethnic set up. As a result, a common medium of communication is necessarily needed to ease interaction in the area and English and Pidgin come in handy. The result of this is that both languages are being used as languages of wider communication and are given exclusive attention to the detriment of the indigenous Edo language. It is also the case that positive attitudes are developed towards the language of the Colonial masters (English), while negative attitudes are developed towards Edo. Yuka (2002) confirmed that English enjoys a better position than the indigenous languages in Cameroun though English is not widely spoken there as its speakers are only 20% and all official documents are written in French before being translated into English.

The situation in *Edo* land is however more serious as English and Pidgin enjoy better positions in the land and their speakers are increasing by the day.

Though the present study is not on attitudes but it is the case that the present attitude of *Edo* speakers, the government of the day and other stakeholders towards the *Edo* language constitute serious problems in the teaching and learning of the language. It is envisaged that if these problems are not promptly addressed, *Edo* language which is already endangered, may eventually go into extinction or become dead to use the expression of Wurm (2002). This study is significant for reawakening the interest of *Edo* people in the language, identify problems that impede the teaching, learning and use of the *Edo* language as well as drawing attention especially of *Edo* youths, to the prospects of teaching, learning and using the language.

In this study attempt is made to identify the various problems encountered in the teaching and learning of *Edo* language in some junior secondary schools in the Ikpoba-Okha L.G.A of *Edo* state. The prospects of teaching, learning and using such a language are also examined.

The National Policy on Education and Mother Tongue issue.

A policy is a thought which expresses educational goal and the means by which they are achieved. Such a policy serves as a guide to administrators when deciding the lines along which the education system should be conducted. A policy statement provides a general goal for all administrative actions whether it is in curriculum development, planning the level of education or others. This is the view of Urevbu (1991). It is a general belief among educationists that a child learns better and faster in his or her mother tongue (Wilkins, (1978), Awoniyi (1982), Imasuen, (1996), Imogie (1998, 2007), and Bamgbose, (2001 and 2003). This probably accounts for one of the reasons why government includes the use of Nigerian languages in Education. The National Policy on Education stipulates that:

1. The Mother tongue (MT) or the language of the environment shall be used as a medium of instruction in the pre-primary school.
2. In the first three years of the primary school, language of the environment shall be used as medium of instruction while English shall be taught as a subject and from the fourth year English shall be used as medium of instruction while language of the immediate environment and French shall be taught as subjects.
3. In the Junior Secondary School (JSS) language of the environment will be taught as first language (i.e. LI) while one major Nigerian language other than the mother tongue (MT) will be taught in the Senior Secondary School (SSS). English, French and one major Nigerian language should be taught and taken at school certificate examination.

What is considered as mother tongue is usually the language which a child acquires in his early year and which normally becomes the natural instrument of thought and communication (UNESCO, 1951). So mother tongue is not necessarily the language of one's parent though in most cases it is. It is the language in which a child first learns to express his ideas about himself and the world around him. The mother tongue (of which *Edo* is one) is a variety of languages. It is the most established way a person can communicate his feelings, ideas and emotions and indeed all aspects of learning (i.e. science, government, technology, etc). The mother tongue is thus of prime importance in the education of the Nigerian child especially in the Ikpoba-Okha L.G.A.

The language situation in *Edo* State is a multi-lingua one and *Edo* has the serious problem of being in constant struggle with the language of the colonial masters (i.e. English) and its pidgin counterpart as they are generally used as the languages of wider communication in the land. Such a situation is of great concern and needs to be promptly and carefully addressed.

The teaching of *Edo* language and its attendant problems

Teaching as a task and activity is understood to be the conscious and deliberate effort by experienced personnel to impact knowledge or pass some information to a less experienced person (Omoruyi, 1998). The goal of such a venture is to be achieved in a variety of ways. The success of the teaching task is said to be determined greatly by the type, quality and of the medium of the communication used. Language is the

greatest tool of communication without which no meaningful teaching activity and task can take place. It is thus obvious that language is very important for the realization of the goal of the National Policy on Education. In his writing of the teaching of African languages of which *Edo* is one, Awoniyi (1982) argued that being trained as a teacher does not just entail knowing the school curriculum in detail, the teacher also ought to know how to teach languages to children at various levels. This awareness too is also very important for the realization of the goal of the National Policy on Education.

Edo language is one of the various languages classified under the minority group in Nigeria as opposed to the major languages: Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo, popularly called 'WAZOBIA' (Emenanjo, 1995). The major aim of the NPE (1977, 1981, 1998, 2004 and 2013) is to foster cultural unity and integration through facilitating communication among Nigerians from different geographical areas and our immediate neighbouring countries (with the inclusion of French). The English language is known to be gaining more grounds in Nigeria and has been accorded high status over the indigenous languages like *Edo*. It is used as the most important medium of instruction in schools in addition to being the official language of communication in the nation. The WAZOBIA series serves as the next important one since it is stipulated that the child must study at least one of them up to the senior secondary school certificate level (Essien, 1990 and Makinde, 1998).

The situation in *Edo* state in general and *Ikpoba-Okha* L.G.A in particular is even more chaotic as regards the implementation of the NPE proposal. As a result of the multi-ethnic nature of languages in the state, the indigenous languages like *Edo*, *Esan*, *Etsako* and *Emai* are being relegated to the background and replaced by English and Pidgin even in homes. This is done in the bid for the people to have a common medium of communication. This chaotic situation is affecting the implementation of the NPE in *Ikpoba-Okha* L.G.A in the teaching of *Edo* in schools. In the sections that follow, the varying problems that militate against the teaching and learning of *Edo* are examined. The extent to which the NPE is being implemented in the school and how real it is are also examined. Possible solutions are also proposed for the problems identified.

Methodology

This study is generally geared towards identifying the problems and prospects associated with teaching and learning of *Edo* language in *Ikpoba-Okha* Local Government Area of *Edo* State. The study was however, restricted to junior secondary schools as they are the ones mainly affected by this issue. This section deals with the description and explanation of the research methods and procedures, used in data collection and analysis. Specifically it discusses the research design, population of the study, sample and sampling techniques research instrument, validity of instrument administration and collection of research instrument as well as method of data analysis.

The descriptive survey design (Richard 1992) was used for this study. This survey involved sample population which consists of one hundred (100) respondents drawn from three junior secondary schools in *Ikpoba-Okha* Local Government Area of *Edo* State. The research instrument used for data collection for the study was obtained from the responses to the questionnaire that were administered to the respondents. This was corroborated by oral interview of a few selected students and teachers. The Chi-Square goodness-of-fit test procedure was used to tabulate variables into categories (i.e. Ogbeibu 2005).

The respondents for this study were JSS1-3 students of three schools: Immaculate Conception College (ICC) Benin City, St. Michael College, Ikhueniro and Presentation National High School (PNHS), Ugbekun all in *Ikpoba-Okha* Local Government Area of *Edo* State and their *Edo* Language Teachers. The schools have a population of three hundred and eighty five (385), two hundred and sixty eight (268) and four hundred and sixty eight (468) students respectively in the junior secondary school section with a class population of 25-39 students of about four arms. The first two schools are all male while the third are all female boarding schools. For the teaching respondents used, Immaculate Conception College (ICC) has two (2), St. Michael College has one (1) while Presentation National High School (PNHS) has one (1) teacher respectively. Thus, the total number of *Edo* teachers used in this study were four (4).

The questionnaire contains a total of twenty one (21) questions divided into two main sections for teachers and students. This was corroborated by oral interviews of a few selected students and teachers. The random selection of students and teachers in each of the schools visited is expected to reflect the

general problems encountered in the teaching and learning of the Edo language. Some of the research questions include the following:

- (i) How many Edo teachers do you have in your school?
- (ii) What other languages do they teach in your school?
- (iii) Should every school be allowed to decide on the medium of instruction (i.e. language to be taught)?
- (iv) Will the teaching of Edo language adversely affect proficiency in English?
- (v) Is Edo language taught in your school?
- (vi) Do you think that every child should be taught Edo language in your school?
- (vii) What do you think are some of the challenges affecting the teaching and learning of Edo language in your school?

The ratings of the responses obtained in the major questions are presented in the tables below.

Table 1: Age distribution of teachers.

Age Range	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Under 20	—	—
21 – 30	1	25%
31 – 40	2	50%
41 – 50	1	25%
Above 50	—	—
Total	4	100%

N = 4

Table 1 shows the age distribution of the respondents who are Edo teachers in the three schools (two teachers in ICC, one in St Michael and one in PHNS). Two respondents which represent 25% are of the age range 21-30,50% are of the age range 31-40,25% are of the range of 41-50 while no respondents for age ranges under 20 and above 50 respectively.

Table 2: Gender distribution (Students)

Gender	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	70	70%
Female	30	30%
Total	100	100%

This table shows the gender distribution of students' respondents. 40 of them which represent 66.7% are males while 20 which represent 33.3% are females.

Research question 1: What are the attitudes of the students generally towards the learning of Edo language in your school?

Table 3: Attitudes of the students generally towards the learning of Edo language

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Poor	3	75%
Good	1	25%
Total	4	100%

N = 4

Table 2 represents the attitude of the students towards the learning of Edo language in their respective schools. The respondents who are teachers state that the attitude of the students towards the teaching and learning of the language is poor. Three (3) of the respondents which represents 75% of the total respondents affirm to the claim. Also, 25% which represents 1 of the respondents argued that the attitude of the students are good while none claimed it was very good.

The table therefore shows that the attitude of the students towards the teaching and learning of Edo language in the different schools is poor.

Research question 2: What other languages are taught in your school?

Table 4: Other languages taught in the school

Languages	Number of Respondents	Percentage
English	4	100%
French	4	100%
Yoruba	1	25%
Igbo	—	—
Others	—	—

N = 4

This table shows the other languages taught in the schools. From the responses it is obvious that English language is taught in all the schools. French is also taught in the schools as affirmed by 100% of the respondents. The table shows that Yoruba is taught in one of the schools representing 25% of the respondents, while Igbo and others are not taught. The table shows that English and French languages have a wider acceptance over the Nigerian languages in the schools.

Research question 3: Should every school be allowed to decide on the medium of instruction (i.e. language of teaching)?

Table 5: Responses on whether every school be allowed to decide on the medium of instruction (i.e. language of teaching).

Responses	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	1	25%
Disagree	3	75%
Agree	—	—
Strongly Agree	—	—
Total	4	100%

N = 4

Table 4 represents the views of the respondents on the languages of teaching (i.e. medium of instruction). None of the respondents strongly agreed that every school should be allowed to decide their medium of instruction. None also agreed to the notion, 25% strongly disagreed while 75% disagreed. The table therefore revealed that majority of the respondents disagreed that every school should be allowed to decide their medium of instruction.

Research question 4: Will the teaching of Edo language adversely affect proficiency in English?

Table 6: Effect of teaching Edo language on English proficiency

Teaching of Edo language adversely affect English proficiency	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly disagree	1	25%
Disagree	3	75%
Agree	—	—
Strongly Agree	—	—
Total	4	100%

The table above debunked the belief over time that the teaching of Edo language in schools will affect the proficiency in English. 3 of the teaching respondents which represent 75% disagreed that the teaching of Edo language will adversely affect proficiency in English while 25% strongly disagree.

In the sections that follow the rating of the responses obtained from the students in the schools are presented.

Research question 5: Is Edo language taught in your class?

Table 7: Distribution of Edo language teaching at Junior Secondary Schools

Classes Edo language is taught	No. of Respondents taught Edo language	Percentage
JSS 1	100	100%
JSS 2	100	100%
JSS 3	100	100%

This table shows that Edo language is taught in JSS 1- 3 in all the schools.

Research question 6: Do you think that every child should be taught Edo language in your school?

Table 8: Responses on whether Edo language should be taught in schools

Should every child be taught Edo language in your school?	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	52	52%
No	35	35%
May be	13	13%
Total	100	100%

The responses in the above data show that the teaching of Edo language will adversely affect the proficiency of the students in English. While 35% of the students' respondents disagree with the notion, 13% are indifferent and yet 52% agree to the notion.

Research question 7: What do you think are some of the challenges affecting the teaching and learning of Edo language in your school?

Table 9: Challenges in the teaching and learning of Edo language

Challenges in the teaching and learning of Edo language	Responses (Yes)	%	Responses (No)	%	Responses (Maybe)	%
Lack of interest on the part of the students	60	60%	25	25%	15	15%
Negative attitudes of the students, language teachers, parents and other stakeholders	65	65%	15	15%	20	20%
The French language as well as English and pidgin have a wider acceptance over Edo	70	70%	28	28%	2	2%
The great influence of English and pidgin on Edo	70	70%	28	28%	2	2%
Lack of enough/well trained and qualified Edo language teachers	58	58%	20	20%	12	12%
Lack of motivation for Edo language teachers	80	80%	15	15%	5	5%
No basic language requirement on the part of the students	75	75%	25	25%	-	-
No systematic method of teaching Edo	70	70%	28%	28%	2	2%
No proper and adequate teaching materials	73	73%	27	27%	-	-
Inferiority complex	75	75%	15	15%	10	10%

Table 9 shows the various challenges affecting the teaching and learning of Edo language in Junior Secondary Schools. The first item on the table revealed that a good number of students lack interest in the study of Edo language as shown by high percentage (60%) of the respondents. Some of the reasons responsible for this challenge include the fact that most of the students have the impression that Edo language is very complex and difficult to understand (i.e. read and write). Imasuen (1998) has also noted this problem.

The table also showed that 73% percent of the respondents have negative attitude towards the Edo language. Many of those interviewed feel that the language has nothing to offer in terms of taking them through the challenges of life especially in the area of technological advancement. A great majority of the Edo native speakers interviewed said that they do not even speak the language at home instead they

speak English and / or its Pidgin equivalent. Lack of encouragement from the Edo language teachers, the parents, government and other stakeholders even make matters worse as regards getting them to accept and embrace fully the use of Edo language. This challenge is a confirmation of the study carried out by Omorogbe (2005).

Another challenge in the teaching and learning of Edo language is that English, Pidgin and French languages have a wider acceptance than the Edo language as revealed by 70% of the respondents. As a result of this, many of the Edo speakers prefer to become more competent in these languages especially English and Pidgin which according to them are more useful than the Edo language. Moreover, English is a necessary requirement in every aspect of learning and employment opportunities. Edo language is not even one-tenth as important as English and French languages. To some of the students interviewed, the teaching of Edo language should not be made compulsory even at the JSS level (see Omorogbe 2005), for a detailed understanding of this).

English and Pidgin are observed to have a great influence on the Edo language as revealed by the high percentage (70%) of the response in this direction. The multi-lingual nature of the Nigerian society in general and Ikpoba-Okha LGA in particular has warranted the adoption and encouragement of English (and even French) as a common medium of communication. English has served as a unifying language since the colonial era. Nigerians are still striving to become more competent in it daily. The result of this is the gradual abandonment of most of the indigenous languages of which Edo is one. This problem has also been noted in some works in other languages (Aziza 2003 and Ugorji 2005).

Even the Pidgin has gained more solid grounds in Edo State than the Edo language. It is now the case that Edo is gradually submerged in the English and Pidgin languages – a situation which calls for urgent and positive attention. The situation is further worsened by such regular and appalling inscriptions like 'vernacular speaking is prohibited in this class; vernacular speaking attract a fine of twenty naira, etc' in many of the schools in the area. Those who violate these rules are actually given sanctions ranging from payment of stipulated fines, strokes of the cane and even corporal punishment. It is sad to note that what they indeed call 'vernacular' in this case is actually the indigenous Edo language. This shows that the use of Edo language is highly disfavoured in the schools as it is in many homes and this makes the future progress of mother tongue education very doubtful. Apart from this instance, English and Pidgin dominate the media and social gatherings. A similar problem was identified by Adeniran (1980) in his study which focused on the relative strength of English over Nigerian languages especially Yoruba. He concluded that against this background idea, the future of Nigerian languages is discussed and settled as they will continue to be subordinate to English, Pidgin and French. This implies that if Nigerian languages are not given their rightful status in the society, many of them will in the nearest future not be in existence. A number of works on Edo language and other languages revealing these problems have been done variously by Imasuen (1998), Omorogbe (2005), Erhahon (1998), Evbayiro and Solomon-Etefia (2011), Uwajeh (2003) and Ugorji (2005).

Another problem observed in the course of this study is the lack of enough, well trained, qualified and adequately trained Edo language teachers. From the responses (58%), it is obvious that Edo language teachers are grossly inadequate. The result of this is that untrained and unqualified teachers are usually employed to teach the subject as it is the case in one of the schools used in this study, whereas more qualified teachers are employed to teach English and French languages. This may be due to the general misconception that specialized training is not necessary for teachers of Nigerian languages because they are natural speakers of the languages. Nigerian languages teachers need well planned and effective training programmes as noted by Awoniyi (1983) to be able to handle the teaching of the local languages and overcome their challenges. Such training programmes will help to expose them to the developments. Most of the Edo language teachers are usually NCE holders from the state College of Education in Ekiadolor. Only very few degree holders of Edo linguistics and literature from the University of Benin are found in the schools. There is therefore, the great and urgent need for adequate training of teachers to teach the Edo language in our schools. The Department of Linguistics and African Languages in the University of Benin is very much available for such training.

Apart from the training challenge, those who are already in the teaching system need high motivation like their counterparts in the science and other subjects like English and French. To get enough *Edo* teachers who are proficient in the language and can use it to teach adequately; those already in the system need to be encouraged and given enough incentives in cash and kind. *Edo* language teachers lack good motivation as affirmed by 80% of the respondents. Regular workshops, seminars, conferences as well as different ceremonies that attract remunerations like those that used to be regularly organized by the *Edo* state chapter of the National Council for Arts and Culture (N.C.A.C) and Institute of Benin Studies for *Edo* language should be organized for *Edo* teachers and students alike. Moreover, recruitment of qualified and willing *Edo* language teachers should be done regularly in quality and quantity. It has also been suggested by Emenanjo (1995) that the number of Nigerian languages teachers need to be increased by reviewing upward the admission quota for Nigerian languages. This is a very laudable idea as we are likely to have more interest and prospective students being admitted into our higher institutions to study indigenous languages like *Edo*. Once they get qualified and are employed, they also need to be encouraged to stay on the job by rewarding them adequately and periodically. They can also be motivated by providing them with incentives for advancement in training and for research activities as Emenanjo (1995) has also advised.

Another serious challenge in the teaching and learning of *Edo* is the fact that most of the students taught do not have the basic requirement of the knowledge of *Edo* language as affirmed by 75% of the respondents. Many of them do not know how to speak, read and write the language, even those who are bonafide *Edo* indigenes. The irony of this is that many of such students have a good mastery of English and Pidgin. This problem makes the *Edo* teachers' work frustrating and cumbersome as they have to cope with the different categories of learners' difficulties and unpreparedness to learn the language. This is one big problem being experienced by those teaching the students of *Edo* linguistics and literature in the Department of Linguistics and African Languages in UNIBEN. Many of the students, who are not native speakers of *Edo*, find themselves studying the course because of admission problems. The stipulation that a prospective student of the programme must have the basic requirement of *Edo* language, do not seem to work out most times because *Edo* language was not taken in the senior school certificate examination before now like the 'WAZOBIA' (Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo) languages. Only a few numbers of students are able to cope with the challenges of studying *Edo* at this level. Those who gained admission into the direct entry programme with NCE usually satisfy the language requirement since they studied *Edo* language at that level. Only recently, *Edo* language was included among the languages written at the SSC examinations as an optional subject (Imasuen, 1998).

Edo language is not taught in any systematic way in the schools as affirmed by 70% of the respondents. Some of the teachers in the schools studied use the dialogue system in which two or more students are called to the front of the class to demonstrate the text being taught and translate them into English as the case may be. Others use the method of reading in *Edo* and asking the students to repeat after them amongst other methods. With such methods, the intricacies of the *Edo* language are not taught nor emphasized. A number of language analysts and writers have given useful hints on how well and systematic African languages (including *Edo* language) can be taught (Awoniyi 1982, Imasuen 1998, Omoregie 1983, 2009, Omozuwa 2010 and 2012).

Lack of proper, adequate and simplified teaching materials has also been identified as one of the challenges facing the teaching and learning of *Edo* language as revealed by the high percentage (73%) of respondents on the table. This problem contributes in making the language more complex, uninteresting and difficult for the students and also makes the teachers' job cumbersome. Apart from the main texts like Egharevba (1959), Agheyisi (1986), Imasuen (1990), Erhahon (1998) and Omozuwa (2010), we observed that there are no proper teaching aids in the schools to enhance the teaching and learning of *Edo*. The use of teaching aids such as charts, other audio/visual aids, resource persons, historical monuments, play cards and occasional excursions will make the teaching and learning of *Edo* language more effective and interesting. Generally, the use of teaching aids make the reading and learning process more effective and efficient since they can make the learners to get more acquainted with the subject and stimulate their interest.

The study also revealed that most of the students (and teachers alike) have inferiority complex as regards the teaching and learning of the *Edo* language. This challenge is affirmed by 75% of the

respondents as shown in table 9. Majority of them feel that the *Edo* language is not prestigious like English. To the students, learning *Edo* is a sheer waste of time and energy. This problem can be traced to the colonial era when the English language was imposed on Nigeria and made the medium of instruction in schools as well as the language of wider communication (i.e. media, government, and print). By so doing, the colonial masters succeeded in making the Nigerian citizens to develop inferiority complex towards the indigenous languages. However, some languages like the WAZOBIA series and a few others were sustained and are still being used greatly by their speakers while others like *Edo* are gradually fading away because of underutilization and inferiority complex. This complex has prevented the students, teachers and the *Edo* populace from having confidence in themselves and any sense of pride for the *Edo* language. To compound this problem of inferiority complex, many parents (based on personal communication and observation) feel that the *Edo* language is too inferior for their children or wards and as such, they detest it and do not encourage the children to use it. They claim that if they encourage its use, the children will not be able to fit into the civilized, literate and computerized society. In this regard, it is very common in the present day *Edo* society to find the inhabitants of many *Edo* homes speaking English and/ or pidgin or even Yoruba with much pride. Only a few parents still encourage the use of *Edo* in their homes. This problem has also been noted by Imasuen (1990), Omoregbe (2005) and Omozuwa (2012).

Some of the *Edo* language teachers do not even help matters. Many of them have non-challant attitudes towards the use of the language, which are usually reflected in their utterances and the way they teach the subject. Such negative attitudes do not facilitate nor enhance class performance in the mother tongue as well as second language learning. Moreover the attitudes do not help in promoting cultural heritage and unity or give the learners a good sense of belonging and identity neither do they encourage intergenerational transmission.

The government of the day can save the situation by making policy statements that will make the *Edo* language teachers to be more alive to their jobs. Such policy statements can steer up interest in all those who are directly and indirectly involved with the teaching and learning of the language. Only then can there be better implementation of the NPE stipulation. All stakeholders can be made to participate in this crusade very actively to save the *Edo* language from dying. All these challenges are corroborated by the problem of language policy making in Nigeria, some of which were outlined in Bamgbose (2001) as follows:

- Negative attitude to Nigerian Languages
- Overwhelming bias for English
- Reliance on sentiment rather than objective data (such as statistics of language use)
- Equation of elite interest with public interest
- Plain ignorance about language (as shown in the false claim that the use of one's language will reduce one's intellectual capacity).

These problems, according to Bamgbose are illustrated vividly by an incident that took place at one of the sittings of the Lagos State House of Assembly on December 9, 1999 in which there was a debate as regards the desirability of using Yoruba for debating in the House in addition to English Language. Bamgbose (2001) reports that the proposal was turned down on the grounds that Yoruba is not appropriate for the conduct of the business of the House of Assembly since Lagos is a cosmopolitan city. This situation can be said to be true of the *Edo* society which has a highly multi-lingual setting.

Conclusion

Many prospects can be identified with the teaching and learning of *Edo* language which include the fact that the learners are given a better sense of belonging and that it will foster unity around the multilingual *Edo* society especially the Ikpoba-Okha LGA. The learners will become more proficient in the language since *Edo* is the main indigenous language of the environment, the mother tongue of most of them, the language of their inner selves and their peer groups. The teaching and learning of *Edo* will also enhance the culture of the land since *Edo* is the child's supposedly first language in which he thinks and acquires all his experiences. Since the teaching and learning of *Edo* in schools will help to keep the language teachers and

the language alive; any neglect and non-challant attitude in this direction will be disastrous for the future of the language.

The teaching and learning of Edo language will help to develop the child's mental, psychological and cognitive capabilities better since it is attested that a child learns better and faster in his local language as noted also by Awoniyi (1982). Agheyisi (1986), Wurm (2002) and Ugorji (2005) inspite of the multi-lingual nature of the Edo society. In the course of facilitating communication among the learners from the different ethnic backgrounds, Edo language teaching and learning will foster integration in addition to the cultural unity identified earlier. Moreover, it will enhance interest and performance in the language which will eventually lead to a better understanding of the world in which we live and the civil society. The teaching and learning of Edo language will also be a panacea for the much needed cultural and moral decadence (Omole 2002) in the land if properly and carefully planned. Students cannot refuse to be taught the language once it has been introduced in a systematic way as a compulsory subject at the Junior Secondary School level. The attitudes of the students, their parents and the society at large towards the language will change in the positive direction and the Edo language will continue to live and not go into extinction.

This study has so far identified and discussed problems which militate against the teaching and learning of Edo language in Junior Secondary Schools in Ikpoba-Okha LGA of Edo State against the background of the NPE stipulation. The most serious problems were identified to be the multi-lingual setting of the area, the negative attitudes of the learners and their lack of basic language requirement as well as the domination and great influence of English and Pidgin on Edo language. The multi-lingual nature of the Edo society makes it very difficult to adopt and emphasize Edo as the indigenous language to be used as the medium of instruction as stipulated by the National Policy on Education. In spite of all the challenges, Edo language is still taught like English and French in the schools. The teaching is however, being marred by the varying problems identified in the study and this situation calls for urgent attention.

Recommendations:

This study therefore, recommends amongst other things that;

- The teaching and learning of Edo language will be less cumbersome and very successful if the students, teachers, parents and other stakeholders develop better and more positive attitudes towards the language, the multi-lingual setting of the society notwithstanding.
- The teaching and learning of Edo language will help the students pursue a common goal and make their intergenerational sustenance and transmission of the language from dying if all the loopholes are properly blocked.
- The teaching and learning of Edo language will facilitate the implementation of the NPE stipulation of using the mother tongue as a medium of instruction at the pre-primary, first three years of primary and the junior secondary schools if the teachers are greatly motivated and encouraged.
- To this end, the study proposed that regular workshops and seminars be organized for teachers, students and Edo populace on matters relating to the use of Edo language.
- More simplified teaching materials should be made available to the teachers and learners to make the teaching and learning of Edo language less cumbersome and more interesting as well as for easy comprehension and acceptance.

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