

***Dramatic Tools as a Vehicle Towards Teaching Igbo Language in Primary Schools
in South West Nigeria***

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Abstract

This paper examines the pedagogical shift from conventional teaching strategies to a dramatic mode in the Igbo class in primary schools in South Western Nigeria. The study utilizes the quasi-experimental design involving 25 primary schools in a senatorial zone that are foreign to the Igbo language. The population consists of 250 subjects randomly selected from the schools. The subjects were distributed into control and experimental groups. Each group was exposed to four weeks intensive teaching and later exposed to teaching using the conventional teaching strategies while the experimental group was exposed to the dramatic mode using theatre props and so on. The group were later post-tested and results of the pre-test and post-test were used as data for the finding from the study. The level of significance was 0.5. The findings revealed that subjects in the experimental group performed better than the subjects in the control group due to many factors. Recommendations were made after the research was concluded.

Keywords: Pedagogical shift, Igbo dramatic device, Primary school.

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Introduction

The use of drama and dramatic devices in foreign and second languages (such as Igbo language L₂) teaching is not new. It has lasted for as long as when teaching Igbo in primary schools to second language learners is commenced. However, this aspect of language teaching is neglected here in Nigeria by Igbo language teachers, curriculum developers and course book writers. The inclusion of drama based activities in language teaching is not so evident in current Igbo language teaching course books, resource books, supplementary teaching materials and teacher training courses. Dramatic activities offer students a wide range of opportunities to enhance their communication skills, motivation, confidence, problem solving skills and so on. Teachers need practical guidance on how to incorporate drama and dramatic activities into their teaching. Chukueggu (2012). It has been observed in education that quality learning happens when knowledgeable, caring teachers use sound and appropriate pedagogy.

Definition of terms

Meaning of dramatic devices

A dramatic device is a convention used in drama as a substitution for reality that the audience accepts as real although they know them to be false. These techniques give the audience information they could not get from straightforward presentation of action.

Drama and Dramatic Devices/Activities

Drama is a unique tool to explore and express human feelings. Holden (1982), defined drama as a kind of activity, in which students portray themselves in an imaginary situation. Drama is an essential form of behavior in all cultures, It is a fundamental human activity. Drama has the potential, as a diverse medium to enhance cognitive, affective and psycho-motor development of a child. Drama is also a tool which is flexible, versatile and applicable among all areas of curriculum. Through its application as a tool in the primary classroom, drama can be experienced by all children. In drama a high degree of thinking, feeling and moving is involved and subsequently, aids in the development of skills for all other learning within and outside of schools (transfer of learning) (www.sacsa.sa.edu.au). A dramatic device is any "trick" used by a playwright to add interest to his work or create a particular impression or effect on the audience. Dramatic devices includes irony (Ogharaokwu), paradox (igbuduokwu), aside (nzupuuka), mime (miim), role play (Oruagwa), soliloquy (Ntakwu) and dramatic pause (Nkwusituejije).

Why Dramatic Activities should be used in Igbo language Teaching

There are a number of reasons why the use of drama is a powerful tool in the language classroom. Desialova (2009) outlines some of the reasons for introducing language learners to drama. They are listed below:

- Drama is an ideal way to encourage learners to communicate for real-life purposes.
- To make language learning an active motivating experience.
- To help learners gain the confidence and self esteem needed to use the language spontaneously.
- To bring the real world into the classroom.
- To make language learning memorable through direct experience.
- To stimulate learner' intellect, imagination, and creativity.
- To develop students' ability to empathize with others and thus become better communicators.

All of the above are very essential to Igbo language learners.

Benefits of Dramatic Devices

Godfrey (2010), stated that using drama in a language course provides active, stimulating, and creative environment in which students can develop their language learning potentials. The use of drama enables students to explore their imagination and creativity as well as express themselves through Language and other forms of communicative activities, such as actions, movement. Dramatic activities help students to improve themselves in the following aspects:

- Positive motivation and self confidence.
- Oral and communication skills
- Authentic language use
- Accuracy and fluency of expression
- Proper pronunciation
- Multisensory and whole-personality learning.
- Learner-centered approach to hearing.
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Positive motivation and self-confidence: participation in dramatic activities fosters self-awareness of others. It enhances one self-esteem and confidence which in turn boosts motivation.

Oral and communication skills: Dramatic activities integrate language skills in a natural way. It involves careful listening and spontaneous verbal expression. Some of them requires reading and writing.

Authentic language use: Through the use of drama, students engage in authentic language use. It becomes a means of practicing real-life language in the classroom. Drama puts language into context and gives the students experience in real life situations.

Accuracy and fluency of expression: Drama creates ample opportunities for conversational use of language which promotes fluency of expression. For instance, while students are practicing a play, they are encouraged to repeat words, phrases and sentences several times, by so doing the become fluent in using such expression.

Multisensory and whole-personality learning: Dramatic activities provide opportunities for students to involve their whole personality and use all their senses (sight, hearing, feeling, smell etc). Dramatic activities also involve the whole personality and not only the mental process.

Learner-centered approach to Learning: Dramatic activities make it possible for students to take charge of their learning. It enables students to test out various situations, registers and vocabularies.

Proper pronunciation: Godwin (2001) stated that drama is particularly effective for teaching pronunciation because various components of communicative competence can be practiced in an integrated way. Some of these components are discourse, intonation, pragmatic awareness, non-verbal communication etc. There are several research studies that support the benefits of drama in teaching second and foreign language learning (Brumfit, 1991; Richard, 1987; Marley and Duff, 2001). All these researchers agree that dramatic activities are useful in helping students to develop oral communication skills. They also help students to communicate in any language at all. From the foregoing therefore, several researchers have confirmed that the use of drama in teaching of foreign and second language is of great benefit. Therefore there is need to find out if such a thing exists in the use of drama to teach Igbo to second language learner's. Thus, the purpose of this study is to find out the difference in the level of performance of students taught with the conventional method and those taught using dramatic methods.

Statement of problem:

Most primary school students exhibit gross deficiency in learning Igbo language in the South-west of Nigeria. Scholars have attributed this phenomenon to certain factors on the part of the teachers and students. Hence, this paper examines teacher's interest, teachers' method of teaching and students' interest in drama as the major problems hindering the study of Igbo language by the second language learners.

Research question:

This study attempts to provide answers to the following research questions

- Is there any significant difference in performance between students taught using dramatic method and those taught using conventional method?
- Is there any significant relative effect of teachers' interest on dramatic method of teaching Igbo?
- Is there any significant relative effect on students' interest on dramatic method of learning Igbo language?

Hypotheses:

HO₁ There is no significant difference in performance between students taught with dramatic method and those taught with conventional method.

HO₂ There is no significant difference in teachers' interest on dramatic method of teaching Igbo Language.

HO₃ There is no significant difference in students' interest on dramatic method of learning Igbo language.

Population: 250 students were used out of the 25 schools selected. Ten students (10) each were selected from each of the selected schools.

Sample and Sampling Technique: The research was carried out in twenty-five (25) primary schools in Ekiti State, Southern Nigeria. This is because the researcher wants to use none Igbo speakers from that part of the country, bearing in mind the number of students in each primary school. Random sampling approach was used to select two hundred and fifty primary school students.

Procedure

Permissions were sought from the head-teachers of the schools to administer the questionnaires to the respondents. The guidance and counselor, the teachers of each school were of great help, including the researcher in the administration/distribution of the questionnaires. This was achieved within the space of two weeks.

The two hundred and fifty (250) copies of the questionnaires were all collected and found useful for the research and data analysis.

Data Analysis and Results.

The researcher chose the chi-square technique for the data analysis. This enabled the researcher to find out the relationship between the variables.

HYPOTHESIS I (HO₁): There is no significant difference in the performance of students taught with dramatic methods and those taught using conventional method.

Table one for hypothesis I

	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL
Teaching second language learners with dramatic helps to achieve the stated objectives.	182(182)	20 (24)	35(27)	10 (18)	250
Dramatizing the lesson makes the students get involved	194(182)	25(24)	10(27)	21(18)	250
Students taught using dramatic methods internalized what they learnt	171(182)	31 (24)	26(27)	22(18)	250
The learning environment would be active with drama for Students	181(182)	19(24)	31(27)	19(18)	250

TOTAL 728 95 105 72 1000

Calculated value of $\chi^2 = 26.07$

In the above table for hypothesis I, the calculated value of 26.07 is greater than the table value of 7.815. Hence the hypothesis is rejected. This implies that, there is a significant difference in performance between students taught using dramatic method and those taught using conventional method.

HYPHESIS II (HO₂)

There is no significant relative effect in teachers' interest on dramatic method of teachers Igbo language

Table II for hypothesis II

	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL
Teachers of dramatic methods are more productive than teachers of conventional methods	192(183)	23 (20)	18(24)	17 (24)	250
Teachers with good knowledge of the subject matter "Igbo" like dramatizing their lesson	179(183)	10(20)	31(24)	30(24)	250
Dramatized class is more active and interesting than the conventional methods	185(183)	21 (20)	22(24)	22(24)	250
Igbo as a language is best taught using the dramatic methods especially when teaching second language learners	174(183)	27(20)	24(24)	25(24)	250

Total= 730 81 95 94 1000

Calculated value of $X^2 = 16.78$

The above table revealed that the calculated x^2 value of 16.78 is greater than the x^2 table of 7.815. Hence the hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is a significant relative effect in teacher' interest on dramatic method of teaching Igbo language.

HYPOTHESIS III (HO₃)

There is no significant relative effect in students' interest on dramatic methods of learning Igbo language as a second language learners (L₂)

Table III for hypothesis III

	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL
Students of dramatic class are more productive than Students of conventional Igbo class.	181(171)	32 (35)	17(23)	20 (21)	250
Students acquire better knowledge of Igbo language when dramatized	160(171)	48(35)	31(23)	11(21)	250
Students love the dramatic Igbo class than the Conventional class	191(171)	10 (35)	19(23)	30(21)	250
Dramatized Igbo classes arouse students' interest the Igbo language as second language learners	152(171)	51(35)	26(23)	21(21)	250

Total= 684 141 93 82 1000

Calculated value of $X^2 = 50.11$

The table above revealed that x^2 calculated value which is 50.11 is greater than the table value of

7.815. Hence the hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that there is significant relative effect in students' interest on dramatic method of learning Igbo language.

Conclusion:

This study was carried out to examine the pedagogical shift from conventional teaching strategies to a dramatic teaching mode in the Igbo language class in primary schools. Based on the findings of the study, there is a significant difference in the performance of students taught using conventional method and those taught using dramatic method. The finding also shows that there is a significant relative effect on both teachers' and students' interest on dramatic method of teaching and learning Igbo language to second language learners of the language. Drama is an indispensable tool in language teaching. Therefore Teachers should capitalize on the opportunities and resources that are available through drama and use it more often in the Igbo language classroom in line with the position of Chukueggu (2012).

Recommendations:

In the light of the findings in this study, the following are hereby recommended to improve dramatic methods of teaching Igbo language in primary schools.

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- Igbo language teachers should adopt effective teaching and learning environment that would enable the students have interest in their teaching method at all times.
 - Teachers on their own should have interest in their profession and be ready to give out their best to the students at all times.
 - Government at all levels should be interested in the study of the language and help to train and re-train the teachers by making provision for seminars and workshops for teachers from time to time.
 - Teachers should always allow the students to take active part in the class. This will make the students to have sense of belonging in the class.
 - Students should be assigned to dramatize one of the drama text book on their own. The teacher should always be ready to assist them as the need arises.
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