

BENEFITS OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE IN THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF ADULT FARMERS IN DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The importance of indigenous language in disseminating local information to the local people cannot be overemphasized. This paper is focused on the perceived benefits of indigenous language in the teaching and learning of adult farmers in Delta State. Data was collected from 400 randomly selected farmers in the study area and information was collected with the aid of structured questionnaire and interview schedule. Data analysis was by the use of frequency, percentage, and mean. The importance of indigenous language use in the teaching and learning process was confirmed by farmers in the study area.

Key words: Indigenous language, Adult farmers, Delta State

INTRODUCTION

The use of local language Africa, Asia and in many other parts of the world today is not always thought to be necessary in the teaching of adult farmers as it is in the united states and in other English speaking countries. The importance of local language in the teaching of adult farmers cannot be overstressed.

Psychologically, the proper understanding of agricultural technologies to enhance farming activities of the adult farmers, is closely bound with the continued use of the language he has spoken from birth, the language of his parents, his brothers and sisters, friends and fellow farmers he is used to. It is the language in which he dreams and thinks and even expresses his feelings and emotions. The attempts to ignore this familiar language in teaching the adult farmers is like taking him away from home and putting him among strangers.

All what is said he cannot, he cannot understand and cannot express himself and therefore become tongue tied and inhibited. The teaching of adult farmers in their native language can influence the effective learning of Agriculture. Some of the method of teaching Agriculture can better be expressed with the use of local or indigenous languages, such as in demonstration operations. Maduka (1985) stated that the learner's command of his natives to an extent that formerly was hardly suspected the key to his whole developments. This implies that perfection in once native language could serve as a strong basis for learning that would contribute to agricultural development. Also, Fafunwa (1991) stressed that 70% Nigerians population are constituted by rural dwellers who communicate and transact their businesses in their collective local languages. Less than 20 million Nigeria's estimated population of 100 million could effectively communicate in English, yet business is truncated by the reaming 80 percent in the local language. Such use of local language would enable the adult learners to think freely and learn better. The local language, thus gives greater member of people greater access to learning and personal development while providing greater interaction between the extension agents and adult learner. Okafor (1990) had noted that an educational programme, whatever type, must have its firm base on an appropriate language. By means of this medium, education provides the knowledge, skills and values necessary for man to become an effective agent of change in the interest of national development. This is the basis upon which indigenous language is useful in teaching adult farmers.

The importance of local languages to the teaching of adult farmers in the delta state in particular cannot be undermined as it is expected to improve the teaching and learning of Agriculture for a better understanding and improvement of totality of the farming operations. Onyemenam (1985) suggested that the local language be employed in the teaching of adult farmers as it will enhance their understanding of Agricultural technologies. It is also important that learning should be adapted to the mentality, aptitudes, occupations and traditions of the

various people concerning as far as possible all sound and healthy elements in the fabric of their social life. This study therefore investigates the benefits of indigenous language in the teaching and learning of adult farmers in Delta State, Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

The study covered rural farmers from the three agricultural zones of Delta state, which include Delta north, Delta central, and Delta south zones. Data was collected was by the use of interview schedule and questionnaire administered to the respondents. From each of the agricultural zones, 70 households were randomly selected and 3 farmers chosen for the study. This gave a total of 210 farmers from each zone. In all, 210 farmers were involved in the study but data was available for 200 respondents.

Descriptive and simple satisfaction tools were use to analyze data collected for the study. Data collected on the benefits of local language in teaching adult farmers were rated on a five point of scale of strongly agree, agree, undecided disagree and strongly disagree. For the purpose of interpretation, a mid point of 3.00 was established. As such, any mean score that is less than 3.00 implies disagreement with the statement, while a mean response score that is greater than 3.00 implies agreement with the statement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**Table 1: Economic characteristics of respondents. (n= 200)**

Age (years)	Frequency	Percentage
<30	14	7.0
30 – 39	26	13.0
40 – 49	49	24.5
50 – 59	78	39.0
> 60	33	16.5
Gender		
Male	137	68.5
Female	63	31.5
Education		
No formal education	61	30.5
FSLC	57	28.5
WASC	39	19.5
OND	24	12.0
N. C. E	19	9.5
Marital Status		
Married	168	84.0
Single	32	16.0

Table 1 shows that majority of the respondents are between the ages of 40-59 years. This shows that most of the respondents were above the middle age category. Onokerhoraye and Okafor (1994) had stated that the average age of the rural farmers has been advancing from 35 to 40 years as a result of migration of the younger people who to towns and cities, since they have the highest propensity to migrate, and such migration could contribute to the decline in food output. From the table also, majority of the respondents were males and also had no hold formal education. The existing pattern in rural areas demonstrates its failure to prepare the people for a better life through functional education or work oriented education, hence such symptoms as rural poverty, under employment and youth unemployment, with its consequent rural exodus (Ijere,1992). The result of the study also showed that majority of the

respondents was married. It is difficult for the married people to move to towns and cities because of their commitment and attachment to their families.

Table 2: Benefits of using local language in the teaching and learning of adult farmers in Delta state

Items	Mean score	Remarks
1. Improves the effectiveness of instruction	3.40	Agreed
2. It will facilitate teaching and learning	3.47	Agreed
3. It will make different words easy to understand	3.54	Agreed
4. Adult farmers will feel more at home and comfortable with learning	3.54	Agreed
5. It will bridge the gap between learning activities (theory) and practice of farming activities	3.44	Agreed
6. There will be natural approach to learning of farming techniques and new innovations	3.50	Agreed
7. It will enhance cultural and national identity	3.54	Agreed
8. It will promote national unity and culture among the Extension Agents and the farmers	3.08	Agreed
9. It will promote indigenous technological culture among Nigerians.	3.55	Agreed
10. It will reduce illiteracy among the rural farmers in delta state	3.07	Agreed
11. The use of local language will give clearer views of what is being taught	3.56	Agreed
12. It will develop curiosity and independent enquiry among adult farmers	3.63	Agreed

Table 2 shows that the use of indigenous languages in the teaching and learning of adult farmers will in no small measure enhance their performance in the areas of Agriculture. The result of the study showed that indigenous language will improve the effectiveness of teaching new innovations to the adult farmers (mean=3.54), respondents perceived that adult farmers will feel more at home and comfortable with learning in their local language (mean=3.54), they also perceived that using indigenous language will bridge the gap between theoretical learning activities and practical farming activities (mean=3.44), respondents also perceived that there will be natural approach to learning of farming techniques and new innovation (mean=3.50), it will enhance cultural and national identity in farming practice (mean=3.54), it will promote national unity and culture among the extension agents and the local farmers (mean=3.08), it will promote indigenous technological culture among Nigerians (mean=3.55), it will reduce illiteracy among the rural farmers in delta state (mean=3.07), the use of local languages will give a clearer view of what is being thought and learnt on the part of the adult farmers (mean=3.56), it will also develop curiosity and undeveloped enquiry among.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The benefits of teaching and learning of the adult farmers in local languages cannot be over emphasized because it is the beliefs that the use of local languages will enhance the understanding of the new techniques and innovations by the adult farmers. It is expected to increase the level of awareness and reduce illiteracy on the parts of the farmers, as it will afford them the opportunity to read newsletters, magazines published in the local languages with ease. The teaching of adult farmers in local languages will in no small measure bridge the gap between what they read about in books (theory) and the practical farming operations they carry out in their farmers. In view of the benefits outlined above, one would say that the learning of improve agricultural practices will be greatly enhanced when local languages are adopted in teaching them. Supporting this

Bamgbose (1974) stated that the possible benefits of using local languages are that it will improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning facilitate learning, bridge the gap between the home and school, enhance national identity, national unity and cultural and promote indigenous technological culture among Nigerians, reduce illiteracy and make approach to learning more natural.

To ensure increased effectiveness of learning through the local languages, it is recommended that Extension agents who pass instruction to the adult farmers be made to learn the local languages of the areas they cover and write or translate the idea they are passing out to the adult farmers in their local dialects before giving it out the instruction and write agricultural news letters journals produce by extension agencies in the local languages of the adult farmers. This will in no small measure enhance the effectiveness of learning and instruction.

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