PROBLEMS OF TEACHING HAUSA LANGUAGE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA AND THE WAY FORWARD

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ABSTRACT
This paper looked at the current problems of teaching and learning Hausa language in our secondary schools in Nigeria. This is necessary considering the fact that the passion people have on indigenous language is diminishing. This might be due to poor instruction and poor motivation towards them. A survey was carried out to observe the problems associated with the teaching of Hausa language in some selected secondary schools. Among the problems found was lack of standard textbooks and novels. The paper therefore recommended that government and other stakeholders concerned should be organising and sponsoring workshops, symposia and seminars for indigenous language teachers and book writers with the purpose of improving their qualities.

Keywords: Teaching, Hausa language

INTRODUCTION

Education is for spiritual, social and mental development. This means education is for rational and intellectual development. A rational individual is one who approaches matters with a concern and an ability to assess them by means of reasoning, who understands the types of reasons that are relevant in various logically distinct areas, who possesses a certain knowledge or information, as well as an ability to acquire alternative ways of looking at things as well as questioning attitude.
From the views of education above, one can see education as a process of developing a person mentally, physically, socially so that the person can be useful to himself and the community which he lives. It is a means for developing the entire person to enable him or her live effectively and efficiently in the society. Education involves acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes, competencies, ideas and cultures. (U.N., 2003).

Hausa language is one of the widely spoken languages in West Africa. It is classified as a member of Chadic sub-family of the Afro-asiatic family of languages. Most recently, the relationship of Hausa to Cushitic, Berber, and Semitic (that is Arabic and Hebrew) languages was widely recognized, (Greenberg, Kraft & Kirkgreen, Welmars & Newman in Yahaya, 2012). Hausa is largely and predominantly spoken in Northern Nigeria and the Southern Niger republic. Sizeable Hausa speaking communities are also found in Ghana, Cameroun and Chad. Reasonable number also exist in Benin Republic, Burkina Faso, Togo, Sudan and many of the major cities in west, North and Equatorial Africa. It is also estimated that millions of people speaks Hausa as a first language with some one hundred million non-native speakers demonstrating varying degrees of competence in the language, (Graham, 1996).

In Northern Nigeria, Hausa language is used as a medium of instruction in the lower primary classes (where it is the language of the immediate community) as set out by the Federal Government of Nigeria (FRN, 2013). The National Policy on Education has also made Hausa language one of the mandatory subjects among the three indigenous languages for Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (S.S.C.E) for NECO, WAEC and NABTEB along with two other Nigerian languages (Igbo, Yoruba).

**THE NIGERIAN LANGUAGE POLICY**

The National Policy on Education (NPE) (2014) provided that each child should be encouraged to learn one of the three major Nigerian languages other than his/her mother tongue. The three languages as stipulated in the policy are Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. Similarly, it provides that at the nursery school, government would ensure that the medium of instruction will be principally the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community and at primary school. The policy provides that government will ensure that the medium of instruction is initially the mother tongue or the language of immediate community (Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN), 2013).

This language policy aimed at promoting Nigerian languages and cultures. It is also aimed at making it easier for students to acquire concept by teaching than in a language they are supposed to be most familiar with.
However, local languages teachers are not adequate. And in an attempt to adhere to this policy, untrained and unqualified teachers are often recruited. Such people often end up misleading their students. Besides the idea of using the mother-tongue or the language of the immediate community is unworkable in schools that draw their students’ population from various parts of the country, except if they are willing to learn the language of the environment for communication.

The paper therefore discusses these and other related problems and suggests way forward as well as recommending some solutions to the discussed problems.

**OBJECTIVES OF TEACHING HAUSA IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

Hausa language enjoys wide researches at all levels and stages of language studies in Nigeria and many overseas universities. It is used as medium of instruction at the primary and secondary school level to fulfil UNESCO condition of instructing children in their mother tongue for the first three years of Universal Basic Education (U.B.E). The National Policy on Education (2011) outlines the objectives of teaching Hausa language in secondary schools as follows:

a. To enable students speak, read and write in Hausa language and communicate effectively with neighbours;
b. To familiarize them with the sound system and grammatical structures of Hausa language
c. To expose students to their culture, custom and institutions and
d. To acquaint them with the necessary tools needed for creative writing and appreciation of Hausa language and literature (NERDC, 2011: p.6).

**PROBLEMS OF TEACHING HAUSA LANGUAGE IN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

Among the very serious problems of teaching Hausa language education, the authors identified the following:

a. Problem of over population of Hausa language classrooms
b. Problem of non-standard writers
c. Problem of inadequate teaching facilities
d. Problem of inadequate and unqualified staff
e. Poor or lack of motivation
f. Poor teaching methods

**Over Population of Classrooms**

It is a common knowledge that the demand for education in the country is very high. The population of students in our secondary schools has been a serious problem with
educational system. A Hausa language classroom should contain not above 40 students or so. Where the number is manageable, the teacher can give his attention to every student effectively. Unfortunately, the situation is such that small classrooms contain students more than 90 students. There is no way a Hausa language teacher can control a classroom of this size as the teacher cannot give every student attention. There are also problems of class management, in conducive learning environment and others. This kind of atmosphere seriously militates against quality education and is a negative factor in students’ performance as quality cannot be compromised with quantity.

**Problem of Non-Standard Writers**

In order to teach students the art of orthography, a lot of human and material resources are necessary. Teachers are the human resources that are saddled with the responsibilities of training the students all those aspects of orthography and standard Hausa. A Hausa teacher is therefore required to be competent and proficient in the language he is required to teach. He should also know the orthographical aspects of the language very well.

However, many Hausa language teachers today are not properly trained. Many of them do not have mastery of the subject they teach as a lot of them cannot write Hausa language correctly. The question then is, how can these type of teachers produce good results? The answer to this question is that the schools will continue to produce students who are half baked and who cannot write Hausa language correctly.

**Inadequate Teaching Facilities**

Teaching facilities are the materials and devices used in learning situations to supplement written or spoken words in the transmission of knowledge, attitudes, ideas and facts to learners. These include classrooms, seats, chalkboard, chalks, textbooks, etc. The provision of these materials will make a Hausa language class lively because students will not be passive but active. Inadequacy of these materials makes teaching to be unsuccessful as students cannot make association, making learning to take place in abstraction. This factor also plays a role in the failure of the students in examinations.

**Inadequate/Unqualified Staff**

There has been shortage of Hausa teachers. This shortage is mainly due to the fact that only very few people study the subject. This attitude is traceable to colonial experiences where the colonised were socialized into believing that Nigerian languages and culture are inferior and unworthy of any serious attention. Because of this mentality, very few students study Hausa at the tertiary level. Even among the few who study the subject, many end up not teaching the language as they are often given employment in other places like oil companies.
Problem of Motivation

Lack of good motivation techniques gives birth to the formation of a negative attitude towards Hausa language. Motivation is an aspect of psychology that must guide the teacher if he wants the learners to achieve the desired change in behaviour. It is the arousal of tendency to act or behave towards a goal which is selected in preference to all other possible goals.

It is the role of the teacher to motivate his students to be interested in what goes on during lessons. The students must see the need to be properly and wholly integrated into the target language and not to see the language as only a means of achieving their ambition in life, as seen in the differences between instrumental and integrative motivation of students. Poor motivation is therefore, one of the obstacles to effective Hausa language learning in schools.

Poor Language Teaching Methodology

Many Hausa language teachers in secondary schools adopt traditional methods of teaching language some of which are outdated. There are current language teaching methods that have proven to be effective by empirical researches. These methods and techniques include communicative language approach and direct methods, among others. Effective method of teaching is crucial in improving learners’ performance. A Hausa language teacher is therefore required to employ methods and techniques that are capable of arousing students’ interest towards the subject. Approaching Hausa language teaching eclectically will no doubt help significantly in dealing with individual differences among learners. Teaching methods should be varied in a way that students can be involved in manipulation of objects, reading, writing, listening, dramatizing, etc.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view to the above discussed problems, urgent measures must be taken to make the teaching of Hausa Language Education prepare students for the challenges of the 21st century. Some of these measures may include:

1. Government and other stakeholders concerned should take appropriate measures to enforce the language policy as contained in the National Policy on Education.
2. Teaching and teachers of Hausa language should be professionalized such that anyone who wants to be a Hausa teacher can be trained in the profession.
3. The Hausa curriculum should be reviewed to suit the students’ needs. Teachers should also ensure full coverage of the content within the stipulated period.
4. Government should be seen not only to be making appropriate budget allocations, but should also ensure appropriate utilization of the budget.
5. Government should encourage Hausa writers by organizing and sponsoring workshops, seminars, and symposia for Nigerian languages writers.

6. Qualified Hausa teachers should be employed by government so that the teaching of Hausa language will be improved

7. Hausa language teachers should be motivated

8. Appropriate language teaching methods should be used to ensure the achievement of desired goals

9. Government and other agencies e.g NGO, UNESCO, TETFUND, should provide adequate classrooms for schools teaching Hausa language.

CONCLUSION

Hausa language is one of the vehicles of knowledge and world view and a route to a child’s comprehension of concepts (NCCE, 2012:65). The policy on language education in Nigeria dates back to the colonial era when the Phelps-Stokes Commission of 1922 emphasized the importance of indigenous languages in the school system. The British Advisory Committee on native education in tropical Africa recommended in 1927, that native languages should serve as a medium of instruction in the lower years of primary education. The Richard’s constitution of 1947 reinstated English as the official language in Nigeria while Hausa was recommended as an additional legislative language in Northern Nigeria. In addition, the 1954 constitution recognized domestic and regional languages. In article 114 (1), it recommended the use of English as a national official language and as the regional official language in the South, with Hausa as the regional language of the North with the provision that when conflicts in interpretation occurred, documentation done in English language is regarded as valid (Fafunwa, 2004: p.34). The paper therefore concludes that the problem of teaching Hausa language in secondary schools when properly addressed can add value to language teaching as a whole.

REFERENCES


