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## **THE STATUS OF YORUBA LANGUAGE AMONG SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN OYO WEST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF OYO STATE**

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### **Abstract**

*The study looks at the status of Yoruba language among secondary schools students in Oyo, Oyo state, Nigeria. Two hypotheses were formulated as a guide to carry out the study. The chi-square statistics was used to analyzed the status of Yoruba language among secondary schools students in Oyo west local government area of Oyo state. A total of fifteen (15) item questions were distributed to 100 randomly selected students from the five (5) randomly selected secondary schools in Oyo town of Oyo state. The result of the chi-square analysis indicated that there is significant different between gender and attitude of students towards learning of Yoruba language. Also, there is significant difference between methodology and interest of students learning Yoruba language among students in Oyo west local government area of Oyo state. This study was concluded by suggestions and recommendation based on future improvement in status of Yoruba language among Nigeria secondary school students.*

*Keywords: Status, Yoruba Language, Secondary Schools, Oyo West, Local Government Area, Oyo State*

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### **Introduction**

Language as a whole is a verbal or non-verbal means of communication among a people. It enables them to coordinate work, exchange idea, express feelings, think, play and reflect on their experiences. Sapir (1963:8) sees language as “a

purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols. Alo (1995:7-8) says “Language is the primary and most highly elaborated form of human symbolic activity”.

Yoruba language now is a language spoken in West Africa, most prominently South Western Nigeria. It is one of the indigenous languages in Nigeria, spoken by the ethnic Yoruba people. Speakers of this language (Yoruba Language) could also be found in countries like Benin Republic, Togo, Sierra Leone, Cuba and Brazil (Babalola, 1978).

Yoruba language remained unwritten before 1,800 and little was known of it before. Awoniyi (2006) stated that there was no alphabet before the advent of the Europeans. It was in 1819 that Bowdich, an European man, wrote Yoruba words that were mainly numerals from numbers one to ten. Bowdich’s idea of that time could be funny to a modern Yoruba student, yet, it was the first attempt to document Yoruba language, asserted (Awoniyi, 2006).

The origin of the use of Yoruba language in Education can be traced to freedom in Sierra Leone during the missionaries period (1800-1881) according to Brann (2003). One of the major problems the missionaries encountered was language barrier, as a result, they (missionaries) found it extremely difficult to communicate with people around them. The Anglican, through the church missionary society came in 1840 but their work did not yield any reasonable fruit because of the communication problem, until 1845 when they opined two schools to educate the people and to learn their language. To crown their effort, the C.M.S missionaries took it upon themselves to standardized Yoruba as a language in 1845 with the translation of the Holy Bible to Yoruba language by Rev. J. F. Shorn and Bishop S. Ajayi Crowther.

Yoruba language is now used in Nigeria schools right from the kindergarten to the University level. Also, it is a policy that Yoruba language should be used for pupils’ right from primary one to three. Not only that, the Government considers it to be in the interest of national unity that each child should be encouraged to learn one of the major languages other than his own mother tongue. Yoruba language is one of the major languages recognized in Nigerian’s constitution. In this connection, the slogan “don’t speak vernacular” which has been geared towards understanding the status of Yoruba language in both

primary and secondary schools has been drastically removed and it has gone into oblivion (Sogunro, 2001).

Scholars of Yoruba language are greatly indebted to the Christian missionaries who took it upon themselves to put Yoruba language into writing. It was their effort that gingered the Yoruba language scholars to further studies and finding of Yoruba language (Ogunsina, 2001).

According to Popoola (2005), Yoruba language is now taking a prominent position in the educational system of Nigeria. The Nigeria Government has given recognition to the importance of language, particularly the role of mother tongue in education process. In 1953, two committees were set up to look into the scientific and grammatical terminologies in Yoruba language. There was a Yoruba syllabus for primary schools in 1954. It was aimed at teaching the mechanics of reading and writing skills and to lead the pupils to express themselves fluently in Yoruba language.

Moreover, to appreciate the importance of Yoruba language more in the educational process and as a means of preserving the people's culture, Federal Government of Nigeria considers it to be in the interest of national unity that each child should be encouraged to learn one of the three major language to be Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa (NPE, 1999). In 1975, there was a proposal by the Federal Government of Nigeria that the three major Nigeria languages should be included in the secondary school's curriculum. The National Education Research and Development Council (NERDC) prepared in 1977 a curriculum on Yoruba for both Junior and Senior Secondary Schools. Yoruba language is being compulsorily taught and learnt in the Junior secondary schools as a language of the environment in Oyo, Osun, Ogun, Ekiti, Ondo, Kwara and Lagos State. It was also made a prerequisite for gaining admission into Teacher Training Colleges in Lagos and then Oyo State (Adelaja, 2002).

There has been rapid growth in the curriculum development, research and teaching with regard to Yoruba language since 1955 (Ogunsina, 2001). Most speakers of Yoruba language no longer feel inferior speaking in the midst of other language speakers. But recently, the researcher observed that the Yoruba speakers, most especially the younger ones do not want to speak the language amidst other language speakers and this is what instigate the researcher to find the cause of lost in the status of Yoruba language.

A lot of problems are being encountered by both the teachers and students in the teaching and learning of Yoruba as a first language. Yoruba specialists are not enough in various secondary schools. The few teachers who are qualified to teach the language are not interested in teaching Yoruba language. Teachers from other disciplines are usually called upon to teach Yoruba since they are Yoruba speakers. Teachers of Yoruba language fail to put into practice the language skills and methods acquired in their various institutions of higher learning (Babalola, 2006).

There is also the problem of textbooks and some of the available ones used in schools are inadequate. The inability of students to purchase the required textbooks due to high cost of poverty is another problem which needs to be addressed. Yoruba language is only taught when students have it on their time table. Students choose Yoruba language as a make up subject. They do not see it as a core subject that is worthy of study. It is taught as knowledge to be acquired and stored instead of practicing it. Students also are not exposed enough to the practical use of the language (Adelaja, 2002).

Adeboye (2002) observed that learners were not motivated enough to use the language effectively in the sense that the community did not encourage them to speak it at home and in the school due to modern civilization. Most of the time when Yoruba language teachers try to enforce the speaking of Yoruba on students, other teachers thwart their efforts by claiming that the school's official language is English. This attitude does not in any way promote the status of Yoruba language.

Bamgbose (2005) identified the problem of period and time allocation on the part of secondary school administrators. Yoruba language is being given three period per week in most schools as against five periods per week given to each of English language and Mathematics. This problem is still persisting up till today in most of the Western part of the country that Yoruba is being taught as a subject. The school administrators fail to understand the fact that the few periods allocated to Yoruba will not be sufficient to treat all aspects of Yoruba language e.g. Yoruba Literature, Prose, Drama and Grammar, all these need to be given sufficient periods so that the teacher can give an in-depth justice to Yoruba language. However, failure to allocate enough period have thus prevented the teacher from either not completing the scheme or by giving the

students insufficient information thereby producing half baked Yoruba students. For Yoruba language to be properly taught, it will be good if the school authority allocated sufficient period just like Mathematics and English language to Yoruba language. The general belief that Yoruba is simple because it's our mother tongue should be ruled out.

Bakare (1997) found that Nigeria is a multilingual society. Any target language that does not have an official status in the environment where it is being taught will have status problem. Such is the case of the status of Yoruba as a second language in Nigerian secondary schools. The lack of sufficient and adequate manpower is another problem contributing to the low status of Yoruba as a second language. Most schools are short of the necessary manpower, enough hands are not employed to handle the language. In most schools a single teacher may be employed to handle all the arms of the school because the school authority fails to comprehend the facts that when enough hands are employed to handle Yoruba in school, the teachers will find it extremely easy to give their best to the students.

More so, when enough hands are employed, the teachers can then engage in division of labour, the one that is best in grammar will handle it, and those that are best in other aspects can as well handle the aspects. This will however, enables the teacher to give his best to the students and this will enhance the performance of the students in their examination because they will excel gallantly in the language because they have been exposed to all the aspect of the language.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The National Policy on Education (NPE) on secondary school education in sub-section 19(4) of section 4.1 states that in selecting two Nigerian language, students should study the language of their own environment in addition to any of the three main languages in Nigeria, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. Also, in section 531 of the 1989 Nigerian constitution, it is stated that National Assembly shall be conducted in English, Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba.

In spite of this policy provision, the actual learning of Yoruba language is still faced with certain difficulties especially at the Senior Secondary School level where the language is an optional subject. Also, Oyo being a metropolitan city

is populated by many indigenous ethnic languages, which makes the learning of Yoruba language difficult in most schools in Oyo state. This study therefore seeks to find out the status of Yoruba language among selected secondary school students in Oyo West Local Government Area of Oyo state.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The researcher attempts to investigate the status of Yoruba language in secondary schools with particular reference to selected secondary schools in Oyo West Local Government Area of Oyo state.

The aim of the investigator is to find out:

- 1) the status of Yoruba language among selected secondary school students in Oyo West Local Government Area of Oyo state.
- 2) the status of Yoruba language in the view of the teachers.
- 3) views of the secondary school students about the status of Yoruba language as a subject.
- 4) the general view of the students about the effectiveness of Yoruba language as a subject.

### **Hypotheses**

Ho1: There is no significant difference between gender and attitude of students towards learning of Yoruba language.

Ho2: There is no statistically significant difference between methodology and interest of the students learning Yoruba.

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

This paper was designed to find out the status of Yoruba language among selected students in Oyo West Local Government Area of Oyo state. The research design is ex-post factor survey in which opinions of students were sought through the use of questionnaire.

### **Population and Sample**

The population of this study consists of students from 10 selected schools in Oyo. A total of 100 students were purposively selected from senior secondary schools which comprises of 50 males and 50 females.

### Instrumentation

Questionnaire was drawn for data collection on the basis of the status of Yoruba language among selected secondary schools in Oyo West Local Government Area of Oyo state. In an attempt to get the different view of the students, the questionnaire consists of two sections. Section A deals with general information about the respondents while section B focuses on the views of the respondents on the study of Yoruba language among other languages spoken in the area.

The likert scaling technique was used in the questionnaire to collect responses required for the respondents. The scale is desirable because of its ability to measure in unites of varying degrees of responses, ranging from Strongly Agreed (SA), from one end of the continuous to Strong Disagreed (SD) on the other end.

The student's questionnaire was distributed to all 100 students of Nigerian languages and they were completed and returned. 100 students were randomly selected using stratified random sampling technique on the basis of gender.

The questionnaire were developed and given to experts in the areas of Nigerian languages for validation and necessary corrections were effected. The questionnaire was subjected to validity test. The instruments were found to be of high validity. In order to ensure the reliability of instruments, the researcher took the questionnaire to some experts in Yoruba language department who check the content validity.

The researchers personally administered the questionnaire to the respondents and responses were analyzed and evaluate the samples, sample chi-square were used to computer the questionnaire.

### Results

**Research Question 1:** There is no significant difference between gender and attitude of students towards learning of Yoruba language.

**Table 1: Attitude of Students to Learning of Yoruba Language, Male and Female Compared.**

Variable	N	Degree of Freedom	Critical Value	Calculated Value	Remark
Differences between gender among students towards learning Yoruba language.	100	12	5.23	77.75	Significant

- Significance at 0.05

The table 1 above shows that there is significant different between gender and attitude of students towards learning of Yoruba language.

**Research Question 2: There is no significant difference between methodology and interest of the students learning Yoruba.**

**Table 2: Influence of Methodology and Interest of the Students Learning Yoruba Language**

Variable	N	Degree of Freedom	Critical Value	Calculated Value	Remark
Influence of methodology and interest of students learning Yoruba language	100	12	5.23	128.00	Significant

Level of significant = 0.05.

The table above shows that there is significant difference between methodology and interest of students learning Yoruba language among students in Ibadan metropolis.

### Discussion of Findings

From the table 1 above the calculated value is 77.75 while the critical value is 5.23. It shows that calculated value is greater than the critical value i.e.  $TC > Tt$ , since calculated is greater, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected. This shows that there is significance difference between gender and attitude of students towards learning of Yoruba language among students in Oyo West Local Government Area of Oyo state.

This is in line with the findings of Awoniyi (2006) in his study “the role and status of Yoruba language in formal school system of western Nigeria (1846-1971)” it is shown that students gender does not determine the attitude of students towards learning of Yoruba language. Also, it shows that the influence of peer groups on Yoruba speaking is further observed in this study. It is observed that there is high rate of respondents who strongly believed that peer groups have great impact in students’ performance in Yoruba language.

From the table 2, the critical value is less than the calculated value i.e.  $TC > Tt$ , since the calculated value is greater, therefore the null hypothesis is rejected and

accept alternative hypothesis. It is now concluded that there is significant difference between methodology and interest of students learning Yoruba language.

This finding is corroborated with the findings of Adetiba (2006) which found that students prefer to learn if they have their way. He also stated some factors that differ the interest of students learning Yoruba language in Nigeria among are offering Yoruba as compulsory subject in Nigerian schools i.e. Yoruba should be made one of the compulsory subject in schools. The status of Yoruba language among Nigeria language is of great value, environment in learning how to speak Yoruba language also influence lives of students speaking of Yoruba language.

### **Recommendations**

Government should made funds available to teachers of Yoruba language for the purchase of appropriate textbooks and a variety of instructional materials. Also there should be language laboratories in secondary schools to enhance good teaching of the Yoruba language.

School principal are encouraged to show interest in the teaching and speaking of Yoruba language in senior secondary schools. They should allow Yoruba language a sufficient number of periods in the school time-table. Principals should stop giving Yoruba teaching to just any teacher. They should allow only specialist to teach Yoruba language in their schools.

Teachers of Yoruba language should serve as mirror to their students. They should dress and speak as specialists of Yoruba language. They should make use of appropriate textbooks, a variety of methods and instructional materials in the teaching of Yoruba language. It is also recommended that teachers should attend seminars and workshops organized on Yoruba language to update their skill and knowledge.

Finally, students should develop interest in learning Yoruba language in order to develop socially and to be rich in Yoruba culture. Their knowledge of Yoruba will go a long way to help them in learning other foreign languages taught in senior secondary schools even in their future life. They should know that there is bright future for students of Yoruba language. They should cooperate with

their teachers by doing their assignments, participating in class engaging and participating in projects and having the necessary textbooks.

### Conclusions

The status of Yoruba among secondary school students is identified in a multilingual society like Nigeria stands to pose a problem as a second language. If Yoruba language should be considered as the second language in Nigeria, that will improve the teaching and studying of Yoruba in schools, because more emphasis will be given to the language and will be handled just that the engineers consider Mathematics and the Journalist consider English language. Each cultural groups feels that her language is superior to the language of other ethnic groups. Need is thus felt for good status of such languages and when people do, it is only on commercial grounds. The nation's lukewarm attitude towards the implementation of the Nigerian second language educational programme is also a problem to the status of Yoruba as a second language. While the federal government considers it to be in the interest of natural unity that a child should learn the three major languages other than his mother tongue, some individuals share the opinion that the national language matter should not be taken seriously.

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