



Attitudes of Oyo State College of Education Students to the use of English and Yoruba Languages

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Abstract

The study examined the attitudes of Oyo State College of Education, Lanlate students to the use of English and Yoruba languages in and outside the classroom. Forty students from each of the six schools in the college, which cut across all the levels, making a total of two hundred and forty students were randomly selected as the population for the study. A self-designed 15-item questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents and descriptive design was used for the analysis. The findings revealed that even when most of the students prefer the use of Yoruba to perform most of their activities in the classroom to cover their deficiencies in English, their attitude to English is extremely positive. They do most of their activities outside the class either in English or through the use of code-mixing and they admire those who speak English competently. It is believed that the study will benefit not only the teachers and the students but also the government.

Keywords: Attitude, Positive, English and Yoruba, Oyo State College of Education, Lanlate

Introduction

Attitude, which can be overt or covert, is generally defined in relation to feeling, opinion or judgment. For instance, Williams (1974) sees it as an internal state aroused by stimulation of some type and may influence the organism's

subsequent response. Adegbija (1994) believes it is a complex phenomenon which could be observable or internal, or both simultaneously, temporarily or lasting and of a surface level or deep-rooted nature. Atkinson et.al (1987) cited

in Adekunle (1995) see attitudes as:

Likes and dislikes – affinities for and aversions to objects, persons, groups, situations, or any other identifiable aspects of the environment, including abstract ideas and social policies.

Adekunle (1995) then submits that attitudes are seen to consist of three components: (i) beliefs, which accounts for (ii) dispositions, which in turn, account for (iii) actions or human behaviours. It is deducible from this that attitude is both psychological and physical; it emanates from the mind before it is demonstrated in action. Generally, conviction that something is good influences one's actions or behaviour. Social psychologists believe that attitude can be positive or negative. Eagly and Chaiken (1998) in Soyele (2019) thus submit that attitude is the tendency to evaluate a person, concept or group either positively or negatively. Going by all the definitions above, language attitude can therefore be simply seen as a person's opinion about, feeling for or likes or dislikes for a language. Attitude, as generally believed, plays a vital role in the survival or decay, marginalisation or promotion of a language (Soyele, 2019). Although Adekunle (1995) also identifies two major language influences, namely centripetal attitude, which is inward-looking, identificational and positive to the indigenous languages, and centrifugal attitude, which is outward-looking and positive to the foreign languages. To avoid unnecessary repetition of what has been over flogged, this aspect will not be covered here.

A lot of things have been written by scholars in language and linguistics in Nigeria on language attitudes such as Doherty (reviewed in Oluikpe 1981), Sofenwa (reviewed in Ubahakwe 1979), Iruafem (1988), Adegbija (2000), Babajide (2001), Ogunsiji (2001), Oyetade (2001), Odebunmi (2001), Odekunbi and Sulymon (2016) and Soyele (2019). However, works on the attitudes of college of education students to the speaking of English and Yoruba languages are very scanty. Doherty's and Sofenwa's studies, for instance, can better be regarded as historical studies in that they dwell on the frequency with which English was used by Nigerians when compared to the indigenous languages in the sixties and seventies. They then reveal that English was more frequently used in formal and official contexts than any other context in the seventies when compared with its use in the sixties. Though it can be deduced from the works that people's frequency of use of languages will betray their attitudes to those languages, unlike the present study, their studies are not directly on people's attitudes to the languages concerned.

Iruafemi (1988) studies the attitudes of parents in Lagos and Ibadan to the use of indigenous languages in the early stages of their children's education and discovers that the larger percentage of the parents is negatively disposed to it. This study also differs from the present study in that it uses the parents as its respondents rather than

the students themselves and it is strictly on the use of indigenous languages as the medium of instruction rather than attitudes to the use of both English and Yoruba for the conduct of all their activities. Adegbija (2000) conducts a similar study in Kwara State to find out if his respondents would like a local language to replace English as a medium of instruction in Nigerian schools. And, like the former one, larger percentage of the respondents was against it. Babajide (2001) using 120 respondents (40 from each of the Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba tribes), simply studies the language attitude patterns of Nigerians towards the use of the languages in Nigeria and discovers that the majority of the Igbo and Yoruba respondents are comfortable with the use of English in all situations.

That of Ogunsiji (2001) titled “A sociological study of the language attitude in market transactions” defers considerably from the previous ones in that he only studies the attitudes of Ibadan market participants to the use of languages and finds out that they use Yoruba and Pidgin English which are mutually intelligible to them. Like the previous ones, Oyetade (2001) considering English as a foreign language, studies the attitudes of Nigerians to the use of both foreign and indigenous languages and concludes that people are generally more disposed to the foreign languages. Odekunbi and Sulymon (2016) only discuss Nigerians’ attitudes to the use of languages to corroborate their stand that Nigerians have been positively disposed to the use of English right from the colonial era, and if the attitude is not changed our indigenous languages, particularly, Yoruba may soon go into extinction. It is obvious from all the reviewed studies that this study differs from them in many ways. One, our respondents are college of education students, two, this is limited to only English and Yoruba languages and three, the attitudes are not limited to the use of the languages in the classroom.

Brief notes on Oyo State College of Education, Lanlate

Lanlate is one of the seven towns that in Ibarapa. The remaining six towns are: Igangan, Eruwa, Igbo-ora, Idere, Tapa and Aiyete. They are under three local government areas: Ibarapa Central, Ibarapa East and Ibarapa North and their major occupation is farming. Lanlate as a campus of Oyo State College of Education, Oyo (Now Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo) was started by the government of late Lamidi Adedibu. However, with the directive of National Commission for Colleges of Education in 2013 that all the satellite campuses of colleges of education should be closed down, the government of Governor Abiola Ajimobi gave it an autonomous power in April 25, 2015 and was named College of Education, Lanlate. But for reasons best known to it, the government of Governor Seyi Makinde renamed it Oyo State College of Education, Lanlate. It also needs to be stated here that though the college gets students from some other parts of the state like Ibadan, Ogbomosho,

Iseyin and indeed the neighbouring states, since the college is in Ibarapa region, sizeable percentage of the students of the college come from the region.

Statement of the problem

It is observed that even when English is known to be the Nigeria's official language and language of education right from the later stage in the primary school, most students of Oyo State College of Education, Lanlate are more comfortable using Yoruba language in nearly all contexts. It is, in fact, observed that some of them find it difficult to restrain themselves from using Yoruba to ask and answer questions in the class. This study therefore examines the attitudes of Oyo State College of Education, Lanlate students to the use of English and Yoruba languages for the conduct of their activities both on the school campus and outside the school.

Purpose of the study

The study sets out to find out the attitudes of the students of Oyo State College of Education, Lanlate students to the use of English and Yoruba on and outside the school campus. The study will specifically find out:

- i. How they feel when they are being taught with English alone.
- ii. How they feel when they are taught with English and Yoruba.
- iii. The language they prefer using outside the classroom.

Significance of the study

Government will benefit immensely from the study in that it will help them to assess the success of their policies on language use in the country. The study will also be of benefit to the teachers, right from the primary school to at least college of education level, because it will open their eyes to the fact that the medium of instruction plays a major role in the achievement of one's goal/objectives in teaching. Therefore, for some pupils/students to understand what they are taught, there may be a need for their teachers to code-switch, that is, they may need to use bilingual method of teaching. Students will also gain from the study because their performance in class will improve once their teachers understand their language problem and use appropriate method(s) to solve it. Also, through the study, the curriculum planners may understand the source of the pupils/students' problem and they will be able to take care of them when planning/preparing the curriculum. Finally, sociolinguistics scholars working on language attitudes will find it useful in updating their knowledge.

Methodology

The descriptive research design which helps to give detailed analysis of data is used for this study. Forty students from each of the six schools in the college namely:

Schools of Education, Vocational and Technical Education, Languages, Arts and Social Science, Science and Early Childhood Education were randomly selected for the study. This means that a total of two hundred and forty students constituted the population for the study. It was also ensured the selected students cut across all the levels of students in the college, that is, parts 1 to 3. The instrument used for data collection is a 15-item questionnaire that demanded yes-or-no type responses. The statements in the questionnaire range from those that are class-related to those that are related to activities outside the classroom. Two hundred and forty copies of the questionnaire were produced for administration to the respondents. The copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents with the assistance of some lecturers in the various schools and the completed copies were collected back after two days. The respondents' responses were analysed by using simple percentage statistical tool. For ease of analysis, the fifteen items in the questionnaire were broken into two tables named Tables 1 and 2. Table 1 has seven classroom-related items while Table 2 has eight items that are related to activities outside the classroom.

Theoretical perspective

The theory adopted here is socio-psychological approach as developed by Garner and Lambert (1972) and updated by Garner (1985). It is posited in the theory that a successful learner of a language must be psychologically prepared to imbibe different aspects of the members of the linguistic/cultural group whose language they want to learn. They then identify two major motivational forces for second language learners: instrumental and integrative forces. Instrumental motivation, according to Garner and Lambert (1972), is informed by one's desire to grow in one's carrier/job or to move up in the social ladder. In the words of Soyele (2019), it is "characterised by the desire to gain social recognition and economic advantage". In simple language, motivation is instrumental when a language learner sees that their learning a language will bring them personal gain and enhanced social status. Soyele (2019) thus submits that this kind of motivation is self-oriented and individualistic. This is the type of motivation that informs most Nigerians to learn English language; they desire to learn it because they see it as the means to the betterment of their socio-economic status. On the other hand, integrative attitude is social, interpersonal and conceptually linked to cultural affiliation (Soyele, 2019). It is informed by the desire to integrate well into a community. This is the choice of a language rather than another for learning and interaction purpose. For instance, various factors can make a multilingual person to prefer their mother tongue to a second or target language.

Data Analysis

As said earlier, for ease of analysis, the fifteen-item questionnaire was divided into Tables 1 and 2 and simple percentage statistical tool was used for the analysis. The respondents' responses to the classroom related-items are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 showing items that are classroom-related.

S/N	Statement	Yes	%	No	%	Total %
1.	I prefer speaking Yoruba to English in the class.	180	75	60	25	100
2.	I feel free asking questions in Yoruba in the class.	200	83.33	40	16.67	100
3.	I speak Yoruba more confidently than English in the class.	220	91.67	20	8.33	100
4.	I enjoy lectures delivered in Yoruba better than English.	180	75	60	25	100
5.	I feel happy when a lecturer switches from English to Yoruba.	180	75	60	25	100
6.	I get better grades in courses where lecturers use both English and Yoruba.	200	83.33	40	16.67	100
7.	I get bore when a lecturer uses only English.	180	75	60	25	100

It is obvious from Table 1 above that most of the respondents are favourably disposed to the use of the Yoruba language in the classroom. It is sufficed here to consider some of the items to establish the argument. For instance, in item 1 which demands the attitude of the respondents to the speaking of Yoruba and English in the class, a large number of them, 180, which constitutes 75% chose “Yes” while only a fractional percentage, 25%, chose “No”. In item 2, 200 of the respondents which constitute 83.33% said they feel free asking questions in Yoruba in the classroom while only 40 students which constitute 16.67% chose “No”. In item 3, 220 students making 91.67% said they speak Yoruba more competently than English in class, while a negligible number of 20 which constitute 8.33% of them chose “No”. Similarly, in item 4, 180 of them said they enjoy lectures delivered in Yoruba better than English while only 60 that make 25% claimed they enjoy lectures delivered in English. The implication of this is that most of them have positive attitude to the use of Yoruba in preference to English. This may not be unconnected to the fact that the majority of the students in the college come from Ibarapa region of the state where the prominent means of communication is Yoruba. The small percentage of the respondents who subscribed to “No” are possibly those who come from cities where the dominant means of communication is English.

Another important thing to be noted here is that the language of lecture delivery also dictates their academic performance and participation in the classroom. For instance, in item 6, 200 respondents which constitute 83.33% claimed they get better grades in

courses where lecturers switch from English to Yoruba, while those who prefer English only (16.67%) claimed they get lower grades in courses where lecturers switch to Yoruba. Finally, in item 7, 180 respondents which constitute 75% of the respondents said they get bored when lectures are delivered in only English. One of the likely implications of this is that the performances of those who get bored in the courses will be poor while the performances of those who enjoy it will be impressive. As argued earlier, this shows that only a small percentage of the students of the college come from the cities where English is prominently spoken as the means of communication. Another explanation that is adducible here is that some of the small percentage of students who prefer English to Yoruba might also come from Ibarapa region but might have attended standard private nursery, primary and secondary schools where English is not only the language of education but also the means of communication.

Table 2 showing items that are related to activities outside the class.

S/N	Statement	Yes	%	No	%	Total
1.	I usually code-mix English and Yoruba when writing text messages.	220	91.67	20	8.33	100
2.	I don't enjoy watching English films as Yoruba.	70	29.17	170	70.83	100
3.	I prefer writing letters in English to Yoruba.	220	91.67	20	8.33	100
4.	I admire my friends who speak English competently.	220	91.67	20	8.33	100
5.	I see speaking English always as a mark of pride.	20	8.33	220	91.67	100
6.	I feel bad about my incompetence in English.	200	83.33	40	16.67	100
7.	I use Yoruba to do nearly all activities outside the classroom.	200	83.33	40	16.67	100
8.	I speak Yoruba at home.	200	83.33	40	16.67	100

From Table 2 above, it is deducible that not all those who prefer speaking and receiving lectures in Yoruba or both English and Yoruba languages have positive attitude towards Yoruba. It can be deduced from the table that the majority of the students in fact have positive attitude towards the use of English both in and outside the school. For instance, in item 1, 220 respondents which constitute 91.67% of the respondents claimed they usually code-mix when sending messages, while only 20 which make 8.33% chose "No" meaning they use only English language. It can be inferred therefore that the majority of them like English so much that they don't like

using Yoruba alone when sending messages; they code-mix the two languages. And, the fact that they code-mix English and Yoruba when sending messages shows that their attitude to English is positive.

In item 2, only 70 respondents which constitute 29.17% claimed not to enjoy English films as Yoruba films. This is negligible when compared with 170 (70.67%) who claimed to enjoy watching films produced in English. That a larger percentage prefers watching English films speaks volume about their attitude to the language. Similarly, in item 3, 220 students said they prefer writing letters in English to Yoruba while only 20 students who constitute mere 8.3 percent chose “No” meaning that it is only this number that prefers writing letters in only Yoruba. The extremely high percentage of those who like writing letters in English tells a lot about their attitude to the language. In item 4, like item 3, 91.67% said they admire their friends who speak English competently while only 8.33% chose “No”. The implication of this is that though they may not be able to speak it (competently), they want to and in fact admire those who speak it competently. By extension, it can be inferred that they have positive attitude to English even when they hardly speak it. Similar explanation can be given about items 5 and 6. In item 5, only 8.33% claimed to see speaking English always as a mark of pride while 91.67% don’t see anything bad in it and in item 6, 200 students (83.33%) confessed that they feel bad about their incompetence in English. This means that even when it is evident in Table 1 that majority of them prefer speaking Yoruba to English, their attitude to English is extremely positive. Larger percentage of them confessed that they don’t see anything bad in speaking English always and even feel bad about their incompetence in English. In items 7 and 8, the majority of them (200) confessed to speaking Yoruba to perform all their activities outside the classroom and that they speak Yoruba at home. This is simply because they are in the Yoruba speech community where Yoruba is the major mean of communication.

Discussion of findings

It is evidently clear from the results in Tables 1 and 2 above that the attitude of Oyo State College of Education, Lanlate students to English is extremely positive when compared to Yoruba. Even when majority of them confessed that they have preference for the use of Yoruba to perform most of their activities in and outside the classroom in Table 1, it is crystal clear in Table 2 that even when majority of them are not competent in English and as such enjoy doing most things in Yoruba, they have positive attitude to English. This informs their admiration for those who speak it competently, their watching English films and writing letters in it. This is not unconnected with the roles they believe English plays in the Nigerian nation in particular and the world in general today. This study is in agreement with the study of Babajide (2001) which contends that given the various important roles that English plays in Nigerian socio-cultural context, any Nigerian that wants to be relevant in the

country needs to have appreciable knowledge of English. This study is also in line with Oyetade (2001) who submits that because of the socio-economic and political advantages that English attracts to its users, right from the colonial period till now, the attitude of Nigerians towards English in comparison to the indigenous languages has been positive. Though the findings of this study differ slightly from that of Soyele (2016) in that 67% of his respondents claim they prefer the usage of English at home, however, like this study, larger percentage of his respondents prefer writing letters, watching drama and videos, reading newspapers and keeping diaries in English.

Conclusion

The study has revealed the attitude of Oyo State College of Education students to the use of English and Yoruba and it has been shown that even when the majority of them prefer using the Yoruba language to perform most of their activities in the classroom and some outside the classroom, their attitude towards English is extremely positive. They prefer Yoruba or code-switching in class because of their incompetence in English and the desire to get good grades in their courses. In demonstration of their positive attitude to English, larger percentage of them admire those who speak English competently, they send messages through code-mixing, write letters and watch films in English.

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