University of Reading

The feasibility of sustainable Obolo Bilingual Education in Nigeria

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the Degree of Doctor in Philosophy

by

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Declaration

I confirm that this is my own work, and that the use of all material from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged.

Signed: MARIA J. AARON Date: 18 April 2018

Acknowledgements

This study was undertaken by the grace of the Almighty who in wonderful ways directed me, arranged for all the necessary provisions, gave me all the wisdom, insight and encouragement needed, and protected and sustained me and all my loved ones, including my supervisor, through all the events of the past five and half years. I dedicate it to Him.

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ABSTRACT

Persuaded by research that mother tongue-based bilingual education would offer a more effective and meaningful education for most Nigerian children than is possible with the current mainly English model, and therefore a better basis for human as well as economic development, this case study investigates the feasibility of using Obolo, a minority language of the Niger-Delta area of Nigeria, as a medium of instruction (in addition to English) for education, and seeks for ways to promote it.

The theoretical underpinnings for this study are Bourdieu's Linguistic Capital and Ethnolinguistic vitality theory. This study is constructivist and critical in orientation, and uses focus group interviews with Obolo parents, semi-structured interviews with officials in the State Ministries of Education over education in the area, and participant observation, to arrive at an emic point of view about the value of Obolo/mother tongue and English, especially in relation to education.

It was found that education is highly important for Obolo people, and perceived as worthy of great effort and expense on the part of the parents. It is seen as the key to progress, both for individuals and their families, but also for the entire Obolo community. My focus group interviews (with 54 participants) demonstrated that the welfare of the community, identified as a feature of "traditional African communalism", is very much in the forefront of their thinking, but also that it becomes less prominent with higher levels of education, evidence that Nigerian curriculum and pedagogies are missing this authentically African orientation to life.

Findings of this case study confirm the negative attitudes to African indigenous languages, and the rising hegemony of English, the language of economic and social upward mobility, employment and education. Ambivalently, Obolo is also cherished for identity purposes, and for communication within the family and community, though children in cities are increasingly speaking English (only). Applying Ethnolinguistic Vitality theory to the findings on attitudes, it was found

that Obolo has medium ethnolinguistic vitality, the result of micro language planning at the grassroots level, and the support of a community-owned language development organisation.

Ethnolinguistic Vitality theory also helped to explain an observed sudden increase in Obolo interest in the use of their language after grand public occasions celebrating achievements in the development of the language.

The researcher informed the research participants of alternative models of education in developed countries, for them to be able to form an informed opinion about Obolo bilingual education. In contrast to most other minority language groups in the Niger-Delta, who prefer English only, over two thirds of the participants discussing this point expressed interest in a continued use of Obolo as medium of instruction up to Primary 6, or even beyond. There is also a desire for the teaching of Obolo as a subject in urban areas.

Finally, exploring the importance of these findings, recommendations for the introduction and promotion of bilingual education in the region are offered. Several templates for extensive 'marketing' both to Obolo parents and to policy makers are identified, and high profile celebrations of achievements in language development, and tools for the use of the language in IT are recommended. Further, arguments are made for model Obolo bilingual schools, which use and teach Obolo all through Primary and Junior Secondary education education.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
ARSLA	Association of Rivers State languages
BECE	Basic Education Certification Examination
BPO	Business Process Outsourcing
CUP	Common Underlying Proficiency
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
EFA	Education for All
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EGIDS	Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale
ESL	English as a Second Language
EV	Ethnolinguistic vitality
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GIDS	Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale
GSM	Global System for Mobile Communications
JSS	Junior Secondary School
L1	First language of the child
L2	Second language, especially the one learned in school
LGA	Local Government Area
LGC	Local Government Council

LWC	Language of wider communication
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MOI	Medium of Instruction
MT	Mother tongue
MTB BE	Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education
NBTT	Nigeria Bible Translation Trust
NCE	NIgeria Certificate in Education
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NERDC	Nigerian Educational Research & Development Council
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NINLAN	National Institute for Nigerian Languages
NPE	National Policy on Education
NTEP	National Teacher Education Policy
NTI	National Teacher Institute
NUT	National Union of Teachers
OLBTO	Obolo Language and Bible Translation Organisation
PE	Primary Education
PTA	Parents Teachers Association
RRP	Rivers Readers Project
SES	Social-Economic Status
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
SSS	Senior Secondary School
SUBEB	State Universal Education Board

SYPP	Six Year Primary Project in Yoruba
UBE	Universal Basic Education
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation
WAEC	West African Examination Council

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

Having worked in Nigeria since 1983 in the area of language development, literacy, and education in minority languages, I had been somewhat perplexed by the general lack of commitment, especially of government, for the promotion of Nigerian indigenous languages in education. Since 1977, the official federal policy had been that the initial three years of primary education should be undertaken in "the language of the immediate environment" of the children, while English was taught only as a subject, until later, when it became the language of instruction and the "language of the immediate environment" continued to be taught as a subject. This policy, however, has only been implemented haphazardly, and mostly only orally, in Nigeria, in spite of the success of the renowned Yoruba Primary Education Project in the early 1970s, where primary education was delivered entirely in Yoruba (one of the three official indigenous languages of Nigeria) and where English was taught as a subject only. Over all these years, the work done by Government for the development of the hundreds of Nigerian languages, has been minimal, and the work at grassroots level has not received support from the government at state and federal levels.

Having been involved in an earlier effort to develop materials and train teachers for the teaching of Obolo language in school, where we saw remarkable improvements in the students' acquisition of literacy skills (in English as well as in

Obolo) when they were tested and compared with other students in the wider region in Primary 6 (see Aaron, 1998), it has been my desire to see Obolo language education continued and its benefits extended to all schools and all students in the region. The Obolo Language and Bible Translation Organisation (OLBTO), a community-owned organisation, under the aegis of which this pilot Obolo Language Project took place (see chapter 8), continued to support the teaching of Obolo in the schools but unfortunately with diminishing effectiveness. Increasingly, Obolo has been considered just one of many optional subjects, in contrast to English and Mathematics which are considered the core subjects of primary education. As a result, very few periods are used to teach the language, not sufficient, for instance, for children to learn to read in it.

Rationale

From my own experience as a Dutch person, having had all my early and secondary education through the Dutch language, and learning English as a second language in secondary school, I believed that the children of Obolo could be helped in their learning if it would be possible for their language to be used as the main medium of instruction. Over time, I have been increasingly persuaded that the hot pursuit of English in education, preferring it as the medium of instruction from the earliest stages of education, while neglecting the indigenous languages and cultures, is at the expense of real learning in schools. As such it is yielding extremely low dividends in education for the majority. Based on research in bilingual education (reviewed in chapter 3), I became increasingly convinced that, for the majority of the people of Nigeria, bilingual education is necessary for a better quality of teaching and learning, even including the learning of English. In addition, I was swayed by arguments that insufficient use of the indigenous languages in education has hindered the development of a highly-skilled populace, capable of participation in the knowledge-driven global economy (reviewed in chapter 4).

Research Aims and Objectives

It was my intention to find out whether, and in what ways, mother-tongue based bilingual education could ignite the hopes and raise the expectations of Obolo people for their future and the future of their land. The objective of this study is thus to explore the feasibility of Obolo bilingual education, based on Obolo people's attitudes to their language, and their understanding and appreciation of their language's capacity to be a resource for quality education. Through discussions with Obolo parents representing all strata of society, and with administrators in the State Ministries of Education, I sought to find out what needs to be done (obstacles to overcome and enabling factors to be put in place/strengthened) for the implementation of (aspects of) mother tongue-based education that may be perceived desirable from the point(s) of view of the users. In other words, the main question of this thesis is, "What factors facilitate or constrain successful implementation of mother tongue-based bilingual education in Obolo?"

Theoretical underpinnings

My research has two main theoretical underpinnings: Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital and Ethnolinguistic vitality (Giles, Bourhis, & Taylor, 1977).

Bourdieu: "Linguistic Capital"

I believe that market forces are the strongest underlying factor shaping the entire sociolinguistic scene, influencing which languages are preferred and which are side-lined. (Bourdieu, 1986) uses "capital" to denote both currency value and also "symbolic (hegemonic) power". Linguistic capital is seen as an aspect of cultural capital: linguistic exchanges obtain their value in relation to the pricing of linguistic

capital in particular linguistic markets and the symbolic profit associated with this Rassool (2013:6-7).

It is not difficult to see how this theory applies to the sociolinguistics of Sub-Saharan Africa with its colonial history, which generally lasted a century. The same principle operates through the global economy, facilitating the growing hegemony of English (Igboanusi & Peter, 2016; Rassool, 2013:7).

Related to the theory of “Cultural/Linguistic Capital” is the concept of “Symbolic Violence”. Moore (2003), discussing Bourdieu’s theory, defines this concept as follows:

> the assertion, chiefly through educational systems and school curricula, of one set of arbitrary cultural forms and preferences by the powerful people who ‘own’ and practise them, above other sets which they perceive - and encourage their owners to perceive - as inferior.

Through this mechanism of “symbolic violence” then, the skills and knowledge, art and other “cultural forms and preferences”, including language(s), of the dominant group become the norm by which all other students who do not belong to the dominant group will be measured, so privileging to an inordinate extent the section of society which is in power, and at the same time marginalizing the rest of society whose cultural forms are different. Meanwhile, those undergoing this education, are enculturated by it, and also come to think of those educationally favoured “cultural forms” as superior, while perceiving those of their own background as inferior.

Bourdieu’s theories help to explain the relationship of the Obolo to the language of the colonizer and, by extension, their willingness to embrace bilingual education.

Ethnolinguistic Vitality theory (Giles et al., 1977)

Ethnolinguistic Vitality theory, a socio-psychological approach to the study of language shift and maintenance, maintains that the Ethnolinguistic Vitality (EV) of a group is the most important ingredient determining whether an ethnolinguistic group (or individual members) will maintain or lose their language in the face of

pressure of another language. The three main variables contributing to the relative level of EV of a group are, demographic factors, status factors and institutional support (for further discussion see chapter 7). Its importance for this study lies in its potential to explain the role of attitudes towards Obolo in the success or otherwise of bilingual education.

Structure of the thesis

Chapter one has presented the background and rationale for the research and introduced the objectives and main focus.

To understand the context of the study, chapter two describes the wider setting of Nigeria, with its formation and political history, which gave rise to its geo-political zones, its languages, the education system, and language in education policies. The focus is mainly on the South where Obolo is situated. Then the geography, the very important fishing industry, and infrastructure (or lack of it) in the Obolo region are discussed, concluding with a consideration of the history of (Western) education there.

Based on the evidence that the use of highly communicative indigenous languages in education in Nigeria is much more effective than English-medium education, in chapter three I provide a summary of research on bilingual education and bilingualism, with an emphasis on the effectiveness of the various models that have emerged. A review of the findings from both the global north and Sub-Saharan Africa is presented. This is followed by a more in-depth discussion of the implications of the specific settings of this region for the selection of the most appropriate model of bilingual education, as well as the pedagogy and resources.

Chapter four reviews the literature on the role of language in human development, and especially the effects of language-in-education choices on economic development, as well as health. This chapter, together with chapter three provide more detail on the rationale for my research, namely the understanding that human development is most effective when people are mobilised in their own

languages rather than in English, and that, despite the growing demand for English in the global economy, the acquisition of English must not be at the detriment of good learning (and teaching) through the highly communicative African indigenous languages of the students.

The focus of my research has been whether Obolo people were in a position to appreciate the value of Obolo/English bilingual education, and to recognize the factors that either hinder or enable its successful implementation. In chapter five I set out the methodological choices for my research: I chose critical ethnography and case study as the methodological approaches since I was seeking to understand insiders' viewpoints on language-in-education issues. The case study provides an in-depth exploration of the issues in the Obolo community and its setting. The study is critical in orientation in relation to the existing practice of the use of English as the main medium of instruction, and my desire to improve the future for Obolo children through more meaningful education. Another critical aspect of the approach is in the fact that I sought to facilitate my participants' understanding and appreciation of alternative models of education in the process of the research.

Having explained my research design and its purposes, chapters six to nine discuss the findings of the research. Chapter six sketches Obolo people's perceptions of education in general, showing the importance they attach to it, and also outlines the obstacles to education they perceive. This provides a baseline for the development of Obolo-English bilingual education.

Chapter seven goes on to investigate the attitudes of Obolo people to both Obolo and English, as an understanding of language attitudes is known to be fundamental for the planning of language in education policy. These attitudes are likely to either enhance or obstruct the implementation of bilingual education. To this end I first survey the socio-linguistic dynamics in the wider region of the sub-Saharan region and Nigeria, to gain understanding how attitudes here were formed, before looking at my data from Obolo. I use ethnolinguistic vitality theory to interpret these data. Lastly, I review the literature on the increasing hegemony of English, and present my analysis of Obolo attitudes to English.

Chapter eight complements these insights with an investigation of Obolo people's receptiveness to Obolo/English bilingual education, with Obolo as the main medium of instruction. By way of background, I first present a survey of bilingual education in Africa from the post-colonial era, and then describe the language in education policy, its implementation, and experimental bilingual programs in Nigeria, including the pilot Obolo language project. Finally I present an analysis of my research participants' views.

In chapter nine, the final findings chapter, I present my refections on the most effective ways to implement Obolo bilingual education, based both on the literature and the analysis of the data from my own research. I consider the importance of advocacy and promotion of bilingual education both for policy makers and for parents; the model of bilingual education that appears to fit the situation best; issues of import for curriculum and pedagogy; the issue of language of assessment and the importance of language examinations; and the preparation of resources.

The final chapter summarizes the findings to the research questions that guide this study and discusses their implications. This is followed by recommendations arising from the findings, arranged according to the stakeholders to whom they are to be addressed. Finally there is a discussion of the contributions of the study to knowledge, and a discussion of its limitations.

Chapter 2: Nigeria: history, politics, languages and education

Introduction

In order to provide a context for the discussion that forms the focus for the present study, it is important to explain the emergence of Nigeria as a geopolitical entity and its recent history. The linguistic landscape of Nigeria will also be considered as, too, will educational provision. The emphasis throughout, however, will be on the south where Obolo is located. I will describe pertinent aspects of Obolo life, including the impact of fishing as the main source of employment and the poorly developed infrastructure.

The emergence of Nigeria as a geo-political entity

From as early as the ninth century, long before colonial times, in the territories that would later form Nigeria, various ancient kingdoms, controlled vast areas of Africa. British interest in these territories was largely commercial. Before 1900, powerful trading companies established by independent traders made treaties with traditional rulers; these territories gradually became British colonies or protectorates. Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa kingdoms were occupied and ruled separately, and in different ways. The Islamic Hausa kingdoms of the North came under indirect rule, with the Emirs and other political or religious leaders submitting to the British crown. Indirect rule worked very well where there was already a hierarchy of leaders. The British agreed not to allow missionaries into these areas, and also sought not to interfere with Islamic education (Akinola, 2014). By 1906, the protectorate of Lagos, which roughly corresponds with the present South-Western geopolitical zone (see figure 2.1 below) was merged with the protectorate of Southern Nigeria, which covers the present South-Eastern and South-South

(Niger-Delta) geopolitical zones to form the “protectorate of Southern Nigeria”. By 1914, the “Protectorate of Northern Nigeria” which roughly covered the same area as the present Northern zones, including Abuja, were joined together with the protectorate of Southern Nigeria, leading to the formation of Nigeria.

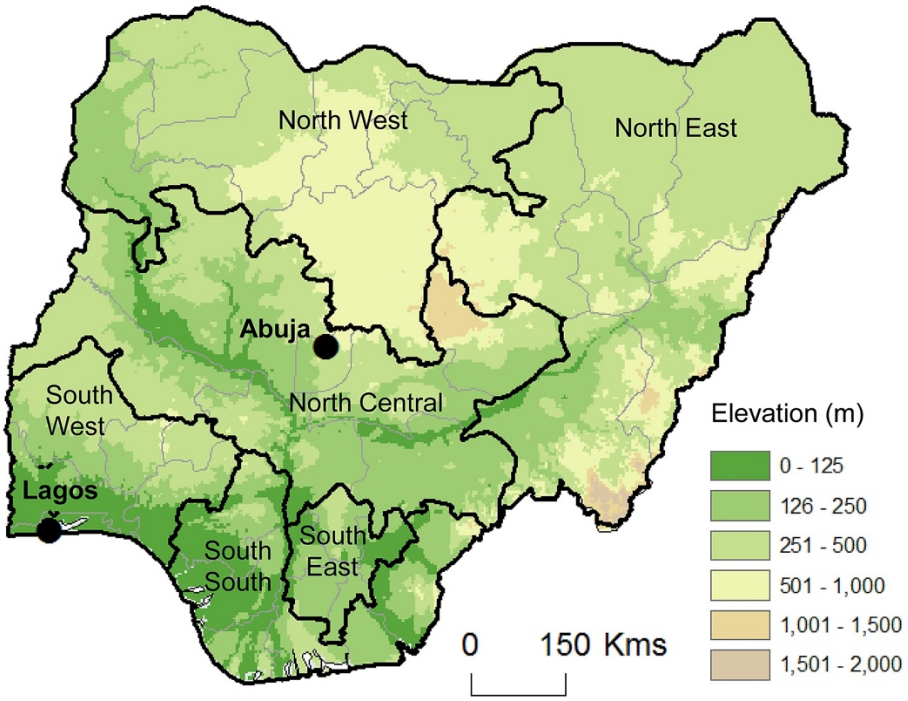
There were important regional differences from the start. Akinola (2014) explains that the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria, despite yearly subventions from Britain and the protectorate of Southern Nigeria, were unable to generate sufficient revenue to sustain their administration, while, in contrast, the protectorate of Southern Nigeria had ample financial resources from its growing trade. Because of this, the colonial administration decided to merge these protectorates into one administrative unit. It was considered that such a wide variety of ethnic groups, cultures, and religions (Islamic, Christian, and African Traditional Religion(ATR)), could only be ruled indirectly.

In the South, Igbo areas and parts of the Niger-Delta, including Obolo, were traditionally much more egalitarian and non-centralized, and indirect rule was less effective. Here the colonial administration circumvented normal leadership patterns by appointing influential individuals as “warrant chiefs”. This system was maintained until nearly the end of the 1950s, with the end of the colonial era (Akinola, 2014). Vestiges continue to this day as the government recognizes “chiefs” and “kings” of various levels of status, and supports them with “befitting” remunerations and honour (personal observation). This often gives rise to wrangling for the position, and interferes with the traditional qualification and roles of “chiefs” in the various communities.

In 1939, the Southern area was divided into two provinces, the Western, and Eastern provinces (later called “regions”), while the Northern area became the Northern provinces. each subdivided into administrative divisions, headed by a District Officer (all British). This, according to Akinola (2014:5) “marked the birth of three geographically distinct and politically hostile cultures” which he sees as the source of the continued lack of political unity of the country. It is also noteworthy that each of these include one of the three major ethnolinguistic groups of the country, the Hausa in the North, the Yoruba in the West, and the Igbo in the East. In modern Nigeria, six geopolitical zones were created (during General Abacha’s

government, 1993-98). The sharing of political representation and economic and education resources is often done on this zonal basis.

Figure 2.1: The geopolitical zones of Nigeria
Source: (Okorie et al., 2013)

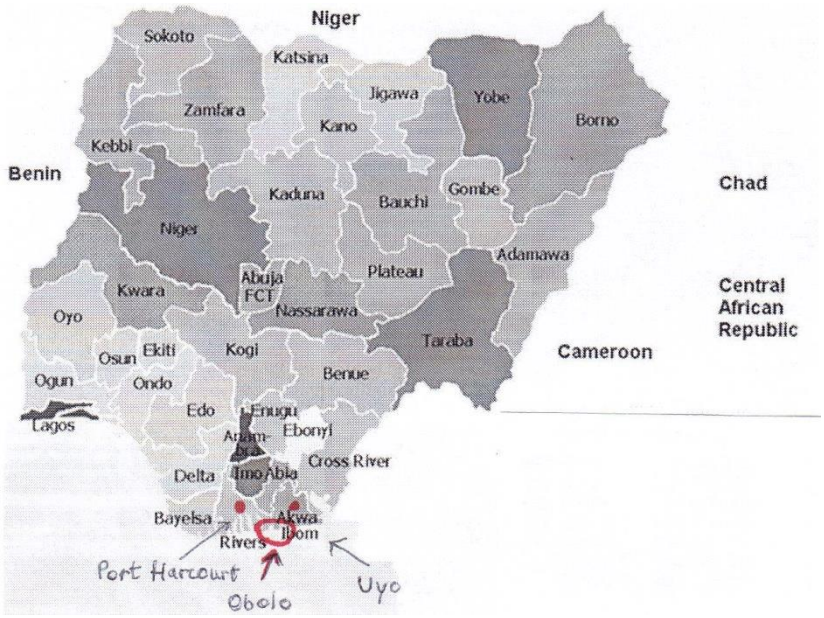


Our attention in this thesis will be focussed within the South-South geopolitical zone, where Obolo is situated.

In addition to the different zones, Nigeria is currently divided into 36 states, as illustrated in Figure 2.2 below. Obolo is located in Rivers and Akwa Ibom States (see superimposed on the map).

Figure 2.2: States of Nigeria and Federal Capital Territory

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Nigerian_states_by_population#/media/File:Population_density_map_of_Nigerian_states_-_English.png



Recent history

Nigeria became independent on September 30, 1960 and was proclaimed a Republic on October 1, 1963. Unrest in several parts of the country led to a military coup in January 1966 under General Gowon who led the Nigerian armies to battle against the seceding eastern region, then known as Biafra, defeating them in 1970 NGex (n.d.). The military ruled Nigeria until 1979 when General Obasanjo handed over power to the elected civilian Government of President Shagari. At the end of 1983, shortly after President Shagari's re-election, there was another military coup, upon which a succession of military regimes followed until 1999 when they handed over government to elected civilians, and Retired General Obasanjo became president again. The military Government, by 1999, drafted a constitution in preparation for civil rule, which was amended for the first time by an elected National Assembly in 2011 (UNICEF/Nigeria, 2012).

Obasanjo was re-elected and stayed in power till 2007. The PDP (People's Democratic Party) became the only powerful party, so that in these elections, they won again and President Yar Adu'a came to power. He is remembered in the

Niger-Delta area for the amnesty he declared in 2009 for Niger Delta militants (Egwemi, 2010). This brought a period of relative peace to the citizens in the Niger-Delta who had endured a reign of terror by militant youth in the creeks and, later, even in the villages. Yar Adu'a however passed away during his term of office, after which vice-President Jonathan (from the Niger Delta region) completed the term. He was the first Niger-Delta person to hold such a lofty position. In 2011 when elections were held again, he was returned to power, with minorities from all the regions teaming up to support him. This was a peaceful election, judged to be "fair and free" by both national and international observers ((Worldbank, 2017). Yet, unfortunately, on the day the election results were announced, the first bombs exploded. Islamic extremists attacked civilians and killed many in Kafanchan (in Plateau State in the Middle Belt), and further violence broke out in two Northern States. In Jos, Plateau State, from February 2012, a series of suicide bombers attacked many churches, with vehicles loaded with explosives, killing hundreds of worshippers. Soon Bokon Haram (the abbreviated form of the group's name, indicating that they are against "books"), a jihadist group originating in Borno State in the North-East, grew stronger and went on the rampage, using bombs in the Federal capital Abuja in busy bus parks and market places and also shooting or bombing church congregations in the North-East. At the same time, they raided villages and towns in three North-Eastern states, killing and maiming and raping and abducting a very large number of girls and women, and displacing millions. The Nigerian army battled with them in these States for years without making headway until around the beginning of 2015, when Nigeria, Chad, and Cameroon joined forces. 2015 was also the year for new elections, and, to the consternation of the South-South region, the mighty PDP party lost support and was defeated by the opposition party. Buhari, a Hausa-Fulani person from the North and a former military leader became the new president at the first peaceful hand-over of power from one party to another (Worldbank, 2017). The violent conflicts in the North and Middle belt are both religiously and politically motivated, and run along ethnic lines (UNICEF/Nigeria, 2012). Worldbank (2017n.p.) concludes: "At the root of the security challenges are high levels of poverty, joblessness, growing numbers of frustrated youth, and the degradation of natural resources and climate stressors."

The Niger-Delta crisis in the South-South, on the other hand, started as youth restiveness in the face of oil exploitation in the region, which left the land under-developed and suffering from the effects of pollution. This came to the fore from 1999 when the military handed over government to civilians. The youth became militant and armed with sophisticated weapons, which were frequently provided by politicians who used them as their private “army/bodyguards”. They kidnapped staff from the oil companies, demanding ransoms; blew up oil installations; sabotaged oil pipes, and undertook other related activities against oil exploitation (see Egwemi, 2010). They also raided banks and were responsible for pirating activities in the creeks and rivers, robbing local passengers, and taking boat engines (Egwemi, 2010). Militancy raised its head again during the electoral campaign of 2015, especially in rural communities, on the islands and in the creeks, often in the form of criminal gangs, attacking and robbing the poor as well as the rich (personal observation). UNICEF/Nigeria (2012:1) observe that, “these conflicts may constitute serious threats to the stability and development of this fledgling democracy”.

Obolo

I turn now from a discussion of Nigeria more generally to Obolo, as the location for the present study.

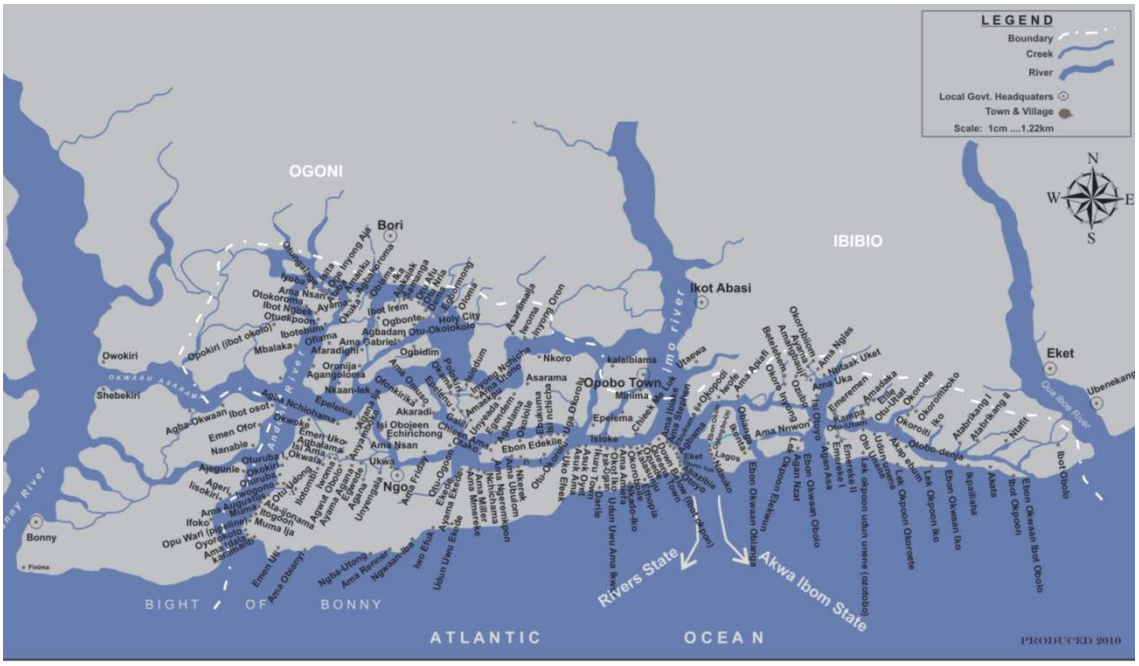
Upon the formation of States in independent Nigeria, in 1967, Obolo land was divided into two States formed out of the former eastern region: two thirds of the population were in Rivers State to the West, and one third in the Cross River State, (in the part which in 1987 became Akwa Ibom State). In Akwa Ibom State, the Obolo are a small minority, with Ibibio people forming the great majority and Ibibio tending to be the lingua franca, while in Rivers State, they are one of the many minorities and English/Pidgin English is the lingua franca.

Obolo territory is situated on a narrow strip consisting of islands and peninsulas in the eastern part of the Niger-Delta in the tropical rainforest and mangroves zone.

The larger part of Obolo is in Rivers State, while about one third of the area is in Akwa Ibom State (see Figure 2.3 below).

Figure 2.3: Obolo territory

Source: (Oluwaseun, 2010)



The dependence on fishing

Obolo people used to be self-sufficient fishermen able to maintain their polygamous families and buy the necessary boats and nets or other fishing gear. Historically, and up to the recent past, Obolo fishing grounds were exceptionally rich in fish and shellfish. Many fish used to come from the ocean to spawn in Obolo rivers and creeks with their mangrove vegetation (Ssentongo, Ukpe, & Ajayi, 1986). It is likely, however, that illegal mechanical fishing by trawlers from outside the region have reduced the stock of fish, for instance when they drag their nets inside or very near the river estuaries (Ssentongo et al., 1986). But oil pollution, with occasional major spills, has also severely affected fish and all living creatures in the waters of the Niger Delta and in the ocean at the entire bight, and must be the main culprit for the drastically reduced stocks of fish.

Traditionally, both male and female Obolo, because of their coastal location, made a living through fishing. The Obolo people operate both in the ocean and in the rivers and creeks of the Delta, (though women do not go into the ocean). Young men can also be drivers of polyester engine boats for public transportation, a lucrative business for the boat owners, since until recently all transport was by boat only. Such boats are also used to go on the ocean to buy frozen fish from the mechanized fishing trawlers, which are widely believed to illegally harvest undersized fish.

The Obolo still lead a migratory lifestyle, especially if they fish in the ocean. They build “permanent” homes in the villages facing the land side of their islands, and go to live most of the year on the ocean-side where they build “temporary” houses in the fishing ports, only returning to “their village” for special seasons and occasions, and often living there in their retirement. Their school-age children may stay there to go to school, living together with other relatives, probably elderly grandparents and others. The houses in the traditional fishing ports are temporary because of the fragility of the coastline. They are built with mats sown from palm fronts.

There has been a distinct lack of economic diversification and investment in infrastructure or stimulation of modern enterprises, so that young people with secondary or higher education cannot find any work in the area apart from teaching or pastoring a church. Often they idle their time away in the villages as they wait for an opportunity to go elsewhere, to an urban area, to look for employment or further education. As a result, the villages and small towns of Obolo lack the young and the financially strong, and are left with the elderly and ailing, and children and young people who are still dependent.

Since their formation in the 1990s, the two Local Government Councils (LGCs) for Obolo, Andoni LGC in Rivers State, and Eastern Obolo LGC in Akwa Ibom State, now offer additional employment opportunity in Obolo land. This has made a significant difference, so that more of the working-age people can find employment at home. In addition, there are now a few cottage hospitals and clinics where people can work. Yet most of the youth cannot find employment and migrate from Obolo to urban areas. Even in urban areas youth unemployment is high, and many

who have finished a Bachelor's degree remain unemployed for long periods of time.

Infrastructure

The lack of infrastructure severely limits opportunities for development. There is no running water and in the dry season it can be hard to get water from the shallow wells and the boreholes which often are operated on electricity from a generator. For drinking, most people now buy "Pure Water" sachets, which traders buy in bulk from the mainland. All food other than fish also has to be bought on the mainland. Moreover, most places, even on the peninsulas in Eastern Obolo, cannot be reached by road and only a few places are now connected to mains electricity. Even this is often interrupted by vandalism on the lines. Many places do not have a doctor or a nurse, only small health care clinics.

Until about ten years ago, all transportation out of the area was by boat. Recently, a road has been constructed from the mainland towards the main island, and so far two of the islands nearest to the mainland have been connected. This has already made a big difference in Andoni LGA as the cost of boat transportation (which is many times more than transportation on land) has been decreased by half for the people living on the main island, while those on the two connected islands now find it much easier and less expensive to travel out. The access road has improved trading, and made it much easier for people to build. Another advantage is greater ease of connection to electricity (from the main grid), which facilitates communication through the use of computers and smart phones. One of the bridges has, however, been found to be faulty and work has stalled for several years.

Oladiti (2014:79) describes the type of political organisation existing among the Igbo, Benue, and Niger-Delta people, as "gerontocracy". This description also appears to fit Obolo government. He says,

> gerontocracy was a village democracy where the general will of the people was taken into consideration. Instead of royal courts and palaces, market

centers were used for religious and political activities such as debate, and decisions on vital issues of public interest were taken there as well.

In each Obolo village or town, there are regular (usually monthly) village meetings in the village square. Decisions concerning the village are taken there. They are taken by consensus, rather than by elections, after extensive debate of the issues.

Languages

Nigeria is rich in languages and ethnolinguistic groups speaking these languages. According to *Ethnologue* (Lewis, Simons, & Fennig, 2016), and Crozier and Blench (1992), the number of indigenous languages in Nigeria is approximately 500, of which 44 are said to be "dying" because there are no people of child-bearing age speaking them anymore. All the three language families of Africa are represented among the indigenous languages of Nigeria: Afroasiatic languages, mainly of the Chadic branch, such as Hausa the major language of the North, and also many minority languages of the North and the Middle Belt; a few Nilo-Saharan languages, such as Kanuri in Borno State in the North-East; and hundreds of Niger-Congo languages, as the greater bulk of Nigerian languages belong to this family. Both major languages of the South, Yoruba and Igbo, belong to this major group, in its Benue-Congo branch, and so do hundreds of minority languages. Obolo is one of the many languages of the Niger-Delta, a region with only "minority languages" ("minority" as defined by Nigerian language policies), although in the most Eastern flank of the region, Ibibio-Efik, closely related to Obolo, is an important lingua franca.

Three languages have at least 20 million first and second language speakers: Hausa in the North, Yoruba in the South-West, and Igbo in the South-East. These are usually referred to as the major languages of Nigeria and they enjoy special official status besides English, which is enshrined in the constitution (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1999). They also have a favoured status in education, whereby it is mandatory for every student to study one of these three Nigerian

languages as an examinable subject. The latest edition of the National Policy on Education NPE (2013), however, has reversed this and only allows any Nigerian language to be learned as an optional subject at this level.

There are other languages, too, that are spoken by several million people, most notably Fulfilde, the language of the migrant cattle herders and rulers in Hausa/Fulani dynasties, which has speakers in most countries of West-Africa, as well as in Nigeria. Other languages with a million plus speakers include Tiv, Nupe, Kanuri, Ebira, Igala, Efik-Ebibio, Ịjọ. Many of these form a majority population in particular states, and by constitution, a state can also vote to use such a language, besides English, to conduct its business in their House of Assembly (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1999).

Of course, the dividing line between “languages” and “dialects of languages” is arbitrary. According to Prah (2011) and the Centre of Advanced Studies of African Society (CASAS), 75-85% of the entire population of Africa understands at least one of 16 languages of the continent which they identify as “core” languages. Because most Africans are multilingual, they maintain that through "harmonisation” of African languages, by which they mean principally the harmonisation of orthographies, people who have learned to read in their mother tongue will have better access to information and knowledge in other languages they understand as well. Orthography harmonisation is certainly a worthwhile endeavour, especially across national boundaries, where the same language is sometimes written in two entirely different ways. Within Nigeria, Williamson (1984) advocated this approach in the Rivers Readers Project as well as elsewhere in Nigeria .

Education

In 1999, the Federal Government of Nigeria introduced Universal Basic Education (UBE), which made education free and compulsory, though it was only signed into law by 2004 (UBEC, 2017). As each State has to contribute funds towards it, start-up has been unequal across the nation. It includes one year of Pre-Primary, six years of Primary, and three years of Junior Secondary education.

The Pre-Primary section is yet to be (fully) implemented. It is the intention that nothing in the UBE is to be paid for by the students or their parents, with free textbooks, uniforms, and even a free meal each school day. Despite free, compulsory education, UNICEF/Nigeria (2012: ix) report: “Nigeria’s major challenges are low attendance, low completion rates and gender as well as regional/geographical disparities.” They also note that there is in every aspect a totally different picture in "the North" and in "the South". The north is generally marked, for instance, by much higher percentages of out-of-school children than the south (UNICEF/Nigeria, 2012).

Language in education policies

With the 1920 Phelps-Stoke Commission on Education in Africa, the language in education policy in British colonies became established as one of transitional bilingual education(see chapter eight), where for the earliest years of education the mother tongue was used as the medium of instruction, and later English. In Nigeria, after independence, the National Policy on Education (NPE) of 1977 and its subsequent revisions remained essentially unchanged (see chapter 8 for fuller discussion).

“Bilingual education” in Northern Nigeria

Models of bilingual education are discussed in detail in chapter 3. Until recently, however, “Bilingual education” was a term that was rarely used in Nigeria, even though the language in education policy of the country has in effect been prescribing bilingual education. During the administration of President Jonathan, a new program of “Bilingual education” or “almajari education” was instituted with the purpose of combining Quranic school subjects and pedagogy with the regular Nigerian school curriculum so as to tackle the problem of large numbers of out of school children in the Northern part of Nigeria. The curriculum in these schools includes both the regular basic education curriculum and Islamic education. More than one hundred of these bilingual model schools were opened (spread over 22 states) especially for the almajari, the children in Quranic schools, who used to

beg for their living in the streets of the cities (UBEC, 2017). These schools are bilingual in the sense that both Arabic and English are used. They are free, full board schools, where Islamic scholars or Mallams teach the Islamic subjects and the Arabic language. There are also separate examinations and certification in Arabic and English for this type of bilingual education (Federal Ministry of Education, 2014; Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). I have not included this new system of “bilingual education” in my discussion of bilingual education in chapter 8 because it does not include a Nigerian indigenous language, (except that probably, as elsewhere, some Hausa is used for explanation in the lower primaries). Its orientation is also quite different from that of Mother Tongue-Based Bilingual Education which is my focus.

Education in Obolo

Historically, early Anglican schools in Ikuru Town taught initial literacy in Igbo, using Igbo readers. In church, adults too were taught to read the Bible and hymnbooks in Igbo. The Amadaka Methodist school in East Obolo, used an Igbo reader, and English, and adults were also taught to read the Igbo Bible and hymnbooks. Many older Obolo people who went to school also said that they learned to read some words in Obolo, too. In the 1980s, there were many middle-aged people all over Obolo who could read in Igbo and, when Obolo books were published, they were able to transfer their reading skills to Obolo. With a little help, many learnt to read very well. Others who said they could read Igbo had rather memorized hymns, and could not read anything else in Igbo or Obolo. In Okoroete, now the East Obolo LGA headquarters, there was also an Anglican school, where the children who studied in Amadaka Methodist school would go on to finish the first phase of education. Only the most initial introduction to reading was done in indigenous languages, while after this, English was used.

Presently, there are about 70 public Primary schools in Andoni and about 13 in East Obolo LGA. Besides this, private Nursery-Primary schools are mushrooming. Rivers State was one of the first states to implement UBE, so that Obolo people in

Andoni LGA have been enjoying free basic education since then. This did not significantly change enrollment at the Primary level as almost all children were already in school. It did, however, bring a large influx of children into junior secondary schools. Since its inception, free books were given occasionally to each student in primary schools, but not in the junior secondary schools. There have also been free uniforms in some schools. UBE was introduced much later in East Obolo and Akwa Ibom State where, however, the previous Government introduced fee-free secondary education in addition to the UBE.

In Obolo, in the South-South zone practically all children are enrolled in school, but enrolment in the higher grades of primary school is considerably lower. Obolo head teachers argue that this is because many children move, either because their parents move to another fishing location where there is a satisfactory school, or because the child is taken to the city. However, UNICEF/Nigeria (2012) report the same trend of much lower enrolment figures in the higher grades than in the lower ones all over the South of the country, and note high drop-out rates for boys in the neighbouring South-Eastern zone. Also, if children would be mostly moving to other fishing locations, one would expect that the numbers in the higher grades would not be so much lower in all of the schools, because many would stay within Obolo.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined a range of issues which will provide a context for the present study. In addition to explaining the emergence of Nigeria as a geopolitical entity and its recent history, the linguistic landscape and educational provision – all matters which will help the reader to better understand the highly complex situation in the south where the Obolo who form the focus for this study are located. Equally important, I have described pertinent aspects of Obolo life and, in particular, the impact of fishing as the main source of employment and the poorly developed infrastructure. In the next chapter, I will turn to theories of bilingualism and bilingual education and the evidence that has emerged about the

various models of bilingual education and the suitability of these models for the effective education of the great majority of children in Sub-Saharan Africa. This forms part of the context for my research.

Chapter 3: Research on bilingualism and bilingual education

Introduction

The starting point for this thesis was my belief, based on a growing body of research, that the most productive way forward for Nigeria is through the development of bilingual education. In this chapter, I review the theories of bilingualism and bilingual education on which this belief is based. I start by tracing the emergence of bilingual education in the global north, before considering the evidence which has emerged for the effectiveness of the various models which have emerged both in the north, and in sub-Saharan Africa. I then outline pedagogical approaches which have developed to meet the needs of bilingual education as well as current limitations.

Bilingualism and education

Since the emergence of the nation state, by far the most frequent scenario is that children receive a monolingual education in the official language of the state. Yet, historically, there are many examples of languages other than the official language being used as the main medium of instruction (Edwards, 2004). These date back to at least the nineteenth century, and usually emerge in the context of mass migration, as was the case for the USA and Australia. In the mid-1950s, Welsh medium education was launched through the efforts of a small group of parent activists. However, by far the best researched and documented twentieth century example concerns French immersion education in Canada. Increasing dissatisfaction with this monolithic approach had been expressed by many different stakeholders. Interestingly, however, a major impetus for alternative

models began with middle class English speakers in Canada who saw potential benefits for their children in becoming fluent in French, the other official language of the country.

Significantly, researchers demonstrated that Anglophone students were able to learn French to a high level of proficiency at the same time as performing at grade level (or even higher) in English than their peers in monolingual English programs. This kind of education, however, was not as beneficial for children whose first language was a minority language, such as the French-speaking minority in Canada (Heugh, 2006a):56). It has been proposed that this was due to a socio-linguistic context, in which French is a minority language, as well as to the lower socio-economic status of the French-speaking population (Aaron, 1998). This situation led Lambert (1975), the pioneer of French-immersion education to coin the terms “additive” and “subtractive” bilingualism, where “additive” refers to a context where the learner’s first language is “societally dominant and prestigious and in no danger of replacement”, while “subtractive bilingualism” is “associated with negative social and cognitive characteristics”.

Jim Cummins explored issues around additive and subtractive bilingualism in a different context: the children of immigrants in the USA and Canada. Over a number of years, Cummins developed various influential theories. The first of these, the Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) or Interdependence Hypothesis, proposes that each language contributes to the development of the proficiency that underlies both languages (Cummins, 1981:25). For example, if a person learns to read and write in Dutch, she will have developed concepts and skills which she can apply to English.

Cummins (1981) later refined his Interdependence Hypothesis, positing that a minimum threshold in language proficiency must be passed before a second-language speaker can reap any benefits from their L1 (Threshold Theory). He was thus able to explain the phenomenon whereby older immigrant pupils taught in their mother tongue for four to six years before immigration made better progress acquiring English, including reading and writing, than pupils who had emigrated as a baby or toddler, and had been taught for the same number of years through the medium of English (Cummins, 1981:29 – 31). Though this latter group might come

to school already fluent in English conversational skills, they tend not to attain grade level performance in regular English-medium schools. He found good supporting evidence for this observation in a variety of settings, in Canada, the US, and Sweden (pp.25–28) where, even though the minority children in bilingual programs had been instructed through the L1 for many more hours and had consequently been less exposed to the L2, their development in the L2 (the majority language) was better than in programs where they had been taught mostly through the majority language.

In a similar vein, there is evidence that literacy learning in L1 facilitates the acquisition of reading and writing in L2 (Aaron, 1994; Afiesimama, 1995; Cummins, 1981; Fafunwa, 1989; Krashen, 1981; Williams, 2011). It also "allows early development of the informational uses of literacy" in the first language (Krashen & Biber, 1988:28) because children, for instance, in Grade 4, already know many more lexical items in their first language and have "a sophisticated knowledge of the structure of that language"(Heugh, 2006a:65):65); (See also MacDonald & Burroughs (1991) cited in Djité (2008:75) who shows that the vocabulary of Grade five pupils in their L2 after four years of ESL is still much too low for them to read their subject textbooks). As they "read in order to learn", they develop more complex cognitive skills which also transfer to reading in the second language.

Evidence for effectiveness of Bilingual Education models

Cummins' theories were further supported by large-scale comparisons of different types of US bilingual programs (Baker, 2011; W. Thomas & Collier, 2002). These comparisons consisted of both quantitative and qualitative long-term research on bilingual education, following immigrant students up to grade 12, i.e. the end of secondary education. The majority of the students in question were Spanish-speakers, the largest immigrant group in the US.

The various types of language interventions available in the US to assist children whose first language is not English are: ESL (English as a Second Language) classes, where they are taught exclusively in English; transitional bilingual education, where their initial education is in their home language for a few years, while they are also learning English as a subject, before making a (gradual) transition to English-medium education; and various types of "maintenance" or "enrichment" bilingual education, where the children are taught in the two languages (in various ratios), for extended periods of time. In Thomas and Collier's research, non-native speakers of English were located in schools spread across the US. The researchers were also careful to include schools with various socio-economic catchment areas. They assessed outcomes using a national standardized test in "English Total Reading" (a test for problem-solving in content subjects, such as math, science and literature through reading in English), because this test was typically the kind of test on which minority children would perform worse than in all other subjects. Other tests employed were a standardized mathematics test (in Spanish, their L1), and the "Spanish Total Reading" test for purposes of comparison both with their reading ability in their second language and that of native-English speaking students reading in their first language.

"English Total Reading" test:

It was clear that the academic progress of children who had not had any language intervention program was the poorest. They had more dropouts than any of the other programs, and by the 11th grade, the median was at the 12th percentile.

Median scores for those who had ESL classes for two to three years were in the 23rd percentile at the end of secondary school (better than those who only had been in mainstream English classes, but far below grade level).

Transitional bilingual education for three to four years, depending on the type and exact duration, yielded median scores at the 32nd and 45th percentile, thus establishing that programmes of this kind were not able to close the gap for non-native English speakers and confirming the hypotheses proposed by Cummins

that students with less than four years of schooling in their primary language, were unable to reach grade level performance in their second language. A further finding was that, after Grade 5, ESL student grades start to drop, and the downward trend continues up to the end of secondary school. A similar pattern was observed for Early-Transitional Bilingual Education of less than four years, where test results looked promising up to the end of primary school, but then plummeted, and student results failed to reach the 50th percentile up to the end of secondary school.

On the other hand, the median performances of the students with four years or more of bilingual education was at least at the 51st percentile by the end of Grade 5, and remained so up to the end of secondary school. Some of the models had median results at 60th percentile and above.

Results in other subjects

Results for the "Total Spanish reading" test revealed that all students in the bilingual programs performed significantly better than native-English speakers in their L1. In addition, even students in the Transitional bilingual classes, which scored between the 61st and 68th percentile in Grades 1 - 4, maintained grade-level performance in reading Spanish up to grade 5. In the third comparison, a standardized Mathematics test (in Spanish) showed that the grade point average of native-Spanish speakers reached the 60th percentile, exceeding that of native-English speakers (tested in English).

In summary, immigrant students with four years or more of bilingual education, outperform monolingual native English speakers: they perform at or above grade level in their second language (English), and well above grade level in other subjects, including mathematics and reading in their L1. The strongest predictor of L2 student achievement is the amount of formal L1 schooling. W. Thomas and Collier (2002:7) conclude: "The more L1 grade-level schooling, the higher L2 achievement". They also advise that any type of program which teaches in the L1 for less than four years “should be avoided" (p.8).

Another indicator of the effectiveness of the maintenance bilingual programs, is that the mother tongue component of bilingual education for four or more years significantly reduces the negative effects of low SES on reading achievement. The researchers state that,

> Number of years of primary language schooling, either in home country or in host country, had more influence than socioeconomic status when the number of years of schooling was 4 or more years" (W. Thomas & Collier, 2002:6).

Of the various maintenance bilingual education programs in the US, the "Two-way bilingual immersion" models, where students of the two language groups are both taught in the two languages together in the same classes (or in the same schools) yield even better results than the "One-way developmental bilingual education" models targeted at non-native speakers of English. Even though both models offer bilingual education throughout primary and secondary school, integrated learning together with native-speakers offers extra opportunities and incentives for both groups, as they interact with their peers. It can also be argued that there may be additional social advantages as students come to appreciate each other as equals and both groups become not only bilingual but also bicultural (W. Thomas & Collier, 2002).

This research thus provides clear support for Cummins' Threshhold Theory and the Developmental Interdependence Hypothesis (see above). W. Thomas and Collier (2002) conclude that Early-Exit Transitional bilingual programs of one to three years only, which replace the use of L1 are "subtractive" (socially and cognitively) and the end results for the pupils' educational development are not significantly better than when they are taught in the majority language only. Students need to continue learning in school in their L1 for at least four years of primary education, and even then, they do better if they have had up to six years. On this basis, bilingual education extending over at least 6 years is advocated over and above shorter programs (such as Early-Exit Transitional bilingual education programs). Only these longer programs make it possible to maintain the first language and culture, while adding a second and allowing good social and cognitive development.

The only exception is for minority populations where parents have lost the ability to speak their heritage language, and want their children to learn this language as part of a language revitalization program where the aim is additive bilingualism. In this case, the children are usually speakers of a dominant language of the country already, as is the case in Wales (Edwards, 2009) and Catalonia (Simmons, 2003) and for Maori bilingual education in New Zealand (Edwards, 2004). Only in this context can children acquire a second language through early-immersion/second language-medium education without “subtractive” cognitive, social, and cultural effects.

Research on Sub-Saharan African settings

For our situation in Africa, much can be learnt from Cummin’s theories of bilingual learning and the comprehensive comparisons of bilingual education models in the Western world. It is important to remember, however, that the socio-linguistic dynamics of African countries are very different from those in the North. Moreover, there are economic and developmental differences, which greatly impact on educational resources and standards of teacher education.

Nevertheless, from the above findings, one would predict that in most Sub-Saharan countries, where the great majority of children speak only African language(s) before starting primary school, learning through a foreign/official language plays an important role in the failure to achieve the educational goals of EFA and MDGs (See chapter 4 on Language, Education, and Development) and the available evidence suggests that this is indeed the case. For instance Djité (2008:75) citing Alain Sissao, a member of the department of Linguistics and National Languages at the University of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso in a call for conference papers by the editorial board of "Linguistique Constrastive" (n.d.) points out:

> Only 25 of 100 pupils understand what they read in French in Burkina Faso primary schools; 20 are able to write a short essay describing a familiar situation, and not one has functional reading skills (i.e. reading a table of contents, reading instructions, etc.)

Similarly Williams (2011) found that only 33.9% and 30% of two groups of class 5 students in Zambia performed credibly on tests of reading comprehension.

Other experiments in bilingual education also provide evidence for its effectiveness. For instance, the introduction of Convergent Pedagogy in Mali from 1994 to 2000 used indigenous languages in addition to French to the end of primary education (Bender, Dutcher, Klaus, Shore, & Tesar, 2005; Canvin, 2003) . This initiative produced on average 32% higher pass rates in the end-of-primary examinations than the regular French-medium schools; the drop-out rate reduced to one third of that of “traditional” programs; and pupils in these schools needed to repeat school years five times fewer than the traditional schools. This experiment is particularly interesting, not only because a new interactive pedagogy was developed to replace the transmission-type teaching of the French-medium schools, but also because typical Malian forms of instructional interaction with children were incorporated, such as involving the class in physical activity, dramatizations by the teacher, and enactments in which the pupils would participate. In addition, the curriculum focused on ways of improving their agrarian lifestyle and environment, for example through improved animal husbandry. This kind of education affirms cultural knowledge and values as well as the language of the children’s home community. Moreover, it has a direct and immediately useful economic effect.

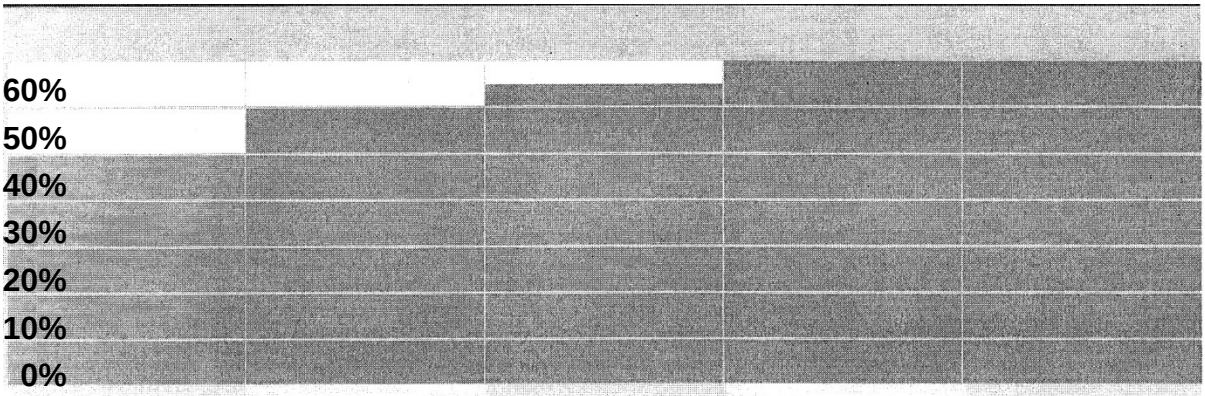
Heugh (2006a:67-72) overview of the models of bilingual education used in Sub-Saharan Africa up to that point provides further support for the findings in Western settings discussed above. In Table 3.1 below, she summarizes the various programmes:

Table 3.1: Expected average achievement for the second language as a subject in well-resourced schools by the end of secondary school depending on earlier medium of instruction choice ***(****Source:* Heugh (2006a:69))

70						
60						
50						
40						
30						
20						
10						
0						
%	L2 medium Mainstream plus L2 pull-out	L1 for 2-3 years then switch to L2	L1 for 2-3 years plus specialised L2 each subject – double teaching time	L1 for 6/7 years then L2 medium	Dual medium (L1 only 5-6 yrs, L1 +L2 MOI from 7th yr.)	L1 medium throughout plus good provision of L2 as subject
TYPE	1 Subtractive	2a Early-exit transitional	2b Early-exit transitional	3 Late-exit transitional	4a Additive	4b Additive [30]

In Table 3.2 below, Heugh (2011) presents only the models of bilingual education in Africa that have been most effective for teaching the foreign/official language as well as other subjects. Drawing heavily on data from Ethiopia and South Africa and Namibia (1955–1975) as well as Guinea Conakry (1966–1984) and the Six Year Yoruba Primary Project of Nigeria (see chapter 9), she demonstrates that the longer the mother tongue is maintained as a medium of instruction the better, and shows the different average scores that can be expected by grades 10-12 depending on the models used.

Table 3.2: Expected Average scores achieved for the second language as a subject in the different models of bilingual education by the end of secondary school (Grade 10-12) *(Source:* Heugh (2011:130))



2c *Medium-exit transitional*	*3a* *Late-exit transitional*	*3b* *Very late-exit transitional*	*4a* *Additive*	*4b* *Additive*
L1 = MOI for 4 years then switch to L2 as MOI, L1 as a subject	L1 = MOI for 6/7 years then L2 as MOI	L1 = MOI for 8 years then L2 as MOI	Dual medium: L1 = MOI for 5-6 years, L1 + L2 as MOI from 7th year	L1 = MOI throughout plus good provision of L2 as subject
Burkina Faso; two regions of Ethiopia; Namibia (1976-1990); South Africa (1976-1995); until recently with one language (Chichewa) in Malawi	Six Year Primary Project, Nigeria; some regions in Ethiopia; Tanzania (Kiswahili)	Three regions of Ethiopia (Somali, Oromifa and Tigrinya); South Africa and Namibia (1955-1975); Guinea (Conakry) (1966-1984)	South Africa in early 20th century. Research from Africa, Europe and USA suggests this could work well in contemporary Africa	South Africa, with both English and Afrikaans speakers – with high levels of success in bilingualism

Based on this analysis, she recommends the additive model which uses first mother tongue as MoI for 5–6 years and then dual medium throughout secondary school as the most promising model for African countries. She argues that in Africa, where schools are generally less well-resourced than in the north, children need more time, minimally six to eight years of bilingual education, to reap lasting additive effects.

Pedagogical approaches

Fundamental to the success of bilingual education is the development of pedagogical approaches appropriate for the delivery of effective teaching and learning. The most important of these to date centres on the concept of translanguaging (García, 2009; Hornberger, 2013; Ouane & Glanz, 2010). In this approach, teachers set out to replicate natural patterns of behaviour in bilingual communities where speakers communicate not only through one or other language, but also through code-switching. This is done skilfully, showing awareness of the level of understanding of the various language(s) the other person is likely to have. Hornberger (2009) proposes that not only does “translanguaging” facilitate teachers’ and learners’ communication about content issues but also language learning. Ouane and Glanz (2010) also argue that education should not be “divisive”: it is better to use languages in the classroom in the same way they are used in the community, rather than strictly and artificially keeping them apart.

Translanguaging is also sensitive to power relations. García (2009) takes note of Foucault's (1991) notion of "governmentality" which proposes that the ways in which schools endorse certain ways of languaging and disapprove of others results in some uses of language being valued and others stigmatized. She also cites Erickson (1996:45) to underline this argument:

> Routine actions and unexamined beliefs that are consonant with the cultural system of meaning and ontology within which it makes sense to take certain actions, entirely without malevolent intent, that nonetheless systematically limit the life chances of members of stigmatized groups. (Erickson (1996:45) cited by García (2009:141)) .

She claims that just as certain varieties of English (e.g. Pidgin English) are stigmatized, so is multilingual "languaging", in schools that look on bilingualism as "bounded autonomous language systems". She argues that truly equitable education in multilingual settings needs to take cognizance of the ways multilinguals "language" bilingually, and to value this in education, "as a resource

for engaging cognitively and socially" instead of demanding communication to always take place monolingually in one language or the other (García, 2009:157).

A growing body of opinion endorses this position. Heugh (2015), for instance, argues that "translanguaging" allows students and teachers to use the linguistic resources already at their disposal more fully and leads to better “cognitive engagement”. Edwards (2015) draws attention to the importance of "acceptance on the part of teachers and students of the use of different languages in the classroom". Weber (2014) also emphasizes the need for what he calls “flexible multilingual education” over against “mother tongue education” in an increasingly globalized world characterised by migration and urbanization and the associated linguistic “superdiversity”. He proposes that parts of a lesson or an assignment should be undertaken in different languages.

Limitations

There is, however, recognition that translanguaging is not a simple phenomenon. Baker in Hornberger (2003) and Hornberger (2013), for instance, argue there are situations where the minority language needs to be used more to compensate for the prestige associated with the majority language. Similarly García (2009) notes that there are times that more prominence should be given to the use of a minority language, as is the case in “recursive bilingualism” where the children are not adding a "new" language to their repertoire, but extending what remains of the ancestral language, as well as using the dominant language of their region/country. In such cases, she acknowledges that at least a period of language separation is required, because the children will be learning their ancestral language through immersion. Nonetheless, she believes that this is not always needed for groups which have been able to maintain much of their language.

In African contexts with their histories of colonisation, and an “inferiority complex” towards indigenous African languages and cultures (see chapter 7), as well as the historical neglect of these languages for use in education (a manifestation of symbolic violence, see chapter 1), there is arguably need for the valorisation of

indigenous languages for use in education (see also chapter 7), and consequently for the development of pedagogies that ensure the systematic use of the various languages in written as well as in spoken form, to avoid the "hegemonic practices" discussed in chapters 7 and 8.

There is, however, awareness that translanguaging, in and of itself, is not sufficient to ensure equality of outcome. Heugh (2009a) reports research in a secondary school in South Africa, in a poor, highly multilingual, inner-city area, where students were tested for their competence in English and those who were not sufficiently competent to learn through English were taught in a Xhosa-English bilingual class, while their former classmates, who were stronger in English, continued to be taught in English. Both classes were taught by the same teacher. Even in the English-speaking class, the students started to feel free to ask questions in Xhosa, and both classes, at the end of the first year, supported the use of Xhosa with English for instruction. Students thus gained better understanding of the concepts. A spin-off of this "experiment" was a first-time government trial-run to offer examinations in Xhosa as well as in English and Afrikaans. This greatly increased the status of Xhosa.

Yet, although the attitudinal and status changes for Xhosa, as well as the improved learning were desirable outcomes, Heugh (2009a) observes from the students' narratives that their syntax in either language did not match the required level needed for real access either to the contents of their syllabus or for further education. There were not sufficient written materials in African languages for the students, for instance, no textbooks beyond Grade 4, and teachers, unable to produce sufficient material by themselves, resorted in the main to oral use of Xhosa. Thus, although she confirms that the legitimisation of code-switching and related practices is right and helpful, she also warns that such practice is not in itself the solution for schools serving the poor in communities in South Africa. Heugh (2009a:111) summarises,

> Thirty-five years of code-switching in South African schools, mirrored in most other African countries, have not opened the doors to higher education or the formal economy for most.

As Heugh points out, bilingual teaching requires textbooks and additional reading materials in African languages (see also Edwards & Ngwaru, 2011; Edwards & Ngwaru, 2012; Edwards & Ngwaru, 2014) (which usually also presupposes the development of subject specific terminology) and the introduction of teachers to appropriate multilingual pedagogies. Moreover, in all cases, there is need to ensure that there is an additive bilingual literacy program in place where pupils can acquire advanced literacy skills, learning to read and comprehend complex texts on cognitively demanding topics. This would of necessity start with their stronger language(s) as the main language(s) of instruction and then gradually increase the use of the official/foreign language as student competency increases.

There are also practical problems associated with translanguaging. For instance, in written texts, which script or which orthography should be used, when the languages are "mixed"? Until systematic "flexible multilingual" pedagogies are developed, it would indeed be counterproductive to conceive of "translanguaging" or "flexible bilingual" teaching as a form of bilingual education that could replace the existing models. As Heugh (2009a:111) citing Alidou et al. (2006) concludes,

> The systematic provision of bilingual education – that is, development of strong academic literacy in both a language widely used in the community and in the international language of widest currency – remains the only process-cum-model which has demonstrated positive valid research data in African contexts.

Considering all these conditions, it is pertinent to note, too, that in African settings, while "translanguaging" can be used by individual teachers, and promoted in individual schools, other issues arguably need to be prioritised. The development of orthographies and terminology, as well as the local implementation of bilingual education must be done at the micro-level of ethnolinguistic groups. In the meantime, at the macro-level of national/regional government, policy formulation and support for the implementation of the various indigenous languages in education are required, in all aspects, including assessment.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have reviewed important theories of bilingualism and the various models of bilingual education that have emerged both in the North and in Sub-Saharan Africa which suggest that at least six years of bilingual education is required for the best educational outcomes.

Research from Africa, however, indicates that additional factors need to be taken into account. While six years of bilingual education are recommended in the well-resourced Northern settings, a different configuration is suggested here: 5–6 years of instruction in the mother tongue/language of the immediate environment, should ideally be followed by dual medium education throughout Secondary school. In addition, in African settings, with their histories of colonisation, there is need for the valorisation of indigenous African languages through their development for use in education, with textbooks and other books in indigenous languages. In view of the dominance of the official/foreign languages, and to avoid “hegemonic practices”, pedagogies that ensure the systematic use of the mother tongue in written as well as in spoken form are needed. There is also need for an additive bilingual literacy program through which students can acquire advanced literacy skills, and for Government recognition of the value of indigenous languages for the provision of quality education in all its aspects, including assessment.

Despite the strong evidence for the greater effectiveness of bilingual education over English-medium education or Early-Transitional education, the government in Nigeria continues to undervalue bilingual education and to emphasize English language while neglecting Nigerian languages in education. A frequently heard reason for this is that English language is necessary for development, especially socio-economic development. In the next chapter I consider the evidence for this claim.

Chapter 4: Language, education, and development

Introduction

One of the rationales for the promotion of indigenous languages which forms the focus for this study is its potential for increasing participation in society and better outcomes in areas such as health and education. In this chapter, I will examine the links between language and development. In particular, I will consider two competing discourses which form an important context for the present study. The first concerns the dominance of former colonial languages; the second the growing body of opinion that indigenous languages have an important role to play in relation to development. I will begin by reviewing the changing perceptions of development and the arguments for using local languages in a range of domains, paying particular attention to education. I will then discuss official responses to indigenous languages, both negative and positive, before considering possible ways forward.

Changing perceptions of development

Historically, definitions of development often do not mention the issue of language but rather put the emphasis on economic issues using indicators such as gross domestic product. From the mid-1970s, however, there was a marked shift in emphasis from economic to human development, triggered by the introduction of participatory methods that encouraged the beneficiaries to identify their own needs and the possible solutions. By 1992, for instance, the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro passed a resolution to give the ownership of development initiatives to local people from start to end (UNCED, 1992). As our understanding of issues in development increased, critical factors such as literacy, education, life expectancy

and child birth rates were given more importance (Djité, 2008; UNDP, 1992), a move also consistent with the shift from economic to human development. As A. Bamgbose (2014:646) comments, “development is not simply socio-economic”, and certainly not just “economic growth” but rather “is about the people”.

While very little attention had been paid to language by those working in the field of development in this period, linguists had begun to articulate its importance. (Prah, 1993), for instance, argued that:

> The real and only basis for sustained and realisable socially emancipating development of Africans, hinges on the usage of African languages, as the instrumental premise of African scientific and technological development.

In a similar vein, language was seen by Wolff (2006:26) as “the missing link” in development work, providing “indigenous solutions to social problems in terms of local action based on local resources”. This view is echoed by the many scholars who have identified the importance of local languages in a number of domains, including participation in public life, health education, agriculture and education more generally. It is also recognised for its potential in reducing the gap between rich and poor.

Participation in public life

Alexander (2000 b) estimates that the proportion of the African population fluent in the former colonial language is at most 20%. (Djité, 2008:9) argues that African societies are currently split between “those who speak the language of power and those who do not" and observing that, where there is any use of the local language, it is a "timid use". In a similar vein, Djité (2008:10-11) draws attention to the implications for very large sections of the population for participation in politics, as well as access to public services and the courts, thus working at cross purposes with MDG 8 which includes a commitment to good governance. For A. Bamgbose (2014:646),

> Development, whether narrowly or broadly defined, cannot be achieved unless it involves the participation of all in the development process, and

> such participation inevitably requires that people are reached and are able to reach others in the language or languages in which they are competent.

Concluding that African languages need to be used to ensure wider participation, he proposes news broadcasts in African languages, community radio broadcasting, and town hall meetings with interaction in the local languages. For those who are literate in African languages, these efforts could be supplemented with translations and printed materials. There is indeed evidence that this strategy is successful. Barron (2012) offers evidence that community radio broadcasting in the local languages is “a powerful ... means of disseminating information” and stimulates debates and involvement from the listeners. Ijah (2010), too, strongly recommends community radio (in the local language) as well as multi-media presentations on the basis of her research on the impact of mass communication on the mobilization of rural communities for community development efforts in Rivers State, Nigeria.

A. Bamgbose (2014) also makes links between public ignorance and corruption, citing the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index (CPI) for 2012 which places 31 out of 49 African countries amongst the most corrupt nations on the globe. He argues that, with widespread information dissemination in local languages, people would know their rights and would be better able to resist corrupt practices. By the same token, this would not only afford the electorate a better basis for their choices, but would also inform the wider public of the performance of those they have elected, ensuring greater accountability in their home areas in the form of shame for their families, which could function as a deterrent (A. Bamgbose, 2014:653).

Health education

MDGs 4,5 and 6 concern the Reduction of Child Mortality, Improvement of Maternal Health, Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. In response to the question:

> What is the most appropriate language(s) for disseminating information to the masses about health and hygiene and ... about preventive measures

> against diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS? (Djité, 2008:10)

Bamgbose (2014) offers various examples of the critical role played by local languages in challenging traditional ways of treating certain conditions in the light of scientific findings. He gives the example of excising a lymph node swollen because it is combatting an infection, a course of action which, in some cases, causes the death of a child. The scientific explanation of the condition and its treatment need to be offered as an alternative, but this cannot be effectively done in a language the parents don't understand well. Another example concerns how in some areas, children are not given enough meat to eat, because there is the belief that it causes worms. To enlighten parents about the merits of a balanced diet for children, this belief would need to be challenged in the local language.

Agriculture

Djité (2008) also emphasises the vital role played by local languages in disseminating information in other areas. In agriculture, for instance, it is important for 'the efficient and safe use of fertilisers and pesticides, or practical info on high-yield varieties of crops and cattle'. He sums up the situation thus:

> Nothing short of the full participation of the majority of its human capital will bring significant and lasting change to Africa; for, 50 years on, the solution to empowering the masses in Africa clearly does not lie in making everyone fluent in the languages of the former colonisers (Djité, 2008:11)

The elite divide and poverty

Rather than "empowering the masses", many authors have pointed to the continued use of the languages of the former colonial masters as the means by which the educated elites maintain their positions of advantage in society, while educationally, socially and economically marginalizing and excluding those who do

not master these languages (Djité, 2008; Myers-Scotton, 1993; Prah, 2009; Rassool, 2013). UNICEF/Nigeria (2012) rate Nigeria as one of the countries with the highest inequality in the world. They explain that there is inequality not only in terms of income, but also in

> access to social and economic opportunities between ... urban and rural residents, high and low socio-economic groups ... These culminate in the emergence of educationally, socially and economically marginalized, excluded or disadvantaged groups (UNICEF/Nigeria, 2012:2):.

It can be argued, then, that in Nigeria the growing gap between the rich and the poor is at least in part due to the language issue which continues to favour the elite and disadvantage those who don't master English. In contrast, the use of local languages for health and agriculture instruction, for information and interaction on poverty alleviation programs, for communication in politics, in court, and in Government offices, offers much better prospects for development for the poor, than the continued use of English for all formal communication, and an emphasis purely on economic development of the country.

Education

The area of development most relevant to the present study is, of course, education where discussion focuses heavily on the language of instruction which, in many cases in the developing world, is the former colonial language. In the wake of globalization, English has assumed a particularly important role.

English language proficiency has increased tremendously in economic value over at least the past 20 years, becoming a means of maximizing *economic* and *social capital*, both for individuals and for governments (Rassool, 2013). With the development of a global knowledge-based economy, countries that use English as lingua franca benefit from international networks for local business and trade and, through this, attract foreign direct investment (FDI), widely considered one of the fastest means of development, through rapid technology transfer and capacity

building. In particular, such countries more easily attract companies in industrialised countries to outsource a major part of their IT service needs. This ‘business process outsourcing’ (BPO) has helped some countries, such as India, China, the Philippines, and Malaysia, to grow rapidly economically.

It can be argued that the main prerequisite in attracting FDI and BPO is a large pool of highly skilled labour able to operate in English. On the surface, at least, the argument for using English as the main or only medium of instruction would seem to be compelling.(Seargeant & Erling, 2011), however, warn that "simplistic notions" of the role of English as vital for international development should not be encouraged in the public discourse of policy makers and program developers/managers.

The impressive economic success of Malaysia provides further support for this position. Primary education in Malaysia has until recently been conducted through the mother tongue – Malay, Chinese and Hindi respectively – for indigenous Malaysians, and those of Chinese and Indian descent. For Chinese and Indian children, the medium of instruction in secondary education is Malay, which also serves as the official language of the nation. Good learning takes place through the high-communicative languages of the children and their teachers. English is taught as a subject but not a medium of instruction throughout primary and secondary school, and becomes the medium of instruction only in tertiary education. In a discussion of the success of countries such as Malaysia, Brock-Utne (2012b):491) considers the lessons which African countries might learn from some Asian countries:

> We have frequently argued that the prosperity and economic prowess of modern Asia is, in no small measure, attributable to the use of languages confidently understood, spoken and written by the overwhelming masses of the people.

The clear implications of this stance are that, without a grounding which allows understanding of the concepts as they are taught in the language of the immediate environment of the child, there is little hope of either individual, or national, development.

It should be emphasised, however, that the relationship between language and development is complex (Djité, 2011, 2014). The rate of development measured by the MDG indices in countries such as Cambodia and Vietnam, where, in contrast to most African countries, the language of the majority of the populace is the national language is not better than that of comparable African countries in the medium-development category. Other factors clearly need to be considered, including the development of curricula appropriate to the culture and environment, appropriate pedagogies (see also chapters 3 and 6), and the training of teachers in their use (Canvin, 2003; Cheffy, 2011; Kanu, 2006). This was also the experience in Mali that led to the introduction of a new pedagogy (Canvin, 2003). Thus while language is not the only factor for quality education, it is the condition without which quality education cannot be achieved.

As discussed in chapter 3, a growing body of research indicates that learning is more effective and efficient when the medium of instruction is a local language rather than a foreign/official low-communicative language (Baker, 2011; Ouane & Glanz, 2011; W. Thomas & Collier, 2002). In this respect, the situation in Africa differs from that in countries such as China, where English language proficiency is simply an additional asset and where children are educated effectively through the medium of Chinese.

It has been estimated that, only 60% of children enrolled in African schools successfully complete their primary education (ECA/AU, 2008:42). Apart from the high drop-out rates (for Southern Nigeria, see the discussion in chapter 2), there is also the issue of ineffectiveness. Williams (2011:42-3) observes that “the effects of education seem weaker in SSA than in other areas of the world". He cites examples in the domain of health, especially child mortality where, unlike in other parts of the world, there is little evidence of the effect of the level of education of the mother. He concludes that,

> what contributes to development is not simply 'education' in the sense of providing schools, teachers and materials for learners, but effective education, and that a crucial feature of much formal African education is precisely that it lacks effectiveness. (Williams, 2011:42)

He argues strongly, using his research on comprehension in reading in Primaries 5 and 6 in several African countries in both the official languages of these countries and in the mother tongues of the students, that education in Africa has failed to achieve the desired ends in part at least because of the use of former colonial languages as the medium of instruction. In contrast, the use of African languages has been shown to have a major impact on the quality of teaching and learning, dropout rates, and repetition in schools (Ouane & Glanz, 2011); see also chapters 3 and 8). Significantly, in a continent, where urban children tend to achieve better educational outcomes than their rural peers, Trudell (2009:76) presents evidence from Eritrea, where all children are educated in their mother tongue, of a national reading survey of grade 5 which showed no difference for rural and urban students. Similar findings were also found in Rivers State, Nigeria, where the achievements of rural Obolo grade 6 students in English literacy were comparable with those of urban students (Aaron, 1994). It can be argued that, even though more children are enrolling in schools in Africa, there will be little hope of achieving the needed human and socio-economic development, until the quality of education is improved through the full incorporation of the African indigenous languages of the students (and teachers) (see also Benavot, 2015; Vanguard, 2015).

Official responses to indigenous languages

While researchers in sociolinguistics and language policy have been actively promoting acceptance of the importance of indigenous languages for several decades, those involved in the planning and formulation of policies for development tend to be unaware of their arguments. There is clearly a need for linguists to communicate their findings to relevant parties in this process.

The fact remains that the centrality of colonial languages in development was accepted unquestioningly until relatively recently both by governments and by international organizations. For instance, the influential 2000 Education for All movement (*The Dakar Framework for Action*, 2000) committed to provide quality

basic *education for all* children, youth and adults failed to address this issue. Dutcher (2004:8) cited by Brock-Utne (2012a:5) notes:

> It is shocking that the international dialogue on Education for All has not confronted the problems children face when they enter school not understanding the medium of instruction, when they are expected to learn a new language at the same time as they are learning in and through the new language. The basic problem is that children cannot understand what the teacher is saying! We believe that if international planners had faced these issues on a global scale, there would have been progress to report.

A similar criticism can be levied against other UN development programmes in Africa, such as the Millenium Development Goals (see also the discussion of individual goals above) and the NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development) of the African Union which fail to make significant reference to the role of language (A. Bamgbose, 2014; Igboanusi, 2014).

Nonetheless, awareness of this issue is gradually gathering momentum. An early indication of the negative effects of ignoring local languages came in the UNDP (1996:55) strong pronouncements against language domination. In Nigeria, between 1999 and 2004, the World Bank undertook an experimental program for the improvement of teacher education as part of Nigeria's Universal Basic Education (UBE) program (Adekola, 2007). In this program the role of languages of instruction in teaching and learning was brought very much to the foreground. It is unfortunate that there is no evidence that the suggested improvements were indeed implemented (except that the recent National Teacher Education Policy (Federal Ministry of Education, 2014) may have taken cognisance of them). The World Bank has also offered support for mother tongue-based educational programs in several countries (ADEA, 2012). Publications advocating the importance of local languages for education and development include the World Bank advocacy booklet, *In their own languages* (Bender et al., 2005), the UNESCO sponsored *Why Languages Matter – Meeting Millennium Development Goals through local languages* (Barron, 2012) and the EFA Global Monitoring Report for the period 2000–2015 (Benavot, 2015). In contrast to previous publications, this EFA report addresses the issue of quality in education, noting

that there are many millions who though enrolling in school, are still left behind, “still not learning the basics”. It therefore recommends the use of “efficient and language appropriate learning materials” for the sake of inclusion, access, and improvement of learning (Benavot, 2015). It also recommends that governments improve (the clarity of) their bilingual and multilingual policies, with a view to improve education through the use of indigenous languages.

Ways forward

In a Nigerian context, Igboanusi (2014:81) considers that poverty alleviation can only be achieved by mobilization of the masses “in development projects in their own languages”. He proposes that this should be done through the integration of micro language policy planning in the development framework. One could envision this would involve the development of minority language orthographies; terminology development for areas such as health, agriculture, fisheries, environmental protection, and industry; the provision of mother tongue-based adult literacy and education; the development of culturally appropriate and enriching new curricula and pedagogies; the writing and publishing of textbooks and other instructional materials in the languages; a massive translation effort; writing and publishing; and broadcasting in the indigenous languages. One current example is the need for micro-language planning in the languages of the catchment area of the institutions for teacher education, so that the improvement of education through teacher education as outlined in the new and progressive National Teacher Education Policy (Federal Ministry of Education, 2014); see also discussion in chapter 9), can be implemented. Without the necessary books in these languages, there can hardly be teaching of reading and writing in them, nor can there be proper teaching of the content subjects through the medium of the “language of the environment” without the development of appropriate terminology. Therefore, if Igboanusi’s advice is not heeded and the needed micro language planning is not undertaken, the NTEP will not achieve the required quality of education.

This strategy, he points out, at the same time as addressing issues of health, poverty, and education, would create jobs in the local language industries (see also Edwards & Ngwaru, 2014). He cites Alexander (2003:34):

> Indeed, if handled properly, languages, like all other resources, have a job-creating potential. In some countries, notably Australia, Canada, Belgium, Sweden, a language industry has been set up which caters for domestic as well as international linguistic needs. Thus, for instance, hundreds – and even thousands – of interpreters, translators, terminologists, lexicographers and other language practitioners and professionals have to be trained and employed in order to make the multilinguality work smoothly.

In Nigeria, if indeed "handled properly", the Government would actively pursue an "ecological language policy" (Hornberger, 2002), giving rise to thriving industries in most of the languages of the country and creating employment for many, notably in rural areas, where, because of lack of employment, there is an exodus of youth to urban areas. Even if only slowly or partially pursued, language communities could be sensitized and mobilized to support the employment of at least some personnel in language-related work for the sake of development in their area (Adegbija, 2004:237) (see also Liddicoat & Taylor-Leech, 2014).

However, a language policy that encourages the use of all the languages of Nigeria in education and government communication would be useful only when its implementation is pursued by Government. The absence of such an approach risks reinforcing the perceived powerlessness of Nigerian languages (Igboanusi & Peter, 2016).

Ethnolinguistic groups, too, need to be informed that without the use of the language(s) they understand best, there will not be much progress to record in any area of development. For this reason, in the area of education, there need to be information campaigns about the huge qualitative improvements that can be made in education through the use of the highly-communicative languages of the students (which in many cases is their mother tongue) instead of only English. Then they need to be mobilized, supported by Government, to pro-actively pursue the expansion of their respective languages for use in modern aspects of life.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the crucial importance of the use of highly communicative indigenous languages rather than foreign/official languages in the development effort has been highlighted. It was argued that even with the rising dominance of English in the global economy, undue emphasis on the learning of English by using it as the (main) medium of instruction in education, is not warranted. Rather it was argued that the use of foreign/official languages is obstructing effective teaching and learning in Africa, so that even with high school attendance as in Southern Nigeria, there is still not a large pool of highly skilled labour to contribute to the knowledge economy. On the other hand, use of highly communicative indigenous languages, facilitates much more effective teaching and learning. It was also pointed out that to facilitate mobilization of ethnolinguistic groups for development in the local languages, it is imperative to include micro language planning in the development framework. Having set out the assumptions which underpin the rationale for the bilingual education programme which lies at the heart of this study, I will consider next the methodology for this study.

Chapter 5: Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter I will describe my research paradigm, setting out my ontological and epistemological position, and my choice of methodology. This will be followed by the questions which form the focus for the research and a description of my research design, presenting the reasons for my choice of a critical ethnographic approach and case study. I will also consider issues of rigour and sampling in qualitative research as they apply to my study, my data collection methods and associated ethical issues as well as how I analyzed the data.

Research paradigm

Here I will discuss the philosophical underpinnings of my research. It is important for researchers to think through the philosophical underpinnings of their research paradigm, to check for consistency in their thinking. The particular beliefs and assumptions we have about the nature of the object of study (ontology), and about the ways we can come to know it (epistemology), are consistent with some methodological approaches and not with others.

Ontology

Ontology is concerned with the nature of social entities. There are two main perspectives on this issue. Objectivists consider that social entities exist separately of the influence of social actors; constructivists, on the other hand, propose that people influence their social world and are always changing and

adapting it (Bryman, 2008a:3,69). Unlike objectivists, I do not consider that social organisations exist independently of the people who are in them, nor as though they exist “beyond our reach or influence” (Bryman, 2008a:18). Rather, I find myself in the position of constructivists (or constructionists) such as Strauss et al. (1973) cited by Bryman (2008a:19) who sees social organisations as “negotiated order”, and Becker (1982:521) in Bryman (2008a:20), who suggests that culture is adapted and changed by every generation, even though, initially, it may shape the perceptions and behaviours of those within. In relation to my research topic, I have observed that Nigerian society and its history have shaped its people’s views of their languages and values to such an extent that it is hard to comprehend for people from other cultures. Over the years I have also seen that cultures and the social organisation of a community do not remain constant. For example, I observed significant changes in the social organisation of Obolo communities between 1991 and 2006, when I returned to work with the community after an extended period of absence, and former Village Councils had now been replaced by Community Development Councils, with a different kind of leadership, and different values and agendas.

Epistemology

Crotty (1998:3) argues that epistemology is concerned with how we know what we know and how we come to know it. Bryman (2008a:13) further defines it as “acceptable knowledge in a discipline” . As I understand it, the epistemological stance of Interpretism is a logical consequence of a constructivist view of the nature of human society. As Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey (2011:14) comment, “the interpretive paradigm recognizes that reality is *socially constructed* as peoples’ experiences occur within social, cultural, historical or personal contexts”.

According to Bryman (2008a), there are two contrasting positions, namely positivism, which sees the social world as an aspect of the natural world, and so emphasizes that it should be researched in the same way as objects in the natural sciences, and interpretivism, which believes that people and society are better studied using a different approach which may allow understanding of “the subjective meaning of social action” (p. 16), i.e. to understand the meaning

attributed by people within a particular social structure. It is finding ways of understanding the “emic” point of view. Max Weber (1864-1920), emphasized the word “verstehen” i.e. ‘to understand’, as he saw sociology “as a science which attempts the interpretive understanding of social action” (Bryman, 2008a:15). According to interpretists, social reality is not something “out there” to be uncovered by our research but rather something constructed by the people living within it. Thus, it is the researcher’s task to understand and interpret that emic reality:

> The thought objects constructed by the social scientist in order to grasp this social reality, have to be founded upon the thought objects constructed by the common- sense thinking of men [and women] living their daily life within the social world. (Bryman 2008 citing Schutz (1962:59)

Methodology

There are two main methodological approaches: qualitative and quantitative. As mentioned above, the methodology of the research needs to be consistent with the ontology and the epistemology of the researcher. As fundamental features for qualitative research Bryman lists: inductive in nature; interpretivism as its epistemological position; and constructionism as its ontological view of reality. For quantitative research, he lists: deductive i.e. testing of theory; natural science model, in particular, positivism as its epistemological position; and objectivism as its ontological orientation. A further difference he notes is that qualitative research “tends to be concerned with words” while quantitative research is more concerned with numbers. He stresses, however, that these distinctions are only “tendencies” and that they are not totally incompatible with regards to the methods used (Bryman, 2008a:22-3). Robson prefers the term “flexible design research” instead of “qualitative research”, because he, too, finds it advantageous for some research questions to be answered best using both methods and resulting in numerical expressions as well as those that are expressed in words (Robson, 2002:6). Bryman gives a good example of “mixed methods research”, basically research with an interpretivist stance, a constructivist orientation, and an inductive approach using both qualitative and quantitative methods (focus groups and questionnaire

respectively), “to show how a wedge need not and should not be driven between quantitative and qualitative research” (p. 23). Both authors also stress the fact that users of research can often get a clearer, more comprehensive idea of the prevalence of certain occurrences if some simple counting is done and some statistical representations are used instead of limiting understanding by using only verbal descriptions such as “many” or “most”.

Quantitative research, being deductive in nature, starts with a theory to be tested. This testing is most often done by using research designs where the factors that can influence the outcome are assumed to be known and can be controlled. Statistics are used to determine and describe the validity and generalizability of the research findings. This is not done in qualitative research as it is considered that human beings and their social relationships are too complex for all the factors to be known and isolated; in this view, quantitative research can be seen as restrictive, e.g. not facilitating the exploration of less researched and more complex social phenomena and social processes.

Qualitative researchers maintain that human beings and their social relationships can be better understood by more intensive and extensive interaction with the researcher, and by the researcher’s interpretation of the data. This is the interpretist approach. Qualitative researchers employ research designs that depend to a large degree on the skills of the researcher. Researchers themselves are in a sense a tool in the research. They need well-developed skills of observation and listening, and must know how to interact appropriately with people who may be quite different from them and their social group. They will seek to see things through the eyes of the participants and understand the context related constraints. They must reflect on their own background and worldview, beliefs and values, which will always to some extent influence the research and the researcher’s interpretations. They must be aware of their own perspectives that are brought to bear on the research; they must transparently and effectively describe them so that the readers will be able to assess these and their influence in the interpretation of the findings. While quantitative researchers assert that proper science is “value-free”, and that they always separate facts from values (Robson, 2002:20), qualitative researchers maintain that the topic of the research is selected for a purpose, and their definition of the factors, and the conclusions

they draw, the descriptions of the end results, and the recommendations are all influenced by the researchers' values, and perspectives. Robson (2002:21) argues along the same lines when he says:

> It has been amply demonstrated that what observers "see" is not determined simply by the characteristics of the thing observed; the characteristics and perspective of the observer also have an effect.

As qualitative research is inductive and reflective in nature, it is also reiterative or cyclical in process because researchers seek to explore and understand and then often go back to earlier stages of the research process to sharpen their understanding and focus. The end-result of qualitative research is theory and concepts (Bryman, 2008a:366), or what some prefer to call "working hypotheses" (Robson, 2002:25), through a rich, in-depth description of the findings.

As qualitative research is conducted differently, the quality measures of validity and generalizability as applied and understood in quantitative research are not directly applicable. Other measures of quality, however, are built into qualitative research designs and procedures (see section "Rigour in research" below).

Research Questions

Bryman (2008a:69, 72-4) explains that although qualitative research is more open-ended than quantitative research, without a clear research question the research is not likely to be focussed. The question has to be specific enough to give guidance to the research but, as Maxwell (2005) says, it should not be so specific that it would be "tunnelling" the researchers' view so that they would miss relevant information that could have contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of the issues. Maxwell suggests that qualitative research questions ask about *meaning, how* people make sense of something; or they ask about *the context* of the phenomenon, while a third type of question explores *processes*. C. Marshall and Rossman (2006:68) describe qualitative research questions as *exploratory*, *descriptive*, or *emancipatory*. I see my overarching question – What enables or

constrains the implementation of effective mother tongue-based bilingual education (MTB BE) in Obolo communities in Nigeria? – as exploratory, while some of the sub-questions are both exploratory and emancipatory, as follows:

Sub-questions:

Research Question 1: What are the implications of Obolo attitudes towards education for the promotion and implementation of a bilingual education programme?

Research Question 2: To what extent does the current status and development of Obolo make it a suitable candidate for inclusion in a bilingual education project?

Research question 3: What are the attitudes towards the use of Obolo in the context of bilingual education?

Research Question 4: How can participants' views on education and attitudes towards Obolo and English usefully inform approaches to the promotion of Obolo-English bilingual education?

Research design

Having defined my initial research question, following from my constructivist and interpretivist position, I decided to use critical ethnography and case study as the methodological approaches for my research.

Ethnography

Historically ethnography was used first by anthropologists (from the 19th century) describing what were perceived as foreign, exotic cultures. They normally went to live for extended times amongst the people of the culture they were studying, learning to communicate with them and observing their way of life and their interaction with their environment. This process was then described in prose,

preferably with pictures of artefacts. These ethnographic tales focused on the exotic, the differences between these cultures and the Western culture of the ethnographer. In time anthropologists also looked inward, becoming more aware of the traits of their own cultures and comparing cases from various other cultures to find similarities in human ways of organising society and ways of doing things.

In the 1930s, social scientists from the University of Chicago started to use the same kind of approach to study sub-cultures of their own society, usually those that were quite different from their own mainstream way of life. This tradition of ethnographic research continued up to the end of the 1960s (the Second Chicago school) (Silverman, 2006:74). In addition to the studies of subcultures, there are also ethnographic studies of public places and of organizations.

One definition of ethnography is: “a culture-studying culture” (Spradley (1979:10) cited in J. Thomas (1993:10)). Robson (2002:188) argues that “ethnographic study seeks to capture, interpret and explain how a group, organization or community live, experience and make sense of their lives and their world.” He explains that the ethnographic researcher does this by exploring “the shared cultural meanings of the behaviour, actions, events and contexts of a group of people”. Spradley (1980:3) maintains that “rather than *studying* people, ethnography means *learning from* people.” Ethnographers study cultures or social groups to understand the insiders’ point of view. They do this using a wide variety of methods of data collection, including participant observation, interviews, and analysis of films, artefacts and documents. Typically, researchers immerse themselves in the setting (Robson, 2002:89).

Within the ethnographic tradition there is a critical strand which seeks to not only describe but also to influence the social system they study.

Critical Ethnography and conventional ethnography

> "Critical ethnographers attempt to identify and illustrate the processes by which cultural repression occurs. They then step back and reflect on its possible sources and suggest ways to resist it." (J. Thomas, 1993:15).

Van Maanen (1988) refers to critical ethnographies as, "theoretically focussed … critical tales". How then is critical ethnography situated within the ethnographic tradition? One strong reason for me to choose critical ethnography as my approach is its pre-occupation with positive change. Some conventional ethnography also has positively impacted practitioners' understanding and their consequent actions in education. Heath (1982), for example, showed that asking children things which were discussed or taught earlier, as is done in school, is a practice of Western society which is by no means universal. Pupils from some cultures may keep quiet and not respond to such questions because this seems unnatural. A consequence of this research is the potential for teachers to learn that children from other cultures are brought up differently, in ways that have their own logic and to understand the need to devise other approaches for teaching and learning to engage these pupils meaningfully, instead of labelling them as slow learners. Van Maanen (1988:142) recognizes that conventional ethnographic research, both in anthropology and in sociology, has sometimes been critical. Indeed J. Thomas (1993:3) places critical ethnography squarely within the ethnographic tradition, saying that they both rely on "core rules of ethnographic methods and analysis". The critical focus then derives from the orientation of the researcher, i.e. the choice of topic and the selection of the group to study, which are based in the experience of a dilemma observed. The desire to improve the lot of the disadvantaged by describing their perspectives and "making their voice heard" or by a call for action are also distinctive features of Critical Ethnography. J. Thomas (1993:4) distinguishes Critical from Conventional Ethnography as follows:

> Conventional ethnographers generally speak *for* their subjects, usually to an audience of other researchers. Critical ethnographers, by contrast, accept an added research task of raising their voice to speak *to* an audience *on behalf* of their subjects as a means of empowering them by giving more authority to the subjects' voice.

Thomas criticises conventional ethnographers saying that they have become "domesticated" (p. 7f). He argues that critical scholars on the other hand "subvert taken-for-granted ways of thinking" (p. 18). Citing Mills (1970), he also calls on other social scientists to apply the knowledge they acquire in their own personal and political lives. He says, and I agree, that (social) "research *should* be emancipatory".

Acknowledging that the above is a value-laden statement, he goes on to argue that all research has at least some underlying judgements of what is valuable, e.g. through the choice of subject, and the way it is researched. He also offers a useful description of "the fact-value problem", which, he says, "centres upon the distinction between scientific claims, which are produced by evidence and demonstration, and value claims, which are produced by rhetoric and reason." He explains that for some researchers, it is not scientific to make value claims, such as "roses are beautiful" or "kindness is preferable to cruelty". He further argues that since there will always be values involved in research, it is better to identify and acknowledge them, so that readers can assess what effect they have on the research (p. 21). Critical researchers, then, need to approach their topics with an attitude of "neutrality", allowing the data to speak to them, without prejudice or bias. They should not present value statements as though they are facts nor draw conclusions without the support of empirical data and clear logical reasoning. Yet, any critical research can and ought to "raise *ough*t questions" (p. 22).

For all the reasons set out above, I approached this research using critical ethnography. The critical nature of my research can be seen in the fact that I provide information in the interviews, so that the interviewees would know that there are alternatives to the status quo for language in education and in childrearing. Because bilingual education is for Obolo people an abstract notion, of which they have no experience, and in order to assess participants' views on whether they would support such an innovation for their own children, it was important to provide more information on how education operates in other settings. It was pointed out, for instance, that, in contrast to what obtains in Africa, in developed countries, education for the majority of the children is in their mother tongues, which is not necessarily English (French in France, Italian in Italy, Japanese in Japan, etc.). We also discussed how this puts those children at an

advantage in learning over African children who have to struggle with the foreign/official language while learning new concepts. It was explained that in Obolo bilingual education, the medium of instruction for all subjects (for varying lengths of time) would be Obolo; the children would interact and ask questions in Obolo; Obolo terminology would be used in textbooks for all subjects; and English would be taught well, too, but as a subject. The evidence of research from the Obolo Language Pilot Project or from the Six Year Primary Project (SYPP) in Yoruba (see chapter 8) proved useful in helping participants to evaluate if the teaching of English as a subject only, would still enable the students to do well in English. Finally, for some of the elite groups and executives, I also gave information from research on the advantages of bilingualism including added cognitive development.

The focus group schedule (see Appendix A) also took the participants carefully from a consideration of the value they attached to their children's ability to speak Obolo, to an awareness of the potential communicative advantages if Obolo would be used for instruction (even at secondary school level). Then information was offered that in developed countries most children there have access to education in their mother tongue (MT) without communicative obstruction of a foreign/official language. Next, participants were reminded about their increased understanding when reading the Obolo Bible and Obolo instructional writing. It was only after this preliminary discussion that the question of Obolo bilingual education was introduced and participants were asked whether they would like their children to attend such a school.

One could argue that the provision of this information would bias the results because they would know my position, but I was aware that Obolo people generally have never seen anything apart from the status quo and that they lacked the necessary information to seriously consider the issue. In this way, the research took on emancipatory value, and enabled them to reflect and understand better what the envisaged Obolo bilingual program(s) could offer. From this experience with the focus groups, we can also glean some hints for promotional campaigns with for instance interviews and debates on the media. Similar issues were discussed, too, in the executive interviews (see Appendix C)

Case study

I used a case study approach, defined by Robert Yin (1981; 1994) as follows:

> Case study is a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence (as cited in Robson (2002:178).

By definition, the case study concentrates on a particular defined case (or a small number of cases). There are many types of case studies, e.g. individual case study, community study, social group study, studies of organisations and institutions, studies of events, roles and relationships, and many more (Robson, 2002:181). Yin (1994) in Robson (2002:182) further distinguishes holistic case studies (i.e. those looking at the whole) from those looking at sub-units. He also mentions that holistic case studies can be engaged in for various purposes, e.g. the critical case (a case which fits and demonstrates what has been predicted); and the extreme case (this would be a kind of “test-bed”, either a worst-case-scenario, that would show that a new approach would work better), or an ideal situation, that would improve the researcher’s understanding of how a new approach would work.

Yin also discusses multiple case studies, where particular cases are found which either provide the same results as the theory predicts or different ones, also as the theory predicts. Bryman (2008a) says that the term is mostly used in connection with a particular location. Both Robson and Bryman associate case study with an emphasis on the setting or context and make reference to the fact that quantitative *and* qualitative research methods have been used. Robson states explicitly that "While ethnography is a distinctive approach, it can be linked .... with the case study. A case study can be approached ethnographically" (p.190)

The main advantage of a case study is that it offers the opportunity to study complex social issues in a particular setting, resulting in a rich description and in-depth analysis. The main disadvantage is that the findings are not generalizable. With the rich descriptions of the case including its settings, readers would, however, be able to assess for themselves how far the findings may be

transferrable to a different setting. (See further discussion below under rigour in qualitative research.)

My research focusses on the Obolo ethnic group, speakers of the Obolo language, in two Local Government Areas in Nigeria (namely the Andoni Local Government Area in Rivers State and the Eastern Obolo LGA in Akwa Ibom State). This is the unit of analysis for my research. The Obolo comprise just one of the hundreds of ethnic groups speaking minority languages in Nigeria.

Although the Obolo constitute a small community (in the region of 280,000 people) and there are clear differences between the various regions of Nigeria, it can be argued that certain characteristics observed here will also apply in other settings in Nigeria. In one sense, then, this is a critical case because, as is the case for most of the other languages of Nigeria, the Obolo language has very low status compared with the three national languages – Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa – and even compared with regional languages, such as Fulfulde, Efik, and Ebibio, and Nupe, which many people acquire as a second language for inter-ethnic communication in the respective regions. At the same time, it is also an extreme case, because unlike most others, it is a language that has enjoyed sustained community-based effort for its development, which may predispose members of this group to develop positive attitudes towards MT in education.

Rigour in research

Reliability and validity and objectivity are considered important features of rigour in quantitative research. Many researchers, however, question the applicability of these criteria for judging rigour in qualitative research (see e.g. Bryman, 2008a:377-80; Trochim, 2006). Lincoln and Guba (1985) for example, propose the following alternative criteria:

Table 5.1: Criteria for judging rigour in research

Alternative Criteria for Judging Qualitative Research	Traditional Criteria for Judging Quantitative Research
credibility	internal validity
transferability	external validity
dependability	Reliability
confirmability	Objectivity

I will discuss each of these criteria in turn.

Credibility

Credibility concerns the level of confidence in the 'truth' of the findings. C. Marshall and Rossman (2006:40) discuss ways in which credibility can be enhanced: prolonged engagement, “member checks” (sharing reports and findings with participants), triangulating by gathering data from multiple sources, and using multiple methods, and looking at the data using multiple theories; “peer debriefing” i.e. discussing emergent findings with colleagues. Methodological triangulation is achieved in the present study using semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and participant observation; data triangulation is achieved through the involvement of participants from many different walks of life and educational experiences. As for prolonged engagement, I had been living in the Obolo area for many years prior to this study, and dealing with language-in-education issues there through my work as a literacy consultant. I also lived there during the period of the data collection so

I have a history of “prolonged engagement”. By presenting the emergent findings in the course of my research, I was able to receive input from colleagues acting as ‘critical friends’. As for “member checks” also called “respondent verification”, Krueger and Casey (2000) recommend that the researcher summarizes what has been said at the end of the focus group discussions, giving participants the opportunity to fine tune: a similar strategy can be used at various points in the conduct of interviews. Since many of my participants have low levels of literacy, it would not be feasible to ask them to comment on transcripts or summaries. However, I took the opportunity to summarise discussion at appropriate points in interviews and focus groups.

Transferability

Transferability is concerned with showing that research findings can be applied in other contexts. My data formed the basis of a ‘thick description’ (reference), with extensive and detailed description of the settings, so that other researchers can evaluate for themselves whether and to what extent the findings might also apply to other settings with which they are familiar.

Dependability

Dependability requires the researcher to show that the findings are consistent and could be repeated. Lincoln and Guba (1985:317) recommend “inquiry audit”, elsewhere called an “audit trail” to meet this criteria (Golafshani, 2003). Cohen and Crabtree (2006) define an audit trail as:

> a transparent description of the research steps taken from the start of a research project to the development and reporting of findings. These are records that are kept regarding what was done in an investigation..

Reporting should also include a rationale for the decisions. Malterud (2001) cited by Cohen and Crabtree (2006) also underscores the need for one to provide a

detailed report of the analytical steps taken in a study when she writes:

> Stating that categories emerged when the material had been read by one or more persons, is not sufficient to explain how and why patterns were noticed... the reader needs to know the principles and choices underlying pattern recognition and category foundation.

I therefore kept good records and was transparent and explicit in describing the processes of the research, how and when insights were gained, and how themes were identified, in short, documenting the chronological development of the argument (see also under Analysis below).

Confirmability

Confirmability concerns the extent to which the results can be confirmed or corroborated by others. I used two main ways of achieving this: through the use of triangulation (as discussed above); and through reflexivity or reflection on my actions and values at all stages of the research process, scrutinizing my own beliefs in the same way that I scrutinize the beliefs of others.

Insider versus outsider research

One further issue needs to be considered in relation to rigour in research: the relative advantages and disadvantages of insider and outsider research. An insider has the advantage of having a wealth of insights and knowledge which the outsider does not (yet) have, and which can provide a greater depth of insight and authenticity to the research. The insider will know better how to approach people appropriately in the culture and has a network of contacts to work with. An insider can also communicate better, knowing the language of the people.

However, there are also disadvantages to research by insiders. Rooney (2005:6) raises several questions relating to threat of bias:

- Will the researcher's relationships with subjects have a negative impact on the subject's behaviour such that they behave in a way that they would not normally?

- Will the researcher's tacit knowledge lead them to misinterpret data or make false assumptions?
- Will the researcher's insider knowledge lead them to make assumptions and miss potentially important information?
- Will the researcher's politics, loyalties, or hidden agendas lead to misrepresentations?
- Will the researcher's moral/political/cultural standpoints lead them to subconsciously distort data?

Although as somebody from the Netherlands I have an outsider's perspective, I also have been a member of Nigerian society by marriage, and have adapted considerably by learning the Obolo language and living and working in the Obolo area of the Niger Delta for a total period of 13 years (from 1983 to 1991 and again from 2006 to 2012). My work as Literacy Advisor was with the local community, schools, the local Schools Boards, and local churches. I also have wider experience of other settings in Nigeria, as I worked as a Literacy Consultant with many other language communities all over Nigeria from the end of 1994 to 2004, while we lived in Jos, in the middle belt of the country. Having the experience of living in the Obolo community, and working with them for long periods, I have developed considerable insight as a "participant", which I believe has a positive bearing on my approach and my analysis. I also have an extensive network of contacts, invaluable in locating suitable participants for each focus group and in arranging a suitable venue. It was also through personal contacts that I was able to gain access to the highly-placed officials of the Ministries of Education for the executive interviews. In Nigeria, "white people" are generally highly regarded, and the fact that I am from Europe would also have helped to secure the appointments with the executives. The fact that I am an outsider, being from a Western culture and an academic researcher from a Western University adds another perspective. I am thus in a unique position to do research in the Obolo area. In addition, despite my colour and different cultural background, the fact that I am able to speak the Obolo language makes people accept me as someone who identifies with them, and has been integrated into life in Obolo. It also helped greatly with communication, so that I was able to catch the nuances of meaning directly rather than having to use an interpreter and a translator of the data before analysis. Even

outside the Obolo area, speaking with the executive officers of education who are not Obolo people, being introduced by my Obolo connections, who never failed to mention that I speak their language very well, helped tremendously to ease our communication in the interview.

I was aware, however, that my association with a particular organization that is known to promote MT in schools might well influence the responses of participants. I attempted to guard against this bias by the use of focus groups, where participants are not only talking to the moderator but also to each other. Moreover I let them know that I was not doing this in the name of OLBTP, but that as a researcher I wanted to know their thoughts and feelings and understandings because they are important indicators for the way education should go. (This is also mentioned in the letter of information; see Appendix B) I also designed the interview schedule with this in mind, so as to first make the participants think more widely about their hopes and aspirations for the future, rather than focussing on education and language in education.This said, it is, of course, impossible to rule out the possibility that my status influenced participants' responses.

Besides this, as I am married to an Obolo person, I am accepted as part of the community, and I identify with them. As a result, my tacit knowledge potentially could lead me to interpret data wrongly. I do, however, have an outsider's perspective too, and as a researcher I often step back and examine my assumptions again. I also have loyalties to OLBTO as I have worked for so many years with them, first as a resident Advisor sent and sponsored by Nigeria Bible Translation Trust (NBTT), but living in accommodation provided by OLBTO, and then from 2006 as a resident Consultant, accommodated by them and receiving a regular allowance. Moreover, both my husband and I have hugely invested time and effort in the language development work and education programs of OLBTO. Yet as "Advisors"/"Consultants" we have always made it clear that we are separate from management and will not make decisions. Nevertheless, because of the above, I tried to guard against the tendency to present them and their programs and organisation in too positive a light, and also described their weaknesses and failures.

Sampling

All research studies involve decisions about sampling. Note that in quantitative research randomness and size of sample determine the quality of the sample, because this offers some assurance that it represents the larger population (generalization). A small sample, that is not randomly selected, is therefore considered "suspect". For qualitative research, however, random sampling is not appropriate; instead sampling should be determined by the purpose of the research.

According to M. N. Marshall (1996), qualitative researchers “actively select” a sample that will produce rich data, engaging intellectually with the research question to specify the kind of characteristics that would make a good sample and/or a good participant (e.g. for interviews, focus groups). Here the researchers’ knowledge of the subject, the literature, relevant theories, and the research population will be drawn on. Marshall describes three types of sampling in qualitative research: convenience, judgment and theoretical.

Convenience sampling is used where constraints such as limited finances and lack of accessibility prevent the researcher from using more advantageous samples. In judgment or purposive sampling the researcher strategically selects the sample based on knowledge of the research subject, the research population, and/or characteristics of the candidates, for example, based on their expressed views or affiliations. There are several sub-types of purposive sampling used for specific purposes: maximum variation samples, cover as much as possible of the spectrum; outlier or deviant samples are used when some data do not fit theories and concepts arising from the bulk of the data; and critical case or key informant samples draw on people with special insight, experience, or training in the research topic. More of these specific kinds of participants can be located through “snowball sampling” when participants are asked to recommend others who would be good candidates for participation. I used purposive sampling to select the focus group participants, ensuring that different geographic areas (urban versus rural), educational levels, genders, and social status were represented (see “Sampling in the present study” below).

A theoretical sample tests both emerging theories arising from the analysis (as in Grounded Theory) (M. N. Marshall, 1996:523) and from existing theories, to see if and how they apply in the specific case. Jennifer Mason writes about this as follows:

> Theoretical sampling means selecting groups or categories to study on the basis of their relevance to your research questions, your theoretical position ... and most importantly the explanation or account which you are developing. Theoretical sampling is concerned with constructing a sample ... which is meaningful theoretically, because it builds in certain characteristics or criteria which help to develop and test your theory and explanation. (Mason (1996:93-4) cited in Silverman (2006:308))

I used theoretical sampling in recognition of the elite-divide in African society widely discussed in the literature, with one of the types of focus groups made up of members of the elite, and also in the semi-structured interviews with gatekeepers in the educational system (see below).

Silverman (2006:309) also discusses the idea of increasing the size of a sample during the research to test "emerging generalizations", to say more about participants, or to look for new deviant cases. Mason (1996:93-4) remarks in this regard that in qualitative research there is much greater flexibility to manipulate the “analysis, theory, and sampling activities interactively” than there is in in quantitative research (which is a much more linear process). This is seen as one of the strengths of qualitative research.

The sample size is determined by the point in the research process when theoretical saturation is achieved and no more new insights are to be gained. M. N. Marshall (1996:523) argues that “this requires a flexible research design and an iterative, cyclical approach to sampling, data collection, analysis and interpretation,” rather than a set design to begin the research with, as in quantitative research.

Sampling in the present study

My understanding of the situation led me to identify the following key variables which guided my purposive sampling: urban versus rural; level of education; elite versus masses; and gender. These variables are, of course, overlapping and many of the participants belong to more than one group (See Table 5.2).

Urban versus rural

The urban–rural divide in African society, whereby rural areas are underdeveloped compared with urban areas drawing people into the cities, has been widely discussed (Adedeji & Olaniyan, 2011; Jamal & Weeks, 1988; Tostensen, 2004). Most people in Obolo rural areas are fisherfolk, although increasingly they also have other occupations. Others living in the rural areas include ministers of religion, school teachers, health workers, office staff, technical staff and labourers employed by the local councils. Schools in rural areas tend to be less well-resourced both materially and in manpower than those in cities. The farther or the more inaccessible the rural area from the city, the more marked the differences (Aaron, 1994; also Afiesimama, 1991). In Obolo, as is the case throughout Africa, the young who have at least secondary school education look for opportunities for their personal progress in the cities outside their home area. This divide also has important implications for language. While children in rural areas usually grow up communicating in their mother tongue, Obolo, children in the cities are more likely to speak Pidgin-English and, to some extent, English than Obolo unless the family maintains strong ties with the extended family and the “home” community. I therefore located participants from the city, outside the Obolo homeland, as well as those from rural areas.

Educational level

It is possible to discern three educational levels. The first group consists of people who have either not attended school or have limited schooling. In this study, fisherfolk fall into this category. The middle group have completed school (primary, secondary, or tertiary level); have a school leaver's certificate, and have found employment. A relatively small proportion of this population will have achieved fluency in English and are likely to be socially upwardly mobile. Examination results, however, suggest that the majority is not able to function very well in English and consequently may not have understood much of the curriculum covered in school. Those likely to fall in this category include ministers of religion, health workers and teachers. The third group constitutes the highly educated elite, who have either studied at a University overseas or have higher degrees; have travelled to Western countries (or have children there), and whose children go to elite schools, whether private or government-owned. All three groups were represented in the sample in order to explore any differences in worldview which may have resulted from their educational experiences.

Educated elite versus masses

The elite-divide in Sub-Saharan Africa is widely discussed in the literature (Myers-Scotton, 1993; Trudell, 2010, 2012), particularly in relation to their role in the maintenance of the status quo. Myers-Scotton (2002:35) defines elites not as the most wealthy (or powerful) but as: "politicians or government administrators, but also … educators and other non-governmental professionals." They are identified by their proficiency in English and by having University degrees (Myers-Scotton, 1993).

A total of three highly placed government functionaries in the Ministry of Education of the two states where Obolo is situated, in charge of education in Obolo area, were included in the study through semi-structured interviews. These officials were not Obolo themselves.

The highly educated Obolo elite, also forms a sample that can be studied for their role in the maintenance of the status quo.

Gender

My observation of mixed gender literacy classes suggests that men feel ashamed when their wives are more outspoken or appear more knowledgeable. By the same token women sometimes hold back in the presence of men, especially when talking on topics such as education and work. For these reasons, therefore, I organised a focus group for the women in the fishing ports, separate from the men. This worked very well, with each group clearly feeling very much at ease. This sensitivity to gender, however, was much less marked amongst educated workers and non-existent among the elites.

Table 5.2: The key variables and numbers of participants[1]

	URBAN	RURAL	
HIGHLY EDUCATED/ELITE[2]	20	-	
MIDDLE EDUCATED	12	12	
LIMITED FORMAL EDUCATION	-	Men	Women
		5	8

Geo-political

Although this was not part of my formal plan, I was also always aware that there are differences in the sociolinguistic and the geo-political setting of Obolo land in Rivers and in Akwa Ibom States (see chapter 2). I therefore sought to have samples from both states.

The abbreviations for references to focus group participants are listed in Appendix D.

[1] Most participants in Focus Groups are Obolo; 3 non-Obolo government functionaries were interviewed individually

[2] All elites, by definition, are also highly educated (see description above)

Representativeness of sample

There were several problems affecting my planned purposive sampling. Because of rising insecurity in the region in 2015 during the period I was to do another set of focus groups, it was too dangerous for me to travel. This limited the number of focus groups with fisherfolk to two, one with men and one with women, instead of the planned four, and yielded a lower number of participants with limited formal education. Even though this meant I could not reach "saturation level" (Krueger & Casey, 2000:4; M. N. Marshall, 1996:523) for the sample of participants of this level of education, the lifestyle and situations of people in other fishing ports are very similar, both in Akwa Ibom and in Rivers State (or even in other fishing ports outside these states), and my interactions with people in fishing ports at other times, suggest that others with this level of education are likely to share views similar to those described in my findings.

Security issues also affected rural participants with intermediate levels of education. In this instance, I fell back on focus group interviews with members of Obolo Language and Bible Translation Committee, (Rural Empl. FG1a and FG1b) originally intended as a practice discussion. As members of this committee, it might reasonably be expected that they would be more favourably disposed to the development of Obolo than others (though maybe not for use in bilingual education). They also knew me personally. From the outcome of all the focus group discussions, there was however no indication that the participants of this particular group were more favourably disposed toward the use of the language in education than others.

Another case of "convenience sampling" affected concerns for the influence of the respective geo-political and socio-linguistic settings of Obolo in the two States where they are based. Unknown to me before the discussion, a sample of middle educated urban people in one of the states (Urban Empl. FG6), proved to consist of people who had come there to work from the other state. They proved to be the least interested of the groups in the use of Obolo as a medium of instruction, thus confirming the many indications that the sociolinguistic settings of this state capital would indeed have made long-term residents there less receptive to the idea of Obolo-based bilingual education than others.

Data collection methods

Here I will be discussing the use of focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and participant observation.

Focus Groups

The focus group method was first described by the sociologist Robert K. Merton et.al (1956), cited in Krueger and Casey (2000), but it was not initially adopted as a useful tool for social science. Instead it was used extensively for market research in commerce and industry. More recently, however, it has been re-discovered as a very useful tool in social research.

Focus groups are composed of either mixed or homogenous groups of people (i.e. people with something in common that is relevant to the topic of study). They are small groups, usually between 5 and 10 people. The same discussion is conducted with several groups of the same type so that "trends and patterns" can be identified (p. 4). This is then repeated until "saturation point", i.e. when you can start to predict the answers, usually between three to four times. Compared with an interview, focus groups are less controlled by the researcher.

Focus Groups have been usefully employed for a wide variety of purposes, including decision making, to gain understanding about a topic from the participants' point of view so that decision makers can be better informed. They have also been used for policy making and testing in public organisations, and in the context of my research, it was envisioned that useful guidance for language in education policy could arise from the discussions. Focus groups have also been used in program development and planning, where the researcher learns "to see the issue through the eyes and hearts of the target audience" and "to learn the language used to talk about the topic", for instance, what they like/dislike about it; what keeps them from or makes them start a behaviour or a program (e.g. breastfeeding) (Krueger & Casey, 2000:6f, 15). These are also issues I wanted to

explore in relation to a mother tongue-based bilingual education program in Obolo. Further, focus groups have been used in social marketing to identify strategies which “change behaviour in a socially desirable manner" (Krueger & Casey, 2000:18).

As one of my purposes is to find strategies for the social marketing of Mother Tongue-Based Bilingual Education similar to the Welsh language promotion project, Twf (Growth), which promotes the benefits of bilingualism to parents in Wales (Edwards, 2009:41-3), as recommended by Wolff (Alidou et al., 2006:24, 157-174), focus groups are fit for purpose.

I wanted to gain insight into perceptions, attitudes and values for education, especially in relation to language in education amongst the Obolo people, as well as the factors that would motivate them to embark on bilingual education. I was interested in capturing the wording used by them to discuss the issues as this might be important in suggesting ways of phrasing our messages when we later disseminate findings and recommendations. As Krueger and Casey (2000:198) say: focus group research seeks “not to predict” but “to provide understanding and insight”.

Focus groups have the advantage of stimulating discussion, as people contribute ideas and react to each other. There is also the advantage that participants who might shy away from lengthy one-to-one interviews, such as the fisherfolk and others who would regard themselves as not well educated, might be more likely to agree to participate as members of a group where they could express themselves more easily. Also, since focus-groups are less controlled by the moderator, the discussions can be more natural, with people reacting to each other and reasoning as they usually do. As such, focus groups are valuable for providing better understanding of the issues

While focus groups provide an efficient way of gathering data quickly from a wide range of people, they also have disadvantages. Because of the difficulties of recording and transcription with sometimes overlapping speech, it is necessary to explain the importance of turn taking before the interview starts. It can also help to identify speakers by placing name cards in front of them at the beginning of the discussion. Another problem that may arise is group dynamics, where one or two

participants dominate the discussion. It is suggested that the moderator intervene and ask to hear other people's views too, and that every participant should be encouraged to say something (Bryman, 2008a; Krueger & Casey, 2000:59). Asch (1951) in Bryman (2008b:489) observes that when a group view emerges, the perspective of an individual may be "suppressed". By the same token, Bryman (2008a:489) suggests that when a group comes to agree on a certain viewpoint, group members "develop almost irrational attachments to it".

Bryman (2008a:489) warns that people who are in hierarchical relationship with each other should not be brought together in focus groups; nor should participants "who are likely to disagree profoundly with each other". Wherever possible I avoided placing in the same focus groups people who were known to have strongly opposing views, or people involved in hierarchical relations. Inadvertently, however, on one occasion, someone was included in one of the focus groups who was given deference because of their partner's high educational status. The effect was that the person tended to dominate and also at some points disrupted the discussions.

It is important to be sensitive to these disadvantages and to counterbalance the weakness of this method of data collection by using other methods.

Focus groups in the present study

My aim in using focus group discussions in the present study is to ensure a "maximum variation sample" (M. N. Marshall, 1996), which covers the spectrum of Obolo people. The rationale for including each of the groups has been explained above, under "Sampling". As set out in table 5.2 below, I used the following groupings:

A. Locally employed people, who have completed basic education, i.e. teachers, pastors, office workers and health workers in the rural areas of Andoni LGA, Rivers State and of E. Obolo LGA, Akwa Ibom State[3].

B. Fishermen and women (with lower levels of education) in fishing ports where there are schools, separated into two groups by gender.

[3] Referred to as rural, "educated workers" on the table below, and as "Rural Empl.FG" in references

C. Obolo people who have completed basic education working in the capital cities of both Akwa Ibom and Rivers States, Uyo and Port Harcourt respectively[4]. These are referred to as urban, “educated workers” on the table below, and as “Urban Empl.FG” in references.

D. Obolo elites in the capital cities of the two states, and in the Federal Capital Area.

All of the participants were asked to express their views as parents.

I proposed to have about 5-6 people in each focus group, so that the topics could be thoroughly discussed (Bryman, 2008a). The design with the number of focus groups of each type was as follows:

Table 5.3: The triple layer design for types of focus groups:

		URBAN	RURAL
HIGHLY EDUCATED	ELITE	Elite	-
	No. FGs	3	
	No. Participants	17	
EDUCATED	NON-ELITE	Educated workers	Educated Workers
	No. FGs	2	3
	No. Participants	12	12
LIMITED EDUCATION	NON-ELITE	-	fisherfolk:
			MEN WOMEN
	No. FGs		1 1
	No. Participants		13

[44] See map on p. 27 for location

I also distributed the focus groups equally across the two states where Obolo is situated because of the different socio-linguistic and political settings of Obolo people in these two states.

Most groups comprised 5 to 7 people. On one occasion, I included 8 but it was more difficult to ensure that each of them was able to contribute. Of the first focus group, only 4 of the 7 I had invited participated, so I held another one of this type with the 3 people who had not been able to participate the first time (Rural Empl. FG1a and 1b). I organized 10 focus groups in total, involving 54 participants. I only held 2 focus groups with fisherfolk, one for men, and one for women, both in the same fishing port in Rivers State, rather than a total of 4 as I had planned, because later on, as a result of insecurity, I was unable to hold the two in Akwa Ibom State.

Selection of Participants

I arranged with individual acquaintances to invite participants from their own social network for the particular types of focus groups mentioned above, and usually also asked them to plan the venue and the exact time (and often even where and how to organize refreshments).

The focus groups of “educated workers” each had at least one teacher or education officer so that the professionals in teaching were always represented, and would not feel ignored. I did not, however, want more than two in a group of six so that they would not dominate the discussion. The participants were mixed in gender and of various (adult) age ranges. In the city, it was usually arranged to meet at the house of one of the participants, while in the rural areas we met at public places, an open school, a church hall, or a chief’s veranda. Because it was my acquaintances who assisted me, they were often people who were informed and interested in Obolo language work. I asked them therefore to ensure that people with no apparent interest in Obolo language work would also be included.

Information and consent

The information sheets on the research were e-mailed or printed copies sent beforehand to the elite participants through the friend who was making the arrangements (see Appendix A). They were asked to read and sign the consent form, which includes consent for oral recording, before the interview. For the other focus groups, however, the information sheet was given to the persons organising the group and the contents were discussed with them beforehand so that they would know how to inform the people they invited. At the beginning of the focus group meetings, it was also given to the participants, together with a copy of the consent form, and I again discussed the content with them (in Obolo), to ensure that everyone understood it. They were not asked to sign the consent form, but instead they were asked to consent orally and this was recorded, as agreed by the University's ethics committee (see also discussion of ethics below).

Interviews

Byrne (2004:182), cited by Silverman (2006:114) asserts that an interview is "particularly useful... for accessing individuals' attitudes and values - things that cannot necessarily be observed or accommodated in a formal questionnaire." Byrne's quote continues with a description of the type of interview she has in mind, with

> open-ended and flexible questions [which] are likely to get a more considered response than closed questions and therefore provide better access to interviewees' views, interpretation of events, understandings, experiences and opinions.

Given the ambivalence about mother tongue language which I observed (i.e. language communities can make considerable effort to get their languages developed for use in schools (Aaron, 1994; Trudell, 2005), and yet there is the general belief that it is only English that helps people to move forward on the social ladder (Myers-Scotton, 1993:151), interviews were important tools in probing more deeply.

There are three main kinds of interview: structured, semi-structured and unstructured. Semi-structured and unstructured interviews are typically used in qualitative research and differ in important respects from the structured interviews of quantitative research. Whereas in quantitative research researchers have a set interview schedule with specific questions to be asked, qualitative researchers have a much less specific list of questions, or only some topic cues to start with. Qualitative researchers typically give greater priority to exploring the perspectives of the interviewees and more room to bring to the fore issues – or aspects of the issues – which are important to them. They are flexible about the order of the questions, and may ask some new questions in response to the interviewees' replies. Qualitative researchers are looking for rich answers and can spend hours on an interview, or interview a person more than once. In contrast to this, quantitative interviewers have to rigidly stick to the set questions and look for answers to these specific questions only. They do not encourage interviewees to depart from the predetermined course of the interview schedule since the interview must be standardized. The answers are expected to be shorter so that they can be coded and processed more quickly. (Bryman, 2008a:436-7)

Semi-structured and unstructured interviews represent varying degrees of structure; unstructured interviews resemble regular conversations. Their lower level of structure allows interviewees to discuss the topics in ways that are relevant to them and so allows better insight into their view of the world (Bryman, 2008a:438). When researchers start with a clearer focus, however, the interview is likely to be semi-structured rather than unstructured, because they already have better defined ideas on what needs to be discussed.

I held three semi-structured interviews with key officials in the two State Ministries of Education, responsible for education in the states where Obolo is located. None of them were Obolo. Because of their position and responsibility they had to be interviewed individually. The reason for their selection is that they are the gatekeepers for education for the area. Their key positions are political appointments, so that they lose their position with a change of Government. They are in a position to directly support or obstruct efforts towards bilingual education in the region. They are also members of the educated elite, able to influence policy in the states. The aims of these interviews were two-fold: to explore the

perceptions and attitudes of government officials in charge of education. At the same time, they are also representative of the elite, and I wanted to see whether and how they acted in relation to the status quo. But, as a critical ethnographer, I hoped not only to learn their views but also wanted them to consider the possible benefits if children were able to use their languages as resources for learning. In this regard, Mishler (1986:122-32) in Heyl (2001:376f) detects three types of relationships of interviewer and interviewee:

- Research Collaborators; (where the interviewer respectfully negotiates with interviewee who wants to tell his own story).
- Informant and Reporter;
- Learner/Actor and Advocate - this would afford the highest level of empowerment. Researcher directly promotes the interest of the research participants/group, providing more information and showing possible alternatives for their situation, and ways to act according to this new awareness.

In these interviews, although I clearly wanted to learn and understand the perspectives of these government officials, I established this third type of relationship by raising issues highlighted in international and national research on the benefits of bilingual education (see Appendix C for list of questions).

Designs of the questions for focus groups and interviews

I drew on my experience in Obolo and in Nigeria, as well as on my review of the literature to design these questions and the structure of the schedule. It required long and deep thought, and eventually I discussed the schedule with my husband (Obolo) to refine it (See the schedule in Appendix D). Later, at the start of my field work, I translated them into Obolo, asking my husband to ensure that they were clear, natural, and unambiguous Obolo.

Questions A and B aim to encourage these parents to consider the future they would prefer for their children, and the potential obstacles they perceive. This is intended as a wider exploration, away from direct discussion of the role of language in education.

Questions C-E are intended to expand on the earlier questions, focussing first on social roles in family and community they would want their children to play in the future; then, to consider the desirability as well as the potential for their young adults to reside in Obolo land; and finally to consider the value they attach to Obolo language for their children and grandchildren. Thus these questions seek to draw out the social advantage of Obolo/English bilingualism.

The questions were formulated in 2013, before some of the cited literature on language and development were published. I had formulated question C, and especially D, initially also to explore potential roles of Obolo language for community development. After the first three focus group interviews, however, question D was often omitted as it appeared less productive.

As I explain elsewhere, as a critical researcher, my research process has emancipatory as well as exploratory purposes (see pp. 55-6, and 81), and upon reflection, I felt the following issues needed to be clarified before Obolo participants would be able to give a considered response to the question on the desirability of Obolo bilingual education.

Questions F – G, therefore, aimed to raise awareness that instruction using English limits students' understanding of the subject matter while instruction using Obolo as the medium, allows communication to flow unhindered. Next the participants were informed that this is the advantage most children and their teachers in developed countries enjoy: their own mother tongues are used for instruction,(while they may be taught English/other languages as subjects too).

Questions H – I aim to draw on their experience with Obolo books, especially the Bible and instructional materials, to deepen their awareness of the (potential) communicative value of Obolo in education.

Question J, finally, asks their opinion about Obolo bilingual education.

Questions K and L were additional questions for the Elite focus groups: K asks about the desirability of the teaching of Nigerian languages to their children in the cities. Then I provide information on the feasibility of toddlers' successful acquisition of Obolo and English at the same time, and the social and cognitive advantages of (advanced) bilingualism with literacy in the two languages.

The schedule for the interviews with education executives too is meant to be emancipatory as well as exploratory, and in order to allow them discuss more freely, I emphasized that I would like to get their opinion both as individuals and from their official positions.

The questions were thus intended to encourage participants to consider the social, as well as the cultural, and communicative value of using Nigerian languages in education, and for me to learn from their considerations.

From the first executive interview onwards, in the course of the discussions, I felt I needed to stress that in most developed countries, children are educated through their mother tongues, which in many cases is not English. It emerged that participants had a hazy picture of what is involved in mother tongue-based bilingual education and that it was therefore important to explain the forms it might take. Further, as in the focus groups with Obolo elites, I also included information about the cognitive advantages of advanced bilingualism and bilingual education, and, for parents' information, the fact that babies and toddlers do not get confused when they acquire both English and the parents' mother tongue(s) at the same time. I supplied these pieces of information as appropriate in the course of the interview.

Recording of the data

I recorded the data with a small voice recorder. As the recorder was small, it was unobtrusive, lying on the table till the end of the interview. Video recording would be much more intrusive and likely to make the participants very self-conscious. Besides this, it would not be practicable as it would involve another person traveling alongside me to do the video recordings and would be too expensive. I obtained the participants' consent for the recording prior to the interviews and focus group sessions. Before the focus group interviews, as we were introducing ourselves, I asked participants to write down their name, (which I memorized), their occupation, their village/town of origin, and a telephone number/e-mail address for later contact, since I had promised in the introductory letter that I would inform them later about my findings. I developed a routine - to give

everyone a chance to speak, in an orderly way, by asking people to speak in turns, around the table - although this was not always strictly maintained. In this way, I was later able to recognize the persons by their voices. I sometimes jotted down a few additional notes of things that struck me, or might be unclear on the recorder, immediately after the session. Each focus group interview took approximately one and a half hours. On one occasion, several people in the focus group had not been able to speak about the last question because of time constraints. I later called one of the participants in this focus group by phone, to ask him to complete what he had started to talk about, which had been interrupted. I recorded this conversation from memory immediately after the call. I also asked another person in that group to respond face to face to the same question, and recorded it afterwards in the same way.

The Executive interviews were strictly timed, because the people in question were initially prepared to give me either an hour, or half an hour. The two who had initially said “half an hour”, were, however, not ready to stop at that point, and wanted me to continue, so that all three of them became one-hour interviews.

Then, as soon as possible after an interview, I would start transcription. All the focus group interviews and the executive interviews were transcribed in full in the language in which they were recorded (the executive interviews were in English, while the focus group discussions were in Obolo). In the transcription, I did not use the names of the participants but instead used letters of the alphabet to indicate them. The lists of names and other particulars were kept separately in my private research administration. I transcribed everything myself, using the Voice Walker, a transcription program. The transcription process was extremely time-consuming; if I had been a native speaker it would certainly have been faster. In some places, dialect differences were particularly challenging, and on some occasions I needed to ask my husband as a native speaker of Obolo for clarification.

The transcriptions were all kept securely on my private computer.

Participant Observation

Although I had not planned it, participant observation also became a research method for this research. As I was back in Obolo, working with the OLBTO and also doing my focus group interviews, I observed situations which were fertile grounds for data for my research topic. Several times, usually afterwards, I jotted down what people said and did, and described the settings in my research journal. Eventually it became evident that participant observation was also a method that would be very useful for this research. At the same time, there were many personal observations from various previous periods of my life in Obolo that contributed to this research, but had not been recorded in field notes. Such insights are recorded as “personal observations”.

An important point to consider about Participant Observation as a research method, is that there are various possible levels, each with its own advantages and disadvantages. Ruane (2015) observes that it is useful to think of this as a scale of involvement, from complete observer, to observer as participant, to participant as observer, and finally, as a full participant. In most cases, as in meetings organised by OLBTO, I would have been a full participant, although as a literacy and education consultant, I do take a separate stance, but not the stance of a researcher. In informal discussions with friends and acquaintances, too, I was a full participant. Over time, as I became sensitized to observing, for instance, people’s attitudes to Obolo and English, I would notice such expressions of attitude and note them down afterwards. Ruane (2015) notes that the advantage of the full participant stance is that “reactivity effect” is minimized. However, a strong disadvantage could be that the researcher is operating “covertly”, even if unintentionally as in my case, which could be considered unethical, since the researcher would not have asked for permission to do research in the particular situation. In this context, Ruane (2015) also notes that there is some overlap between the insider versus outsider role, and the levels of involvement or participation. As described above, I am an insider as well as an outsider in Obolo. I am an insider also as someone working on Obolo language development with OLBTO. In that role, it is known that I, as other people working with OLBTO, am interested in Obolo language and seek to promote it. Initially, I did not foresee the situations I would observe, but at a point, I decided to jot down some observations

as they occurred. In some cases, I was involved in the action/conversations, and could influence the direction, (as I often do, to make people think of other options). In other cases, I was not. This, however, can be considered part of a critical researcher's role, as described above. On the other hand, I am always an outsider too, because of my race (which cannot be hidden), and my different cultural background. On the whole, I am always noticed because of my colour, and people associate me with OLBTO and know their interests. Some also knew about my research, and probably out of interest, volunteered information about their behaviours and attitudes. I take this as a sign that they would have no problem with my taking note of it for research purposes. Other participant observation took place in public meetings. I consider that in no case these acts of participant observation were unethical (see also below).

Ethics

Having obtained clearance from the University's Research Ethics Committee for the pursuit of my research, I have given due consideration to the issues of informed consent, anonymity of participants, confidentiality, sensitivity of issues, potential of harm to any of the participants, as well as issues of fairness, e.g. the need for some remuneration for hours spent in interviews (I had an assortment of Obolo books as a gift for Focus Group participants), and the right of access to the report to which participants have contributed by their participation. Hammersley and Traianou (2012:35-98, 134) categorize ethical issues under the heading of "minimisation of harm", "respect for the autonomy of participants", and the "preservation of privacy". Orb, Eisenhauer, and Wynaden (2000) propose the categories "autonomy", "beneficience", and "justice" (where "beneficence" is explained as "doing good for others and preventing harm", and "justice" refers to "equal share and fairness").

Because the qualitative research process is reiterative, flexible and exploratory in nature, it is difficult to know at the outset which issues will arise later on (Mason (1996:29-30) cited in Silverman (2006:55)). Orb et al. (2000:94) therefore stress

the need ‘to be aware of sensitive issues and potential conflicts of interest.” They also note that ethical codes may not offer a ready solution for every ethical issue that may arise in a particular research project. For this reason, while professional ethical codes are important, they may not encompass every judgment which researchers need to make in the course of the research. (Orb et al., 2000:94-5) point out that “the research process creates tension between the aims of research to make generalizations for the good of others, and the rights of participants to maintain privacy.” In a similar vein, Hammersley and Traianou (2012) argue that the principles enshrined in a code are general and need to always be applied to *particular situations*. They consider therefore these codes must be taken as “guides for action, not as injunctions or rules”. Individual researchers, then, cannot absolve themselves of ethical responsibility for the research by relying exclusively on codes of ethics.

Hammersley and Traianou (2012:87,89) also make the pertinent point that in other, non-Western cultures, there are significant differences in views, giving many examples, relating to matters of consent (Who should give the consent, the male head of the family, or the individual member of the family? Should it be in written form or would that be considered as a sign of lack of trust?) Researchers need to consider the effects of these differences and find solutions so that the ethical principles important to them will be applied in ways that are sensitive to the local culture. From my experience in Obolo, I anticipated that less educated participants would feel most hesitant to sign a document indicating their consent because the act of signing conveys a disproportionate significance. In their setting, experience of written consent extends only to signing employment contracts, marriage contracts in church, and possibly transactions with banks. I therefore proposed to ask them for their oral consent, which was audio-recorded.

Another pertinent point is raised by Orb et al. (2000:96) in relation to research contexts where researchers are already known, maybe because they work there. In studies of health care or hospitals, for instance, patients may feel obliged to participate in the research because they know the researcher in their other role as health worker. They assert that it “creates problems related to the validity, reliability, and meaningfulness of the data.” I considered this issue for my own research using focus groups. Having worked for many years with the Obolo

Language and Bible Translation Project, I am associated in the area in connection with this work. I would not be known in the same way as the health worker/researcher by patients in a hospital because the area is large and I am by no means known by everyone, but nevertheless I am known (and also easily recognizable as the only white person). I therefore made a special effort to ensure that people who have not shown interest in this work were included in the focus groups (see above). I also formulated the focus group interview schedule with the knowledge that my known interests could influence the way people would respond. However, I believe this influence was minimal in a context where people were responding to others in the group and with only little control by the moderator. In addition, it can be argued that any disadvantages associated with familiarity with my interests would be countered by the fact that, having lived and worked among the Obolo, the insights I have developed offer a valuable foundation on which to build.

Mason (1996:29-30) cited in Silverman (2006:55) advises researchers, specifically ethnographers, to think through certain important issues while formulating the research problem in order to forestall ethical dilemmas later on, such as - “the purpose of the research (e.g. self-advancement, political advocacy, etc.”), - the people who “might be interested or affected by the research topic”, - “the implications for these parties of framing the research topic in the way it was done”. My research had the practical purpose of wanting to know if and how Obolo bilingual education could be established in Obolo, and could also be informative about bilingual education. I scrutinized my work in this light at several points because not only will colleagues and researchers read the findings, but the thesis will be made available for Obolo people at the office of OLBTO (possibly also online) and summaries of its findings will be made available to all the participants and the interviewees. In as much as possible, I want the presentation to be understandable and meaningful to them. For this reason, for instance, when discussing African settings, I didn’t talk about “first language”/L1 but rather used “mother tongue” or “language of the immediate environment” because these are the terms used in Nigeria, and they are more appropriate for the sociolinguistic setting. Also, the recommendations are framed with Nigerian/Obolo readership in mind.

Analysis

Transcription

I downloaded the recordings immediately onto my computer ready to transcribe at the earliest opportunity when my memory was fresh. I did not use the transcription conventions of conversational analysis to mark pauses, overlaps, shouting or whispering and the like as my main focus was on the substance of what they said rather than a more detailed discourse analysis. Before transcribing, I listened to the recording at least once, and also started to take some notes of interesting, puzzling or striking issues before transcription.

Translation

The focus group sessions were conducted in Obolo language, the language in which most participants expressed themselves more comfortably. We did not need an interpreter, since I know the language. I made it clear to the elite focus groups that they were welcome to use Obolo, English or both, as I suspected discussion of education related issues might trigger a switch to English and home and family to Obolo. There too, however, the participants and I used more Obolo, although there were indeed times we reverted to English. The transcription was done in the same language as the recording. I translated only the data that I used as supportive evidence in the write-up.

Analytic procedures

C. Marshall and Rossman (2006:209-24) describe the processes through which qualitative inductive analysis typically passes. They recognize seven phases, although they are not discrete because of the re-iterative nature of the research. The phases are: (1) Organizing the data: this mainly involves keeping some log of the data; (2) Immersion in the data: this implies reading and re-reading (3)

Generating categories and themes; (4) Coding the data, either manually or using a computer program such as Nvivo; (5) Offering interpretations based on patterns they are observing in the data; (6) Searching for alternative understandings and generating categories, themes, typologies, matrices, and clusters; and (7) writing the report or other format for presenting the study.

Alternatively, Silverman (2006:297f) advises researchers to "begin with 'How?' questions, then ask 'Why?'" He suggests starting with talk-in-interaction, giving "close attention to *how* participants locally produce contexts for the interaction". From there we can then move to *why* questions "about institutional and cultural constraints". He argues that, "Such constraints reveal the functions of apparently irrational practices and help us to understand the possibilities and limits of attempts at social reform" (p. 297) and that, if we follow this order and do not allow ourselves to be constantly focussing on the "causes" or the "consequences" of the ills we see, then we may be able to address such issues later with much more force. I planned to follow this advice for my research, expecting this to be an activity that would fall under Marshall & Rossman's stage 6. What I learned from this advice, is a general principle to work first to describe the answers to "How?" and "What?" and reserve judgment about the "Why?" question till later.

The process of my analysis was very re-iterative. First of all I had familiarized myself with the literature. After the field work, even during the writing phase (7th Phase of C. Marshall and Rossman (2006), several times I returned to more immersion in the data, reading more of the literature, and starting the research process anew. The following phases of C. Marshall and Rossman (2006) could however be seen in my research:

(1) Organizing the data:

Data log: I labelled both the recordings and the various transcriptions (See Appendix D).

Research journal: All through the research, starting from reviewing the literature, and determining the methodology, I kept a research journal.

Log of "flashes of insight": As I heard about this in a data management lecture, I decided to keep such a log, and found it useful to re-read this occasionally.

(2) Immersion in the data:

Often, soon after the interview, I would think back on it and note down some salient items immediately. I would also listen to the recorded data at least once, before transcribing, and often I would note down some salient items too. Transcribing the data also meant intensive listening. After transcribing, I would study the interview to see how I could improve on the interview schedules and on my interviewing technique. I would also read through the transcript again sometimes producing new insights which I would jot down.

(3) Looking for categories and themes;

(4) Coding of the data:

See Appendix E for lists of the emerging themes and sub themes.

(5) Offering interpretations based on patterns I observed in the data:

The observations of patterns and the interpretations arising from these are described in the findings chapters.

(7) Writing the thesis presenting the study:

After step 3 and 4, I started writing down findings, interpreting in the writing process, checking more closely for patterns, looking again for literature to help interpret findings, and sometimes searching for alternative understandings (Phase 6 of C. Marshall and Rossman (2006)).

Use of computer assisted analysis

I did the coding initially manually, which became messy when I had to make changes. Then I continued by colour coding in Microsoft Word, which also helps with searches for certain words.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have looked at the philosophical underpinnings of my research, defined the research question and explained why I chose the approaches of critical ethnography and case study. I have discussed issues of rigour in qualitative research and how this was applied in this study, and also issues of sampling. Further I have discussed data collection, the application of ethics in my research, and my approach to analysis. In the next chapter, I will present my findings looking at the views of Obolo people towards education in general, and the implications for the promotion and implementation of a bilingual education programme.

Chapter 6: Obolo perceptions of education

Introduction

Bilingual education is, of course, just one model of delivery of schooling and, in planning for its promotion and implementation, it is helpful to build a picture of Obolo attitudes towards and perceptions of education in general. In this chapter I look at the views of Obolo people from all walks of life towards education, based on the analysis of focus group discussions and supported, where relevant by my own personal observations. In order to answer the first of my research questions – What are the implications of Obolo attitudes towards education for the promotion and implementation of a bilingual education programme? I first offer evidence that the vast majority of Obolo attach considerable importance to education. I then go on to explore a range of reasons that they put forward for this belief. Finally, I examine the obstacles which stand in the way of successful learning, matters of considerable importance for the development of Obolo-English bilingual education.

The importance of Education

Education was undoubtedly uppermost in the people's minds as they talked about their hopes for the future of their children. Fisherfolk, people who are employed, professionals, and elites were all agreed that there is no future in the traditional Obolo occupation of subsistence fishing and that the way forward lies in education.

Fisherfolk, especially the women, say they are ready to make every effort to send their children to school. Because in Rivers State, the Government has been providing "free" Basic Education (up to year 9) since 2005, the cost of education is only a major issue from Senior Secondary School (SSS) level onward. Though

one has to pay fees, there are sufficient numbers of Senior Secondary schools in Obololand so that most children are able to stay at home or with relatives to complete their secondary education. Nonetheless, some highly motivated students have had to go fishing during their secondary education, and even primary education, and afterwards to earn enough to support themselves. As one mother commented, “He will find the little he needs to add” [FG3:B:8]. Some of the young parents who had needed to go fishing while at school were anxious to shield their own children from the same. As one mother, now a teacher, said,

> There was suffering, because you would go along fishing before going to school. You go fishing, come back and go to school. When you are back from school, you then go a fishing again, so that you can be studying. But you suffer and then to be able to sit down and learn again?!

Beyond Secondary education, however, Obolo youth have to go to live in towns and cities on the mainland, outside the Obolo area, a great financial burden, especially because of the high cost of water transportation and accommodation in the cities. The fisherfolk, however, are willing to take on the heavy burden for any child who is ready to study, “even if we have to suffer hunger for it”. Lack of money was the most common reason offered for the underachievement of the many young people who just “drift around”. The greatest desire of the fisherfolk for the development of the region was for an institute of Higher education, such as a Polytechnic or College of Education to be based in Obolo land. As one mother regretted,

> Our Obolo area is not quite good enough for me, because our children don’t progress, that is they don’t get higher education. That is why this area is not quite good with me” [FG3:A:8]

Another mother continued,

> Yes, if there could be an institute of Higher education, then we would not continue to be pushing our children to go to the mainland to live. If it would be here, then our children, all of them, would be looking forward to go for Higher education ... because the money that the fathers and mothers have cannot take those children to cross over to the mainland, but if there would

> be an institute of Higher education, that child would go, even if with hunger, he would go and he would certainly find the little extra that he would need in addition" [FG3:B:8].

The same yearning was expressed by a young man in far-away Abuja, the capital city of Nigeria located in the centre of the country,who asserted "Obolo children are interested in studies, and to have skills training for manual work". He emphasizes that the problem was not lack of interest or lack of ability, but rather poverty coupled with the lack of infrastructure and services such as roads, electricity, and institutes of higher education, which handicap them in their pursuit of education and opportunities to work. He illustrated this, saying,

> Just very recently they managed to build a road to reach there. It enters Obolo through Inyọñ-Oron Asarama. This enables many Obolo people to get electricity. This enables many children to learn something on the computer, a lot of work, to do a lot of learning which God has provided for them. [Elite FG9 A:1].

For this reason, he would like "the Government" to continue to build this road – and bridges – to connect more Obolo to the national electricity grid, and to bring schools closer to the people.

Most Obolo people in the cities who are working, struggle to send their children to private, fee-paying schools for Nursery and Primary levels. This is a relatively high expense for them, frequently causing much stress, especially in the first term of school when new uniforms and books need to be purchased, and also in the term after the Christmas season when people have spent on travel to their home areas and celebrations of the season. In contrast to the free Government schools, these schools have strictly enforced rules. In the well-established ones, children must be brought on time, neatly dressed in their full uniforms from the first day of the school year, and with the prescribed set of books. Parents must also make sure the children do their homework or the children will be punished. Moreover, if parents do not attend Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) and other meetings at the school, they are liable to be fined (personal observation).

The schools of the elite are not only very costly, they are also very competitive. They make heavy demands on parents in terms of the considerable time required to help with – or even do –their children's homework. A University lecturer observed,

> ... because if you don't do that homework, the child will be beaten. So, you go to the internet. Like D, one of my children, they will say, 'Construct this, construct that'. When you read it: 'Come I have seen it. Do you understand?' No way! But if you do not do it, the child will not enter school, they will not allow her to enter. So, all the parents do it and take it to the school. Because they want the assignments to be done, so you will do it too and give it to the child. [FG5 C:7]

This participant, an authority in the field, also pointed out that the standards are too demanding on the children, "I say the children don't need this at this level! They are overloading them and it is useless!" A father in the same focus group discussion concurred, saying of his son, "They give them assignments. How can this small one, you know, understand all these things!"

Why education is important

Having demonstrated in a range of ways the importance which they attached to education, they also offered reasons for why this was the case. These included the desire for a well-paid job and a prosperous future and the opportunity to widen one's horizons through learning for its own sake. Beyond these reasons, which relate to the individual's progress, another important reason is a desire for the progress of the community.

A more prosperous future

Most participants viewed education as a very important route to a prosperous future. People in employment, for instance tended to hope that, "now that there is

no fish in the rivers", education would allow their children to obtain a well-paid job and a good position, so that they could look after themselves and their families, including the parents. A mother in the fishing port went so far as to say, "Any child that I have, who has not gone to school, there is no benefit to that child". Two fathers in a group of elite participants stressed that children should be allowed to follow their own inclination and talents and do the study and the work that they themselves desire to do. One of them, however, added, "provided they speak English, which gives them a position". He is satisfied with his own son who changed from studying Engineering to playing the organ for a living, and concluded, "that has given him enough to get married, and he already has children too..."

For those who "don't have a head for study" or for some who can no longer go to school, e.g. for "a woman who is already married", skills training was seen as an option which would generate an income which would enable them to look after themselves and their family. Clearly, in Obolo, this is less desirable than a more academic education which puts people in a better position, of higher status. However, among the younger generation, this idea may be changing. Unemployment is very high, and the Government as well as international organisations have made available all kinds of skills training in the cities, which are very popular. As one young man maintained: "Obolo children are interested in studies, and to have skills training for manual work". Some rural parents also felt that, in order to supplement their income, children need to learn fishing or farming or a craft in addition to their education. Only one person in the focus group discussions maintained that education was not necessary for all, saying, "For some it is not 'book'". He explained that one of his sons didn't use his education (to get work) but instead became a builder, by careful observation, and is making a living from it. By the same token, some of the parents are making a living from fishing and selling of fish, even though they have successfully completed primary, secondary, or even tertiary education. Their status, however, is much lower than that of people in employment, and their hopes are that education will allow their children to find employment.

Education also gives access to positions in politics. For instance, one of the participants in an elite focus group commented that "now that there is XX (a highly-

placed party leader) whom we know",[5] he would like his children and other members of his family to become well-placed politicians/government functionaries: the holders of such positions are required to have certain levels of education, even though it is not always their ability and commitment but rather their relationships to those in charge which matter most.

The elite, like other Obolo people, want their children to go further. As one University don explained, "Every father wants his child to go further than himself, and to know more than himself". This stance is by no means limited to the elite. People in employment, both urban- and rural-based, want their children to be better off than they themselves and "not to suffer as their father and mother are suffering today" They feel that "a person with education has hope for a better tomorrow".

Widening horizons

Participants from various backgrounds emphasized that many people want education simply for the certificate, which gives access to employment, and not for the knowledge. One elite father commented:

> I want my children not just to go to school, but to learn things well, and to know what they have learnt, to be able to use it to help themselves.

He also saw "the first degree more or less as 'general education'. It opens the mind so that you are able to do something". He made a distinction between learning to pass exams and learning in order to apply your knowledge in life. Similarly, a mother in the same group, said, "...let her learn to *know*.... Let her read it and *know* it. That is what she went to school for … "that she would be able to learn that work, so that she knows it". Another elite father indicated something similar: he said he wanted to give his children "the understanding that is called a 'foundation', the basics that are given to them here to receive, and have, and take along". Yet another elite father talked about the need for flexibility, to be able to

[5] He means that there is an Obolo person in charge

build on what you have been taught, warning that “you better get ready, because it may not be what you studied that you will use to live from”.

A few other participants, both rural and urban, also stressed that no matter what their children would be doing later in life, education would help them. One fisher woman remarked that,

> ...apart from education, even to trade nowadays you can’t. Even if it is fishing, there are some people who go fishing, who really don’t know what they do with their money, they can’t count. On the other hand, there are people who go out fishing together with other people, and they know all that they have earned, because they have gone to school. So, schooling is very important. [FG3 F:3]

Schooling, however, is of little help when the children fail to learn effectively, as is often the case. The fisher woman whose comment is reported above had benefitted from her basic education; she could read very well, both in Obolo and in English (in which she had a much more limited vocabulary). But this was not the case for the other five women in the same focus group, who had also completed primary education, three of whom reported that they were not able to read in Obolo which, in my experience, is likely to indicate that they also very poor readers in English.

Benefits for the wider community

Up to now, discussion has focussed on the benefits of education for individuals and their families. However, parents think of improvement not only in terms of their own family but also in relation to the progress of the wider Obolo community. I came to understand the significance of this concern from the literature on African traditional communalism.

African traditional communalism

In my search to understand the role of language in development, I had also considered its effect on the cohesiveness of Obolo society. This is how I first encountered the phrase “African communalism”. It was, however, much later, as I was analyzing my focus group interview data, that I found another feature of this communalism, a very commonly expressed concern for the “development/progress” of Obolo (see below), which led me to study the literature on traditional African communalism to find out how it relates to community involvement for development, and education.

The prominence of African communalism in African culture

There is no shortage of evidence in the literature of the centrality of African communalism to African philosophy (see, for instance, Kanu (2006); Mbite (1970); Gbadegesin (1991); Higgs (2008, 2012)). Tembe and Norton (2011:5) drawing mainly on Kanu (2006) explain that,

> ... the success of the wider society is of paramount importance and ... the meaning of an individual’s life is constructed with reference to the group. In this spirit, communalism is characterized by practices of **solidarity, interdependence, co-operation and reciprocal obligations**.[bold added]

In a similar vein, Mbite (1970:108) cited by Higgs (2008 :451) points out that:

> Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say: 'I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am.'

Gbadegesin (1991) observes,

> …human persons are conceived as communal beings embedded in a context of interdependence sharing the same common interests and values. Gbadegesin (1991: 65) cited by Ndofirepi and Ndofirepi (2012:17)

African communalism and education

If African communalism is central to African philosophy of life, then also, as Venter (2004:140), emphasizes, “the “notion of .... 'communalism’ is of great importance in African educational discourse” (see also Higgs, 2012). Kanu (2005); (2006) believes that this has a bearing not only on the content of the curriculum, but even more so on pedagogy. She recounts how in her native Sierra Leone, communalism was "an active component of indigenous education ... because commununity development was an important objective in the indigenous curriculum" (Kanu, 2006:211). She describes how among the Mende, for example, an "age grade" group composed of 10–16 year old people, could be assigned the task of constructing "a court-room house for the use of the community" (p.271). The group would go about this task with enthusiasm, singing while working, and supervised by adults. The task was completed and the learning achieved through interdependence and cooperation. She observes that this kind of education starkly contrasts with the emphasis on autonomy and originality which are emphasised in present day classrooms.

Higgs (2008) thinks that indigenous African educational discourse is

> directed at fostering humane people endowed with moral norms and virtues such as kindness, generosity, compassion, benevolence, courtesy and respect and concern for others. In short, an African educational discourse would be fundamentally concerned with ubuntu[6] in the service of the community and personal well-being

In a similar vein, Fafunwa (1974) cited by Higgs (2008:454) describes a well-educated African as "...honest, respectable, skilled, cooperative and conforming to the social order of the day." Indigenous African education thus contrasts with Western education, in its emphasis on social and cooperative skills.

Kanu (2006:213) also draws attention to the "negation of cultural knowledge" in colonial education where education was used "as agent for the internalisation and acceptance of Western cultural values”.

[6] Ubuntu or “humanness” is the concept of African communalism as expressed in Zulu

Higgs (2008) concludes.

> Education, then, in the indigenous African setting cannot, and indeed, should not, be separated from life itself. It is a natural process by which the child gradually acquires skill, knowledge, and attitudes appropriate to life in his or her community - an education inspired by a spirit of ubuntu in the service of the community". (Higgs, 2008:454).

From the above reasons for the inclusion of African communalism in education for it to be authentically African are clear (see also Higgs, 2012). This understanding has a bearing not only on the curriculum but also on the pedagogy.

African communalism in the Obolo focus groups

When discussing their hopes for the future of their children, very many parents mentioned that they hoped that, through their children's education, they would bring progress/development to Obolo/their town. Examples of this thinking were evident across all participants. In the words of one worker in the city, for the town/ethnic group from which he came, "there will be a brighter tomorrow". In a similar vein, the University Lecturer (mentioned above) wants his children to be in a good position, not only for their own benefit, but, also to make a significant contribution to the progress of Obolo people, because "Obolo is developing, but we still have not reached where we ought to be". By the same token, a rural employee explains, "Our hope now is that our children will go to school and that from there they will then have something to eat tomorrow, and that they will open up the area we come from in Obolo". One of the fishermen, had typically talked about "development" in terms of "the bringing of light, and 'nnwọn', meaning 'good' to Obolo (and Nigeria)", and also as "nje-nnyi-isi", literally 'forward movement', or 'progress'. When asked, how he sees education bringing this "progress", he explains, using my husband as an example,

> Because, after they have finished their studies, and return from the position they held in their work, their work can bring progress to Obolo. Like as it is, the progress the Obolo people presently have, that they know something about Obolo books. If it wasn't for the doctor, Uche Aaron, maybe people

> would not have been able to have it. What happened? It is education that made him to know. So, if not for education [literally “books”], he would not have been able to know the things he could do. So, any child who studies and makes it his own, and makes sure that he really knows it, will bring the light of education. This is light. That is what made us to be able to hear Obolo in books, and to read it. If it were not so, with things like that, we would not be able to read it. If it were not so, such books, we would not be able to have any knowledge of [Fishermen FG4 B:1].

To help all the children get a better education, those in the cities who are able, more often than not take in children of relatives or even friends from “home” to live with them in the city, and support them financially. For example, the wife of a University lecturer, referred to the children in her “home” area as “the children ‘at home’, who don’t have people who will be able to take them to the mainland”. Although many cannot afford to send these children to the same private schools as their direct descendants, they usually do the best they can. As one elite participant, commented,

> I am happy to also try my best to see that I help other people so that their children are trained in such a way that they... can have a good position. [FG5 B:2]

As mentioned above, this focus on the progress of the community and its members, I came to recognize, is a feature of “African communalism”, which is deeply embedded, fundamental, in traditional African society. “The good of Obolo”, the development of its people, and the wellbeing of individual Obolo persons, seems to be very much in the forefront of anything they do. For example, these parents don’t only have hopes for their children’s future contributions to the good of their community, but they are themselves contributing to this end: advising and giving leadership in the community with wisdom and knowledge, and/or with insights gathered from their education or exposure in other places; helping children of relatives and friends to get a (better) education; using their influence to get Obolo people placed in important positions through politics; and through employment opportunities in the companies or institutions they work in or own. There is also no distinction made between helping an individual to progress in life,

for instance by helping an Obolo child to a good education, and directly affecting the entire community by your action.

In total, well over half of the participants spontaneously commented that they hoped that their children would have a good education not only so that they would be able to look after themselves and their family members, *but also for the good of the Obolo people*. Upon further interrogation of the data, I found that there were differences in the three educational levels. Almost all (9 out of11) the fisherfolk said something about progress/development for the community in the context of their children's education. In the elite groups, who live in the cities, and whose lifestyle is more like people in Western countries, relatively few (4 out of the 13) mentioned the Obolo community. The middle-educated group, both urban and rural people in employment, with education ranging between Junior Secondary School (JSS) level and undergraduate level, fell between these extremes with comments from 8 out of 14. This is not to say that the elite group is less concerned about the progress of Obolo.

It can be argued that the differences in the patterns of response from participants with different educational levels says something about the influence of Western education on the philosophy of life of Nigerian people. Western education seeks to promote autonomy rather than to emphasize "the cultivation of social responsibility and nurturance" which are the distinctive features of African socialisation (Serpell, Mariga, & Harvey (1993) cited inNdofirepi and Ndofirepi (2012:23). So when asked, "What would you like for your children in the future?" one elite mother answered,

> "that she will be able to live for herself tomorrow. Let it not be that tomorrow, that she will be dependent, so that she will be inclined to remember me, the mother, and the father, to go and live with them. That is, that this child will be standing on her own." [Elite FG8 C:3].

It may also be enlightening in the context of the elite-divide (see chapter 5) to see the role of formal education in (re-)forming Nigerian people's worldview and philosophy of life to a more Western one, as African philosophy since colonial times has been excluded (see also Kanu, 2006 above). This is a process of symbolic violence which not only the elite have undergone, but which, due to the

longer years of their studies, is more thorough and complete in them than in others. One consequence of this, as was seen in this research, is that they are less likely than others to always think of themselves as in the service of their community.

Fafunwa (1974) explains that,

> the major goal of traditional education in Africa is to produce a complete individual; one who is cultured, respectful, integrated, sensitive and responsive to the needs of the family and neighbours. It aims at inculcating attitudes and values capable of integrating the individual into the wider society. Fafunwa (1974) quoted by Ndofirepi and Ndofirepi (2012:19)

Practical suggestions as to how this might be achieved tend to focus on the use of oral literature – stories, proverbs and riddles which embody traditional wisdom. There was evidence, for instance, of considerable support for the inclusion of storytelling in the curriculum. An executive officer in a state Ministry of Education explained:

> Children like storytelling! They enjoy! Some of them do not know that there are still lessons... until the child will be asked, “What are you learning from this?” You see so many hands up! .... And they have learnt something there. Now, if, with demonstration ... Now this child will be carried along, he’ll know the good and bad ... [Executive A :15]

The art of telling the stories, can be practiced in class, with teachers as well as parents and children telling the stories.

While there are indications that storytelling is less common in family and village settings than was the case in previous generations (personal observation), there is evidence that many of the functions which it served are now embodied in films. People watch films both on screen in local “cinemas” against a small fee, and from videos and DVDs which are sold or hired out for use on personal TVs when there is electricity or when someone puts on a generator. Youth and children also watch on the internet, downloaded on mobile phones. Since there are only a few places that have recently been connected to the national grid, Obolo people depend on private generators, and many people charge their telephones weekly at church

services when the generator is on for the sound system (Personal observation). Nigeria boasts one of the largest film industries in the world, Nollywood, ranking third following Hollywood and the Indian film industry “Bollywood”. Onuzulike (2007) claims that just as storytelling was used to pass on traditional African values, now Nigerian-produced films are "transmitting cultural values".

> The corpus of songs and oral literature, festivals, rituals, the traditional religion, performing arts, music, dance, and indeed, the entire range of artifacts constituting traditional oral performance of Nigerian culture are represented in Nigerian movies.

Obstacles to successful education

Obolo people have the firm belief that their hopes and expectations for the future of their children through education will be fulfilled as long as they, the parents, would play their part. Practically everybody – fisher folk and both rural and urban employees, as well as the elites – maintained this hopeful stance. Nevertheless, when prompted to describe the obstacles to the fulfilment of their dreams, they identified a wide range of intersecting issues, some of which related to the provision of formal education and others to the wider social situation.

Issues related to the provision of formal education

Many of the obstacles to learning are related to poor infrastructure including both physical and human resources. Participants commented, for instance on the poor state of the schools in their area – buildings with leaking roofs and without furniture to sit on, and very limited teaching aids. Textbooks have been provided to all primary schools since 2011, but erratically, and not every year. Some schools are therefore reluctant to distribute them to students, keeping them in the school for longer use. (Compare the discussion of a similar issue in Ghana by Opoku-Amankwa, Edu-Buandoh, and Brew-Hammond (2015)).

Participants also highlighted the shortage of trained teachers and the poor standards of teaching. The fisher folk and people working in the rural area, as well as some of the elite participants, feared that the children would not be able to do well in school because of both the shortage of teachers, and teachers not reporting for work. For example, one mother in a fishing port said,

> One reason why some of our children don't do well in school is the environment, the place where we stay. It is so lowly, it doesn't allow the children to do well in school. Like in this village now, there are no good teachers who teach well ... and yes, there are no good teachers who are teaching in this village! They were sent, but they did not agree to come. Those who agreed to come, don't agree to be here on a full-time basis. In a week, sometimes a teacher may come on Monday, would leave out Tuesday, come on Wednesday, Thursday, and leave again on Friday. The next week he would not come. The week after that, similarly ... They go to their own town to live [FG3:F:3].

The lack of skills was a recurrent theme. One experienced former teacher observed:

> The teachers should know the stuff, and take their work seriously ... The ones who are teaching, let them know the things they are teaching, and be serious about their work … That is why I still believe, the issue of Teacher Training College, needs to be re-visited. Because, in the Teacher Training College, all these subjects taught in Primary school are taught there at a higher level again. So that any subject you handle in the Primary school you can handle well, all (of them). [Elite FG8 B:2].

Many examples were given of the teachers' inadequacies. One head teacher commented:

> I was in Ibekwe, when they sent the teachers on practice, teaching practice. Somebody could not even write down the particular subject she is teaching, that is Government. That girl wrote a wrong spelling of the subject she is teaching … Who gives them admission to Colleges of Education? [Elite FG8 D]

The student teacher referred to above was in fact in a teacher education programme. Some teachers, of course are untrained:

> Like we are talking about primary school, how many trained teachers? One, trained teacher, two other teachers. And they are expected to teach six classes. In Primary school, one teacher has to handle up to eight subjects. But in a school where you have three teachers, a head teacher, who is even the kind of “oga” (the ‘boss’), teaching little or nothing, and the other two will have to carry the whole burden of primary 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. [Elite FG8 D:5]

An associated issue was teacher punctuality. Elite participants, for instance, reported that the school at O, with more than 200 children, had only three teachers, including the head teacher, and so the children there were just allowed to play all the time. One of these participants explained that non-Obolo people often went back to their own villages on the mainland to do farming, reporting after a few days to their superior, “a big man whom they know there, that they are not at work because there is unrest in the village where they work.” [Elite FG8]

Contrasting private with Government schools, a seasoned rural teacher [Rural Empl.FG1a D] observed of Government schools, “Yes, they only open school at 9am and close again at 10. If they can teach the first and a second lesson, the time is up. So, what can they then teach?” My own observations provide support for this comment. For example, on a number of occasions when I went to informally observe the teaching of Obolo language as a subject in 2010 and 2011, I found a particular school already closed before 11am. By the same token, although the official opening time for Government schools is 8am, many primary schools do not start until 9 am.

It appears that teachers’ absenteeism and lateness is more pronounced in rural than in urban schools, although it also seems to be an issue in the cities. This may be due to infrequent inspection and supervision, as asserted by the experienced teacher above comparing Private and Government schools generally. In riverine areas in Rivers State, the Government Supervisors of Schools have great difficulty getting to the schools, scattered as they are over many islands, especially given that their transportation costs are not reimbursed. The above teacher also

observed, “There is better teaching in private schools, homework for at home; teachers working throughout the day; rewards for performing teachers...”. In contrast to Private Schools, Government does not reward hard-working teachers in any way, neither do the parents who have little or no interaction with the teachers in the public schools.

It is the expectation in Nigerian schools that children who fail to reach the required standard are required to retake the year. The new official practice that children should not be made to retake a class gave rise to some critical comment. In the words of one rural teacher:

> Now, another thing too is the new way they make us pass children anyhow to the next class. Because, before, if you had failed, you would retake the class, to go and learn, so that you would learn again what would be re-taught, so that you would pass. This dispensation, it disturbs us, because as they have no knowledge in the first class and are passed on to the next class, there is nothing at all that they can know. That is also why they are not able to write their name even in UBE (JSS). There is nothing at all they can do, they will not read, they will not be able to do it. [Rural Empl.FG1b A:4]

The attendant pressures often give rise to the unprofessional behaviour of exam malpractices, particularly at the secondary school level:

> Children stay at XXX, at the fishing port until near the exam...until near the time when the exam will be taken. Then they will come and the teacher will then write their names and tell them, ‘You will give me N500, you N1000,’ and then they will put down scores for them. Even the people who stayed in the class learning steadily, maybe they get 40(%), but, someone who came to pay money may get 70, 80, ... [Rural Empl.FG1b: 4]

> Yes, exam malpractice is one of the problems. The children don’t study, they don’t count education as something that will cause them to become something in life, as something that they will know and have for themselves and their parents. So, all their resourcefulness they put to work only when it is exam time. Teachers and others then come and help them, when it is

> exam. .... Only the exam is important to them! To know something by themselves so that when they are asked ... They don't know, their whole purpose is to get that certificate at the end of the school that they are attending. [Rural Empl.FG2 E:7]

One of the fathers specifically linked the willingness of families to pay with the strategic approach of teachers to improving their conditions. In his view, teachers purposely fail to teach the children to pass the exams without their help to ensure they supplement their income:

> in the normal time of school, you will see, they won't come to school at the normal time anymore, instead they will give a time in the late afternoon and say, come and pay for extra-mural classes, and come and learn there. [FG2 C:8]

This father reported that just recently the state Governor had outlawed extramural classes and threatened the teachers with tough action if they failed to teach sufficiently during school time. The end result is people who have certificates but don't know the things they were supposed to know.

The participants in elite focus group 8 were particularly critical of examination malpractice, expressing a very high level of frustration with behaviour which cripples all those who desire to have good and effective education in Nigeria. Various participants with experience either as heads of school, or as examination supervisors described how not only teachers, but also centre supervisors are involved in the malpractice. One experienced in examination supervision confided that even the examination boards do not intervene when reports of malpractice are made. It was reasoned that the examination boards prefer to report that higher numbers of the candidates passed the examination well, since there are now two competing boards, NECO (National Examinations Council) as well as WAEC.

These problems of education which are most prevalent in rural areas, issues of lack of teachers, lack of a reward system for teachers, and especially lack of special allowances for teachers posted in distant rural locations, are common problems in Africa (Adedeji & Olaniyan, 2011), and have also been observed by

Government and in Government-related research (Adekola, 2007; Federal Ministry of Education, 2014).

Social Issues

Obstacles to successful learning include a number of wider societal issues such as poverty, student lateness and absenteeism, early pregnancy and unemployment.

Lack of disposable income is seen by many participants as the most serious threat to the successful completion of secondary and/or tertiary education. Parents invest a large part of their income in their children's education. The problem becomes more serious from Senior Secondary School level onward, from Years 10 to 12, when they have to pay school and final examination fees, especially when many students spend years retaking the exams. Those hoping to go on to any tertiary education also need to take the JAMB (Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board), another costly examination.

Elite participants, in particular, associated irregular school attendance, absenteeism and lateness not only with teachers but also with students:

> Parents are problems too.... But you allowed… How would a child be in bed till.... 9 o'clock? The teacher will be in the school waiting, when you are supposed at seven, "Get up,.... Hey!' The parents are some of the factors that "kill" the children! [FG9c B:2]

> Our children, who go to Montessori and all the other places, before they are starting school, they will buy books for them, they will buy clothes to wear at school, so that they will look 'makmak'. They will prepare food to put in their schoolbag for them so that they can be conveyed and dropped off by car. But when you go to the village when school is on, some children go round selling 'gari'[7], or selling other things. Shoes to wear to school, they don't have; school fees, not paid; books, not bought. That is why these children don't have the chance to know things like people in other places. [Elite FG5 C:4]

[7] Food stuff made of cassava

These observations can be understood as examples of blaming the victim (Ryan, 1976) whereby, for example, the poor are considered to be responsible for behaviours associated with poverty rather than explaining their behaviour by their poverty.

There are also issues related to employment patterns of the parents who move to fish on the coast, leaving their children with relatives in their home villages; in many cases, children stay with their parents only in the holidays. Many children return from the fishing ports a few weeks late. October and November are bad months for fishermen, partly because of storms and partly because Igbo traders, the main customers for their crayfish, are away for a period of festivals and meetings in their home area. Therefore, these months are always difficult months for the fisher folk financially and there may not be any funds for the children's transportation back to the permanent villages where most of the schools are located.

Dependence on child labour is another contributory factor. One of the urban employees observed that many parents who do business send their children out to sell; he cautioned that the use of child labour will mean that they will not have enough time to read and do their assignments. In a similar vein, an elite participant in the city described children selling garri while they should be in school while a rural primary school teacher reported that sometimes children sleep in class because they have things to do at home till late at night. She described the situation of "one big girl" in her class (primary 5), old enough to be in JSS year 2, who was not learning, no matter what the teacher did, and how she found out that the child was not living with her parents but with another relative whose wife made her do all her work: going to sell gari, cooking and washing to such an extent that she would come late to school, sleep in class and fail to do her homework. From my observations, following the introduction of UBE, it is now very rare for a child to be seen selling things while school is in progress. It is, however, still very common to see children selling after school time, at weekends and during holidays.

Although most children now start school at five, some are still as old as nine or ten, raising issues around physical maturity. Several participants from many different walks of life mentioned early pregnancy both as a threat to girls'

completion of school and as a reason for some parents to decide not to send their daughters for further education. In a focus group discussion with rural employed participants, comments included:

> Especially with girls, [some people] say that school for women doesn't have any gain in it, they will get pregnant and have a child. So, a lot of girls, especially on our side, don't go to school anymore. They think, these ones will go to get a husband, it does not profit".
>
> So even primary school they will not finish, they will go to get a man, they are already getting married, they don't go to school anymore. How can they be forced? Some people have money but they say, 'girls' education does not profit at all. After all, they are going to get married.'" [Rural Empl. FG2 B,E,A:12]

A final issue concerns unease about the next generation, something which, of course, is a feature of all societies and is by no means limited to the Obolo. All fishermen and their wives expressed the hope that if they themselves play their part, providing finance, and they advise and encourage the children in their schooling, they will be successful. People in employment also stress the need for parental advice and encouragement for the children to keep on doing their best in school, and to remain respectful to their parents. Many talk about the need to teach their children about God so that they will live good moral lives. Fisherfolk also talk in terms of a child's "stubbornness", when he does not "humble himself and listen to what his mother and father tell him", and falls into bad company, a very real threat given the widespread poverty and violence in present day Nigeria. An experienced teacher explained:

> Also, if children are not interested in schooling, they can't do well in education, they can't know anything, because they are not interested in learning and knowing books. Like, some children nowadays, it is not that the parents don't have money; it is not people whose father doesn't want them to go to school anymore, but because they saw something their age mates, their friends, are doing, so they just followed them to become people who carry guns around, shooting, sleeping in the mangroves and in the bush, taking things from people by force, doing fearful things, causing

> wailing for loss of money, and doing numerous evil things. So, if children have no interest in books/studying, they may join gangs like this, and go to hold up people for their money and do whatever brings money quick, quick. Since there is no quick money through education, they don't want to be wasting their time anymore to bend down and read/study and know, so that they would become something tomorrow ...when they would finally have money from their labour of studies. [Rural Empl. FG1b A:2]

Criticisms of technological developments such as those expressed in the developed world was also in evidence among Obolo participants who cited the influence of films, which children watch on their handsets in class or late at night in the cinemas so that they oversleep and come to school very late.

Distant parents

Many parents observed that it is important to advise and encourage the children in their education, but for the fisher folk whose children cannot always stay with them in the fishing ports because there is no school there, there is the added problem of being distant from the children during school time. One experienced, now retired teacher notes that some children cannot succeed in education and in life because they lack the advice of the parents who are far away at the fishing ports. She maintains,

> The best way for children to move forward is to study, but some cannot do well. The counsel father and mother should give to the children, to counsel them so that they will do better than they themselves... It is because of the fish that the father and mother run away and leave the children... [Rural Empl. FG1a C:]

In their circumstances, however, the parents cannot be blamed, since fishing is their source of income. Leaving the children in the villages where there are schools so that they can have some education appears the best they can do. Usually the children can stay with relatives there, who also are expected as older members of the family to counsel the children (personal observation)

Conclusion

Analysis of the focus group discussions highlights both strengths on which to build, such as the extremely positive attitudes towards the benefits of education for the individual, the family and the wider community, and the very real constraints on the delivery of education, deriving from poverty, inadequate infrastructure and teacher training. It is clearly important for such considerations to inform any attempts to promote and implement bilingual education. I move next from a discussion of attitudes towards education in general to an exploration of attitudes to the languages which form the core of an Obolo-English bilingual programme.

Chapter 7: Attitudes towards Obolo and English

Introduction

As explained in chapter one, the main aim of this study is to consider issues likely to enhance or hinder the development of Obolo-English bilingual education. Fundamental to an understanding of these issues are the attitudes which the Obolo people hold to both these languages. The data analysed in this chapter thus seek to answer the research question: To what extent does the current status and development of Obolo make it a suitable candidate for inclusion in a bilingual education project? In this chapter, I enquire first into the socio-linguistic dynamics shaping the patterns of language attitudes in the wider region (especially concerning language use in education) with a view to understand how they are formed and which issues have been influential. Next I look at attitudes to Obolo as reflected in the data from my focus group interviews and participant observation through the lens of ethnolinguistic vitality theory. Lastly, in view of globalization and the increasing hegemony of English and in order to produce a complete picture, I also look at Obolo attitudes to English, based on an analysis of data from the focus groups.

Multilingualism in Africa

The socio-linguistic dynamics in sub-Saharan countries are different from those in the North, where the language of the majority of the population is the official language and most children are educated through the language of the home. In this situation, minority languages are usually the languages of immigrants. In almost all sub-Saharan African nations, in contrast, the many African indigenous languages, which are the mother tongues of the population, are found alongside

an official language, which is the former colonial language, in essence, a foreign language (Wolff, 2011:64, 78), which is used as “the primary and ultimate medium of instruction” (Ouane & Glanz, 2011:22). The “subtractive” bilingualism associated in the North with school failure, high repetition, and high drop-out rates also obtains for the very large numbers of speakers of indigenous languages in Africa. Here only a small proportion of the population, the highly educated elite, achieves fluency in the official/foreign language, estimated by Alexander (2000) in Djité (2008:10) as rarely more than 20 per cent.

So in the wake of these research findings, why do African countries not vigorously pursue the development of a more equitable mother tongue-based multilingual education system? A. Bamgbose (2005:255) observes:

> Outside Africa, no one questions why the languages of countries with smaller populations in Europe should be used as a medium, even up to and including the university level. What seems to be lacking in many African countries is the political will to break away from the colonial policy and practice of limiting mother tongue education to lower primary classes.

And he adds "Where such a will exists, much can be done in a short period of time" (p.642). Muthwii and Kioko (2004), Igboanusi (2008b), Tembe and Norton (2011) citing A. Bamgbose (1991), and Rosekrans, Sherris, and Chatry-Komarek (2012) all maintain that the future of bilingualism and bilingual education of a country is determined by the attitudes of the population. In a similar vein, writers such as A. Bamgbose (1994) express concern at the non-implementation of the relatively progressive language in education policy in Nigeria, and Owu-Ewie (2006) at Ghana’s reversal of a more progressive bilingual education policy to an English-medium policy in 2002. Adegbija (2000:79), citing E.G. Lewis (1981) asserts that "knowledge about attitudes is fundamental to the formulation of a policy as well as to success in its implementation". Yet, very few studies to date have attempted to determine the views of primary stakeholders in education (Igboanusi, 2008b).

How attitudes are formed

One of the foremost researchers of language attitudes in the region is Efurosibina Adegbija. He describes the formation of language attitudes as follows:

> Language attitudes are formed, established, or changed according to the functions, status, and potentials people perceive particular languages as possessing. Attitudes toward languages in West Africa, as in many other multilingual parts of the world, are determined largely by sociohistorical forces, the divergent competitive pulls of different languages, the relative values of the languages in the achievement of social mobility by individuals, the functional vigor of the languages, and survival pressures on language groups, especially minority ones. (Adegbija, 2000:85-6)

Adegbija (2000) discusses two specific influences on language attitudes in the region in some detail. First and foremost are the colonial language policies, which still hold sway, widely attributed to Western dependency, and the "colonization of the mind", and of the elites in particular, who "see everything European, including the languages and cultures, as inherently superior to African languages and cultures" (Adegbija, 2000:84). A. Bamgbose (2000:88) cited by Wolff (2011:79) refers to this phenomenon as "indoctrination" while Rassool (2004) identifies it as an example of Bourdieusian "Symbolic Violence" and Prah (2009) describes the resultant condition as "cultural inferiority complex vis a vis western languages". A State Ministry of Education executive provided further evidence for this position in a discussion of the state of mother tongue language education:

> You know, when a people feel that, "Oh my language is inferior! The other one is superior!" So, they want to drop the inferior and go along with what they call superior. So, it is all very, very complicated … the colonialists came to make us feel that they are superior. Even their colour is superior to our colour. Their language is superior to our language. Their food is superior to our food. Yes, that is why. Because of that gradual, mental, let me say brainwashing, our people now consider what is native as inferior, and then go for what the white man brought. That also affects the language! [Exec. Interv. C:7]

Adegbija (2000:96) recognizes the way in which languages are used in education as the second main influence on language attitudes: because education is seen as the basis for socio-economic advancement. He (1991:21) cautions against the "mistaken impression that endoglossic indigenous languages cannot be serious vehicles for modern thought", underlining the danger that such policies will lead to increasingly unfavourable attitudes to indigenous languages while the exoglossic language grows stronger and stronger. This influence is clearly demonstrated in an interview with one executive in a State Ministry of Education. He lamented the "deficit" of the indigenous languages to express scientific ideas, which he said makes parents feel that since, for most of their studies, their children will need English, they don't need to bother with mother tongue. But when a proposal was made that terminology should be developed in these languages for the teaching of science and technology subjects, he exclaimed that this would change parents' perception, it "would go a long way for them to begin to like it!" (the mother tongue in education) [Exec.Interv.C:7]. Translation of scientific ideas into African languages for use in education, appears to valorize these languages. (This also confirms Alexander's (2005) views on the translation of scientific works for the "intellectualization of African languages"). Also, two executives in a state Ministry of Education complained that the Government and the National Policy on Education were not sufficiently emphasizing the language provisions set out in the NPE. Teachers are not trained in the Teacher Training Colleges to teach the local languages, and as one of the executives also lamented, while a credit in English is compulsory, "nobody is talking about the local language". Executive B. similarly noted that many teachers cannot even read in the language themselves, emphasizing that a movement for the re-instatement of the regular teaching of the language in primary schools would have to start with teacher education. He therefore concludes that "Government Policy does not actually make the local language to look important to the people." In fact, all three Executive interviewees see the lack of requirements to take any examination in "the language of the environment", even at the Basic level (Basic Education Certificate Examination, BECE) and at institutes of teacher education, as the main reason that people do not put effort into the study and the teaching of Nigerian languages. It is therefore indeed likely that if the teaching and learning of "the languages of the

environment" would be enforced at these levels, attitudes to them would most likely improve.

A large body of research in fact points to the widespread positive attitudes towards English and correspondingly negative attitudes towards African languages (Adegbija, 1994, 2000; Babajide, 2001; Oyetade, 2001). Adegbija (2000) points out that in virtually all West African countries the European language of the former colonial power (English, French, or Portuguese) is used as an official language and the language of education, and is held in the highest esteem, particularly by the elite. This is the language that is used in all formal, official, and serious settings. At the same time, the mother tongues are also highly valued, but only in informal settings, such as day-to-day communication in the local community, on traditional and cultural occasions, and at home.

He notes, however, the growing number of homes where the official/foreign language is replacing the mother tongue as parents are eager for their children to be fluent in this language in order to do better in school. This is particularly the case in urban centres, where since colonial times there has been a "straight for English" policy, there are many private, English-medium schools (Adegbija, 2004:210, 215), and the student population is usually from a variety of language backgrounds, particularly in those states of the Niger-Delta where there is no dominant language and English and Pidgin English are used as lingua francas (Adegbija, 2004:192). He surmises that the exclusion of the indigenous languages from all formal, official and 'serious' settings sends a message to the youth as to the importance of the official/foreign language in relation to indigenous languages, noting that "in most formal and official settings, indigenous West African languages have a very low esteem" (Adegbija, 2000:88) and making a link to the fact that many of these languages are not written or have very little literature. For instance, of the more than 60 newspapers in Nigeria, less than five are in indigenous languages. It is also worth noting that earlier in the 20th century there used to be more newspapers and periodicals in some Nigerian languages and that the number kept on decreasing (Adegbija, 2000); [Exec. Interv. B]. (Adegbija, 2000:89) also observes that the younger generations favour the use of the official/European language, a pattern which, he reasons, must be due to the

impact of the medium of instruction in education, and the fact that in many schools students are even forbidden from speaking their mother tongue.

Generally, non-Western educated people were found to have an ambivalent attitude to the European/official language, as they consider it “as language of power” but at the same time resent it because its extensive use in education ‘pollutes’ the mother tongue, and the associated youth culture through code-switching and code-mixing. While the educated elite were found to have the highest esteem for the official language, considering it the sine qua non for education and socio-economic advancement, they too, express some ambivalence because of the association with the colonial past.

Attitudes to other languages: Arabic, French/English, pidgins

Adegbija (2000) also includes an important discussion of attitudes to other languages. Arabic, the language of Islam, is held in high esteem by all its adherents in the region. As mentioned in chapter 2, in a bid to incorporate the “Almajaris” (children studying Islam under an Imam) into the formal school system, in 2012 the Federal Government of Nigeria established many Arabic-English “bilingual schools” in Northern Nigeria. Adegbija (2000:88) also reports that Muslims have also started to value the language for international relations. Further, he states that French is treated with indifference in Anglophone countries, as is English in Francophone countries. He observes that the majority of the population in these countries is not aware that there are other European languages besides the one of their particular former colonizer. Finally, pidgins are commonly used as lingua franca, but only in informal interactions. They are seen as substandard versions of the official languages, and are therefore considered of very low status. While it is possible to argue that their status may be changing with their gradual introduction into other settings, including broadcasting, information (for instance on HIV/AIDS and other public health issues), and even in literature. Igboanusi (2008) suggests that such changes have not led to improvement in the perceptions of their use in education.

In addition, Adegbija (2000) reports that in densely multilingual contexts, such as Nigeria, where language and cultural loyalties are strong, it is to be expected that there will be "a wide range, diversity and intensity of attitudinal patterns". He also warns that there are “ethnolinguistically related political underpinnings” for some of the wars and conflicts in the region. For example in Nigeria, “the Hausas are perpetually perceived as a political and linguistic threat by many other ethnolinguistic groups” (Adegbija, 2000:81; see also chapter 2). He explains that in cases where people perceive oppression, threat, and other unfavourable behaviours by a neighbouring ethnic group, they are naturally not disposed to love the language of this group. As a result of these “politics of language”, “unless there are other sociocultural variables” bilingualism may be less prevalent. Indeed, many minority language groups in such relationships with a neighbouring dominating ethnolinguistic group resent having their children educated through the language of that group (personal observation). Language policies must therefore take account of such dynamics.

Ethnolinguistic vitality (EV)

During the period of the focus group interviews, (March 2014 – August 2015) , I noted that there was uncommon excitement about Obolo language, and its development, and a rise in ethnic pride. Amazed about their positivity compared to earlier times, which clearly appeared to be linked to the high profile launch of the Obolo Bible in May 2014, I found in the concept of Ethnolinguistic Vitality (EV) a useful framework for the study of language attitudes as well as an explanation for the improvement of attitudes to Obolo through high profile events.

Giles et al. (1977) first introduced a socio-psychological approach to the study of language shift and maintenance, which sheds additional light on language attitudes and their formation. In this view, the notion of ethnolinguistic identity can help us to understand how individuals come to either maintain their language or to assimilate to the competing language “in the short term of social interaction as well as in the longer term” (Giles & Johnson, 1987). They explain that thus, over time,

speakers, as a group, may either maintain their language or assimilate to the competing language, allowing researchers to describe the "psychological climate" surrounding decisions (Giles & Johnson, 1987:70).

Giles et al. (1977:308) emphasize that the "political, historical, economic and linguistic realities" in each situation must be taken into consideration. Although they affirm that there may be other "structural variables", their analysis identifies three main groups: status, demography, and institutional support (Giles et al., 1977:309), which, they maintain, influence the ethnolinguistic vitality of a group. The level of "ethnolinguistic vitality" is the strongest factor determining whether or not a group maintains their language and culture in the face of pressures from other languages in their environment. The three main variables contributing to the relative EV of ethnic groups are described as follows:

> **Status factors** (e.g. economic, political, and linguistic prestige), **demographic factors** (absolute numbers, birth-rate, geographical concentration); and **institutional support** (such as recognition of the group and its language in mass media, education, government). (Giles et al., 1977, cited in (Giles & Johnson, 1987:71)

Other demographic variables mentioned by these and other authors include patterns of distribution, numbers of "mixed" marriages, migration of others into the "home" area of the ethnolinguistic group and their patterns of adaptation, and migration patterns from the home to other areas. Other institutional factors include "representation in the various institutions of a society" as well as "formal and informal support" from "industry, religion, culture and politics" and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) (Yagmur and Ehala, 2011).

By looking at these variables 'in the round', it is possible to classify different groups as having high, low or medium ethnolinguistic vitality. Low ethnolinguistic vitality groups are likely to lose their distinctiveness, assimilating linguistically (and culturally) to the dominant group, while high ethnolinguistic vitality groups are likely to maintain their distinctive language and culture.

(Giles et al., 1977:318), however, also note that the level of EV a group *perceives* may be different from the "objective" EV. They explain that, for instance, a group's

perception could be influenced by the media, where a dominant ethnolinguistic group could seek to manipulate the perception of non-dominant groups EV by controlling what information is given, to their own advantage. It is not only the actual level of ethnolinguistic vitality of a group (objectively seen) but, even more so, the subjectively *perceived* level of vitality, that affects individuals' choices and is therefore at least as important as "objective" EV. In a review of the relevant literature, Yagmur and Ehala (2011) conclude that the perceptions of ethnolinguistic vitality "shape ethnic groups' strategies and manifestations of ethnic identity". Moreover, they find consensus that the analysis of "objective" and "subjective" vitality combined provides a "sociologically sound" picture.

The notion of ethnolinguistic vitality, however, is not without its critics. Tollefson (1991), as cited by Yagmur and Ehala (2011:105), for instance, contends that it does not deal with the more important issues of "key historical and structural variables" and that it is misleading to focus all attention on the "internal" variable of the vitality of the group, when the "survival of minority languages" is endangered by issues of historical and contemporary hegemony. In the context of the present study, for instance, a pertinent issue is the growing hegemony of English discussed later in this chapter, and the role of Western stakeholders with their publishing industries, and other economic and political interests in maintaining the position of the English language in Nigeria. Yet, despite the fact that Ethnolinguistic Vitality theory does not deal (directly) with these causal issues, it is valuable because measurement of the EV of a particular group gives an indication of the likelihood that the group can accept MT-based bilingual education. Moreover, the process of defining the parameters for EV, and also the insight that "perceived EV, is considered at least as influential as "objective" EV in guiding individuals' decisions as to whether to maintain or not to maintain the language, offer clues for strategies for the promotion of the language and bilingual education.

Another important criticism in Yagmur and Ehala (2011), citing Khan and Khan (1982) and Tollefson (1991), is that ethnolinguistic vitality is measured in terms of status and institutional support defined by the dominant ethnolinguistic group. It is, however, also possible to define status and institutional support along other parameters more pertinent in a given context (see Landweer, 1998, in relation to Papua New Guinea). It is important to remember, though, that, in the Sub-Saharan

context, the reality is that colonial and neo-colonial ideologies already define relative status. Colonial governments also formed the nation states, governed by politicians, and instituted Western-type education and the formal economy so that, at this time, institutional support along these lines has become increasingly important for the vitality of ethnolinguistic groups in the region.

Ethnolinguistic vitality of Obolo

I begin by applying the earlier tripartite framework of demographic, status and institutional support factors to the data collected through interviews and focus group discussions for this study.

Demographic factors

Since the creation of the two local government areas (see chapter 2), there are more people from other areas visiting or working whose lingua franca is English (and Pidgin English), e.g. National Youth Corpers teaching in the secondary schools, some Public Servants working for Local Government, and some medical personnel in the clinics and hospitals. However, the demographic feature with by far the greatest impact on the ethnolinguistic vitality of Obolo concerns the differences in the language behavior of urban and rural populations, and also the fact that most Obolo young adults migrate to the city.

The Obolo heartlands

In the “home” or rural areas, the Obolo language is still vibrant. It is used in homes, in the fishing industry, trading in the area, in town meetings, town crier announcements, cultural occasions, traditional religion, and in church activities. Here all little children still learn Obolo. Mothers in the fishing port who participated in this study wanted their children to speak Obolo so that they would be able to communicate freely rather than appearing “snobbish” or “proud” by speaking English only. In contrast, humility is a virtue that all Obolo parents desire to instill in

their children (in the same focus group [Fisher folk FG3] it was mentioned ten times). One commented that she hoped that her children would occupy high positions in their work places, “but ‘at home’, where we live, they will live humbly, they will not be proud people.” Another participant [FG3 F:4] reported: “Some of our Obolo people, when they have gone to school and know English, they cannot speak our language anymore, they cannot speak Obolo, and that is a problem”. Others agreed.

Obolo in the city

There are, however, many signs that the language is under pressure in the city, a situation which pertains for most other Nigerian languages (see Adegbija, 2004) above) and Adegbija (2001) on Oko), with the exception of Hausa (see chapter 2). There is a growing number of urban Obolo families where the language of the home has shifted to English, especially in Port Harcourt where the main lingua franca is English or Pidgin English. One highly educated person in Akwa Ibom, for instance, reported that (though all his own children speak fluent Obolo) that one of his brothers and his Obolo wife who live in Port Harcourt have not transmitted Obolo to their children. They all speak English and Pidgin-English only (Elite FG 8, E). From the viewpoint of some people in the cities in the South-South, the local languages are dying out, and there is not much that can be done about it. Sitanda (a non-Obolo) takes a particularly pessimistic stance in a social media post:

> In most parts of the South, especially the SS and SE, virtually no parents communicate to their kids in native languages. It's very rare to see any kid less than 15 years who could speak his/her mother tongue fluently. The SW has fared better in this regard. Worse hit is the SS. Truth is most languages will die naturally in less than 3 decades from now as those above 15 years get older. How sad... *Vanguard News*, October 29, 2015, retrieved from http://www.vanguardngr.com/2015/10/primary-secondary-education-the-case-for-instruction-in-mother-tongue/

Such attitudes give rise to widespread concern. An Obolo linguist in a radio interview on the topic “Mother Tongue” (22-2-2016) argued that if you refuse to speak your language to your child, you are cutting off the person from his culture. He affirmed that “mother tongue is a matter of identity, cultural identity ... ” and quoted Prof. K. Williamson as saying, “Your language is *you*. Use it or lose it!”

Data collected for the present study add weight to these concerns. Non-Obolo Executive A made the following observation about parents:

> But there are some parents, who will deliberately speak English to their children, and even when they speak their local languages, they will say, “No!”, you know? They will make them to speak English rather than their local languages, thinking that they are probably consolidating their proficiency in the English language. Because, ultimately, that is the language that they would write the exams and pass.

In a similar vein, I have heard the comment that such people are “’lost’ to Obolo”. It is certainly the case that young Obolo adults from the city not fluent in the mother tongue are embarrassed when they meet Obolo speakers (personal observation). Nevertheless, some maintain that they show their solidarity by sending money for development projects, and even by visiting their relatives in the village and “practicing the little Obolo they know” [Elite FG8 F].

Talking about the hopes he has for his children’s future, an urban father reported his concern that, because the child’s mother is not Obolo and having English as the language of the home, his son might not be able to learn to speak the language. Therefore, he had purposely given his child an Obolo name, Awaji-îgbana-emi (meaning ‘God has blessed me)’, “so that wherever he will be, when he mentions his name, even if he can’t speak the language, they will know from his name that he is an Obolo person [Elite FG5 B:2].

When asked if a young person who doesn’t speak Obolo could contribute to progress and development in Obolo, a mother in an urban focus group reported:

> That person is a stranger, he doesn’t know. It is as if he doesn’t come from our area. The problems are just too many! Let him know the customs of his people! [Urban Empl. FG6 E:5-6]

Another urban mother, whose husband was a speaker of a different language, now regrets that her growing children were raised speaking English and don't know the Obolo language. They have difficulty relating well with the extended family, and when they are taken to their village, they are at a loss. She explained:

> If the children cannot speak their language it is not nice. It is difficult, because there are a lot of things they would be able to know and to hear and to do together with others. It is not nice at all... and people cannot relate with those children as they normally relate. Those children are in fact like strangers in their own town. People don't even want to know them, and they themselves even pull back from.... because if something happens, they can't, they don't know... This causes some of them to lose interest in things of "home". So, not to know their language, disturbs them. It is not good [Urban Empl. FG6 A: 4]!

While there are currently no opportunities for urban children to formally learn Obolo, many parents agreed, that it would be good to have the language taught to Obolo children in the cities. The following comment was typical:

> In the future, I want people in Government in this state to arrange so that all children, whether they are living in Obolo towns-o, or in the city, let them put in a paper, so that they will know how to enable the teaching of Obolo, both spoken and written too. That is now a problem for us, we don't have it. (Elite FG5:A)

In the meantime, as one of the urban employees pointed out: "The father and mother have a really huge duty to fulfil towards their children" [Urban Empl.FG6]

Status factors

Status factors can include linguistic, political, and economic prestige. Economic prestige can be seen in terms of "adequate work environment in the mother tongue" (Landweer, 1998). In Obolo, people commonly say that they want their children to have an education "because there is no more fish in the rivers". As there is no industry or commerce in Obolo area, except subsistence fishing,

parents find it necessary for their children to get a better future through employment in the cities away from Obolo. So Obolo has no economic prestige. For instance, one woman in the fishing port said, “The fish might finish. During the time of the elders, there was so much fish, but now a lot less. Therefore I want all of my children to have an education.” Obolo people desire for their children not to be fisherfolk but rather, in the words of one of the fisher women, “...that they will be amongst the great in their work place, and that they will have a ‘good’ job.” This is the desire of practically everyone. One mother said, “No, let him not make a living from fishing, let him be in employment, so that from there, there will be progress, there will be profit in it for me and for everyone.” Another woman there said that she didn’t want her children to be smoking crayfish for sale like she herself, although she confirmed, “My position in life is OK ... but, if I had finished school, I would not be ... smoking the thing. I would go away to another place for some time.” This view may also be related to the very simple living conditions, without any modern facilities, which obtain in the fishing ports.

While Obolo has no economic status, there is evidence of both political and linguistic status. As explained by one of the fisherfolk, anyone who is to take on a leadership role in the community needs to speak Obolo:

> If he doesn’t know Obolo, how will he be able to lead/govern Obolo people? An Obolo person must understand Obolo to be able to rule Obolo people well. [Fisherfolk FG3 F:5]

In answer to my question, “If your child is not able to speak Obolo and would like to do something for the people ‘at home’, how would that be with the people there?” Various reactions implied that it would be difficult. The clearest answer, by an urban mother, was as follows:

> That child is a visitor/stranger. He doesn’t know it. It is as if he doesn’t come from our place. Oi, there would be so many problems! ...Let him know the customs and traditions of his “home”! [Urban Empl. FG 6 E:5-6]

This is not surprising, because a leader in Obolo is deemed to be a wise person, who knows how to advise, how to explain his insights well, and how to convince,

taking everyone along. This is not autocratic leadership: all decisions are taken by consensus.

The political status of Obolo was also clearly visible in an event where the Obolo language, because of its level of development, was selected as the language for UNESCO International Mother Language Day in Rivers State. Significantly, members of the Obolo elite and traditional rulers rallied around the Trustees of the Obolo Language and Bible Translation Organisation (OLBTO, see below) in the state capital in order to raise more funds among themselves, and to organise publicity, so as to "project the image of Obolo" (as reported by a woman who was amongst those who went to Port Harcourt as a representative of the Executive Committee of OLBTO). She added that "God has given us this unique opportunity *to remove the shame* from Obolo people's faces". Two days before the event she also contacted the women of the various church Womens' Fellowships "at home" and they moved en masse to the State capital to add their voices to the occasion. An Obolo linguist was invited to a panel discussion on "Mother Tongue" on radio, and used the opportunity to inform listeners that Obolo people had already started to develop the necessary metalanguage for teaching in schools.

On the day of the event, very many members of the Obolo elites came from near and far, including Obolo educationists and chiefs of villages and towns. The fact that the event was widely reported in the radio, television and internet news increased the impact both inside and outside Obolo. Although the formal speeches were almost entirely in English, it is notable that the two highly educated masters of ceremony occasionally spoke Obolo, which could conceivably, under other circumstances, have been considered a breach of protocol. By the same token, many of the songs, and an Obolo language competition involving children from six secondary schools were performed in Obolo, with explanations in English for attendees outside the area.

At the end of his speech, the main speaker started singing, "Obolo, ina, ina, ina! Eji kpeberọ mkpọ esese. Eji egbaañ mkpọ irọ" 'Obolo people, come, come, come! We will not be doing things separately. Let us work together', a song which appeals to the Obolo nation to move together and not be divided. Everyone, including chiefs and university professors, bishops, and others, jumped up and

joined in the dancing and singing of the song! Only the Head of Administration who was representing the Governor, though an Obolo person, did not dance. He explained afterwards that it would be a breach of protocol for him to join in, but that he had restrained himself with great difficulty (Participant Observation, 23-2-2016).

Institutional support

Institutional support can be provided by government as well as NGOs and religious institutions. The presence of state and federal representatives at the UNESCO Mother Language Day event is, of course, indicative of governmental support. This support, in turn, was driven by the significant work undertaken over many years by the Obolo Language Committee, which later merged with the Obolo Language and Bible Translation Organisation (OLBTO).

The Obolo Language Committee was founded by a group of Obolo teachers in 1978, under the auspices of Prof. Kay Williamson of the Rivers Readers Project, with the aim of teaching Obolo in schools. People were keenly aware that, due to the many years immersed in English education, the youth were not becoming as proficient in speaking Obolo as the older generations and so were seizing the opportunity to make the language better known (see also chapter 8). Language has played a central role throughout this time in mobilizing the people from village to village. The village councils have been used as a platform for providing information about goals and objectives relating to the maintenance and development of Obolo language through Bible translation and education, inviting people to learn to read and write in the language, to teach, write books, to help to organize, and to contribute financially. The monthly meetings that steer the organisation are held in Obolo, and the minutes of the meetings are read in the language. The answer to the rallying cry in these meetings of “Obolo, ìre eji kpeberọ?!” ‘Obolo, will we not do it?!’ is invariably, “Mêrọ!!! Mêrọ!! Mêrọ-o!!!” ‘We will do it! We will do it!! We will certainly do it!’. Many have served on the Committee, the decision-making body; similarly, many have volunteered in roles including literacy coordinators, literacy teachers in churches, authors and artists, trainers of teachers, and book sellers (Ene-Awaji, 2015). It is also the work of this

organization which is leading to the ongoing development of bilingual education in Obolo and English discussed in chapters 8 and 9.

OLBTO has assumed the role of language activist on other occasions, too. In a meeting of a former Local Government Chairperson, with local “leaders of thought” or “opinion makers” on Independence Day, 2012, all the discussions were done in English, until members of the NGO started speaking Obolo, changing the atmosphere from formal to a more genuine, community-based, interaction where everyone else joined in. For the purpose of the invited press and NTA (National Television Authority), the LGC Chairperson simply repeated questions and answers in English. Still other indications of the linguistic status of Obolo include the publication of the Bible in the language and its recent launch event, attended by representatives of state governors and even the President of the Federation at which the President donated a large sum of money for the purchase of Bibles for all the schools in Obolo.

The churches of Obolo and in the wider region also made important contributions to the events described above, as several Obolo Bishops and many leaders of the various denominations (Anglican, Methodist, Roman Catholic and Pentecostal) participated, with several giving speeches or offering prayers. There is in fact strong support from all the many Christian denominations in this area for the work of OLBTO: individual churches contribute yearly in accordance with their size, and many offer voluntary service, especially in the work of Bible Translation, Bible publications, and literacy work in churches. Some prominent individuals are also always willing to contribute financially.

One of the Local Government Councils of Eastern Obolo, and several of the consecutive Andoni Local Government Councils have for a period of five or six years (around 2009 to 2014) sent substantial monthly contributions towards payment of OLBTO staff. This ended at the beginning of a period of severe political and civil upheaval which disrupted the local government’s functioning. This ongoing support was, however, not made public (for security reasons). The local Ministry of Education and especially the Schools Board have also given much support (see also chapter 8).

In 2007, The Andoni Council of Chiefs on behalf of all the villages and towns in the LGA, donated a large sum of money, which was part of the compensation an oil company had been made to pay as a fine, and which was used for the building of a duplex for staff housing. This was made known through the Annual General Meeting to which representatives of all the local churches and members/supporters of OLBTO and any interested parties are invited.

An NGO, the Andoni (Obolo) chapter of Shell's development outreach, in 2009 funded the printing of a free Obolo textbook for each school child in Obolo. This was celebrated in a grand public event jointly organised by them and OLBTO at Ngo, Andoni LGA headquarters.

From outside Obolo, there has been the support from Nigeria Bible Translation Trust, which was especially active in the 1980s and early 1990s, with salaries for my husband and myself as Advisors to OLBTO. They also provided library and computer services for Bible translation and language development work at their centre in Jos, Plateau State, and offered courses there in Applied Linguistics, translation principles, and literacy and language education, which various staff and volunteers of OLBTO attended over the years. Of all these, perhaps the visits of their Consultants for the checking of the Obolo New Testament in the 1980s made the greatest impression, especially as two of the Consultants who came were Europeans.

Some of the churches with which my husband and I are connected outside the country have at times sent gifts or financial donations to OLBTO, and most importantly, some of the leaders of my church in the Netherlands have come and visited with OLBTO. Since Obolo is an "end of the road" destination, Obolo people are always very grateful for visits and greatly honour visitors, so that many people would gather to welcome these guests. OLBTO and Obolo people in the towns and villages on the main island, and other places where they visited were clearly greatly encouraged by these visits from afar. On most occasions, the executive committee would make arrangements to take visitors around to several towns to meet with chiefs and town council leaders, church leaders, and sometimes to address entire congregations.

In my data on the Obolo, then, there was evidence of varying ethnolinguistic vitality. However, overall, Obolo could be considered to have medium ethnolinguistic vitality and therefore to be a credible candidate for the development of a bilingual education programme. This is confirmed by other measurements for Ethnolinguistic Vitality which also place Obolo at a medium level. For instance, GIDS (Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale) (Fishman, 1991), which has been the main tool for measuring linguistic endangerment/development for over 20 years (Young, 2011), would place Obolo at stage 5 on its scale of 8 because there is literacy in the language, or even at the stronger stage 4 on this descending scale, because there is formal, compulsory education in the language, even though the written language is only used as a subject. Similarly, Lewis et al. (2016) in their EGIDS (Expanded GIDS)[8], which is a further refinement of GIDS, also place Obolo at "Developing", "EGIDS 5", meaning "The language is in vigorous use, with literature in a standardized form being used by some though this is not yet widespread or sustainable". This is the place in between EGIDS 4, which is for developed languages which are institutionalized, or "formal, compulsory education in the language" (Young, 2011:53), and EGIDS 6a, which is for languages which are unstandardized but in vigorous use by all generations (This is grade 6 in Fishman (1991)). However, since in urban areas there is intergenerational disruption, with rather few children learning the language, a large part of the Obolo population living in urban areas should be placed at EGIDS 6b, meaning "Intergenerational transmission is in the process of being broken, but the child-bearing generation can still use the language so it is possible that revitalization efforts could restore transmission of the language in the home" (Lewis et al., 2016). In Fishman (1991), since his GIDS does not have anything between stage 6 (languages which are unstandardized but in in vigorous use by all generations)

[8] EGIDS (Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale has 13 instead of the 8 stages on Fishman's scale. Fishman's GIDS mostly measures and ranks the extent of a language's usage across generations and certain domains, and it's criteria are helpful indicators of the interventions that would be helpful at each particular phase of disruption/development of the language. Young (2011) describes how the EGIDS is an attempt to align alongside the indicators of the GIDS, the endangerment indicators of the UNESCO Atlas of endangered languages (Moseley, 2010), as well as that of Ethnologue (2009), forming them into this 13 scale framework.

and 7, we might have to place urban Obolo people at this time at grade 7, meaning that the younger generation is not speaking the language any longer. Young (2011) notes Fishman's (1991) counsel that, to prevent this intergenerational disruption process from continuing, there is need to support the family, (for instance with the "provision of minority language nursery schools").

Globalisation and the hegemony of English

In considering the suitability of Obolo for inclusion in a bilingual education programme, it is important to explore the nature of its relationship with English. In this section I survey the extent of the hegemony of English globally, its effects in Africa and in Nigeria in particular, and scholarly reactions to the situation. This is then followed by a report on the situation in Obolo, paying close attention to the evidence of Obolo attitudes to English which emerged from the data collected for the present study.

History of the spread of English and the extent of its dominance

The history of the spread of English is associated with the establishment of the British empire encompassing territories such as the USA, New Zealand, and Australia colonized by British settlers who decimated the indigenous populations through both force and disease, pushing them back to occupy only small enclaves of the land. These countries are now home to the large numbers of first language English speakers (Crystal, 2003; Edwards, 2004; Graddol, 1997). In other former territories, such as those in Africa, the British made English the language of Government, administration, and education, as well as the language of international trade, but they did not settle there in large numbers. Nevertheless, when the colonies in Africa gained independence, almost all these newly formed multilingual states chose the respective language of the former rulers – English, French or Portuguese – as the official/national language (Adegbija, 2000;

Alexander, 2000; Graddol, 1997). Alexander (2000) observes critically that in South Africa, English was already the choice of the African black population in 1903, clearly showing its hegemonic dominance; African languages were not even considered an option. Colonization thus created an English-speaking elite , and a condition of the “colonization of the mind” which continued post-independence (Alexander, 2000); (see also Adegbija, 2000 above). Globally, the use of English has been increasing and its influence has overtaken that of all other languages world-wide. Presently it is an official language in over 70 nations (Crystal, 2003). Most of these are former colonies of Great Britain (Graddol, 1997).

The rise of the USA as a super power did much to promote the English language worldwide (Graddol, 1997; Crystal, 2003). From the end of World War II, its economic importance became evident as it invested huge funds in the rebuilding and economic restructuring of impoverished Europe, Japan, and other countries in that region; it was also highly influential in the establishment of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, and their regulatory role in international economic relations (Rassool, 2007). These financial institutions and other international organizations such as the United Nations, founded in the post-war era, all adopted English as their working language. The rise of international companies and trade, most of which also adopted English as their language of communication, again contributed to the rise of English. Accelerated scientific and technological development also contributed to the spreading influence of English, through international scientific cooperation and knowledge sharing. Another important use of English globally is in the film industry and TV, especially through international news broadcasters such as BBC International and CNN. Increasingly, university courses are taught through English in countries where this is not the official language. There is also ample evidence of the influence of the language in technology, including mobile phones, and the Internet (Crystal, 2004).

The global impact of English is seen in the vast number of people learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). EFL users now outnumber mother tongue speakers of English in the world in a ratio of 2:1 (Graddol, 1997). Such developments have important economic implications for native speakers of English. In the UK alone English language teaching generates almost £1.9 billion a year and a further £10 billion in educational publishing and consultant services. By the same token,

international students coming to study in the English-speaking countries are an extremely important source of income (see, e.g. "UKCISA - Policy, Research, and Statistics International Student Statistics: International Students in UK Higher Education " 2016).

The empire strikes back?

Many writers, however, warn of the dangers of these developments, including Phillipson (2009), Adegbija (2004), and Mustapha (2014). In relation to the “market-driven” English language industry, Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) talks about “Englishising” the world and so causing other languages to stagnate in their development and lose their vitality. Brock-Utne (2012b:495f) raises concerns about western donors who have reinforced the idea that monolingual education through a foreign/former colonial language is preferable to mother tongue-based multilingual education. She draws attention, for instance, to the influence of development partners in Rwanda, including the British Council, which led to the removal of both French and Kinyarwanda (the language of 99.4% of the population) to make space for a mono-lingual, English-medium policy. Alexander (2000:15), too, warns against the specious “number-crunching techniques of market research, on which the legitimation of the ESL industry is based”, and which, he says, show nothing more than the hegemonic grip of English on the socio-economically advanced citizens in the countries concerned.

Graddol (1997) highlights the emergence of more positive attitudes towards indigenous languages and bilingualism. Similarly, Edwards (2008) discusses both the disadvantages for non-native speakers of the emergence of English as a native language and the advantages for native and non-native speakers associated with the nurturing of other languages in areas as diverse as education, health care, culture, law and defense (see also chapter 4). These views are also reflected in the growing number of international organisations such as UNESCO (2003) and Save the Children ("Global Campaign for Education Policy Brief - Mother-tongue education: policy lessons for quality and inclusion," n.d.) that are advocating the use of mother tongues in education, a topic to which I return in chapter 8.

The hegemony of English in Nigeria

Nigeria is no exception to this general trend. Mustapha (2014) observes,

> English enjoys an unparalleled status and usage... in the nation... English is the *dominant* official language, the language of the media, the court, the legislature, language of instruction, and of politics (Mustapha, 2014)

Looking critically at this issue, however, he acknowledges that there are large sections of the population who cannot use the language in these ways and questions the validity of the Euromonitor International (2010) claim that in 2009, 53% of Nigeria's population were English- speaking (including Pidgin), judging this to be an exaggeration due to the investigators' focus on urban areas. In a similar vein, Awonisi (2004) as cited in Mustapha (2014) argues that English no longer functions as the "neutral" language it is often assumed to be.

Adegbija (2004), writing after the military regimes of the 1980s and 1990s, notes the economic and technological developments encouraging the growth of English usage. Foreign companies use English; import and export companies require workers with skills in English; technology transfer is done in English; and the Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM), mostly uses English for its services and advertisements. He notes that many Nigerians prefer international news broadcasting corporations such as CNN to Nigerian news stations. He also observes that the internet, accessed in English, has made a strong impact, especially amongst the youth. He concludes that the continuously increasing hegemony of English, especially its extensive exposure through the Nigerian mass media, has a pervasive daily influence on families in the cities, with the result that even the language of the home is being replaced by English:

> The very presence and prestige of English in Nigeria and the functions it performs create not only a lack of interest in the indigenous languages among many youths, but also a perceived lack of need for the indigenous languages for those **youths in urban areas** who boldly claim that English is their first language. The inferiority complex associated with a majority of the

> Nigerian indigenous languages, and their neglect in governmental policies and practice, compounds this situation. (p. 238)

He also writes:

> Indigenous languages are officially considered unworthy of being used in official contexts because of their low development status. Their perceived unworthiness increases year by year as frontiers of knowledge continue to expand (pp.238-9).

Rassool (2013) notes concerning the “inferiority complex” attached to Nigerian languages, that the use of Yoruba language in the House of Assembly in Lagos has been seen as "demeaning and reducing the intellectual capacity of legislators" (reported in The Guardian, 10 December 1999), and comments on

> the extent to which the social construction of the inherent superiority of English has become part of the hegemonic consciousness amongst governing elites within Nigerian society and the de facto marginalization of local languages. (Rassool, 2013:17-8)

Writers such as, Essien (2005), Igboanusi (2008b), as well as Adegbija (2000) (see above) relate the highly positive attitudes to English to the education functions and opportunities it provides to advance economically in Nigeria. Igboanusi (2008b) observes that for these reasons many parents prefer English-medium education for their children, which has led to an increasing number of children being monolingual in English, and several indigenous languages having fewer and fewer child speakers.

Adegbija’s observations were made at the turn of the century when only elites and their children in the cities had internet access from a few expensive internet cafes. However, as the GSM (Global System for Mobile Communications) network spread to rural areas and mobile phones became more affordable, the Internet became widely accessible. The first telecommunication mast in Andoni Local Government Area was erected at the end of 2007 and from about 2008 most youths, including those in rural areas, were taking advantage of these developments through mobile phones (downloading films and music, and sharing these with others (personal observation). Clearly, as Adegbija (2004: 240)

foresaw, the impact of English is becoming more pronounced through the internet, as it penetrates rural areas, gradually reaching even the children in less privileged families. On the other hand, most Nigerian languages are hardly yet represented on the internet, though various individuals and companies have developed keyboards for some of the major languages and there is Microsoft software available in the three major languages of Nigeria (as well as other major African languages, especially those with many speakers who are also literate in them)(Djité, 2008). Therefore Djité (2008) recommends “software localization”, which he reports, has the capacity to positively impact people’s perception of their language.

Adegbija (2004:241) warns that,

> As long as present language policies in Nigeria remain, the current position and status of English will most likely remain unassailable, and its future will be solidly secure, while the statuses of the indigenous languages will remain threatened and their position jeopardized … It has grave implications for the indigenous languages being able to make the necessary contribution to Nigeria’s national development. Urgent action therefore needs to be taken to ensure their security.

He therefore urges, as does Alexander (2003), for Africa generally, "bold language policy change in favour of the indigenous languages" because, without this support, there will be large-scale shifting of the indigenous languages to English, particularly by the present younger generation, who were born in the cities, and the families they are forming. He concludes that English "lures” them by its "status, functional power, and intrinsic value ... both within Nigeria and globally” (Adegbija, 2004:239).

Obolo attitudes towards English

Having reviewed the growing evidence for the hegemony of English, first on a global scale and then, more specifically in Nigeria, I now report the views of participants in the present study on this issue. There was in fact abundant evidence of the hegemony of English among the Obolo people. Its influence was felt in a wide range of ways, including the social recognition it bestows on those able to speak it and the pride associated with its use.

English gives you recognition and admiration

Traditionally in African cultures, good oratory skills are valued (Ndofirepi & Ndofirepi, 2012:20,22); see also the discussion of status in the section on Obolo attitudes above). Those who have good oratory skills wield influence in society, where decisions are mostly made by consensus. Increasingly, however, the prestige associated with being a 'wise' man with good oratory skills in Obolo is seen as limited to Obolo land; to exercise authority outside this territory requires fluency in English. As a young father, who is also a University student, explained:

> The person who is educated [i.e. speaks English] has respect, he is listened to, he has influence on people. Because nowadays it is education that takes you "outside". If you are educated ... they beg you, they say, "You decide", "You speak on behalf of our town/our community", "You speak on behalf of the country where you stay". [Urban Empl. FG7 F]

This same city dweller also reflected:

> .... people who haven't gone to school can also be wise. But that wisdom of theirs, is limited to inside the community … they cannot recite something in pubic. Their wisdom is located within their family …

The reason that "They cannot recite something in public" is not, of course, that they are not good public speakers, but because they cannot do so in English. For any public address outside a traditional ceremony, or a meeting of the village on internal issues, the tendency is now to use English (personal observation).

This participant is by no means isolated in his views. In a similar vein, a member of the urban elite, a politician, reported that what he really wanted for his children, especially the girls, was for them to be able to express themselves well in English, in order to exert influence in (the wider) society:

> Because what I learned in public life in which we work is, what really makes a person count is two things: the money you have in your pocket, and the words that come out of your mouth. So, if a girl comes forward and can speak English, and that English is correct, and she also has a little sum in her bag, then immediately people give a rousing applause! (He laughs) Well, I see how.... [Elite FG8 E]

Another elite father does not mind if his children become artists or business people, "*provided they speak English, which gives them a position"*. As an example, he tells about one of his sons who left engineering to play the organ, and to the satisfaction of the father, is making a good living of it, enough for him to marry and to provide for his growing family.

As a result of this change of values, there is a clash of leadership in Obolo. Several Obolo towns have had significant chieftaincy tussles in recent times, even to the extent of spilling blood. Communities are divided about the question who is fit to fill the chieftaincy role: the "wise" person who has become chief along traditional lines, or the more educated person who nowadays, by virtue of his ability to communicate in English, commands more respect both "at home" and in the wider society.

Knowing English, a matter of pride; not knowing English, a matter of shame

The command of English, then, emerged from both interviews and focus group discussions as something to be proud of. By the same token the inability to speak the language is perceived as shameful. To be identified as someone who does not know English is embarrassing. For instance, an urban woman initially mentioned only "our mothers at home" [Urban Empl.FG7] as those with English and would benefit from "interpretation" or instruction through the mother tongue, though later she conceded that "young" women like herself might also benefit from their

children's textbooks in Obolo. It is certainly my observation that people are reluctant to indicate that they need interpretation in Obolo, thus exposing their "ignorance".

The shame associated with limited English is also apparent in religious domains. Many Obolo-speaking pastors preach in English to entirely Obolo congregations using an interpreter. An Igbo missionary working in Obolo land offered an explanation for this choice:

> It is much more effective to evangelize using the local dialect than English. But in the ministry (i.e. public preaching and teaching in church) we use English so that people know that we have learnt something! … If you don't do it, too, they will feel that you are dumb!" (fieldwork notes, p.102–3).

Another reason for this pattern, of course, is that pastors do their theological studies on the mainland in English, and it is initially harder for them to preach in Obolo when they have not yet learned the theological terms in the language. (This is why courses were held to familiarize Obolo pastors with the reading of the Obolo Bible. In the translated Bible they find the terminology and the expressions they need.)

In all public gatherings, except for some purely traditional occasions, formal speeches are given in English, usually read, with printed copies for the audience. This is done, even when the vast majority of the audience are Obolo people and large numbers struggle to understand English. This was most striking on the occasion of the dedication of the Obolo version of the Bible in May 2014. It was planned that on the day itself there would be speeches and a comprehensive and illustrated programme booklet with the speeches included. There was, however, no mention as to which language(s) would be used. In my role as Literacy Consultant, I proposed that some of the most important speeches should be given in Obolo, with interpretation or summaries in English. Initial support for this proposal soon gave way to vocal opposition, with one church leader shouting:

> This occasion in Obolo? We will have Governors of State coming. People from other regions too. Big people, will come. To translate from Obolo will not be good! Let it be that those who speak good English will speak it! If it

> is going to be translated, it could be we will be shamed, the kind of English they will speak ... Instead, let us have good English, and translation to Obolo for our elderlies!

Several other loud voices shouted their agreement. One wanted to avoid “risking that people will say again that these riverine people don’t know how things are done!” Another demanded, “The program will be done in English! They will write it in English!” [Blue notebook: fieldwork notes, pp. 105-6]

Conclusion

In this chapter I surveyed the socio-linguistic dynamics of the wider region of sub-Saharan Africa to see how they shaped language attitudes. It emerged that, both in the wider region and in Nigeria, an important legacy of colonialism is the heightened status of colonial over indigenous languages and cultures. The issue is, however, more nuanced. While there is no shortage of evidence of the hegemony of English, analysis of the ethnolinguistic vitality of Obolo suggests that it is nonetheless a suitable candidate for inclusion in a bilingual education programme because of its perceived ethnolinguistic vitality which depends, among other reasons, on its development status, the present-day high political status of Obolo people, the consistent institutional support of OLBTO, and the level of institutional support shown by representatives of other institutions at highly publicized occasions celebrating achievements in Obolo language.

Chapter 8: Obolo attitudes towards bilingual education

Introduction

In the previous chapter we explored attitudes towards both Obolo and English, issues with obvious implications for parents, and thus for the implementation and promotion of bilingual education. In the present chapter, we deepen this discussion to look more specifically at receptiveness towards the use of Obolo in bilingual education. Our focus here, then, is on presenting data which answer the third of the research questions: what are the attitudes towards the use of Obolo in the context of bilingual education?

In order to provide a context for this discussion, I start by examining the provision of bilingual education in Africa more generally before describing language in education policy and its implementation in Nigeria, and three experimental programmes in the country. At this point, I present an analysis of the data collected through the focus group discussions and interviews with education executives relating to participants' views on the prospect of bilingual education involving Obolo and English.

Bilingual education in Africa

A. Bamgbose (1991) describes Sub-Saharan Africa as an "inheritance situation" where colonial history has continuing influence on language in education policy (see also chapter 7). Obondo (2008) tells how the colonizing nations applied two different strategies: the French and the Portuguese sought to assimilate the people in their territories and therefore rejected all use of indigenous languages in education. She terms this group "the "anti-users". Meanwhile the "pro-users" are Britain, Belgium, and Germany, who allowed some use of the indigenous

languages. Britain, which ruled more African territories than the others in this group, initially allowed missionaries to deliver education mainly in indigenous languages on account of the policy of indirect rule which required only a select group who spoke English to relate both to the colonial administration and the local population. Over time, these English-speaking Africans became an influential elite.

Although the “anti-users” allowed only European languages in schools, very few succeeded learning the language well, giving rise in these countries, too, to an elite competent in the languages of the (former) colonial masters. At the time of independence the elite class in each country became the political leaders of the newly formed nation. Consequently, at the time of independence, almost every new African nation continued with a similar language-in-education policy (Alexander, 2000; Obondo, 2008), with either no use of indigenous languages, or a limited use for the one to three years of initial education.

Only three countries were bold enough to extend the duration of the use of indigenous languages: Tanzania, Somalia, and Ethiopia.

In Tanzania, Obondo (2008) records that, after independence, Kiswahili was adopted as the national language and the language of education as it was already widely used in the country. By 2004, it was estimated that about 99 percent of the population spoke Swahili, mostly as a second language (Brock-Utne (2005) cited by Sa (n.d.)). Although many other languages are spoken, none has been included in the education policy. Kiswahili is used in primary education but, because initially there were no books for secondary education, English was used in the hope that Kiswahili would ultimately replace English in secondary school and tertiary education (Ngonyani, n.d.). Under the socialist regime, it was envisioned that the youth would stay in rural areas to contribute to development there, and that English would be of limited use. Yet, it never was replaced with Kiswahili either during the socialist era, or up to the present. Though English is hardly spoken in any sphere of life outside school, it remains the language of instruction from secondary school onwards. This situation has been maintained, despite very poor secondary school results. According to Ngonyani (n.d.:14) this happened because of fear of “isolation”. In more recent years, after the period of socialism, the rising hegemony of English through the global economy keeps Tanzanians questioning

whether it would be wise to change from English medium to Kiswahili because international aid is accessed through English and because it is more attractive to international companies if the work force speaks English (Mohammed, 2015; see also Tembe and Norton's 2011 discussion of Tanzania's language policy by neighbouring Ugandans). Brock-Utne (2012b) reports that the Tanzanian islands of Zanzibar first replaced Kiswahili with English as the medium of instruction in primary education. Then, in 2015, president Jakaya Kikwete announced a change-over to Kiswahili for secondary and tertiary education, a policy which has been widely debated in the media (Mohammed, 2015).

In Somalia, Somali was the medium of instruction in both primary and secondary education until, following the civil war of the 1990s, English and/or Arabic replaced it in secondary education. Obondo (2008) surmises that an important influence of the earlier decision to use Somali in education may have been the fact that two European languages were used in their territory, with the Northern part (colonized by Britain) using English, while the Southern part (colonized by Italy) used Italian. Another reason for the choice of Somali as the national language was that it was by far the most widely spoken language, with the other indigenous languages used by significantly smaller numbers (Simons & Fennig, 2017).

Finally, in Ethiopia, initially, from the 1940s, Amharic became the language of education at all levels (ignoring the existence of many other languages); from 1991, all languages have been considered equal and can be used in education up to Grade 8. Significantly, Ethiopia did not experience colonisation as other countries of sub-Saharan Africa did. It only experienced occupation from Italy for the brief period between 1936 and 1941, when it was recognized as a sovereign state. As a result, Ethiopians did not suffer the same consequences of colonisation as other sub-Saharan countries, and they were able to follow a different approach to language policy. Initially, in the 1940s, Emperor Haile-Selassie made Amharic the medium of instruction in education. This choice was certainly facilitated by the fact that Amharic languages as well as Ge’ez, an ancient related language, had been used in the traditional system of education of the nineteenth century. In addition, it could be argued that because these Ethiopian languages had been written using an ancient Ethiopian syllabary, Ethiopians would have had no doubt that they were useful instruments for education. The later socialist government

continued the use of Amharic for formal education (1974-1991). With the new government of 1991, however, there was a reaction against the domination of Amharic (Bloor & Tamrat, 1996). Since 1994, the Constitution states that Amharic is the official language of the country, but it also recognizes all Ethiopian languages as equal, and the various states are to determine which of their languages they recognize as official (UNICEF, 2016citing Ambatchew, 2010). According to Ethnologue, there are 69 languages in Ethiopia (Lewis et al., 2016).

Ethiopia's mother tongue-based decentralized program of education has become the most progressive on the continent, with mother tongue as medium of instruction from Grades 1 to 8, and then a switch to English as medium of instruction from Grade 9 – 12 and onwards in higher education. More than 30 languages are presently used in education (UNICEF, 2016). English is taught as a subject from primary 1, while Amharic is added as a subject from either primary three or primary 5. As yet, not all languages have materials for all the years of mother tongue instruction, but those languages that don't yet have them are in the process of developing such materials. Implementation of the policy also varies by region, with some desiring to only use mother tongues in the lower primary grades, while others continue to primary six, instead of Grade 8. Presently there is, however, as elsewhere, a strong pull towards English and consequently a tendency to introduce English earlier as the medium of instruction. Yet outside education, English has hardly any function in society in Ethiopia. It is also very clear from comparative research that the regions with up to 8 years of mother tongue education produce much better results all round, including English, than those with fewer years, (Heugh, Bogale, Benson, & Yohannes, 2007); see also chapter 3, Table 3.2). The motivations for using English in Ethiopia are to be better prepared for higher education, and for "international opportunity" (Heugh et al., 2007). At the same time, for "historical reasons" (UNICEF, 2016), Amharic, the official and most widely spoken language of the country, is not used as a medium of education at any level, even though in this setting it would be a much more efficient and effective means of instruction for higher education. It appears then that in countries without historic ties to English through colonization, such as Ethiopia, and Tanzania, with Zanzibar, as well as in some former French colonies,

globalization has brought growing pressure to “Englishize” (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000).

In spite of evidence of the greater effectiveness of bilingual education, progress has been slow and disappointing. ADEA (2006) reports that the practice in the majority of countries was “the use of the official/foreign language as the primary and ultimate MoI”, with a marked lack of political will to implement existing language policies that favour the use of African languages. There are also more and more English-medium private schools across Africa where the elite and all who can afford it send their children instead of the regular government schools. Rubagumya, Afitska, Clegg, and Kiliku (2011) claim, however, that they follow this course of action not because these schools use English as the medium of instruction, but rather because they are better resourced. Significantly, Brock-Utne (2012b) offers evidence that, with extra resources, government schools teaching in Kiswahili can outperform the elite private schools.

More recently, however, from the turn of the new millennium, there has been a growing interest in bilingual education. Obondo (2008) reports that, as the great majority of countries made either no use of indigenous languages or limited use in lower primary grades, there was growing dissatisfaction with this course of action, leading to various experiments to increase the use of indigenous languages (see also A. Bamgbose, 2004). In countries where only a former colonial language had been used, the experiments have been mainly with Early Transitional models (see chapter 3), while in former British colonies there have been attempts to introduce additional years of instruction in MT/Language of Wider Communication (LWC, of which an early forerunner in Nigeria will be discussed in greater detail below. Increasing numbers of indigenous languages are now being used in education in Africa (A. Bamgbose, 2004).

A similar rise in interest in the unfulfilled potential of indigenous languages has been noted in other settings where the hegemony of English threatens to squeeze the more local languages out of existence. As Riagáin (2013:2) observes,

> the movement toward a new, more radical, phase of globalization and political integration is proceeding, side by side, with a growing reassertion of local, regional, and ethnic interests.

This changing trend appears to be reflected also in more positive attitudes to bilingual education (Igboanusi, 2014). Trudell and Young (2016:6) report that, in addition to Ethiopia, Uganda and Ghana have started to prepare for, or are already implementing additive bilingual education country-wide (see also Rosekrans et al., 2012 for Ghana), (even though in Ghana there remain signs of strong political reluctance (Napo, 2017; see also Opoku-Amankwa et al., 2015)). One of the most encouraging developments is in Mozambique. Benson (2002) reports that an initial experiment spread to 70 schools and 16 languages, and plans to roll bilingual education out nationwide by 2017. A number of writers (see, for instance Benson, 2010; Chimbutane, 2009) draw attention to the debate around the various models of delivery of the programmes (see also chapter 3).

Bilingual education in Nigeria

Language in education policies

Since the end of the nineteenth century, in the southern territories of Nigeria, in Yoruba and Igbo land, the Niger-Delta and also further north in the Middle belt, churches were established, and many people were also eager for Western education so that schools proliferated. Most missionaries learned the local languages for their mission outreach, and also translated/wrote instructional materials in these languages, including translation of the Bible or sections of it (Adegbija, 2004). Government, however, needed English speaking clerks, policemen, and other staff who could communicate with the colonial administrators, and so gave financial support to schools where English was taught. As a result, the mission schools, after a foundation in the local language, taught English (Adegbija, 2004). In 1920 the Phelps-Stoke Commission was established to examine cooperation between missionaries and government in education in Africa. It recommended the teaching of the local “vernacular” in the lower grades of primary education would be included in education, a model of bilingual education later known as Early Transitional Bilingual Education which continued in all subsequent policy documents, both colonial and post-colonial (Fabunmi, 2005). The first National Policy on Education (NPE), in1977 offered subsequently

unfulfilled promises of language development and provision of textbooks in all Nigerian languages by Government. Revisions in 1981, 1988, 2004, 2007 and 2013, remained essentially the same in terms of language provision. In 1988, however, additional provision was made for the three major languages, Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo. It was made mandatory for all secondary school students to learn one of these languages of Nigeria up to the final examination, the WAEC (West African Examination Council). At the same time, students could also optionally study their mother tongue/"the language of the environment" up to the end of Junior Secondary School. Thus the NPE has since 1988 followed a three language model of multilingual education, as has been recommended for countries where there is one or more lingua franca: in this case, the mother tongue, the regional lingua franca, and the international language of wider communication (Heugh, 2006a:58):58). By the latest edition of the National Policy on Education NPE (2013), however, it is no more mandatory to study one of these three major languages, nor any other indigenous language up to the WAEC, even though, "a Nigerian language" is still an optional subject

Despite the long-standing NPE policy, implementation has been partial at best (Igboanusi :565). In the institutions for teacher education, it has not been mandatory to take a Nigerian language as a subject[9], and in most cases, there is no provision for its teaching in these institutions, except for the three major languages which are offered as an elective. Thus a credit in a Nigerian language is not required of teachers, even though according to the national policies, they are to teach reading and writing and numeracy in "the language of the environment" of the child. In most Nigerian languages there are no instructional materials or textbooks, so that most teachers only use the children's languages for oral explanations. Even in the major Nigerian languages, the teaching materials that were developed are rarely accessible to students and teachers (see below). It appears that in the north, much use is made of Hausa, both in education and also in formal Government settings – but seldom in written form, or using pedagogies suitable for bilingual education. They are, however, using it to teach all subjects,

[9] The recent National Teacher Education Policy (Federal Ministry of Education, 2014) now stipulates that "The curriculum for the ECCE (Early Childhood Care and Education) and PE (Primary Education) streams shall include the learning of the language of the environment" (Federal Ministry of Education, 2014):17.3. This is yet to be implemented.

both in rural and in urban areas, a practice referred to as "near-regular bilingual education". Igboanusi and Peter (2016), who, following Zhou (2001), also describe the situation in the two other major languages as "occasional bilingual education" where the language is used only in public schools, and mostly in rural areas, while the minority language states are described as "without bilingual education" both in urban and in rural areas as well as in private and public schools (Igboanusi & Peter, 2016:565):565). In these states, there is most emphasis on English, with basically English-medium education (Igboanusi & Peter, 2016). As Igboanusi and Peter (2016) assert, the well-known negative consequences of the use of an official/foreign language as the only/major medium of instruction in basic education are easy to observe:

> While mass failures are usually recorded in major secondary school final examinations, the declining quality of university graduates is of public knowledge. Several factors, (including the non-use of the child's L1 as a medium of instruction, which results in lack of a solid background) are responsible for these examination outcomes. (Igboanusi & Peter, 2016:564):564.

Despite the limited use of Nigerian languages in education, Benson (2005:5) considers that "a solid place for Nigerian languages has been established in formal schooling"; most people interviewed in her study felt there was value in the use of Nigerian languages not only in lower primary grades, but all the way through the schooling system. Igboanusi (2008b) provides support for this position, reporting that a majority of the 1,000 stakeholders in education (65.2%) responding to his survey, preferred education in English *and* mother tongue, and that the majority, (61.1%), also wanted it to be used at least to the end of primary school. A substantial proportion (24.8%) wanted mother tongue to have a place even up to senior secondary school certificate level. More recently, there has also been progress on the clarification of the NPE and its provisions through the most recent edition (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013), and the National Teacher Education Policy, (Federal Ministry of Education, 2014). Together these spell out exactly what the envisioned model of bilingual education entails for every level of education, and also contain some helpful directives for teacher education. Although the NPE is as yet hard to access, the National Teacher Education Policy

is freely accessible on the internet for wider dissemination of the information. These efforts seem to indicate a growing desire to implement the policy and integrate Nigerian languages in education. However, even though there are some hopeful signs, Igboanusi and Peter (2016) in a later study, where the surveys are complemented with interviews and observations, caution that interview data and especially observations show that actions often do not match what is reported, and that people continue "to play politics" privately, seeking to circumvent the official bilingual policy in Nigeria, and rather re-affirming the status quo by sending their children to private English-medium schools. Igboanusi and Peter (2016) therefore recommend that, as in India, the policy should be mandatory in all schools, including private ones.

Interestingly, two of the most successful and well-documented bilingual education projects in Africa – the Six Year Primary Project (SYPP) in Yoruba, and the Rivers Readers Project – took place in Nigeria. In the following section, these two projects, as well as the Obolo pilot project will be described in turn.

Six Year Yoruba Primary Project

Yoruba is one of the three national languages of Nigeria, with more than 15 million speakers in the South-Western states of Nigeria. It is also a LWC for many others. Fafunwa (1989) reports that the researchers at the University of Ife who, in 1970, launched the *Six Year Primary P*roject (SYPP) in Yoruba, believed that, unlike the existing system which favoured the children of the elite, using the mother tongue as the "natural" medium of instruction in primary education would allow a "maximum number" of African children to thrive in all subjects, at the same time as learning English, the official language. It was also their desire to offer a suitable education for African children, (in this case Yoruba), by including their cultural heritage in the curriculum and pedagogy with a view to developing balanced human beings, able to live harmoniously within their communities at the same time as contributing meaningfully to the progress of the nation. The project was funded with a grant from the Ford Foundation.

The schools where the experiment took place were well-resourced with books in both Yoruba and English. (Fasokun, 2000), for instance, reports that 183

textbooks were produced, mostly in Yoruba but also some in English, including textbooks, teachers' guides, and supplementary Yoruba readers. Some of these, for instance mathematics and science books, were translated into English so that they could serve as models for materials to be written in other Nigerian languages. A new curriculum was developed, as well as Yoruba terminology for the teaching of language, mathematics, social and cultural studies, and science. The curricula and terminology lists were later used by the Nigerian Educational Research & Development Council (NERDC), one of the Federal institutions for the development of Nigerian languages and National Institute for Nigerian Languages (NINLAN) for translation and adaptation into the other major languages, Hausa and Igbo, as well as for some "regional languages" and as models for minority languages (Emenanjo, n.d., as cited in Benson, 2005; Fasokun, 2000). Unfortunately they have often been hard to access to for purposes of research and practical application in language education, both at NERDC (Benson, 2005) and at NINLAN offices (Adekola, 2007). A team of subject specialists and linguists worked together with people from the community who were considered sages or "language experts" on whose understanding they were able to draw. These local "language experts" also drew on the wealth of oral literature and recorded and interpreted cultural ceremonies. In addition, parents of pupils were engaged to teach their children about cultural issues.

Fafunwa (1989) reports that the teaching in the original experimental classes started in one school in the township of Ile-Ife in1970, with new intakes into Primary 1 in each consecutive year. In 1973, the project was expanded to 10 "proliferation" schools, five of which were rural schools. The control classes, which were all in urban schools, followed the "traditional" model with Yoruba as medium of instruction from Primary 1 to 3, and a switch-over to English as medium of instruction at the beginning of Primary 4. Both the experimental classes and some of the control classes used the new curriculum and books developed by the project, and the teachers in both were trained how to teach the subjects, using these books. Both groups were also introduced to pedagogy for teaching Yoruba language. Each year, the pupils in both the experimental and the control classes were tested. From grade five onward, both the original and the proliferation experimental classes clearly outperformed the control classes, especially in

English and Yoruba language, but also in the content subjects: mathematics, social and cultural studies, and science. In the meantime, it was observed that drop-out rates were down to a mere 10% in the experimental classes, while they were at 30% for the control group, compared to the 40–60% drop-out rate for the nation at that time (Fasokun, 2000). Fasokun (2000) reports that when the original experimental classes took the First School Leaving Certificate Examination in 1975, all the pupils passed, while a number of pupils in the control classes failed. Fafunwa (1989) reports that the students were followed up in some of the secondary schools in Ile-Ife and it was found that the great majority consistently achieved above average results. Fasokun (2000) reports that, of the intake of pupils in the proliferation schools in 1973, more than one third were found by 1987 to have finished University studies, a higher than average proportion. Confirming the findings of research elsewhere (see chapter 3), it became clear that the experimental classes, including those in the ten proliferation schools, lost nothing by having all the content subjects taught in Yoruba, but outperformed students in the control classes in Yoruba and English.

Okedara and Okedara (1992:94) citing Fafunwa (1989) observe that the pupils in the experimental classes had more "self-reliance, resourcefulness, and ... were happier as a group as compared with the control group", and point out that additional "cultural and motivational value" is associated with the use of mother tongue. They observe that the acquisition of literacy in Yoruba, the language of their cultural heritage, apparently gave the children enough “confidence, enthusiasm, and motivation to learn English and its associated cultural values" (Okedara & Okedara, 1992:94).

Aaron (1998) notes that, for the five rural proliferation schools, the additional years of bilingual education appeared to close the gap in achievement usually observed between rural and urban schools in Nigeria. It is known that rural schools are disadvantaged compared with urban schools, in relation to low exposure to English in the environment (including news papers,radio, TV, and internet), and less well equipped schools. Yet, as was the case in the urban proliferation schools, the five rural proliferation schools scored considerably higher on the project tests in all subjects than the urban project control classes (Fafunwa, 1989:98).

Fafunwa (1989:12) highlights the role that low levels of teacher competence in English played in this process. The team that developed the experiment had known from experience over the years that teachers were not sufficiently competent in English to use it as a medium of instruction in primary education. Indeed, during the experiment, it was found that they needed to employ the services of teachers who were specialized in English to teach it as a subject. It should therefore be noted that the achievements in English of the proliferation schools were lower than those of the original set, possibly because they were unable to benefit from specialist teachers. Yet, as noted above, they performed better than the control classes and it is therefore possible to argue that curriculum and textbooks in Yoruba helped not only the pupils but also the teachers' performance in English.

The findings from this project thus offer support for Cummin's theory of Common Underlying Proficiency (see chapter 3). They suggest that the understanding of the key concepts the pupils gained through the medium of Yoruba was responsible for their improved performance across the curriculum. It would appear that in Nigeria, as elsewhere, the use of bilingual education with the mother-tongue as the main medium of instruction for six years, has strong additive effects. Drawing on this evidence, Benson (2002) warns political leaders seeking to improve education by establishing mother tongue-based bilingual education, not to reduce the years of mother tongue instruction, but rather to pay attention to the findings of research that show that "good models produce good results".

Initially, the success of the project led to further proliferation. Fasokun (2000) reports that the Government of Oyo State embarked from 1985 on a state-wide trial, involving more than 60,000 pupils and 2,100 teachers. He also claims that by 1988 some of the books from the project, including those translated into other Nigerian languages, were being used in 21 states. Moreover, by 2000, more than two million pupils were using at least some of these Yoruba books. Ouane (2003) reports that in 1991, five of the Yoruba States held a teacher training workshop for teachers on the use of the MT in teaching content subjects with the help of the project curriculum and books.

However, the project failed to attract ongoing support from the government, and was gradually sidelined and forgotten. This was arguably because the new official National Policy on Education of 1977 and its later revisions (see Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013) continued to be one of Early Transition (Adegbija, 2000:96; Benson, 2002). In addition, as Obondo (2008) observes, problems associated with the implementation of additive bilingual education are common, often due to the demands of parents who assume that their children will learn English better when only English is used as the medium of instruction, and the actions of politicians who pursue a "short-cut" model of bilingual education (early-transition) (see chapter 3 for further discussion). Igboanusi (2014) and Igboanusi and Peter (2016), recognizing the political sensitivity around the use of Nigerian languages for instruction, advise that researchers should work together closely with politicians to promote their understanding of the advantages of bilingual education for achieving quality education, and so to achieve the enforcement of the implementation of the language policy in schools .

Rivers Readers Project

The Rivers Readers Project (RRP), spearheaded by Professor Kay Williamson and colleagues at the University of Port Harcourt, with the cooperation of the Rivers State Ministry of Education, also dates back to 1970 and was sponsored by a grant from the Ford Foundation (Adegbija, 2004). The purpose of this project was to provide materials for initial literacy teaching in Primary 1–3 in the languages of the state, for the purpose of Early Transition Bilingual education (Orekan, 2011). The then Rivers State was highly multilingual with over thirty minority languages within its borders (Adegbija, 2004; Orekan, 2011)[10]. The sizes of the pupil populations of the languages ranged between 1,200 and over 40,000 students (Orekan, 2011). Linguistics students as well as visiting researchers were co-opted to describe the phonology of the languages and to draw up tentative orthographies for them. Many of these students worked on their own native languages (observation and personal communication, Enene N. Enene, 2012). The project published orthography manuals, readers and teachers' notes, and dictionaries, and Emenanjo (1990:94) cited in Adegbija (2004:222) reports that 62

[10] Subsequently, Rivers State has been split into two: Bayelsa and the present Rivers State.

publications were eventually produced in 21 languages. (Adegbija, 2004) claims that because of the RRP, Rivers State is linguistically more developed than any other state in the Federation, with orthographies and primers prepared in all of its languages which “are all, to some extent, used in education”. The project contacted well-qualified teachers, linguists, and other important figures from each ethnolinguistic group to organise a meeting with community representatives to discuss the orthography proposal and assess it for adoption by the community (Orekan, 2011). Often they would then form a Language Committee to facilitate further work on the development of the language including, for instance, an introductory book, which could be used by teachers and others who could already read in English to familiarize themselves with the way the language was written. Such books, called “Reading and Writing ...” were prepared in every language. They contained bilingual word lists, a brief explanation of the writing system, and some sample stories. After this, one to three readers or “primers” would be adapted and translated from a model in English, with an accomanying teachers’ guide (Personal communication, Nicholas Faraclas, a PhD researcher working with the project). In addition, some teacher training workshops were held in the state capital to train trainers for each ethnolinguistic group. Although this project raised initial interest in the respective communities, teaching did not continue for long, and the project activities gradually came to an end (Personal communication, Prof. K. Williamson). Orekan (2011:33) citing Adegbija (2004) lists the following as weaknesses of the project:

a) lack of adequate support from the national authorities;
b) lack of sufficient sources of funding;
c) absence of fully trained and committed linguists; and
d) absence of a systematic method of evaluation.

The linguistic work was led by Prof. Kay Williamson, assisted by her PhD students and others from foreign Universities. Under the supervision of Prof. Williamson, undergraduate students also supplied data and some analysis of their own languages. The contributions of these students were helpful for the development of the orthographies used for the writing of readers, and also for greater involvement of educated people from the respective ethnolinguistic groups in the development of their languages. There was no evidence, however, of the practical

involvement of the Ministry of Education in the project; no financial support, for instance, was forthcoming when the grant from the Ford Foundation came to an end; nor were the project outcomes used to inform any Ministry programme.

By the same token, there was no evaluation of the language teaching program in schools. My personal observation suggested that there was no systematic pedagogy for the teaching of the reading and writing of the languages. The readers were translated from an English version (probably a back translation of the original in one of the Ijọ languages) and the teachers were not given sufficient guidance as to how to teach in their language. Moreover, many of these languages had no other printed literature apart from these few school books, and there was no wider ongoing development that would be required to generate more literature in the language. This lack of materials in their language was unlikely to motivate either teachers or the pupils and their parents to devote effort to the enterprise.

One off-shoot of the project was that all undergraduate students at the University were required to take two courses in Applied Linguistics, including a project on the phonology and orthography of their own native language. This was still the practice in the mid-1990s (Personal communication, Enene N. Enene, 2012). This would have instilled in the students some appreciation of the possibility of literacy in their languages.

The project was discontinued in the late 1980s. Early in the new millennium, representatives of language committees that had worked with the former RRP, led by some of their indigenous linguists and other language specialists, formed the ARSLA, the Association of Rivers State languages. They lobbied for the submission of a bill to the State House of Assembly for the enforcement of the teaching of mother tongue in Rivers State schools (Personal communications, C. Utong, the then Secretary, 2005). This was voted into law in 2003 ("The Rivers State Readers Project," 2012). An offshoot of their activism was the creation of an office under the Ministry of Education to continue with the work of the defunct Rivers Readers Project, under the new name the Rivers State Readers Project. Building on the work of the former RRP, accounts of the orthographies of 14 Rivers State languages were submitted to NERDC and were then officially

approved by them (published in NERDC (2011); see also www. nerdc.org), bringing the number of NERDC-approved languages in the State up to 17 ("The Rivers State Readers Project," 2012). They also “translated” the NERDC-produced curriculum for the teaching of the “language of the immediate environment” for the UBE (Universal Basic Education), Grades 1 – 9, into English and made it available to representatives of language communities of Rivers in 2009. Unfortunately, this curriculum does not include the teaching of reading and writing, except for a few occasional lessons where language readers can be used. Consequently, it was not very helpful for languages such as Obolo, where literacy was already taught in the language. In the meantime, while a few linguists were working on the presentation of the orthographies through the Rivers State Readers Project, the Association of Rivers State Languages was sidelined and became dormant. There is also no indication that during this period these language committees were seeking to encourage the local teaching of their respective languages in schools. However, under the current political dispensation, the Rivers State Readers Project has again been scrapped. Very recently, (June, 2017), interested representatives of the various language groups, together with representatives of the Ministry of Education, held another meeting to attempt to re-institute the Rivers State Readers Project under new leadership with the purpose of developing a curriculum for the teaching of “the language of the environment” and to train special teachers for it (personal communication with OLBTO, 23-6-2017).

The Rivers Readers Project has thus demonstrated that it is practicable even in highly multilingual areas to develop materials for initial instruction in “the language of the environment” in a relatively short time, and in this case, at relatively low cost (most books, except for the children’s readers, were mimeographed). It left a legacy of orthographies and introductory readers for the respective ethnolinguistic groups and Government to use or to build on for later bilingual education in the area. The project also provides a model for linguists, and university departments, (and possibly NGOs and arms of government) working together with ethnolinguistic communities. Significantly, when the later Rivers State Readers Project started operating under the State Ministry of Education, it appears that it was no longer under the aegis of ARSLA and the language committees they represented. Therefore, none or very limited work was done at the micro-level, and

is therefore likely to have had little impact on the communities in question and their use of the languages.

The Obolo pilot project

It was through the efforts of the RRP that the Obolo Language Committee was formed. Williamson (1976, 1979, 1990, 1992) cited in Adegbija (2004) described Obolo as being "notable for having an active language committee". In their case, the language committee initially consisted of a large group of prominent teachers who went about the project work with much enthusiasm. A pilot programme was launched in three schools from 1985–1991 (Aaron, 1998), which, amongst other benefits, showed Primary 6 pupils' higher achievement in writing essays (both in English and in Obolo), and provided initial training for all primary school teachers in workshops from 1988 onwards. A contributing factor to the initial popularity of the Obolo Language program in schools was the public endorsement and encouragement from the Schools Board and the Ministry of Education, both at local and state levels (Aaron, 1998). Initially, the school teachers, through the local branch of the National Union of Teachers (NUT), raised funds for the printing of the first reader in Obolo (see discussion of Rivers Readers Project, above). Teacher training workshops were organised by the Schools Board, under the auspices of the Chief Supervisor, who was also one of the leaders of the Obolo Language and Bible Translation Project (OLBTP) committee. Teachers, through their union, continued to contribute financially, and during this Chief Supervisor's term in office, their contributions were deducted directly from their salaries. Contributions in both cash and kind came from individuals, especially the teachers, and with the support of the Government, particularly at the local level. The Commissioner of Education of the former (larger) Rivers State, retired Captain Elechi Amadi, graced the closing occasion of the first Obolo teacher training workshop, which was held zone by zone in 1988. This provided a huge boost to the program, constituting official endorsement from the highest level. In 1989 the OLBTP secured a grant from the dormant Rivers Readers Project for half the cost of a large print run of the second reader, published by the Ministry of Education,

Rivers State, in conjunction with the Rivers Readers Project with the colours of the national flag on the cover.

In later years however, the education authorities at the local level were much more passive, giving permission for the teachers to attend the workshops during school time, but not organising the workshops or publically endorsing the program. In 1996, the local branch of the National Union of Teachers again raised some funds towards workshops for the teaching of Obolo and in the following years workshops were held twice (Ene-Awaji, 2015). There was, however, no effort from Government to facilitate and promote this program in the schools, and the OLBTP, weakened by financial constraints, was unable to employ coordinators, even on a part-time basis, and failed to attract the attention of Government officials at State level.

From 2007 to 2014, while the translation of the Old Testament of the Bible was ongoing, there was another concerted effort by OLBTO to invigorate the teaching of Obolo in the schools, with a series of annual one-week workshops from 2007 to 2009, aiming to train all the teachers again. In this period, the Andoni Local Government started to make a regular contribution to the work of OLBTO, and the churches, too, made regular contributions. The invitation to the workshop was accompanied by a letter from the Education Secretary encouraging teachers to attend. While the workshops were well attended there was rising dissatisfaction with the austerity of this provision compared to other workshops regularly organised by the State Government. This was due to the limited finances of OLBTO, which was still unable to contribute to the cost of the voluntary part-time Literacy Coordinator and teacher trainers. Some teachers also voiced their disappointment that, although the invitation for the workshops was accompanied by a letter from the Education Secretary, neither he nor any of the Supervisors of Schools attended to encourage the teachers. Moreover, due to limited finances as well as sickness and eventually the loss of the Literacy Coordinator through death, the planned grand Closing Occasion for the series of workshops failed to materialise, and the opportunity to invite high officials of the State Ministry of Education was missed. Nonetheless, teachers started to teach Obolo again and in 2010, and in the absence of trained supervisors of schools, OLBTO were able to

send out their own (unofficial) supervisors for Obolo Language to encourage the teachers. Obolo Language was again included on the official timetable of the schools. OLBTO staff have also subsequently been producing termly examination papers for the local branch of the association of head teachers in the state. They have published several new editions of the Obolo readers, as well as teacher guides, and vigorously pursued the distribution of the books for sale at schools and churches. However, supervisory reports in 2010-11 and personal observations in nearby schools made it clear that the official school timetables were not being followed and the teaching of Obolo in schools was haphazard. The general laxity of teachers and pupils' irregular and late attendance reduced the time for teaching (see also Chapter 6); Obolo language was clearly considered less important than English and Mathematics and possibly many other subjects in the very crowded curriculum, and was very often left out. As a result, the number of actual teaching hours was insufficient for the children to acquire initial literacy in the language.

Although the initial aim was to teach Obolo Language throughout the primary classes and even through junior secondary school, up to the present, only the readers for Primaries 1 to 3 have been published and circulated. As discussed in chapter 3, basic literacy in the first language is unlikely to produce lasting educational benefits. In spite of appeals from teachers for readers for Primaries 4 to 6, the lack of qualified staff, coupled with the lack of funding, prevented this, and while a team worked on them from 2011 to 2014, they remain unpublished. Moreover, apart from the textbooks for Obolo as a subject, no textbooks for the other subjects were developed in the language. In the absence of corpus development for the teaching of the other subjects, teachers had to use English terminology. The failure of Federal and State Governments to facilitate and promote the use of Nigerian languages in education has, arguably, been the main obstacle to further development.

There was nonetheless evidence of the effectiveness of the pilot project. The programme evaluation, largely based on testing (Afiesimama, 1991), highlighted the higher achievement of Primary 6 pupils in essay writing (both in English and in Obolo). Two retired teachers who participated in one of the focus group

discussions for the present research also threw some interesting light on its benefits:

> They could read, in Obolo-o, in English-o! Their heads were very quick, they were really learning. And they moved on in this way, up to University! Those children were really very knowledgeable! [Rural Empl. FG1 B:101]

The teachers continued, now mentioning the names of some children at that time, who had impressed them as they could already read Bible passages while in Primary 1, “both in Obolo and English,” in the schools where they were teaching. Concluding, the same teacher remarked:

> At that time, teachers didn’t get tired teaching Obolo. Obolo and English! At that time, teachers didn’t get tired teaching Obolo at XXX-school!
>
> D: and also at XYX!
>
> B: But, now, the teachers do not teach Obolo very much anymore.

When asked about the current situation, Mrs. D, also a former Headmistress and participant in this focus group replied: “They come to church and cannot read the Obolo Bible. Yes, they bring Obolo Bible ‘frafrafra’, but they cannot read it”.

Eventually, in 2014 the vision for a private Obolo bilingual education centre was born which would serve as a model school to demonstrate that Obolo language is a valuable resource for more effective instruction (see also chapter 9).

The challenge, then, is to build on the experience of earlier attempts to implement bilingual education and identify the issues likely to constrain or facilitate future efforts. In what follows, I will start by linking the problems encountered in Obolo with those reported more widely in Africa. I will then discuss the range of attitudes within the Obolo community to Mother Tongue Based Bilingual Education.

Critiques of bilingual education in Africa

Many of the issues which limited the success of the Obolo pilot project also affect the attempts to implement bilingual education more widely. Perhaps the most important of these is the lack of an established pedagogy of bilingual education. The official language policy in Nigeria, for instance, advocates the use of the “language of the immediate environment” in Junior Primary grades. However, this policy is implemented in a very limited way. While teachers are free to explain new concepts in the local language, the expectation is that the pupils will learn the English vocabulary for these concepts. Since textbooks in the “language of the environment” (with the terminology in that language) are not readily available, even in the three major languages (Adekola, 2007; Benson, 2005), the teachers introduce new concepts using the English terms, with varying amounts of explanation in the “language of the immediate environment” (Benson, 2005:3ff). Without access to the textbooks and lacking the terminology in the mother tongue, the emphasis, then, is placed on drilling the terminology in English.

A related and recurrent issue concerns examinations which are always in English (Alidou et al., 2006; Benson, 2005:4). As Benson (2005) comments, testing in English conveys the message that mother tongue is not important, and that English is the language that really counts. In her own words, "From a pedagogical perspective, however, the ‘backwash effect’ of testing in English is to devalue the mother tongue" (Benson, 2005:3). This was strongly confirmed in my research. For instance, Executive A. emphasized that it was because of the examinations in English that parents prefer their children to use only English, both at school, and even at home. He insisted therefore that if there was teaching in the mother tongue, then the examinations should be in the mother tongue, too.

Opoku-Amankwa (2009) observing teaching and learning in class rooms in Ghana also raises concerns about over-reliance on English. He notes that the policy of using English only with students who are effective multilingual communicators in several Ghanaian languages, stunts their learning of new concepts and often “blocks” their learning of English. They suffer “language anxiety” and “loss of self esteem”. He concludes:

> Language mediates learning, allowing us to access new information and connect it to what we already know. It is also primarily through language that we are able to demonstrate what we have learned.(p.132)

A related observation concerns inadequate teacher training. There is no provision for the study of local languages in institutes for teacher education, (except that in Nigeria there is an optional specialisation for students of the three major languages.) Students are also not exposed to pedagogy for bilingual education (Benson, 2005:3ff) or pedagogy for teaching English as a Second Language (instead of teaching it as though it is the children's first language), and so are unprepared for the task (Adekola, 2007:8). The National Teacher Institute (NTI) has the problem of centralization: although they have zonal centres in remote rural areas, which would facilitate the inclusion of the (minority) language(s) of a zone, the curriculum is national and the examinations are centrally set and corrected, leaving no room for the teaching of a local language and its pedagogies (Personal observation 2006-2012). With a centrally set curriculum, it appears the Colleges of Education may also be affected in a similar way. This lack of preparation of teachers to teach Nigerian languages was also observed by executive officers I interviewed in the two State Ministries of Education. Executive C observed that in the distant past, when he was a child, children first learned to read and write in the local language. "And so", he says, "when we had Teacher Training College, the trainee teachers were also brought up that way. But somewhere along the line all these things got lost!" [Exec. Interv.C:10]. Executive B. said that the teaching of the languages in basic education "must begin" with teachers having to learn their local languages (reading and writing and oral literature) as a compulsory subject in the Colleges of Education, "If it would be made compulsory for the teachers, incorporated in the program of teacher training colleges ... like English is a must, that would go a long way to help" [Executive Interv. B:8].

The situation is complicated still further in Nigeria because in some states, the practice is to post teachers to any government school in the state rather than to their own language area, so that they do not share a "language of the immediate environment" with the pupils. Secondly, most teachers prefer to be posted to

towns and cities, and always try to transfer from rural to urban areas (Education Executive in Elite Focus Group 8).

As already mentioned, Igboanusi and Peter (2016) conclude from their research on language attitudes in Nigeria that the teaching of Nigerian languages needs to be made compulsory, in private as well as public schools. Probably the only way in which this can be achieved is by making it mandatory to have a pass/credit in the subject at least in Basic Education (BECE) and teacher (NCE) examinations. (Then, in order not to make this a hollow political manoeuvre, the next thing that would need to be done is to create enabling environments to facilitate the development of educational corpus in all the languages.)

Community attitudes to Mother Tongue Based Bilingual Education

Participants displayed a wide range of attitudes towards the role of Obolo in education summarised below. These can be grouped under four main headings: approval of the teaching of Obolo as a subject; rejection of the use of Obolo for the teaching of other subjects; approval of its use as a transitional bridge to English medium education; and enthusiasm for increased use throughout education. The range of attitudes is summarised in table 8.1 below

Table 8.1 Attitudes to Obolo in education

		Types of Respondents				
		Fisherfolk **Total 13**	**Rural employed 12**	**Urban employed 12**	**Elite** **17**	**TOTAL** **54**[11]
As a subject		near universal support				
Transition to English	Reject			1		1
	Primary 1-3			5		5
	Primary 1-6	9	6	3	1	19
	Primary 1 - J.S.S. 3		2		1	3
Maintenance	Primary 1 - S.S.S. 3		1	2	5	8
	Primary 1 - Tertiary education		1	1		2

It should be noted that my question was whether they would be interested in sending their children to a school where Obolo would be the main language of instruction for the content subjects. I did not ask them to specify the duration. Quite a number of people, however, specified the levels where they would like Obolo to be used. Since "School" would normally mean primary school, I assumed that those who reacted positively without further specification, were thinking about the use of Obolo as a medium of instruction up to the end of primary school. This is one reason why the total number for primary 6 is very much higher than all others.

Besides this, there were also several rural employed people as well as several fisherfolk who mentioned that Obolo, just like the three major languages of Nigeria, should also be taught as a subject in Senior Secondary School and written in the West Africa Examination Council (WAEC) examination, the end of secondary school examination. In addition, some elite participants, mentioned that Obolo

[11] The total of participants was 54 but three participants had left before this issue was discussed

should be offered as a course in University, discussing how, through further study, the language could be developed further. One fisherman, qualified as a teacher, proposed it should be a subject in Teacher Education (as is the case for the major languages which are offered as elective courses). Some people, however, did not have a chance to make their opinion heard or did not respond for other reasons. It should also be acknowledged, however, that participant responses often reflected a limited understanding of both the current national language policy and what might be involved in the delivery of effective MTBBE. On a number of occasions, responses suggested that participants were unaware that the National Policy on Education (NPE) stipulates that children initially should be taught in "the language of the immediate environment", and that it can be taught as a subject up to Junior Secondary School. When this information was shared, it provoked a shout from one participant of "Leyi!" (an exclamation of surprise or shock). By the same token, some of the urban dwellers were still unaware that Obolo has been taught in the (public) schools since 1988, (but mostly restricted to Andoni Local Government).

Extracts from focus group discussions which illustrate these various perspectives follow.

Rejection of Obolo

Very occasionally the idea that Obolo should be used as a language of instruction in education was met with derision. This reaction came from a city dweller who argued: "The languages in Nigeria are too many!" She also commented:

> Like a child "at home" who is taught in Obolo in school, if she comes to Port Harcourt (a city), she will not know anything! Because here it is English. The child will be afraid, even if she knows something, she will not be able to say it! … See this lady (the hostess, not a participant in the focus group), they say she should go and teach in Obolo-land. What do you say? "Stop it! God forbid!" [Urban Empl. FG6 E:17]. (Everyone laughs [Urban Empl. FG6].)

Another reason put forward for rejecting its use was that English was the language of examinations, an issue which we have already discussed.

Obolo as a subject

It is notable that none of the participants objected to the teaching of Obolo as a subject. Rather, they press for it to be taught so that the children will know their language better and be able to read and write it (well) [Rural Empl.FG1; Rural Empl.FG1b; Fisherfolk FG3F; Fisherfolk FG4E; Elite FG5; Urban Empl.FG6E; Urban Empl.FG7 E; Elite FG8 B];Elite FG9 B]. There was also a widespread desire that Obolo should be included as a subject in the final Senior Secondary School examinations (WAEC). There is, of course, a difference between the study of Obolo as a subject and its use as a medium of instruction.

Obolo as a transition to English

In contrast, I found in the same urban focus group, where someone entirely rejected the use of Obolo as medium of education for the content subjects, enthusiasm from a teacher participant for the idea of more extensive teaching of the language for initial literacy and also as a medium of instruction from Primary 1 to 3, (i.e. Early Transitional Bilingual education, just as in the present official Policy of Education). For instance, she appreciated that the children “at home” learn better with Obolo as medium of instruction because they understand more. She was in fact keenly aware of the difficulties she and her peers faced as children in their villages, not understanding the language of instruction sufficiently. This view was also expressed by one of the urban fathers who described his experience as a child in the village, where only Obolo was used in home and community:

> It was only when you went to school that you would hear English. So, if they would speak English to you, it would be very difficult for you! For example, I remember ...when we were to read, and when they were teaching us, they always used Obolo to speak ... But immediately you entered Form four, Sir there said this, ‘I don’t want to hear vernacular in my class! Use English!’ Now, we all wanted to speak English because there are some times they would ask in class, ‘Are there any questions?’ But, how to go about expressing it, how to frame that question in English, would be very difficult!

> We would swallow that question! ....You would keep quiet! So, because he stays in that village, English is not easy. They say it all the time, all the time, 'Know English!' That is why it is very difficult for a person! [Urban Empl. FG6 D: 14]

Another father wanted Obolo to be used as language of instruction from Primary 1 to 3, and then English from 4 to 6, "so that the children will quickly understand", just as it was when they were young and had a period called "vernacular". He said, "the person who could not understand the teaching in English, would then have understanding in Obolo". Moreover, he affirmed, "The children would also know their language" [FG6 B:19]. A third father made the point that Obolo language is now more developed and that there are books to teach the children in school, "because there are a lot of things children do not know in Obolo language" [FG6 C:17-8]. In a similar vein, a teacher welcomed the idea of using Obolo for instruction in all the school subjects while English was (initially) taught as a subject only. She affirmed this strongly: "It will be good! It will be good! It will make them understand..."[FG6 A:17]. The same urban mother shared this view:

> That will be good, it will make those children to know things well quickly. Whatever you have taught in Obolo, when they see it in English, they remember it in Obolo, and quickly know what it means... [Urban Empl. FG6:18].

Some participants also expressed the opinion that the education of urban Obolo children is not "complete" unless they know Obolo language and customs. This, however, they saw as the responsibility of the parents to teach, in the home.

Enthusiasm for increased use of Obolo

Most participants were even more enthusiastic about using Obolo as the main medium of instruction. There was also support for Obolo as a medium of instruction in secondary school, though opinion varied as to how long. Most of these wanted Obolo as a medium of instruction throughout primary school (grades 1 – 6) or throughout Basic Education (grades 1 – 9); others thought it would be viable even for Senior Secondary Education (grades 10-12). A student in higher

education, for instance, thought that Obolo should be used “from the start, Primary 1 to 6, and all through Secondary school”, and also as a subject at University [Urban Empl. FG7 F]. This participant also said that she would like their higher-level textbooks translated into Obolo, as she had seen from reading the Bible in Obolo that it would really help her to understand the concepts better. This course of action would require corpus planning and the development of new vocabulary. There are, of course, many examples of such planning for both basic and higher education in countries in Europe such as Wales and for all the official languages of South Africa (Alexander, 2005), Swahili in East Africa and Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo in Nigeria.

Some participants were able to draw on examples of their own experiences of the usefulness of Obolo in teaching not only in the early years of education but also in secondary and even teriary education. A lawyer living in Abuja testified how his study of Obolo language at the beginning of Junior Secondary school helped him to do better in English. A former teacher, he also related how he used to help his students understand the science lessons in Secondary school and was nicknamed “Obolo-English” because he used to explain everything in Obolo. He therefore proposed, “So if this Obolo is being taught right from the Primary school, Secondary school, it will give him more simplicity..... it will just be very, very simple“.

In a similar vein, a teacher described how during her training, she understood the English textbooks much better after the lecturer had explained everything to them in Obolo. She says that after his explanation in Obolo, she would “reach home and read up about the subject and remembering what he said in Obolo I would understand it fully” [FG1b A]. Now, even though some people question her, she does the same in her own Primary 5 class: she always teaches in English and then goes again over the material in Obolo, because, she says, “I want them to have understanding”[FG1b A].

Another elite participant reported how as a secondary school student he was sent to Belgium on an exchange program, where they first spent one-and-half years to learn the language of education, before they could start their course. There he saw for the first time how much easier it is for the natives of a country to study all the

subjects in their first language, the language they had grown up with, than it is for Nigerian children studying in English. When the idea of teaching sciences and mathematics in Obolo for greater effectiveness was proposed in his focus group discussion, he immediately related it to this experience and fully supported the proposal.

This enthusiasm was by no means limited to elite participants. One member of a rural focus group, for instance, said, “Let us be using Obolo, it can enable that school child to understand, so that he knows what he is after!” and he later commented:

> If we look at the people called “expatriate”, like the Chinese, the ones who come to do the road around X, they say that these people know how to make roads very well. Those people, who don’t speak English at all, they are the people who know the work properly! They are the ones they call “experts” in that field. Then our people, the people who know it, who have been to school, and who are called “engineer” like this, they are under them. They are saying that they are “engineer”, but the main work, it is the “experts” who bring out insight/ideas on how to go about it. [FG 2 A:22-3]

The influence of the Obolo Bible on attitudes to Obolo in education

Historically, the translation of the Bible has had a great impact on the literacy rates and the education of the speakers of these languages. For instance, the translation of the Bible in Welsh, published in 1588, spurred the writing of many books in the next two centuries and motivated the largely illiterate population to learn to read, especially through the mobile schools of Minister Griffith Jones, started in 1734, through which, in a little over 30 years, Wales became “one of the few European countries to have a literate majority ("Welsh Bible 1588,").

Similarly, there is evidence from the focus group discussions that the translation of the Bible in Obolo has done much to valorise the Obolo language for use in education. This project saw the publication of individual Bible books in the late 1980s, followed by the New Testament in 1992, during which time many people

learned to read the language in various church-based literacy classes, while others who could already read in English, learned in brief zonal workshops. As the translation progressed, more books of the Old Testament were published, too, eventually culminating in the publication of the entire Obolo Bible in 2014.

In the focus groups, a University Lecturer, who himself uses the Obolo Bible to read and in preaching, observed that in his church many young people could not read it well even though they try hard. He therefore proposed that Obolo language should be made a compulsory subject in school. Similarly a mother in a rural area, who had taken part some years before in a workshop where leaders in churches were taught to read in Obolo (practising reading with published portions of the Bible) expressed concern about the inability of children and young people to read in Obolo. She says, - “Like in Obolo language which we are now reading, very many children don’t know that we are reading Obolo. They don’t know at all, their eyes are blind. If their teachers would have chance, during the break, they could enter the building to learn something...” [Rural Empl. FG2 B:6-7]. Two young men not yet able to read Obolo themselves reported that when they hear the Obolo Bible they are able to understand it much more fully than the English version and hope that they themselves will gradually acquire reading skills in Obolo .

This enthusiasm extended beyond the potential role of Obolo in promoting literacy to bilingual education in general. Still exhilarated following the launch, some of the highly educated members of the recently constituted Board of Trustees of OLBTO (see above) were eager to start the Obolo Bilingual Education Centre immediately, in the same year that the idea of the Centre was proposed. They were convinced that it would be possible to have textbooks for all school subjects in Obolo. As one of them, holding the newly published Bible, said, “The Obolo Bible has every kind of terminology in it already”, seeming to imply that any terms remaining could also be translated (Participant Observation, Meeting with Board of Trustees 26-7-2014).

Moreover, it must be noted that my focus groups were conducted around the period of the launch and the attendant excitement. Everyone seemed very eager to participate in this research on the role of language in education. I was surprised at their level of enthusiasm, especially when exploring their understanding of the

potential role of Obolo language in education. It appears that the heightened (perceived) Ethnolinguistic Vitality (see chapter 7), made Obolo people more willing to consider, and start harnessing, the language's potential for education, despite the strongly established hegemony of English in this domain.

Conclusion

Despite early motivation and a successful pilot program, and in contrast with the early days of this program, present-day teachers in Obolo generally show little enthusiasm for the wider use of Obolo in education. In contrast, parents demonstrated a much wider range of attitudes towards its use in bilingual programmes. In this respect, developments in Obolo land mirror those elsewhere in Nigeria.

The focus group interviews with just one exception, do not show a negative view of Obolo as a medium of education besides English. On the whole these Obolo participants, appear to appreciate the usefulness of their language as the main medium of communication in school in leading to better understanding and learning, including the acquisition of English.

As was the case with some other recent research in Nigeria (Igboanusi, 2008b), parents from various educational backgrounds, both rural and urban dwellers, are interested in mother tongue-based bilingual education in which the use of the language is continued well beyond the first three (to four) years of primary education as prescribed in the current official language policy for education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013), at least up to the end of primary school. Many would be prepared to support its use also in Junior Secondary School, or even "for some subjects" or, "mixing" it with English, up to Senior Secondary School, where it is expected the final examination will be in English. In addition, one participant advocated for the translation of some textbooks for tertiary level education, and another for lecturers in the National Teacher Institute (NTI) zonal branch in Obolo to lecture (or at least explain things) in Obolo. In contrast to most other minority language groups (in minority language states), who prefer English (Igboanusi & Peter, 2016), Obolo people appear to value their language for education, at least

“at home”, where there is a high concentration of Obolo-speaking people. There is also interest in teaching it as a subject in urban schools, where there is a sizeable concentration of Obolo people. The value attached to Obolo language for education, would appear to be even more widespread than reported by Igboanusi (2008a) for major language states. This may be related to the language development and literacy work, and the Bible translation project of OLBTO. It is also enhanced through high profile events celebrating major achievements in these areas, and the increased visibility of the language that comes with it.

Having found an encouraging level of appreciation for the use of Obolo in education amongst the participants, in the next chapter I will consider suitable approaches to the promotion of Obolo-English bilingual education in Obolo.

Chapter 9: Reimagining Obolo education

Introduction

In this chapter, I draw both on analysis of focus group discussions and interviews which form part of the present study and also the work of other researchers in this area, drawing attention to issues where our own efforts either provide support for, or disagree with, the findings of earlier researchers. Moving from the macro to the micro, I start by considering the importance of advocacy for bilingual education with both policy makers and parents. I then move on to which model of bilingual education is likely to be most appropriate for the Obolo setting, before considering curriculum, pedagogy, examinations and resources. I need to stress, however, that this is not a simple unidirectional development. In the absence of political will, various initiatives are taking place at grass roots which influence issues at other levels and vice versa.

Advocacy and promotion of bilingual education

Bilingual education requires 'buy in' from two main groups: policy makers and parents. There are some useful precedents for lobbying of policy makers in the literature. The ADEA Toolkit Communication for Education and Development (ADEA, 2010), for instance, targets journalists, communication officers in ministries of education and education campaign activists on the continent in recognition of the 'dire need for journalists and communication officers to be adequately trained to take on the tasks of promoting education in Africa' (ADEA, 2010:9). As such, it offers a template for advocacy in relation to bilingual education. In a similar vein, the Twf campaign which promotes the benefits of bilingualism to parents in Wales (Edwards & Newcombe, 2005a, 2005b; Edwards

& Pritchard Newcombe, 2006), offers a model for the “marketing” of Obolo/English bilingualism to young Obolo parents and youth in the cities. The centrepiece of their approach was a bilingual pamphlet – *6 good reasons for making sure your children speak Welsh* –distributed to every pregnant woman. In some of the elite urban focus group interviews, and interviews with executives, there was evidence that similar reasons also appeal to Obolo people in the cities. This social marketing effort should be supplemented with the provision of resources such as Obolo books and possibly video cartoons for toddlers. As we saw in chapter 7, the public support of institutions enhances positive attitudes towards Obolo and is thus also likely to boost public resolve to pursue the use of the language in education.

My own research has clearly demonstrated the impact on attitudes towards Obolo of high profile events which celebrate achievements in the area of language development and bilingual education (see chapter 7). These have included the UNESCO International Mother Language Day in Rivers State in 2016, an event for which the Obolo language, because of its level of development, was selected, and where OLBTO was honoured. On this occasion the first Obolo textbooks for the teaching of all subjects in Primaries 1 and 2 were displayed, and children of the Obolo Bilingual Education Centre presented the National Anthem and Pledge in Obolo. The event was attended by the Governor of the State (represented) and other Government officials, representatives of UNESCO and of the press, Obolo elites, traditional rulers, politicians, educationists and other academicians in high positions in Government, and their invited non-Obolo guests. Another high profile event, which happened in the period I did my focus group interviews, was the launch of the Bible translated into Obolo, during which even the President of the Federation of Nigeria was represented, as well as foreign visitors from churches in the Netherlands and USA with which my husband and I are associated.

By the same token, Djité (2008) argues that IT-related developments, such as software localization, have a positive impact on young people’s perception of Obolo (see also chapter 7). In this regard, the provision of free language keyboard software for writing the special characters required for Obolo is urgently needed. In the meantime, OLBTO already maintains a website, with news and information about the language in both Obolo and English. This website also has some Obolo literature, including a Bible app, and various audio and audio-visual publications.

Models of bilingual education

Bilingual education has evolved in response to both grassroots pressures and official policies. Unsurprisingly therefore, we find very many different models of delivery. One of the most important decisions, then, is which model is the best fit for a given context.

In chapter 3 we saw that in Northern settings, for minority language speaking children, education in the dominant language is subtractive, while education in their own mother tongue as well as the dominant language is additive. In a similar vein, the theories of Jim Cummins propose that - even when the children have been exposed to the dominant language from a very young age (baby or toddler) and have become fluent, it is better for their cognitive and social development to educate them in their first language, with the second language as a subject, for four years or more. W. Thomas and Collier (2002), in their comprehensive research in the US, found it is best to continue with the minority language as a medium of instruction for as long as possible, and at least six years. These longer programs allow maintenance of the child's language and culture, better social and cognitive development, as well as better performance in English in addition to the minority language. All these findings have been replicated in many other settings, including Africa (see chapter 8). Here, with less well resourced schools than in the north, it can be argued that a minimum of eight years is required. Since the schools in Obolo are less well resourced, it would therefore seem reasonable to conclude that eight years will be needed. Heugh (2011) recommends a model that uses 5 – 6 years of mother tongue as main medium of instruction, followed by dual medium throughout secondary school. She found that this model, which was used in South Africa in the early twentieth century, yields the best results for education in an indigenous African language and the official/foreign language (see also chapter 8).

My own research confirms that there is good local support for the use of Obolo as a medium of instruction, although there is uncertainty about the optimum length of

time. Most people in my focus groups indicated that it would be desirable for Obolo to be used as a medium of instruction all through primary school, and a good number felt Obolo should be used beyond primary and into Junior Secondary School (JSS) (or onward) (see chapter 8). In the present system of Universal Basic Education, where "basic" extends to JSS 3, with the first official (external) examination at this point, it makes good sense to have Obolo as a medium of instruction up to that time. This model would be a "very late-exit transitional" one, similar to that used in three regions of Ethiopia, in South Africa and Namibia and Guinea. Similar to Heugh (2006a) recommended model, it would probably be good to introduce dual medium education from primary 5 or 6 onwards, with a gradual introduction of subjects taught in English. In the case of Obolo, as a small minority language where there has been no bilingual education previously, and only some teaching of the language as a subject, it might appear over-ambitious at this stage, to aim for bilingual education beyond this, up to the end of secondary education, especially since, in Nigeria as a whole, mother tongue-based bilingual education (MTBBE) has only previously been attempted in experiments in primary education, and then only in major languages.

There is, however, reason to suppose that this model would not necessarily be a good fit for urban families. For parents whose children do not speak (much) Obolo, but who wish their children to learn their mother tongue (and their culture), early immersion education in Obolo (see chapter 3) could be successful, as has proved the case for English speaking Maori children in New Zealand and English speaking children in Wales (Edwards, 2004).

Yet, although immersion education would theoretically be helpful for children of Obolo families in urban areas, my research suggests that urban Obolo people do not expect this to be possible in the cities, (nor may they be disposed to sending their English-speaking children to such a school, since they expect these children to do better in English-medium education. The focus of the discussions in the cities was on education in the "home" area for the children of their relatives, because of the cosmopolitan composition of the cities. There was, however, a widespread desire for Obolo language to be included as a subject in the schools in towns, at least where there is a sizeable Obolo population (see chapter 8), and some elite participants felt that it should be made compulsory for all children, in the

cities as well as in rural areas, to learn their mother tongue/a Nigerian language in school [Elite FG5]. There is also interest in holiday classes in Port Harcourt, to teach Obolo children to speak and read Obolo (communication from OLBTO, February 2018). Probably immersion education would be the best approach for these urban classes, using as resources Obolo books/magazines for children, as well as Obolo language readers and textbooks for the various subjects.

Because bilingual education is a relatively recent development, most people have a very limited understanding of what it involves. In view of this, model schools have a potentially vital role to play, both in the implementation of curricula, resources and pedagogies and in demonstrating principles and practice to stakeholders. In 2014, during the course of my PhD research, such a model school was set up under the aegis of OLBTO. While the documentation and evaluation of this process lies outside the present study, its findings, of course, feed into the further development of the model school. The decision to go ahead, for instance, was informed in part by early evidence from my first focus groups about Obolo people's positive attitudes to bilingual education, and receptiveness to the notion that the teaching of Obolo should continue all through primary education (rather than only in primaries 1–3 as implied in the NPE), and not only teaching it as a subject, but also to use Obolo as medium of instruction.

A note of caution can usefully be sounded at this point. As Benson (2002:308) warns, in all developing countries, there has been a tendency for politicians toward a "short-cut" model of early transition for "the benefit of assuaging political concerns and parental fears about time lost in L2 learning" and to save cost and effort in the training of bilingual teachers and the publication of more materials in the indigenous languages. It should not be surprising, however, if shortcuts of this kind lead to disappointing outcomes.

Examinations

The current policies on examinations have wide ranging implications. The latest NPE stipulates that a Nigerian "language of the environment" should be used as medium of instruction from pre-primary to Primary 4, with a gradual transition to English as medium of instruction from Primary 4. The subject of "Nigerian Language" is to be taught all through basic education and up to the end of JSS, and is to be examined in the BECE examinations. As things stand at the moment, other subjects taught through the medium of Obolo in Obolo bilingual schools would need to be examined in English, a situation which is clearly untenable. For this reason, the issue of examinations needs careful consideration. Currently, "any language that has a curriculum" would be eligible to be the Nigerian language taught in JSS and to be examined in the BECE examinations. In principle, "any language that has a curriculum" even could be taken as an optional subject in the SSS examinations (the WAEC). Any such initiative, however, has implications for resources. The Obolo language books for Primaries 4 to 6 would need to be finished and published. A curriculum with instructions for teachers also needs to be written. A curriculum and instructional materials for JSS level need to be developed using, amongst other things, some of the existing advanced literature. The present study has demonstrated some support for this course of action. Already some Obolo principals have requested that OLBTO develop this curriculum. Many participants in focus group discussions also expressed the desire that Obolo should be included in the WAEC, which would require the development of curriculum for SSS too. This later level would, however, be dependent on the official acceptance of the language as an examinable subject at JSS level first.

Executives in the State Ministries of Education were united in their view that, without examinations in Nigerian languages, the use of these languages in education will remain neglected (see chapter 7). Without it, Government is rather reinforcing the impression, remaining from colonial times, that Nigerian languages are not useful for education and modern life (see also chapter 7). By making the BECE examination in a Nigerian language compulsory, the teaching of these

languages would be enforced in all schools, including the private ones, and those in urban areas.

Curriculum and pedagogies

As noted in chapter 4, bilingual education affords the opportunity for bicultural or "inter-cultural" education (Cheffy, 2011), with curricula appropriate to the culture and environment, and appropriate pedagogies (see also the discussion of African Communalism, chapter 6; (Canvin, 2003; Kanu, 2006)). The prevailing pedagogies in African classrooms, however, are transmissive: teacher talk dominates and the focus is on repetition and memorization (Opoku-Amankwa, 2009). There is broad consensus that teachers need to learn more effective methods for teaching both their mother tongue and the foreign/official language (ADEA, 2010; Adekola, 2007; Benson, 2010:313). Although current teacher training addresses child-centred approaches, these are difficult to implement in poorly resourced classrooms with large student numbers, and hardly possible with the current use of English as medium of instruction. Nor is there discussion of innovative pedagogies appropriate for either bilingual education or teaching English as a second language.

Various developments, however, have considerable potential for use in Obolo-English bilingual programmes, not least translanguaging (see chapter 3), the process whereby speakers use their languages as an integrated communication system, although, as argued in chapter 3, the priority in Sub-Saharan countries such as Nigeria needs to be the development of resources and pedagogies for the implementation of bilingual education. At this stage, however, at secondary school level (SSS), prospects for the implementation of bilingual education with subject books in Obolo and teacher education for bilingual pedagogy are likely to be limited in the near future. Therefore translanguaging would be helpful for increased understanding of the concepts. This would involve the legitimization of the use of other languages besides English in the teaching/learning process in school. In Obolo land, children at secondary school level and educated adults would

normally communicate in Obolo/English/(Pidgin). In the absence of Obolo textbooks for this level of education, for instance, a text would be read in English, while students and teachers could discuss the topic, and students work on a group project in Obolo/English/Pidgin, with code-switching and code-mixing, and then write their notes/reports in either English or Obolo or Obolo/English. Such a translanguaging approach could possibly also lead to greater recognition/status for Obolo (and Pidgin) in education, as it did for Xhosa in South Africa through a translanguaging project in a secondary school using English/Xhosa (Heugh, 2009a). In this respect, there is also potential for using translanguaging in tertiary education, especially that which is provided within the area (at the moment there is teacher education and the occasional skills acquisition course in Obolo land).

The use of storytelling, riddles and proverbs offers opportunities to include wisdom and knowledge of Obolo culture in the curriculum, and especially to learn the philosophy of African communalism which is central to an African and Obolo worldview, as confirmed from the analysis of my focus group interviews (see chapter 6). Storytelling, for instance has the added benefit of teaching students about well-formed stories, and literary styles that draw in the listeners' attention and convey the intended messages.

From Convergent Pedagogy in Mali, we can learn to incorporate indigenous forms of instructional interaction. As is the case in Mali, instruction with much physical activity such as dramatizations by the teacher, and enactments for the pupils to participate in, fits cultural instructional styles of the Obolo. In Obolo, there is also dance with enactment and songs. Another relevant feature of Convergent Pedagogy is the focus on directly improving the children's family's livelihood and environment. For Obolo too, it would be good to focus on improvements in the environment and the teaching of skills with (immediately) useful economic effect, and this will have a bearing on the selection of topics from the existing government curricula, with some additions as necessary.

Projects, such as the SYPP in Yoruba offer valuable clues about successful implementation of bilingual education in other languages, too. Here a team of Yoruba subject specialists and linguists worked together with others from the community who were considered sages or "language experts" on whose

understanding they were able to draw. These local “language experts” also drew on the wealth of oral literature and recorded and interpreted cultural ceremonies. Parents of pupils were also engaged to teach their children about cultural issues.

Appropriate teacher training is, of course, a fundamental requirement for the delivery of innovations of the kind discussed above. Obolo language needs to be a mandatory course for Obolo teachers in institutes of teacher education serving the region. The executives I interviewed pointed out that the (re-)instatement of regular teaching of the “language of the environment” would have to start with teacher education. Therefore, the teaching and learning of “the language of the environment” would need to be enforced also at institutes of teacher education, with examinations and the requirement of a credit. As we saw in chapter 7, measures of this kind would also increase the status of Nigerian languages.

Resources

The dearth of resources in African languages is a widespread matter of concern throughout the continent (Edwards& Ngwaru, 2011a, 2011b). There are some promising initiatives, however, designed to address this issue. In 2017, for instance, the honourable Minister of Science and Technology, Dr. Ogbonnaya Onu, announced his intention to promote improved learning of mathematics and sciences through the use of Nigerian languages. In a similar vein, Benue State Universal Basic Education Board held workshops for the translation of science textbooks into Tiv[12], the major language of the state, while also exploring ways to translate textbooks into Idoma and Igede, languages spoken in this state (NAN, 2017).

While there are relatively few resources currently available in Obolo, there is nonetheless considerable potential for translation and adaptation of existing

[12] Tiv, is an interesting exception for Nigerian languages because the South African missionaries working amongst them helped to develop the Tiv language for education up to tertiary level, and the region was known as having the highest literacy rates in the country. Then in 1960, as Nigeria reacted to Apartheid in South Africa, the use of Tiv in education was also rejected and the region went for a “Straight-for-English” policy. The Tiv churches, however, continued to use Tiv language for their worship.

government curricula and textbooks to be more relevant to the immediate environment of the children, so that initially, only issues of importance in the Obolo environment would be selected, rather than those important to other areas in Nigeria or abroad. Examples of items or concepts, as well as pictures would also be taken from the immediate environment and the culture of the children (see also Canvin, 2003; Edwards & Ngwaru, 2011; Fafunwa, 1989).

For the teaching of Obolo as a subject, the State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs) need to include the series of Obolo readers (primary 1 – 6) in their free textbooks scheme for UBE. Also, if the provisions of Government in the NPE are taken seriously, the Obolo textbooks for Primary 1 – 3 or 4, would need to be included instead of the English equivalent books.

Another way forward is suggested by OLBTO's work with Obolo linguists, teachers specialized in the various subjects, translators, and local "language experts" in workshops on the development of terminology for all subjects, and for the translation/adaptation into Obolo of subject textbooks and curriculum guides.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have drawn on findings from the literature and from my own research through focus groups, interviews, and participant observation to imagine Obolo bilingual education and ways forward for its development and promotion. Finding sufficient potential support for extended use of Obolo in education on the part of Obolo parents, and in view of lack of political will outside the area to support it, several strategies for advocacy to policy makers and to Obolo parents are outlined.

The most promising models for bilingual education that fit the Obolo settings and Obolo parents' attitudes to Obolo bilingual education are recommended. Likewise, ways to develop curricula, pedagogies and Obolo resources are suggested.

In the final chapter, I will summarise the findings for each of the research questions and consider both contributions to knowledge and limitations.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

Introduction

In this chapter, I first summarize the findings of the research questions. Then the important recommendations for the stakeholders which flow from these are listed. There is also a consideration of the contributions of this study to knowledge, as well as a discussion of the limitations of the study. Finally, I make a series of recommendations, addressed at the various stakeholders in education.

Summary and implications of findings

The overall research question which has guided this research is: What factors facilitate or constrain successful implementation of mother tongue-based bilingual education in Obolo? This research question led to four further sub- questions, the findings to each of which are summarised below.

Research Question 1: What are the implications of Obolo attitudes towards education for the promotion and implementation of a bilingual education programme?

Evidence from my focus group discussions suggested that Obolo people generally view education as hugely important for their children's future, because it allows them to access well-paid jobs, a more prosperous life with modern comforts, and a higher social position. This is particularly important in the context of declining stocks of fish, which create uncertainty about the future for the traditional fishing industry. Another desire expressed by most participants for the future is that, through their children's education, the wider community might prosper, too.

This latter finding underlined the prevalence of African traditional communalism in the Obolo community. The evidence, however, appears to indicate that this central aspect of African philosophy is missing in the curriculum and pedagogies associated with formal education in Nigeria, leading me to conclude that they should be included in any programme that aspired to be authentically African. As mentioned in chapter 4, it appears that cultural appropriateness of curriculum and pedagogy, and not only the language issue, is important for the effectiveness of education. For the purpose of re-designing Obolo education in the form of a bilingual model, it is therefore important to harness both the positive attitudes towards education and the principles of African communalism (see chapter 9). The fact that African worldview and philosophy have been absent from formal education in Nigeria also sheds light on the role of formal education in shaping the elite-divide (see chapter 5), reforming people's worldview and philosophy to a more Western one (through symbolic violence). Through education, mostly in cities outside their rural "home" areas, the elite have more fully embraced a Western worldview and Western philosophies, to the exclusion of African viewpoints.

There are, of course, other serious obstacles to quality education. One such obstacle is the issue of poverty, which prevents some parents from sending their children to Senior Secondary School and tertiary education, partly because these are fee-paying, and partly because there is no tertiary level education nearby. Other very serious problems include the shortage of teachers and low commitment among serving teachers, arguably because of insufficient supervision and inspection, and lack of reward for hard work and good performance. In addition, highly educated parents mentioned the inadequacies of teachers, for which many examples were given, and which are likely to be the result of a vicious circle, starting at the primary level, of poor quality formal education.

In considering the most effective ways to promote and implement a bilingual programme, it is clearly important to take on board both positive attitudes towards education in general and the constraints within which schooling operates in the region.

Research Question 2: To what extent does the current status and development of Obolo make it a suitable candidate for inclusion in a bilingual education project?

A survey of the literature on the socio-linguistic dynamics of the wider region of sub-Saharan Africa and how they have shaped language attitudes makes it clear that colonial history is the most important feature in explaining the functions and relative status of the languages in the region. It also explains the existence of a "cultural inferiority complex" whereby everything Western is seen as superior, and everything African, including language and culture, as inferior (cf. Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence).

A second and consequent, defining feature of the status of the respective languages are the educational functions assigned to them. On the whole, these have remained unchanged from the colonial era, except that the limited role assigned to the indigenous languages has in practice further eroded, especially because of non- or haphazard implementation of the official policy for languages in education, and the lack of teaching of local languages in institutes of teacher education. Early Transitional Bilingual Education (with only three years of the African language as a medium of instruction) has a similar effect on attitudes as exclusively English-medium education: it gives the impression that African languages are not important in education and in modern life. As a result, and aided by the added influence of globalization, the role of English has been growing stronger and stronger, increasingly taking over all "formal" domains, even in rural areas. Predictably, younger generations tend to favour foreign/official languages more than their elders and more and more families are no longer speaking their indigenous languages.

In contrast, we saw evidence of support from executive interviews for the view that terminology development (in the immediate context of a bilingual education programme) for the teaching of sciences, technology, and other subjects, even at the most basic level of education, would help to start valorising African languages. The data also appear to indicate that mandatory examinations in the local languages at least at the basic level (BECE) and their inclusion at the institutes of teacher education would do much to improve attitudes to them.

Several clear examples of Obolo people's very positive attitudes to English were presented. As expected, I also found much ambivalence in people's attitude to Obolo language. On the one hand, it is much devalued, relegated to informal occasions, belittled because its usefulness is limited to the "local", and sometimes associated with the past. On the other hand, the language is cherished for identity, family and community interactions, and for community leadership, with people expressing great discomfort when their children lose the language.

The concept of Ethnolinguistic Vitality, as described in ethnolinguistic identity theory, was found helpful for the interpretation of my data on Obolo attitudes to their language. Comparing them with other ethnic groups along the variables of demography, status, and institutional support, it emerged that they have medium, rather than high or low levels of ethnolinguistic vitality. As such, they are considered credible candidates for a mother tongue-based bilingual education program. In addition, learning that how an ethnic group *perceive* their EV is at least as important as their "objective" EV, helped me to interpret the sudden improvements in attitudes from the two highly-publicized events celebrating achievements in Obolo language development work which took place around the period of my research, and provided clues for further promotion of the language and bilingual education.

Research question 3: What are the attitudes towards the use of Obolo in the context of bilingual education?

The history of colonization in sub-Saharan Africa has led to an "inheritance situation" for the former colonies, with language policies that favour the European former colonial language as the official language and the (main) language of education and in an example of symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) the indigenous languages are viewed as "inferior", not fit for use in education beyond the initial stage. Another "inheritance" of colonial times, is the formation of an elite class, competent in the official language, who upon independence took over the leadership of the newly formed (democratic) states. Consequently, it is most common to see a distinct absence of political will to change the existing language policies and allow more use of indigenous languages in education.

Instead, private schools using the foreign/official language are very popular and thriving, even in countries such as Nigeria where the official policy is early transitional bilingual education. Presently, the global economy and the hegemony of English are exerting additional pressures to “Englishize”, driving African nations to use English more and earlier as a medium of instruction in recognition of the associated cultural capital.

Nevertheless, from the turn of the new century there are some indications of a rising interest in bilingual education, with a growing number of experimental programs in various countries, and recently, with Uganda, Ghana, and Ethiopia, reported as starting to prepare for or already implementing country-wide bilingual education programs (Trudell & Young, 2016), and Mozambique planning country-wide transitional bilingual education (where up to recently Portuguese was the medium of instruction).

Meanwhile in Nigeria, there had also been successful and well-documented experimental programmes – the Ile-Ife Six Year Primary Project in Yoruba bilingual education, as well as the more or less concurrent Rivers Readers Project (RRP), developing readers for the first years of education in the minority languages of Rivers State. Yet, despite their success, there was insufficient political will to implement these programs more widely. The first National Policy on Education (NPE, 1977) and all subsequent iterations essentially continued the former colonial policy, which only allowed the use of Nigerian languages for initial education, and enjoyed only limited implementation, mostly restricted to oral interactions.

Nevertheless, in Nigeria, too, recent research appears to indicate a growing appreciation for the use of Nigerian languages in education for the six years of primary education, and considerable support (almost 25% of the people surveyed) for their use up to senior secondary school level (Igboanusi, 2008b). Moreover, the clarification of the language requirements in the recent version of the NPE (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013), and the newly specified provision for teacher education in the National Teacher Education Policy (Federal Ministry of Education, 2014) also appear to indicate the changing climate of support for implementation.

In the Obolo region, slightly overlapping with the RRP and following on from it, the OLBTO was responsible for a pilot Obolo language project, started by teachers,

which showed good student performance in the 1980s and early 1990s. Just as was the case with the more famous projects mentioned above, this, too, failed to be incorporated into the national education system. Eventually teachers were treating the language as an optional subject.

Yet, in contrast to teacher attitudes, and as demonstrated by recent research in other parts of Nigeria, Obolo parents (including teachers) in my focus group interviews, showed more positive attitudes. Although there were a few negative initial reactions, the great majority showed enthusiasm for an increased use of Obolo for teaching and learning all through primary school and beyond. There was also interest in having Obolo taught as a subject in urban areas. It appears that the high profile launch of the Obolo translation of the Bible, which took place during the period of my research, enhanced the value attached to Obolo language for education, so that these parents, in contrast with those from other minority language groups who preferred English, showed even greater interest than that reported by Igboanusi (2008b) for major language states.

Research Question 4: How can participants' views on education and attitudes towards Obolo and English usefully inform approaches to the promotion of Obolo-English bilingual education?

Having considered the literature and the findings of my own research, I found a rich store of information to guide the development and promotion of Obolo bilingual education. As bilingual education needs the 'buy in' of both policy makers and parents, extensive 'marketing' efforts are required, and several templates or models were found in the literature which could be used to promote both bilingualism and bilingual education to these groups. One important finding of my own research is the strongly positive impact of high profile events celebrating achievements in the area of language development on the attitudes of Obolo people to Obolo, and increased receptivity to the innovation of Obolo-based bilingual education. It has also been argued that the use of the language in IT boosts the perception of the language, especially among the youth.

From the literature on research in bilingual education, the best-fitting model for Obolo settings was located. For the rural “home” area, a “very late-exit transitional” model emerged as the most promising way forward. Both rural and urban focus group interviews showed high levels of support for the use of Obolo as medium of instruction for a more extended period in the “home” region. While Obolo as medium of instruction was not considered an option in the cosmopolitan urban areas, there was nonetheless a strong desire for children to learn Obolo at school, or in holiday classes. In this setting, the recommended approach would be Obolo immersion.

Because the Obolo have no experience with additive bilingual education, model schools are potentially vital for the development of pedagogies, curriculum, and resources, serving as a “knowledge hub” for the evolution of teachers, translators, textbook authors and publishers.

The importance of examinations for accreditation of studies of Nigerian languages, and for the use of these languages as media of instruction, is emphasized both in the literature and in my findings.

There are also significant findings for curriculum, and pedagogies, showing, for instance, the need for teacher education in interactive pedagogy, facilitated by the “language of the environment”, and the mandatory nature of mother tongue literacy as a subject in teacher education. My findings also pointed to the need for inclusion of storytelling and other oral literature in the curriculum for an authentic African education.

There are currently various initiatives for the preparation of resources in Nigeria, and lessons can be learned from SYPP in Yoruba and other initiatives on the continent, and also from the current work of OLBTO.

Recommendations

Many recommendations flow from the findings discussed in the various chapters of this thesis. Here, I present the most pertinent, arranged according to the various

stakeholders to whom they are addressed, again starting from the macro to the micro .

Policy makers

- Based on the findings of international research, the model of bilingual education with the best fit for the rural Obolo “home” area is “very late-exit transitional”; the best fit for cosmopolitan urban areas is Obolo immersion education, though presently this can only be applied during the teaching of Obolo as a subject.
- Obolo needs to be the mandatory medium of instruction from primary 1 –3/4 in all schools in the area, including private ones, and to be accredited as a subject for the BECE examinations.
- Tests and examinations from primary 1 – 4 should be written in Obolo rather than in English, except for the examination on English language, so that students’ knowledge will be assessed in the languages in which they are taught.
- Obolo subject school books for primaries 1 – 4, and the Obolo series of readers need to be included in the free-books scheme for school children of the SUBEBs (State Universal Education Boards).
- For the sake of development through effective education using Nigerian languages (see chapter 4), Government needs to support OLBTO for the translation/adaptation of instructional materials for all subjects into Obolo, and for developing curriculum and appropriate materials to teach Obolo language from Primary 1 to JSS 3. (OLBTO employs several people for this work and also employs the services of experts in linguistics, translation, and education.)
- Researchers, too, need to convey their understanding to politicians, so that they might work towards the implementation of Nigerian languages in instruction in all schools.

OLBTO/the designers or implementers of Obolo bilingual education

- Advocacy for bilingual education requires the preparation of information packs for all stakeholders, including policy makers, teachers, and parents. These packs should cover topics such as
    - Cognitive and social advantages of bilingualism and bi-literacy);
    - Languages of education in developed countries
    - Findings of research that mother tongue based bilingual education improves student performance in all subjects including English language.

  The presentation and content of these packs needs to be responsive to the needs of these different groups.

- In designing both promotional messages, and also aspects of Obolo bilingual education, activities need to be informed by an understanding of Obolo perceptions, especially the perceptions of English and its importance in the wider society.
- Obolo bilingual education can be most usefully promoted through model school(s).
- Every opportunity for well publicized occasions in celebration of achievement in language development should be taken and all institutional support, especially from Government, needs to be celebrated and made public.
- Provision should be made for free Obolo keyboard software.

Obolo teachers and educationists

- Obolo needs to be a mandatory subject for primary school teachers in institutes of teacher education in the area, with accreditation in the NCE examinations.
- The Federal Ministry of Education (2014) special allowances for teachers in rural areas need to be made available so that Obolo teachers will be attracted to teaching “at home”.

- *Teachers need to be:*
    - Introduced to the benefits of active learning as well as pedagogies for both teaching through the medium of Obolo and English as a second language.
    - Encouraged to involve parents and other community members as language experts and repositories of knowledge for traditional stories, riddles and proverbs, and knowledge of the environment.

Parents and youth (parents to be)

Parents should be:

- given information on the benefits of bilingualism
- encouraged to:
    - use Obolo with their children (including counting)
    - act as language experts in the delivery of the curriculum

Urban parents and young adults should be:

- The target of a campaign, “marketing” bilingualism not only through information but also through the provision of educational resources in Obolo for toddlers and nursery age children.

Contributions of the study to knowledge

Discussion of minority Nigerian languages is extremely limited. Any discussion of Obolo thus represents an important contribution of our understanding of linguistic diversity in Nigeria. Equally important, this study provides a voice for Obolo people. It also looks at language planning from the grassroots up, a rarely offered perspective in this field of study which reveals spaces for the implementation of educational language policy, as well as the constraints posed by a lack of political will.

This study also confirms that the “intellectualization” of African languages through translation of academic or literary works is indeed a powerful tool for valorisation of African languages.

On the level of theory, it offers an example of the application of Ethnolinguistic. Vitality theory to the analysis of observational and focus group data on attitudes, showing in the process the important role a grassroots organisation working at micro language planning, offering consistent institutional support, and galvanizing the support of other institutions for the development and use of the language. Moreover, it highlights the achievements of translation and publication of both the Bible, and also text books for education in raising the status of the language.

Another contribution to knowledge is the finding that this ethnolinguistic group with its sense of African communalism, is buoyed by public celebrations at which the entire Obolo community, their traditional rulers, the educated elite as well as politicians, Government and NGO officials, and religious leaders, are represented. The consequent feelings of pride and attachment to Obolo, appear to counteract to some extent, the symbolic violence associated with colonial and neo-colonial history, and the resultant “inferiority complex” of African language and culture. It also strengthens their willingness to continue to use their language in the face of globalization and the hegemony of English. These observations confirm the notion that “perceived” ethnolinguistic strength (which is subjective) is as important as more objective measures of ethnolinguistic vitality, providing hints for the promotion of bilingual education in Obolo land.

Finally, this study demonstrates the superficial nature of attempts to date to produce textbooks and curriculum that are adapted to the Nigerian culture. My findings indicate the failure in education to pass on central tenets of African philosophy of life, such as African communalism. The study thus makes a contribution to a more authentically African curriculum and pedagogies, facilitated by the use of the indigenous languages in bilingual education.

Limitations of the present study

The main limitations of the research reported in this thesis relate to the practical obstacles to purposive sampling and my ambiguous status as both an insider and outsider in the community under study.

Representativeness of sample

My efforts at purposive sampling were sometimes thwarted because of cost, time and security constraints and were thus not always as successful as I would have hoped. For pragmatic reasons, I relied more heavily than I would have wanted on members of the Obolo Language and Bible Translation Committee who were known to me personally. It might therefore be expected that these participants would be more favourably disposed to the development of Obolo (though not necessarily to its use as a medium of instruction). Nothing in the analysis of focus group discussions involving these participants , however, suggests that their attitudes towards Obolo bilingual education were more favourable than those of any other group.

Insider vs outsider status

As discussed in the Methodology chapter, I have both outsider and insider status. Although I speak Obolo fluently, I am not a native speaker and therefore there is a risk of miscommunication on occasion or perhaps reluctance to be as open as might be the case with a full insider. But perhaps more pertinently, as someone married into the Obolo community, I clearly have loyalties to Obolo. There is therefore a risk that my tacit knowledge may lead me to misinterpret data or make false assumptions and miss potentially important information. Similarly, my husband and I also have loyalties to OLBTO as we have worked for many years with them and also received allowances from them. I am aware that because of this close association there is a danger of presenting OLBTO and its

achievements too positively, so I have attempted to also accurately present weaknesses and failures of programs and organisation of OLBTO.

Closing Remarks

I found in my work in Obolo an emergent understanding and appreciation of the concept of bilingual education. This needs to be deepened and encouraged. Model Obolo bilingual schools will certainly enhance this understanding. In the process of developing terminology, writing, translating and publishing textbooks for teaching all the subjects in Obolo and offering teachers training and experience in bilingual education, these innovations have the potential to serve as an important template for others.

It will be important not only to diffuse good practice both in the Obolo region and in the wider environment but also to enlist the support of politicians and educational policy makers. It needs to be borne in mind that Nigerian languages are so weakened that many of the ethnolinguistic minorities of the Niger-Delta region may not be able to resist the pressures of the hegemony of English. In this thesis I have argued that there is no good reason for discarding Nigerian languages (and cultures) in order to be educated. Rather, Nigerian languages can be resources for more effective teaching and learning, a foundation for development. The knowledge and skills thus acquired also transfer to English, making it possible for bilingual schools to outperform comparably resourced English-medium schools in all subjects, including English. This type of education also facilitates the inclusion of culturally appropriate subjects and skills in education so that it can be authentically African. It is a win-win situation, enhancing learning in both the mother tongue and English.

I have framed this study as a critical ethnography in which catalytic validity – which aims to spur social change for the benefit of participants –plays a central role. I aim to share the findings of my research with the various stakeholders. For the education executives and ‘elite’ participants, I will prepare a summary of the findings in English; for other participants in my focus groups, a summary in diglot.

For OBLTO, I will prepare two powerpoint presentations with a summary of the findings and especially the recommendations for the organisation: one to be presented to the board (consisting of urban educated elites) in a meeting with them (probably mostly in English), and another one to the Executive Committee (consisting of rural dwellers, who are mostly in the middle educated group) in their monthly meeting, which includes the OLBTO staff and the teachers of the model bilingual school (mostly in Obolo), hoping that they will use it as a basis for their action plans.

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APPENDIX A

Interview schedule for the focus groups

Questions to be used in the focus-groups:

(The main sub- questions are boldened, and the rest, less bold, for further questioning and further probing.)

1) For the focus groups in rural area:

Main questions:

A. **What are the needs and hopes they have for their children's future?**
B. **What do they see as obstacles to that future?** [Possible prompts: failing exams; not getting admission in higher education; unemployment even for graduates; corruption and lack of connections].
C. **What role do they hope their children will play as adults within their family and community**? Do they think it is likely that they will be fulfilling that role? What if they work very far away so that they can't come home? What if their children speak only English? What would they think if their children would like to stay "at home" and do something locally, e.g. set up a modern fish farm in the village?
D. **What are the things they themselves enjoy in Obolo land, which are not in most other places? What would they like to see in Obolo, before they can say, "Obolo land is a good place to be?"** What would it look like? What would they like their grown-up children be doing? Where would they like them live?
E. **What languages would they like their children and grandchildren to speak?**
F. *Only for elites and the groups with middle level education:* **Are the students in secondary school able to understand their lessons?**

E.g. a lesson in Science? If you ask them immediately after their lesson what they have learnt, are they able to tell you? ***I***Or maybe: Remember when you were in secondary school. How well did you understand the lessons?

G. **Would it help students if someone would explain the lessons in Obolo language? And if the students would be allowed to speak Obolo instead of English?** *Information: In more developed countries***,** *the majority of children learn everything (all the subjects) from nursery school to University in their own mother tongue, e.g. French in France, Italian in Italy, Japanese in Japan, and Chinese in China. Like in Holland, my country too. Then, we learned English as a subject.*

H. **Do they like Obolo books**? Do they like the Obolo Bible? Is there any way in which the Obolo Bible helps them more than the English Bible? Or do they personally prefer the English Bible? Which kind of Obolo books would they like most?

I. **How do the children like Obolo books?** Do they buy them? What do they do with them? (Are children enjoying the children's magazine?) What other Obolo books have they seen their children read? Where? How? With whom? Do they think their children are learning from what they read in Obolo books? Ask for examples. How are the children benefitting from the Obolo Bible? For children who can read and write well in Obolo, how does it help them? And how does it help in the family or in the wider community?

J. **Would they like to send their children to a bilingual school, where they would be taught with Obolo as a medium of instruction as well as English?** *With mathematics, introductory science, introductory technology, and other subjects taught in Obolo, with textbooks in Obolo; and with the teacher speaking Obolo, and the children asking and answering questions in Obolo.*

2) For elites and others based in the cities

I used the same questions as for the rural focus groups, though rephrased to some extent. In particular in relation to the children of the urban elite, the above questions would be irrelevant, because English is certainly a language of the home and their children attend expensive, well-resourced, English-medium schools. But they have often some other relatives, still living in the villages and I asked them to apply the above questions to these children, their children "at home". Most of them didn't seem to be too far removed to get really engaged with it. For their children and grandchildren in the city, I asked the following questions in addition:

K. **If it were possible, would they like to add one of their (father or mother's) MTs to the education of their own children in school**? What would they see as the advantages for their own children's learning of Obolo (as a subject)? Do they think there are any disadvantages? What would they say if it be made compulsory for children to learn at least one of their parents' languages, besides English?

L. *Information: Contrary to popular opinion, it has been found that advanced bilingualism (which includes high-level literacy in the two languages) makes for additional cognitive development, i.e. increased intelligence. It is easiest for children to learn their parents' languages from when they are babies, naturally, in the home. (If they learn several languages at the same time, children may delay speaking, but eventually they will speak all of these languages, e.g. both father's and mother's language, and English or any other language both the parents have in common.)* **What do they think about this in relation to their own children?**

APPENDIX B

Information sheets and Consent forms

Interview Information sheet and Consent forms

Focus Group Information sheet and Consent forms

University of Reading

Interview Information sheet:
Research project: Policies and Procedures for the Promotion of Effective Bilingual Education in Nigeria

Marianne Aaron
PhD Researcher, Institute of Education, University of Reading, 4 London Road, Reading RG1 5EX, UK

Thank you for your willingness to consider participating in this research project. I am doing this research with the purpose of finding ways to promote greater effectiveness in teaching and learning at the Basic Education level in Nigeria. I am particularly interested in the role of language in education and in the opinions of stakeholders on this matter.

You have been specially selected for interview because of your important role in education. The interview would take up to an hour and would be at a time and place of your choosing. I would like to audio record the interview so that your contribution can be studied more carefully afterwards but I will send you a transcript of the interview afterwards and give you the opportunity to add or amend any comments.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of taking part?

Your experiences and opinions have the potential to shape the future development of basic education in Nigeria. However, participation is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw from the study at any time. Any data collected will be held in strict confidence and no real names will be used in this study or in any subsequent publications. The records of this study will be kept strictly private and confidential. Only my supervisor, Professor Viv Edwards and I will have access to the data, which will be stored securely on a password-protected computer.

When the thesis is complete, a copy will be deposited in the archives of the Obolo Language and Bible Translation Project Office at AgwutObolo, Andoni LGA,Rivers State. On request, I will also send a summary of the findings for any of you who is interested.

This project has been reviewed following the procedures of the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct.

If you would like more information or have any concerns at any point in the project, you can contact me at m.j.aaron@pgr.reading.ac.uk or my supervisor, Prof Viv Edwards at v.k.edwards@reading.ac.uk.

Yours Faithfully

Marianne Aaron

University of Reading

Interview Information sheet:

Research project: Policies and Procedures for the Promotion of Effective Bilingual Education in Nigeria

Marianne Aaron
PhD Researcher, Institute of Education, University of Reading, 4 London Road, Reading RG1 5EX, UK

Consent form:

I have read the Information Sheet about the project.

I understand what the purpose of the project is and what is required of me. All my questions have been answered.

I am happy for the interview to be recorded. YES/~~NO~~

(signature)

16th June 2015 (date)

University of Reading

Focus group Information sheet:
Research project: Policies and Procedures for the Promotion of Effective Bilingual Education in Nigeria

Marianne Aaron
PhD Researcher, Institute of Education, University of Reading, 4 London Road, Reading RG1 5EX, UK

Thank you for your willingness to consider participating in this research project. I am doing this research with the purpose of finding ways to promote greater effectiveness in teaching and learning at the Basic Education level in Nigeria. I am particularly interested in the role of language in education and in the opinions of Obolo people on this matter.

You have been specially selected to take part in a group discussion because I am interested in finding out what Obolo parents think about their children's education. The discussion will take between one and two hours hours, and there will be refreshments served. Your participation is much appreciated but you are free at any time to discontinue. If you decide to take part, we will be glad to give you a "souvenir" for your participation.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of taking part?

Your experiences and opinions have the potential to shape the future development of basic education in Nigeria. However, participation is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw from the study at any time.

We are going to audio-record this group discussion so that your contributions can be studied more carefully afterwards. Any data collected will be held in strict confidence and no real names will be used in this study or in any subsequent publications. The records of this study will be kept private and confidential. Only my supervisor, Professor Viv Edwards and I will have access to the data, which will be stored securely on a password-protected computer.

When the thesis is complete, a copy will be deposited in the archives of the Obolo Language and Bible Translation Project Office at Agwut Obolo, Andoni LGA, Rivers State. On request, I will also send a summary of the findings for any of you who is interested.

This project has been reviewed following the procedures of the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct.

If you would like more information, or have any concerns at any point in the project, you can contact me at m.j.aaron@pgr.reading.ac.uk or my supervisor, Prof Viv Edwards at v.k.edwards@reading.ac.uk.

Yours Faithfully

Marianne Aaron

University of Reading

Focus group Information sheet:
Research project: Policies and Procedures for the Promotion of Effective Bilingual Education in Nigeria

Marianne Aaron
PhD Researcher, Institute of Education, University of Reading, 4 London Road, Reading RG1 5EX, UK

Consent form for participants of Focus Groups:

I have read the Information Sheet about the project.

I understand what the purpose of the project is and what is required of me. All my questions have been answered.

(signature)

17th May 2015 (date)

APPENDIX C

Schedule for Interview with Executive Officers

Questions, to be used in the Elite Interviews

1. We have had the National Policy for Education since 1977 stipulating that initially the MoI in schools should be the "language of the immediate environment" and later English. But **some people say it is better to use only English just as the private schools do, while others say it is better to use "the language of the environment" more. What is your own opinion about this?** (What would be the advantages and disadvantages to these?)

2. I know you are aware that **Secondary school students' performances in English, Mathematics, and Sciences are generally very poor, (except probably for students from special schools like the Government Science Secondary Schools and good private schools.)** ***Information: It has been found that inadequate understanding of the concepts is (at least partly) responsible for this.*** If so, are there any things that could be done about this?

3. **If these subjects were taught in the language of the environment, which is the most highly-communicative language of the children, would this facilitate the children's understanding of the concepts?** If so, would it be possible to do anything about this? What could be done**?**

4. **What about the principle of "going from the known to the unknown". When children in the rural areas start school at the age of 6, they can communicate freely in their Mother Tongue and have learnt a lot of things at home and in their community about life in their environment.** They are starting to become helpful members of the family. Outside school they continue to observe and learn the features of their environment and some of the skills and knowledge of their community**. Would it not be very useful for teachers to build on this knowledge, having the children discuss these things, and then building on it?** How would the language of communication in school enhance or obstruct this?

5. **Do you think there is any knowledge/wisdom which your community had, which is getting lost?** Knowledge about how to live in their environment, e.g. for the riverine people: about the ocean, the creeks and the mangroves; the stars, the wind and the currents that can guide you; about the tides and their times, calculating when there will be spring tide, when the water will be good for fishing and which period it will be bad; things they know about fish and how to catch them; how to preserve fish, crayfish, crabs and shellfish, etc.; and also knowledge about plants and roots that can be used to drive away mosquitoes, or armies of aunts; and those that can heal certain health conditions, stop bleeding, etc., etc? **/**What about wisdom, proverbs and folkstories, etc. **Do you think that such knowledge/wisdom is actually helpful for life in the area? Is there a way for such kinds of knowledge/wisdom to be discussed in school and related to what is known from the sciences and literature etc., so that it will be valued and used, and developed more? How would the language of communication in school enhance or obstruct this?**

6. **Many children who have completed primary school are not sufficiently literate and cannot read and write well. Good reading and writing skills are fundamental to education. It has been known that good literacy skills in the mother tongue lead to good literacy skills in English by the end of primary school. But there is much too little time on the primary school time-table to teach reading and writing in the language of the environment. What could be done about this?**

7. **These days many children and young people in the cities do not speak their MT, only English. What do you think about that? (**Is it like something was lost for them, or doesn't it matter?) Should mother tongue be taught as a subject?

8. **Up to what level do you think the "language of the environment" should have a place besides English in education, where most subjects are taught in that language** (with textbooks in the language)?

APPENDIX D

Data log

References to research participants are in square brackets to distinguish them from other references in the thesis, for instance, [Rural Empl. FG2 E] and [Interv.Exec. A] are referring to participant E in focus group 2, while the second participant is an executive officer I interviewed individually.

Focus Groups:

Abbreviations for the types of focus groups:

Fisherfolk FG	Rural, Lower educated group
Rural Empl.FG	Rural, Middle educated group
Urban Empl.FG	Urban, Middle educated group
Elite FG	Urban, Highly educated group, Elite

The ten focus groups are numbered as follows: 1a, 1b, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9a, 9b, 9c, 9d

The lower case letters indicate that these are parts of the recordings and transcriptions of one group[13]. For instance, FG9a-d, are the four pieces of recording and transcripts of FG9.

[1313] The reason why there are two focus groups number one is because the invited participants were unable to all gather at the same time in that particular week, so I decided to interview them in two groups. Focus group 9 was only one group, but we were disrupted several times, so that I would put off the recorder. When re-starting, the voice-recorder automatically starts a new file.

Participants were assigned capital letters A - G

Interviews:

Abbreviation for executive interviews: Interv.Exec.

Interv.Exec. A	Education executive of Rivers State
Interv.Exec. B	Education executive of Akwa Ibom State
Interv. Exec. C	Education executive of Akwa Ibom State

APPENDIX E

List of emerging themes and sub-themes

The parents' goals for education, and its effectiveness

- Socio-economic considerations for the family
- Progress/development of Obolo – African communalism

Obstacles to learning/education

- Societal socio-economic problems
- Problems related to the provision of education

Obolo attitudes to Obolo and English

- Attitudes to Obolo/MT
- Attitudes to English

Attitudes to Obolo bilingual education