Readability of Igbo Language Textbook in use in Nigerian Secondary Schools

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Abstract
This study assessed the readability of Igbo language textbook in use in Nigerian secondary schools. Five Igbo Language textbook were evaluated. The study employed an evaluation research design. The study was conducted in South Eastern Geopolitical zone of Nigeria which is predominantly the Igbo tribe of Nigeria. Four hundred secondary school students were used for the study. These students were drawn from five secondary schools (one school from each of the five States of the South Easter zone of Nigeria) that were used for the study. In each school eighty students were drawn for the study (twenty students were drawn from each of the JSS1, JSS2, SS1 and SS2 classes). Data were collected on readability of the textbooks using Igbo Language readability test which are specifically cloze tests of readability. Research questions were answered using percentages while the hypothesis was tested at 95% confidence level using the Chi-Square test of independence. Summary of result reveals that although all the five textbooks were readable their readability indices are below standard expectations of first language textbooks. The study further revealed that readability of the Igbo Language textbooks do not depend significantly on the class levels of the students. Based on these findings the researcher recommends that that a readability benchmark should be adopted for all language textbooks in Nigerian schools. Those textbooks that do not meet the minimum benchmark should not be allowed in Nigerian schools
Keywords: Readability, Igbo Language, Secondary Schools, Textbooks, Nigerian Languages.

Introduction
The quest for Igbo language growth and development requires a sound based in language teaching and learning in our nation. Language teaching and learning is very important in the society and the world in general. Since language is the most principal means of communication its importance in the development of a society cannot be overemphasized. Igbo language is one of the three major languages in Nigeria and it is studies at all levels of the educational system and as such should be properly developed and standardized (Emenanjo, 2006).

Igbo language generally refers to the language of a particular tribe in Nigeria – the Igbo tribe of the South Eastern Nigeria. The South Eastern Nigeria includes five States in Nigeria (Anambra State, Enugu State, Abia State, Imo State, Ebonyi State) and a substantial part of Delta State, Rivers State, and some communities in Cross Rivers State and Kogi State of Nigeria.

Language is a portmanteau word englobing the entirety of a people's way of life and this ways of life encompass dimensions that are material and non material. It includes the way a people perceive and organize themselves and how they perceive the world and people around them.

Whorf's (1989: 5) hypothesis states that "all observers are not led by the same physical evidence to the same picture of the universe, unless their language and cultural background are similar or can in some ways be calibrated". Eshiet (1991) and his colleagues did not realize that although Whorf tied perception of the physical universe to language structure he was very explicit in stressing the role of culture in overall societal development. As a means of expressing culture and practices languages maintained a prime position in Nigerian Educational system. There is great emphasis on Nigeria languages in the school system. Scholars were also encouraged to develop resources that facilitate the teaching and learning of these languages to ensure the full realization of the objectives of language instruction in Nigerian educational system. Unfortunately, some the resources provided for effective teaching and learning of languages in schools are deficient in a number of attributes. One of such attributes is the readability of the textbooks.

Readability refers to the assessment of the difficulties that readers of a certain level of skills may have in reading a piece of connected written discourse or text (Abonyi and Oluikpe 2013). It generally tends to portray the effectiveness in communication between the author of a written text and the readers. According to Dale and Chall (1988) readability is the sum total including interactions of all those elements within a given piece of printed materials that affect the success which a group of readers have with it. It is generally a function of interest, fluency and comprehensibility. Although there are arguments that a number of educational resources in use in school system do not meet up with the stipulated criteria for usage, most of the emphasis and studies have been on resources for teaching sciences in Nigerian schools. With the current emphasis on language education in Nigerian schools it has become obviously imperative that the textbooks being offered for the language teaching and learning be subjected to thorough evaluation. It is against this background that the researcher deems it

explicitly necessary to assess the readability of Igbo language textbooks in use in Nigerian secondary schools.

Objectives of the Study
The objective of this study is to determine the readability of Igbo language textbooks in use in Nigerian Secondary Schools. Specifically the study swill explore (a). readability status of the five prominent Igbo textbooks recommended for Nigerian secondary schools. (b). whether their readability status depend on the class level of the students

Scope of the Study
This study will be restricted to the evaluation of the readability of Igbo language textbooks in use in Nigerian secondary school. This will include those in use in junior and senior secondary schools. The assessment will be restricted to the following Igbo Language Textbooks in use in Nigerian secondary schools:
(a). TEXTBOOK 1: Nhazi Asusu Igbo maka ule Junior Secondiri n'usoro Bezik Education   by Chinwe, Uzochukwu, Okafor, & Udoka Ewelukwa
(b). TEXTBOOK 2: Nhazi Asusu igbo maka Ule Senio na Kolji WASSCE, NECO,JAMB by Chinwe, Uzochukwu, Okafor, & Udoka Ewelukwa
(c). TEXTBOOK 3: Exam Focus: Igbo Maka WASCE, JME by E. N Emenanjo; O.N Dike, S.N Agomo; R.O Ezeuko
(d). TEXTBOOK 4: Ndezu Utoasusu Igbo Nke Ndi Senior Secondiri (Usoro Nkuzi na Omumu nke UBE) by Chinedu Ofomata
(e). TEXTBOOK 5: Igbo maka senior sekondiri 2 by E.N Emenanjo, Okoli O and B.U Ekwe

Research Question
The following research questions guided the study:
What is the readability index of the Igbo Language textbooks in use in Nigerian Secondary Schools?
What is the influence of class level on the readability index of the Igbo Language textbooks?

Hypothesis
This null hypothesis guided the study:
HO₁: *The readability index of the Igbo language textbooks in Nigerian Secondary Schools does not depend significantly on the class level of the readers*

Research Method
This study employed an evaluation design. Evaluation design is the type of design, which seeks to ascertain, or judge the value of a programme or resource by careful appraisal determined by a pre-stipulated standard (Carter, 1989). According to Ali (2006), Evaluation design is the type of design that makes value judgment on program, projects based on certain pre-determined criteria. Specifically this study will employ the naturalistic evaluation design which according to Wolf (1991) is the act of gathering information and juxtaposing it with some set of criteria to make judgment regarding the strength and weakness, merits or worth of an educational innovation, materials, programmes or products.

This study was conducted within the South Eastern Geopolitical zone of Nigeria. This zone is the Igbo speaking tribe of Nigeria. Both senior and junior secondary school textbooks were evaluated. Examination classes (junior secondary class 3 and senior secondary class 3) were not used in this study. Junior secondary classes 1 and 2 students were used in evaluating the junior secondary textbooks while senior secondary school classes 1 and 2 students were used in evaluation the senior secondary textbooks. One secondary school was drawn from each of the five states in the South Eastern Geopolitical zone of the country. In each of the five schools drawn for this study twenty students were drawn from each of the JSS1, JSS2, SS1 and SS2 classes. In each school therefore a total eighty (80) students were drawn through simple stratified random sampling. For the five secondary schools drawn for this study a total of four hundred (400) students were drawn and used for the study.

The instrument that was used for the data collection is a cloze readability test. Five cloze passages were generated from each of the five textbooks. The instrument was subjected to face validation using specialists in language education and the measurement & evaluation. The reliability of the Igbo Language Readability Test (ILRT) was determined using the Kendal's Coefficient of Concordance (Kendal's W). The Cloze test yielded an inter rater reliability index of 0.72.

Data for the study were collected using the Igbo Language Readability Test (ILRT). The readability text is comprised of cloze passages drawn from the five Igbo language textbooks that were selected for this study. Data were analyzed using percentages and chi square test of independence.

RESULTS
Research Questions
Research Question1:
What is the Readability of the Igbo textbooks in use in Nigerian Secondary Schools?

The data used in answering this research question were obtained from the "Cloze Test of Readability of Igbo textbooks" The mean readability scores of the five Igbo textbooks evaluated were computed and presented on table 1

Table 1*: Readability Index of Igbo Language Textbooks in use in use in Nigerian secondary schools.*

S/No	Textbook	Authors	Mean Readability Score	Decision
1	Nhazi Asusu Igbo maka ule Junior Secondiri n'usoro Bezik Education	Chinwe, Uzochukwu, Okafor, & Udoka Ewelukwa	69.66%	Very Readable
2	Nhazi Asusu igbo maka Ule Senior na Kolji WASSCE, NECO,JAMB	Chinwe, Uzochukwu, Okafor, & Udoka Ewelukwa	51.51%	Readable
3	Exam Focus: Igbo Maka WASCE, JME	E. N Emenanjo; O.N Dike, S.N Agomo; R.O Ezeuko	47.85%	Readable
4	Ndezu Utoasusu Igbo Nke Ndi Senior Secondiri (Usoro Nkuzi na Omumu nke UBE)	Chinedu Ofomata	44.57%	Readable
5	Igbo maka senior sekondiri 2	E.N Emenanjo, Okoli O and B.U Ekwe	54.27%	Readable

Acceptance Range = 40% & above

Table 1 shows the readability scores for the five Igbo Language textbooks in use in Nigerian State Secondary Schools. The results presented in table 1 revealed "Nhazi Asusu Igbo maka ule Junior Secondiri n'usoro Bezik Education" by Chinwe, Uzochukwu, Okafor, & Udoka Ewelukwa has a readability index of 69.66%, "Nhazi Asusu igbo maka Ule Senio na Kolji WASSCE, NECO,JAMB" by Chinwe, Uzochukwu, Okafor, & Udoka Ewelukwa has a readability index of 51.55% while "Exam Focus: Igbo Maka WASCE, JME" by E. N Emenanjo; O.N Dike, S.N Agomo; R.O Ezeuko has a readability index of 47.85%. Summary of result in Table 1 also indicates that "Ndezu Utoasusu Igbo Nke Ndi Senior Secondiri (Usoro Nkuzi na Omumu nke UBE)" by Chinedu Ofomata has a readability index of 44.57% while "Igbo maka senior sekondiri 2" by E.N Emenanjo, Okoli O and B.U Ekwe has an index of readability of 54.27%.

Research Question 2:
What is the influence of class level on the readability index of the Igbo Language Textbooks?

Both senior and junior secondary school textbooks were evaluated. Examination classes (junior secondary class 3 and senior secondary class 3) were not used in this study. Junior secondary classes 1 and 2 were used in evaluating the junior secondary textbooks while senior secondary school classes 1 and 2 were used in evaluation the senior secondary textbooks. Summary of the readability across the class levels were presented in Table2:

Table 2: *Readability indices of Igbo Language Textbooks by class levels*

S/No	Textbook	Authors	Mean Readability Score		Decision
			Class 1	Class 2	
1	Nhazi Asusu Igbo maka ule Junior Secondiri n'usoro Bezik Education	Chinwe, Uzochukwu, Okafor, & Udoka Ewelukwa	63.18%	76.14%	Very Readable
2	Nhazi Asusu igbo maka Ule Senior na Kolji WASSCE, NECO,JAMB	Chinwe, Uzochukwu, Okafor, & Udoka Ewelukwa	45.61%	57.41%	Readable
3	Exam Focus: Igbo Maka WASCE, JME	E. N Emenanjo; O.N Dike, S.N Agomo; R.O Ezeuko	41.37%	54.33%	Readable
4	Ndezu Utoasusu Igbo Nke Ndi Senior Secondiri (Usoro Nkuzi na Omumu nke UBE)	Chinedu Ofomata	40.44%	48.70%	Readable
5	Igbo maka senior sekondiri 2	E.N Emenanjo, Okoli O and B.U Ekwe	47.39%	61.15%	Readable

Hypothesis

HO$_1$ *The readability index of the Igbo language textbooks in Nigerian Secondary Schools does not depend significantly on the class level of the readers*

The Overall readability scores of the five textbooks shown in Table 1 was separated for the two categories of research subjects (junior and senior secondary) that were used for this study.

Table3: *Chi-Square test of independence of readability of Igbo language textbooks on class levels of the students*

	Indices of Readability of the five Igbo Language Textbooks					Chi Square cal.	α	Chi Square Crit
	Textbook 1	*Textbook 2*	*Textbook 3*	*Textbook 4*	*Textbook 5*			
Class 1	63.18 (61.89)	45.61 (45.77)	41.37 (42.51)	40.44 (39.60)	47.39 (48.22)	0.143	0.05	9.49
Class 2	76.14 (77.43)	57.41 (57.25)	54.33 (53.8)	48.70 (49.54)	61.15 (60.32)			

Summary of result in Table 3 reveals that the chi-square calculated is 0.143 while the critical value is 9.49.   The decision rule is to reject the null hypothesis if the calculated chi-square value is greater than the critical value at a given alpha level. Since the calculated value is less than the critical value, the researcher upholds the null hypothesis and concludes that the readability index of the Igbo language textbooks in Nigerian Secondary Schools does not depend significantly on the class level of the readers.

Discussion

Summary of result presented in Table 1 reveals that Textbook one (Nhazi Asusu Igbo maka ule Junior Secondiri n'usoro Bezik Education) is the most readable of all the Igbo five igbo language textbooks being evaluated. This is followed by textbook 5 (Igbo maka senior sekondiri 2) and Textbook 2 (Nhazi Asusu igbo maka Ule Senior na Kolji WASSCE, NECO, JAMB) and Textbook 3 (Exam Focus: Igbo Maka WASCE, JME). The least readable of the five textbook is Textbook 4 (Ndezu Utoasusu Igbo Nke Ndi Senior Secondiri (Usoro Nkuzi na Omumu nke UBE). In Table 2 summary of result reveals that readability of the Igbo textbooks does not depend significantly on class level of the students.

Reading according to Akani (2011) is one of the skills acquired through teaching and learning process. This most likely accounted for the little variation observed in readability across class level. It is important to note that the class levels explored is close enough and the amount of learning experiences may not be such that should generate a significant difference. Although readability is viewed mostly is predominantly a visual thinking skill it has been argued that readability is a learnt behaviour and as such progresses with increase in class level. This is manifested in the little differences observed across class level. It must be noted that with an increase in class level learner's level of readability and comprehensibility improves (Abonyi and Oluikpe, 2013).

Another issue of interest in this study is the peculiarity of Igbo language as the first contact language for children in south eastern Nigeria. This makes it possible for individuals that have not actually experience formal education to acquire little reading skills in Igbo language. As such it is most likely that readability may not so much depend on class level but on the text materials presented by the authors of such textbooks. Readability may therefore be more of a function of the text materials than class level. Although all the reviewed textbooks

were readable it is evident that the readability indices are below expectation. For textbooks written in learner's first language and enshrined in the learner's cultural background it is expected that their readability will be very high (at least above 70%).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The researcher has attempted to present the readability indices of some prominent Igbo language textbooks in use in Nigerian secondary schools. In addition the review covered the extent to which the readability depended on the class levels of the students. Although this review was not intended to discredit authors of these textbooks it may serve as a guide for further review of the textbooks especially now that much emphasis is placed on readability and comprehensibility. Even though all the five Igbo Language textbooks were found to be readable their readability indices are not quite impressive especially in this case that we are concerned with the cultural language of the learners. The authors should not lose focus of the fact that conception of phenomena and concept development are to a large extent tied to language. As such if a learner must appreciate, utilize and adjust sustainably to his environment, most of the textual materials that has much to do with his/her culture should not only be readable but appropriately comprehensible. It is therefore recommended that a readability benchmark must be adopted for all language textbooks in Nigerian schools. Those textbooks that do not meet the minimum benchmark should not be allowed in Nigerian schools. Review of such textbooks should be carried out by specialist in language education and instructional programme evaluation.

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