

Teaching Factors and Learning of the Ibibio Language in Secondary Schools in Akwa Ibom State

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Abstract

Language is simultaneously a vehicle for a people's culture and a means of maintaining and indefinitely preserving that culture. In order not to lose our identity as a people, together with our rich cultural heritage, attention must be paid to the teaching and learning of our mother-tongue (Ibibio) in schools. This study was therefore designed to identify those factors (knowledge, skill and activities) which could aid teachers, students, policy makers and other stakeholders to implement effective programmes for the teaching and learning of the Ibibio language in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. Specifically, this study examines factors which would make the study of Ibibio language attractive to teachers and students, such as: teachers training and professional competence, curriculum development, textbooks, and government policies. This investigation was carried out using questionnaire as the research instrument. Separate questionnaires were designed for students and teachers to elicit relevant information. The result of this investigation shows that there is a very severe deficit in the number of qualified Ibibio language teachers, as such, most schools do not offer the subject as required by the National Policy on Education (2004). There is, therefore, an urgent need for massive recruitment and training of Ibibio language teachers for sustainability of Ibibio language education. Also, the provision of other teaching tools apart from textbooks such as provision of audio teaching material, conducive classrooms, and Ibibio Artefact centres are urgently needed.

Keywords: Ibibio language, mother-tongue, Education policy, language education.

Introduction

The state of the indigenous language studies in Nigeria today is far from being satisfactory. The performance of secondary school students in the public examination conducted in the indigenous languages and quality of the use of indigenous languages by secondary school leavers attest to this fact. This poor state of indigenous language and the quality of the use of indigenous language studies in the country has attracted much attention and several comments from scholars and educators in Nigeria (Chumbow, 1990). The study of languages involves the four basic language skills which are: listening, speaking, reading and writing. It is obvious that most of these basic language skills are not given the attention they deserve in most secondary schools in the country. It is a universally acknowledged principle in modern education that a child should receive instruction in his/her mother tongue (Chumbow, 1990). This right should not be denied every Akwa Ibom child, because such education leads to alienation of a child from his/her environment, and cannot achieve

the most important aim of education, which is to help in developing the power and intellect of the child (Chumbow, 1990).

Teaching and learning of Nigeria languages as promulgated by the National Policy on education (NPE) (2004) is aimed at promoting our indigenous languages, to sustain our cultural pride and glory and to rescue our mother-tongue from neglect and extinction because, they are our symbol of identity and the instruments for preserving our culture. As important as our indigenous language is, there should be greater motivation on the part of language crusaders for the actualization of the objectives of the National Policy on Education (NPE) (2004) as regards issues, which directly affect our indigenous language. This research takes a look at the factors that enhance the teaching and learning of the Ibibio language in secondary schools, attitude of the teachers, students, parents, towards the implementation of government policy on language learning, and the materials available for teaching this subject.

Background of the Study

Ibibio is the fourth largest ethnic group in Nigeria after Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. The Ibibio language with its various dialects is spoken by over four million people (Esen, 1982). Effort to codify the language between 1846 and 1862 were foiled hence, the missionaries directed their attention to the development of Efik, a dialect of Ibibio and then imposed it on the Ibibio people (Essien, 2008). In recognition of the need to develop Ibibio and in response to the challenge of the National Policy on Education (NPE), the Akwa Esop Imaisong Ibibio in 1982 sponsored the writing of Ibibio orthography to make learning in the language possible. The successful writing and publishing of Ibibio orthography in 1983 was a mile stone in the development of the language.

The Ibibio language has prestige and respect as a language. It has now been developed for use in the education sector. The needed recognition was accorded the language when in September 1983, the commissioner for Education in the erstwhile cross River State, Prof. E. J. Usua directed that Ibibio be taught in all schools in what is now Akwa Ibom State using orthography as the standard (Essien, 2008). The teaching of the Ibibio language in secondary schools is relatively new compared to other language such as English, French, Yoruba, and so on. There is the need therefore, from time to time, to conduct iterative progress assessment to ascertain what factors may mitigate against the effective implementation of Ibibio language curricula and to suggest ways to enhance the effective teaching and learning of the Ibibio language in schools. This study is part of such effort. It seeks to assess: the role of teachers, the role of students, the role of parents, the role of government and Availability of tools for effective teaching and learning of Ibibio language in secondary schools.

While there are many factors involved in delivering quality education, language is clearly the key to communication and understanding in the classroom. The scope of this research work is to examine those factors that would enhance effective teaching and learning of Ibibio in schools. This study will be limited to the identification of factors such as resources (human and materials), schools, students, community, as well as effective government policies to promote the teaching and learning of the Ibibio language in secondary schools.

Research Questions

- i. are there secondary schools in Akwa Ibom that study Ibibio?
- ii. are there professional teachers to teach Ibibio language in secondary school in Akwa Ibom State?
- iii. are there teaching and learning aids for teaching and learning of Ibibio language in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State?
- iv. is there measures set in by government to monitor the implementation of this National Education Policy schools?
- v. does students attitude affect the teaching and learning of Ibibio language?

Objectives of the Study

- i. to identify secondary schools that teach Ibibio language in Akwa Ibom State.
- ii. identify professional teachers that teach Ibibio language in secondary school in Akwa Ibom State
- iii. to ascertain the teaching and learning aids for teaching and learning of Ibibio language in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.
- iv. to identify measures put in by government to monitor the implementation of this National Education Policy schools.
- v. to ascertain how the attitude of students affects the teaching of Ibibio

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the Language Acquisition Theory of the American linguist and a cognitive scientist, Chomsky, (1986). According to Chomsky theory, children have inborn structures in the brain which he refers to as Language Acquisition Device (LAD), that is responsible for the innate or natural ability to organize spoken language in different ways. Because human language is extremely complex, Chomsky opines that, children do not imitate the language that they hear in their immediate environment but they naturally and unconsciously observe their syntactic rules that they used to generate new sentences. He asserts that, there is a universal syntactic set of categories he called ‘Universal Grammar’ which children are born with that enable them to acquire how words and sentences of their first language are formed.

The language acquisition theory, informed this study in that children who are not fluent in their mother tongue become limited both in speaking and writing and this has a way of hindering their ability to learn a second language. It is true that languages are categorised into different groups based on their features, yet a pre-knowledge in a child’s mother tongue enhances his/her ability in learning a second language because language features are intertwined. Therefore, having a good understanding of one’s mother tongue is important for learning a second language. Furthermore, the task for a child to speak and write fluently in his/her mother tongue is the responsibility of parents, teachers and government which is what this paper advocates.

Methodology

This section deals with the research methodology or tools used for the study. Questionnaire is the main instrument of research methodology used in this study. The sets questionnaire is designed to elicit specific response from the teachers and students who are teaching/studying the Ibibio language. The questionnaires were administered in secondary schools offering the subject in the state.

In this study, secondary schools in Akwa Ibom which teach Ibibio language were the target population. Six Secondary schools were randomly selected among private and public schools that met the criteria for the study. From the selected schools, students were randomly selected to provide response to the questions in the questionnaire. These students were in JSS1–SSS2. Teachers from these schools also responded to the questionnaire specifically designed for them, because there were one to two teachers in each school that met the criteria. Questionnaires were used as a research instrument for this study. The sets of questionnaires were designed to elicit specific responses consistent with the objectives of this study. One set of the questionnaire was designed for students to appraise their appreciation, understanding and problems with the teaching and learning of Ibibio in their schools. The second set of the questionnaire was designed for teachers. The questionnaires are included in the appendix. Also, responses to the questionnaires were analysed using simple percentages. Most of the questionnaire questions required yes or no answer (Nominal Data).

Results and discussion

1. Analysis of Student's Questionnaires

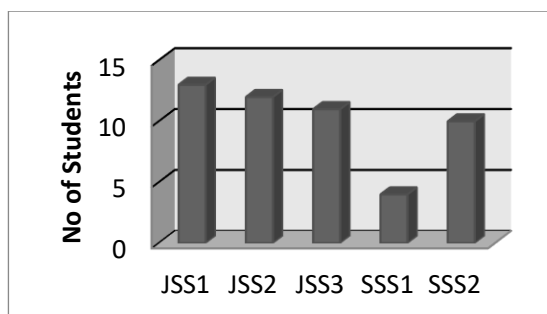


Figure 1. Student respondents by class

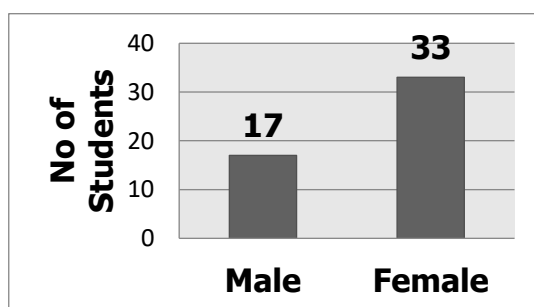


Figure 2. Student respondents by Gender

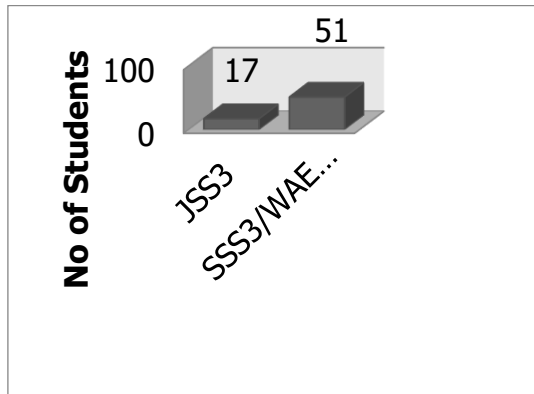


Figure 3. Student intending to offer Ibibio in examinations

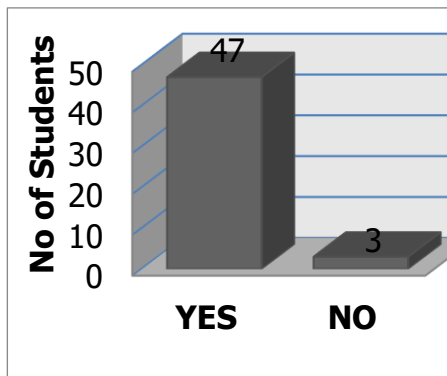


Figure 4. Students who were satisfied with their teachers

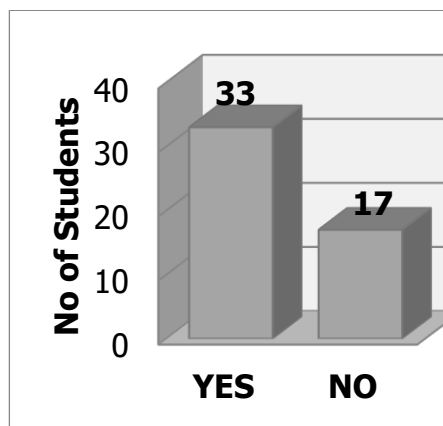


Figure 5. Students who were satisfaction with textbooks

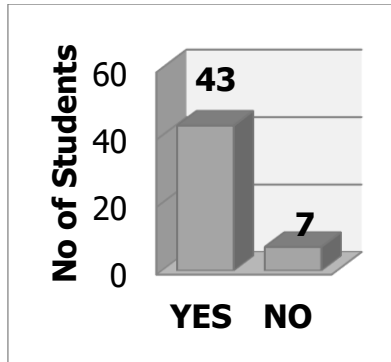


Figure 6. Students whose parents speak Ibibio at home

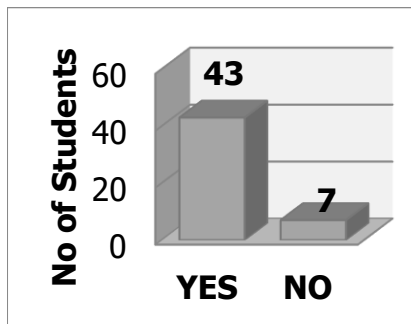


Figure 7. No. Students whose parents encourage them to study Ibibio

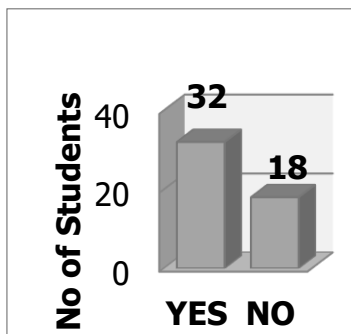


Figure 8. Study of Ibibio is helpful with other subjects

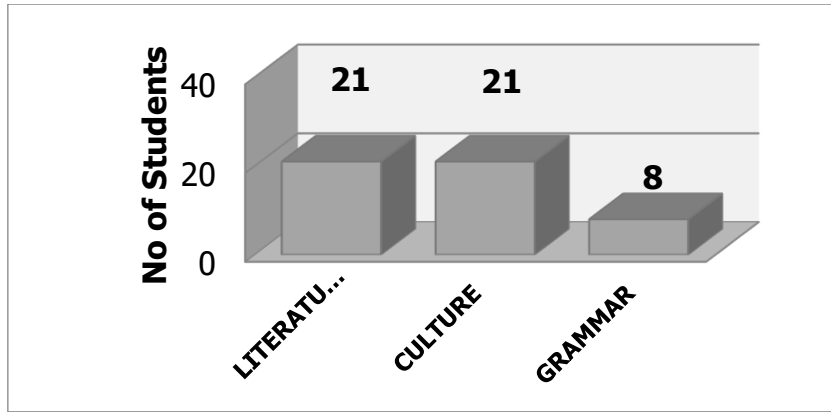


Figure 9. Students' areas of interest

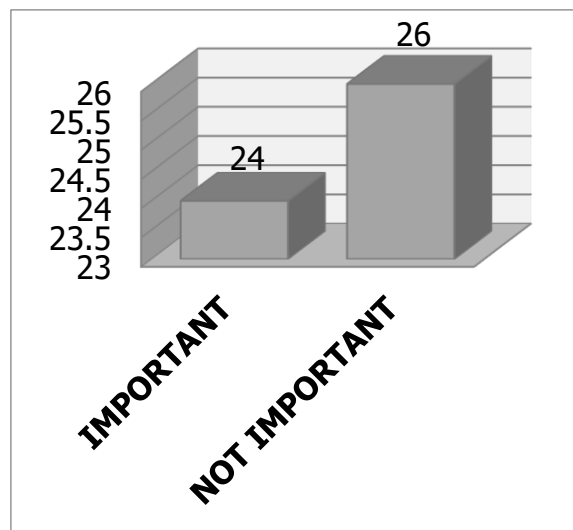


Figure 10. Peer group assessment of Ibibio language

2. Analysis of Teachers' Questionnaires

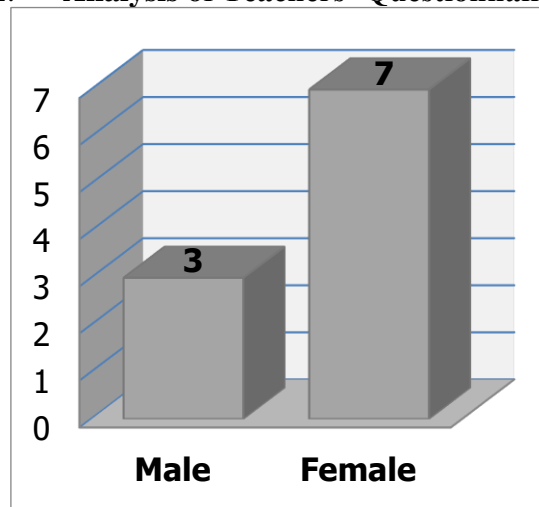


Figure 1. Response by teachers based on gender

Educational Qualifications And Areas Of Specialization

1. All the teachers had B.Ed
2. Areas of specialization:

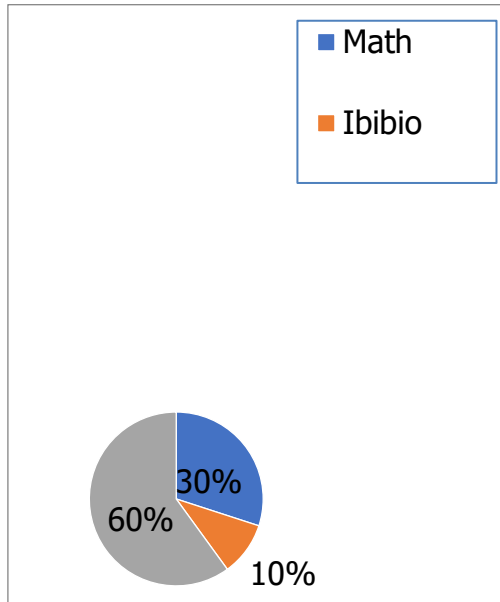


Figure 2. Educational background of Ibibio Language Teachers

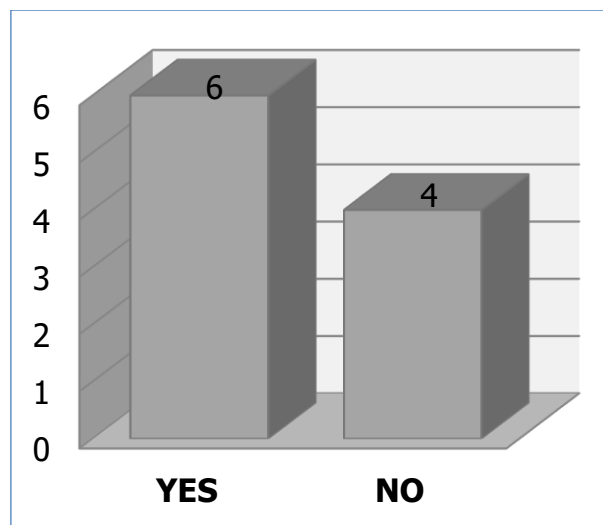


Figure 3. Teachers surveyed agree that the Ibibio language should be made compulsory in schools.

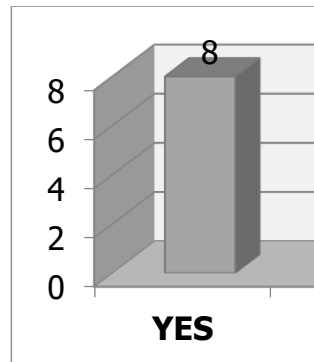


Figure 4. Teachers surveyed agree that the study of Ibibio language enhances understanding of other subjects

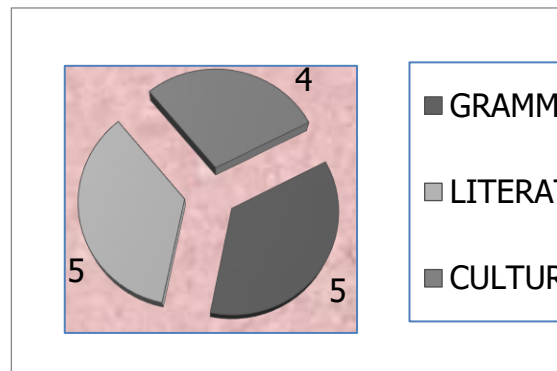


Figure 5. Ibibio language teachers are about equally interested in all areas of Ibibio

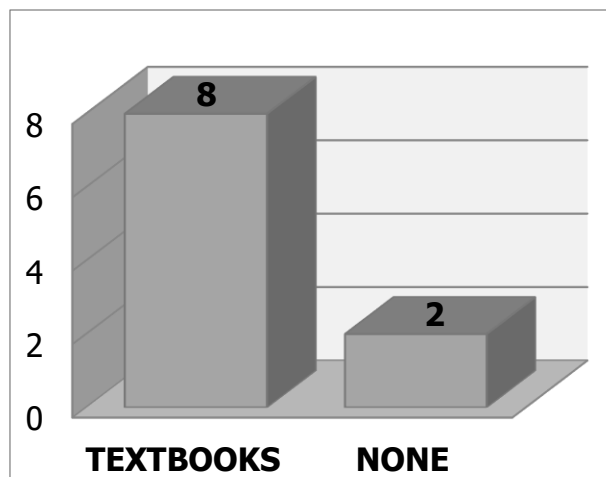


Figure 6. Teaching tools and materials available for teaching Ibibio in schools

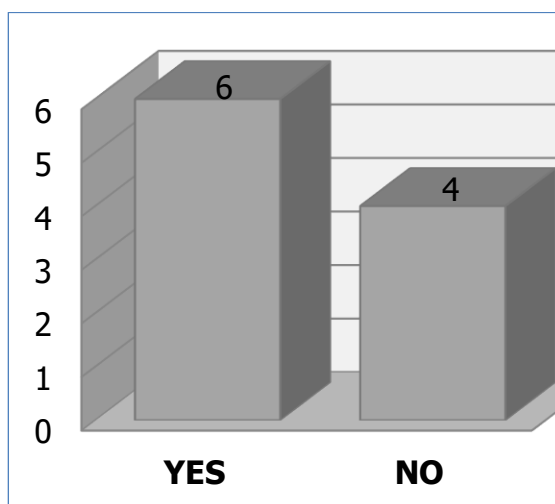


Figure 7. Response by some teachers surveyed agrees that students are interested in the study of the subject

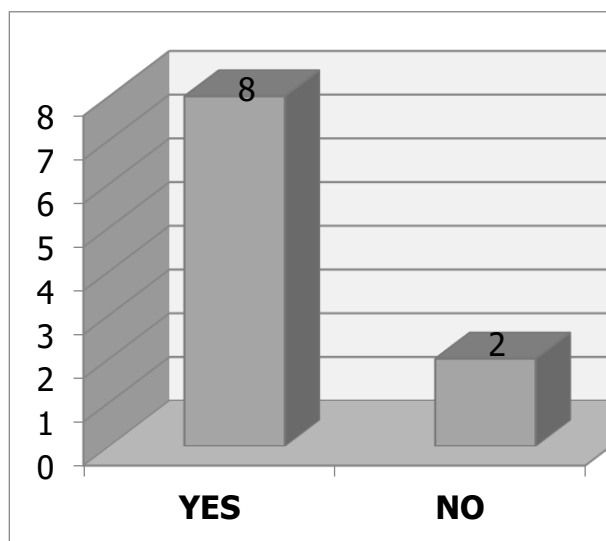


Figure 8. Teachers surveyed agree that the curriculum is adequate

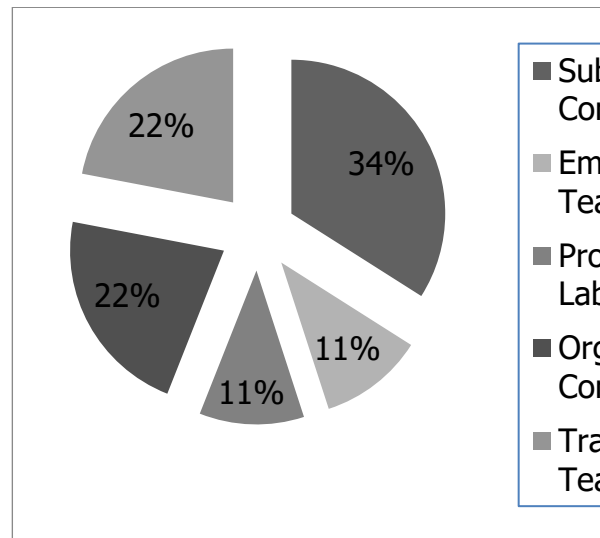


Figure 9. Suggestions on how government policies may enhance teaching and learning of Ibibio language

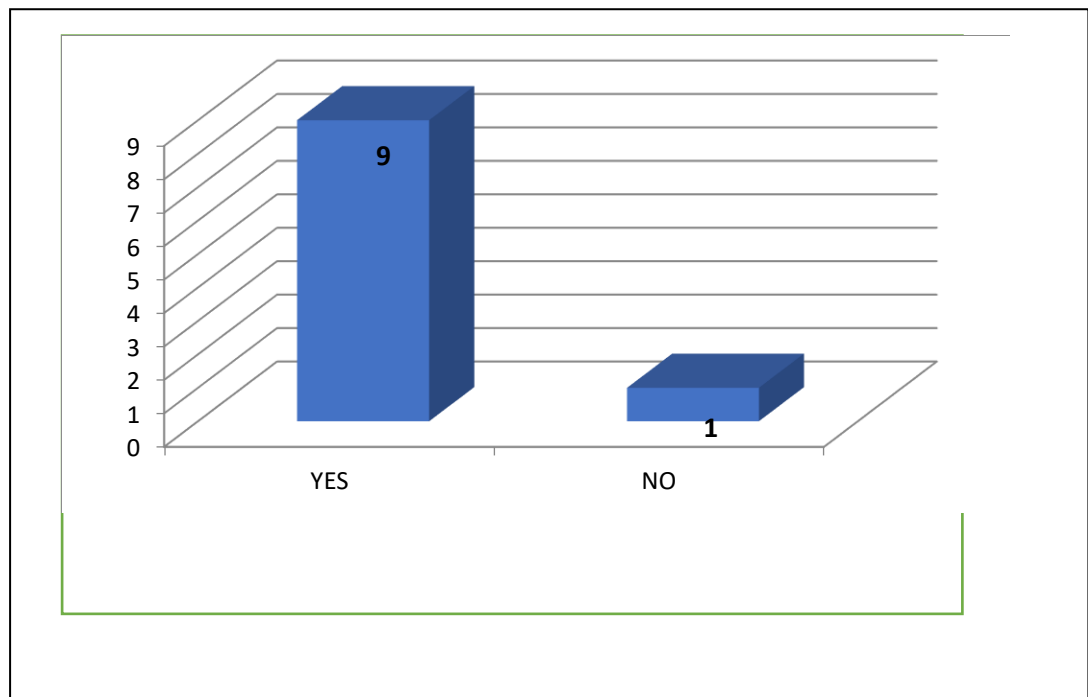


Figure 10. Ninety percent of teachers surveyed agree that there were not enough qualified teachers to teach Ibibio language

Discussion

The teaching and learning of Ibibio in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State is potentially making positive progress. From the results of teacher's questionnaires, only 60% of the teachers hold a degree in Ibibio language. Most schools employed one or two teachers. Other schools are not able to offer the subject because of lack of qualified teachers. There is great demand for Ibibio language teachers. All the teachers surveyed agree that payment of financial incentive to teachers will encourage more teachers to take up Ibibio language in colleges and universities.

The Ibibio language is offered from JSS1-SS2. Students are satisfied with the level of instruction, curriculum and textbooks. Eighty two percent (82%) of the student respondents would offer Ibibio in WAEC or NECO. Most students are more interested in the Ibibio culture and literature than in the grammar (16%). Grammar is the bedrock of any language and if students do not understand the rudiment of the Ibibio language, then, they will find it difficult to construct good sentences. Emphasis should be laid on the grammar. There is some perception by forty eight percent (48%) of students that the subject is not as important as the study of English language. This concept needs to be disabused.

Eighty six percent (86%) of the parents speak the Ibibio language at home with their wards. The eighty six percent (86%) of parents also encourage their wards to study the Ibibio language. The materials available for the teaching and learning of Ibibio language are textbooks. Other teaching aids such as language laboratory, audio and video tapes are needed for effective teaching and learning. Government and other stakeholders have an important role to play in enhancing effective teaching and learning of Ibibio language in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State by providing these essential learning tools as found at the French language centres.

Suggestions on possible government role in enhancing the teaching and learning of Ibibio language in secondary schools include: (1) Making the subject compulsory, (2) training and employing more qualified teachers, (3) Funding Ibibio language interschool competitions, (4) providing financial incentives for students who major in Ibibio language in tertiary institutions, (5) Providing incentives to Ibibio language teachers in order to encourage them.

Conclusion

The study of Ibibio is increasing but there is great need for qualified Ibibio teacher in secondary schools. Most schools employ one or two teachers who teach from JSS 1 to SSS 2 and only 60% of teachers are graduates of Ibibio.

There is this perception by students that the subject is not as important as the study of English language (48%), and 16% of them show appreciation for Ibibio grammar.

Most schools do not offer Ibibio (mother tongue) as required by National Policy on Education (NPE). This may be due to a deficit in availability of Ibibio Language teachers.

Textbooks are the only available teaching materials at the schools.

Recommendations

The University of Uyo and College of Education, Afaha Nsit should increase intake of students to study Ibibio so as produce qualified Ibibio language teachers. Employment opportunities for teachers in Ibibio should be advertised to increase interest of in the subject and/ or department.

Stakeholders should encourage government to provide incentives for students to study Ibibio at the Colleges of Education and at the Universities.

State government should make it mandatory for mother tongue as part of the Universal Basic Curriculum (UBEC) throughout the school system.

There should be great enlightenment of parents and their wards on the value and benefits of studying the Ibibio language. This will help abate their current negative attitudes.

Government and school authorities (school owners, proprietors/proprietresses and teachers) should provide electronic instructional resources such as language laboratory, radio, television, cassette, recorder, and so on. in order to enhance effective teaching and learning of Ibibio language.

The mass media can also help create awareness through programmes likes- “the essence of indigenous language.”

Workshops, seminars and conferences for teachers will raise the profile of Ibibio language and enhance the effectiveness of its implementation.

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