

Empowering Youth by Teaching Them Their Mother Tongue A Simple (Not Easy!) Action Plan

by Esther Achenyo Nordman

English is being taught in Nigerian schools, and this is very important. English helps students get ahead in education. Reading English opens a thousand worlds to the curious mind. Speaking and writing English is helpful for communicating with non-Igala Nigerians and with much of the rest of the world and enables travel to many other countries for education, business, or pleasure.

But what about our mother tongue? Is it worthless? If not, then let us name some of its values. How do you feel about your mother tongue?

For those wondering, "Why bother with Igala?" the websites below may surprise you! I can email this list to you so that you may simply click to access the web pages.

http://www.multiculturas.com/textos/insightsEdn5_Mother_tongue_first_2006.pdf

<http://www-01.sil.org/sil/news/2012/mother-tongue-education-cameroon.htm>

http://www.eenet.org.uk/resources/eenet_newsletter/news12/page10.php

https://www.rti.org/brochures/eddata_ii_mother_tongue_instruction.pdf

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2013/april/first-language-first.html?paging=off>

<http://resources.wycliffe.net/pdf/MT-Based%20MLE%20programs.pdf>

<http://ldcnepal.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/MLE-Article-Newspaper-9-December-2010.pdf>

<http://mg.co.za/article/2013-10-18-mother-tongue-classrooms-give-a-better-boost-to-english-study-later>

<http://www.polis.leeds.ac.uk/assets/files/students/student-journal/ma-winter-10/gacheche-e.pdf>

<http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/mother-tongue-instruction-pushed-burmas-schools.html>

<https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/mother-tongue-instruction-0> Download the PDF by Agatha van Ginkel

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multilingual_Education

<http://www-01.sil.org/sil/news/2012/mtbmle-philippines.htm>

<http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~jar/SIL/Fishman1.pdf>

<http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/981/1957>

<http://opinion.inquirer.net/24959/the-return-of-the-mother-tongue>

<http://www-01.sil.org/sil/news/2012/intl-literacy-day-2012.htm>

One article about the mother tongue eloquently describes its holiness, the relationships nurtured in it, and the duty some individuals felt toward their mother tongue for all it had given them. And it raised the question of identity. For example: if a child of Mexican parents grows up in the USA and doesn't speak Spanish, is he or she Hispanic?

What about Igala people who grow up outside ane Igala? What I hear the most from people who can't speak or read Igala is the shame they feel. Without the language, one doesn't understand one's own culture and values; one can't enjoy the jokes and stories; one is an outsider.

Children everywhere need to study their own language. In the US, even native-born, English-speaking children must take English classes every DAY of the school year for TWELVE years. Why should we believe that a study of the Igala primer is enough for Igala-speaking children? I am convinced that we must create and implement a full curriculum for teaching reading and writing in Igala in the schools.

This is my simple action plan. It is simple but not easy. It will take a lot of work and prayer! Please add your comments and suggestions in the blank lines as we review the plan.

The Simple Action Plan	What Igala has	What English has
<p>Create a complete curriculum, explaining what and how to teach reading and writing in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nursery 1 • Nursery 2 • Nursery 3 • Primary 1 • Primary 2 • Primary 3 • Primary 4 • Primary 5 • Primary 6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Director of Education at MoM Primary School is drawing up a plan • MoM Primary School is a testing ground for the curriculum • Many individuals are pushing for progress in this area <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hundreds of curricula from which to choose • Thousands of articles about curriculum on the web • Complete curriculum fully implemented in every school • English taught at every level of education • Courses on reading, writing, grammar, logic, vocabulary, poetry, public speaking, debate, drama, and much more
<p>Produce books to cover the teaching goals adequately at each class level.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • textbooks • workbooks • teachers' manuals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>The Grammar of the Igala Language</u>, a doctoral dissertation by an Igala linguistics doctoral candidate. • Grammar for non-linguists <i>soon to be produced</i>. • Several small Igala-English dictionaries • Several Igala primers <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>An Amazon.com search for “English teacher manual” showed books in these categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •English as a Second Language (314) •Schools & Teaching (2,805) •Instruction Methods (1,238) •Education & Reference (233) •Children's Books (687) •Words, Language & Grammar (559) •Reference (3,966) •Homeschooling (55) •Rhetoric (43) •Reading Skills Reference (93) <p>An Amazon.com search for dictionaries gave results of nearly 38,000 dictionaries and thesauruses</p>

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<p>Train teachers to engage the children in learning, and to know what to expect from the children at different ages.</p>	<p>MoM Primary School COE Lecturers and Courses</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher training in thousands of universities • Frequent in-service training courses for teachers already working in schools • Thousands of books and seminars on new and better ways to help the children learn
<p>Produce children's books on every class level, and on many subjects – books such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • story books and fables • science books • picture books • poetry and songs • games and puzzles • novels 	<p>Several primers Several coloring books Several dictionaries Several story books The Bible</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Tens of thousands of children's books. An Amazon.com search returned: 8,030 results for "children's books ages 3-5" 11,641 results for "children's books ages 6-8" 132,493 results for "children's books ages 9-12"</p> <p>Categorizing them a different way returned: 99,943 results for "children's picture books" 49,922 results for "children's chapter books" 188,443 results for "children's science books" 43,224 results for "children's fairy tales"</p>
<p>Encourage writing as well as read. E.g., the best little books created by students could be photocopied and used as reading material in the schools.</p>	<p>How else could writing in Igala be encouraged?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Writing is required in English classes. Books written by children sometimes even get published commercially.</p>
<p>Obtain government assistance to review, approve and implement the curriculum, textbooks, and teacher training.</p>	<p>Who has the power to do this? If we are unable to obtain their help we must do this ourselves for the sake of our children and our culture.</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Government regulation and funding. Competition among schools and states for high ratings and funding. Private schools and people who home school chose or create their own curriculum.</p>

The Simple Action Plan	What Igala has	What English has
<p>Preservation and promotion of our language and our cultural heritage in books and audio and video. What a rich treasury of wit and wisdom the we have in fables, proverbs, games, dances and songs.</p>	<p>Untapped human storehouses of oral traditions My unpublished collection of 20 fables My audio recordings of 20 fables. (The video was lost in a computer crash.) My unpublished collection of 333 proverbs Dramatic reading of the Igala New Testament, free to download at faithcomesbyhearing.com</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Millions of books, tapes, videos, TV programs, radio programs, and more</p>

A small group has already begun work on this action plan. Current members are:

- Crystal Gosnell, Director of Education at Ministry of Mercy Primary School, and the MoM teachers,
- Salem Ejeba of UniPort (with his doctoral dissertation on the grammar of the Igala language),
- and myself.

I invite anyone with a passion for the Igala language to join us in our efforts. Talk to me during our time together here, or contact me later.

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- Website: <http://www.partners-in-joy.org/igala-language-project.html>

God bless you. God bless the Igala people. God bless Nigeria.