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## INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR PROMOTION OF QUESTIONING SKILLS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

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### Abstract

*This study examined indigenous languages as an instrument for promotion of questioning skills in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The study assessed the level of relationship and knowledge of indigenous languages on questioning skills of academic staff of Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere. The study adopted a descriptive research design of survey type. The sample size of 100 respondents which included lecturers and students was drawn from the population of 345 members of Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere chapter. The instrument for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire tagged "Indigenous Language as an Instrument of Promoting Questioning Skills in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria (ILIPQSTI) Questionnaire". The three research questions raised to guide the study was answered using descriptive analysis of simple frequency count, percentage, mean and standard deviation. Two (2) research hypotheses formulated for the study was tested at 0.05 level of significance using Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) statistic of independent sample. Analysis of the study revealed that there was significant relationship between indigenous languages and questioning skills in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. It was also revealed that lack of knowledge of indigenous languages does not influence the promotion of questioning skills in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The study concluded that there is an urgent need to deliberately inculcate and imbibe right indigenous values and languages as sine qua non for student-centered academic development and excellence. The study recommended that Nigerian government must match actions with words by adopting policies that would promote their use by all and sundry, including the masses and the 'exploitative' elites and most importantly by tertiary institutions' lecturers as a medium of instruction, communication and in development of their questioning skills.*

**Keywords: Indigenous Language, Tertiary Institutions, Questioning Skills**

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## **Introduction**

Language is a viable instrument of expression; human beings need language for meaningful survival. According to Okonkwo (2004), origin of language coincide with that of society given the fact that a system of linguist communication is a necessary condition for the existence of a human group. Language can be seen as a means of communication, which is very unique to man more than to animals. Language relies on communication for its essence. Also, Awodun & Joshi (2022) noted that language is a method of communicating ideas, thoughts, and desires by means of sounds for psychological and physiological survival. Language is one of the most important attributes of mankind because it is the medium of communication.

It is affirm that communication is a way of sending and receiving information and giving feedback. Through communication, message (thoughts and feelings) are encoded which can come in form of questions are encoded by the person who sends it (the speaker) and decoded by the person who receives it (the listener). Encoding and decoding of information are very essential. Communication is not complete until feedback that can come in form of answers has been received from the decoder. Indigenous language then play as a greatest weapon towards the laying the dangers inherent in communication between individuals and groups. Even in educational institutions, the power of questioning skills promote the use of indigenous language and makes learning and teaching easier and understandable among students and lecturers.

## **Definition of Terms**

### **Indigenous Language**

Adedeji (2015) submit that local or indigenous language can be construed to mean a language spoken of belonging or connected with a particular place or area which one is talking about or with the place where one lives.

### **Nigerian language**

Nigerian language are languages which are indigenous in Nigeria by virtue of the fact that they are spoken by people who hail from Nigeria and are legally Nigerians.

### **Nigerian language policy**

The Nigerian language policy according to Mbak (2011) is a principled statement which has statutory flavor, guiding the teaching, learning and the use of different languages in the country.

### **Questioning Skills**

According to Bhasiri (2021), questioning skills is an important aspect of learning. It is also good for the teaching process. Since it is very important and necessary for teachers to always ask their students questions about the content of their subject matter in order to feed back the teachers about the performance of their pupils or learners. Based on this, the students' understanding could be rated and ascertained. As an educator, we are able to identify that asking questions tap the higher skills of the students and teachers.

Normally, the ways of asking questions could be at the beginning of the lesson. Questions can also be asked in the middle of the teaching and at the end of the teaching. The common questioning techniques involves the 5Wh (who, where, when, why, what and how)

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### **Tertiary Institutions and Teaching**

In education sector, tertiary institutions teacher education is an aspect of tertiary institutions that is empowered to provide quality education to effect much needed change in our society (Amoo & Onuka, 2011). In providing such change, research into this aspect of tertiary education should be geared towards national development, since education has become a weapon through which one can rise to prominence, and as well as development any country's citizens. It means then, that the educational practice in any country including Nigeria should depend on sound philosophy and guiding curriculum. The awareness and the demand for philosophy of education upon which Nigeria government fashions the curriculum have made the society to plan for accelerated educational development as well as the expansion of educational opportunities in recent times. As a result of this, the establishment and participation of private universities to accommodate more students and more employment opportunities ensured (Jubril, 2013). The awareness and demand of the philosophy and curriculum by the stakeholders in education (including researchers in higher education teaching for national development) will go a long way to help develop our citizens.

The tertiary education sector is composed of all universities; colleges of education and technology and other institutes of post-secondary education (Amoo & Onuka 2011, Jubril 2013). In some countries, Odeyemi (2004) noted that the difference between universities and other tertiary institutions is the fact that research takes place in universities. In such countries accordingly, universities have research culture in which it is assumed that most lecturers will engage in research. It also may also include all research institutes, experimental campuses and schools operating under the direct control of, or administered by, or associated with, the higher education establishments. Higher Education is any of the various types of education given in postsecondary institutions of learning and usually affording, at the end of a course of study, a named degree, diploma, or certificate of higher studies (FME, 2009). Higher educational institutions include not only universities and colleges, but also various professional schools that provide preparation in such fields as law, theology, medicine, business, music, and art. Higher education also includes teacher-training schools, junior colleges, and institutes of technology (FRN, 2004). The basic entrance requirement for most higher-educational institutions is the completion of secondary education, and the usual entrance age is about 18 years in advanced countries (College University, 2010, Higher education, 2010).

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. Is there any relationship between indigenous languages and questioning skills in tertiary institutions in Nigeria?
  2. Will lack of knowledge of indigenous languages influence the promotion of questioning skills in tertiary institutions in Nigeria?
  3. Is indigenous language responsible for the promotion of questioning skills in tertiary institutions in Nigeria?
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### Research Hypotheses

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between indigenous languages and questioning skills in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** The lack of knowledge of indigenous languages will not significantly influence the promotion of questioning skills in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

### Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive design of the survey type. The population of the study consisted of 345 members of Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and 3570 students of Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology (BOUESTI), Ikere chapter. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 50 academic staff and 50 students in BOUESTI from the 3 Colleges of study totalling 100 respondents. The sample for the study consisted of 55 female and 45 male respondents in the institution.

The research instrument for the study was a 20-itemed self-structure questionnaire. The questionnaire titled; “Indigenous Language as an Instrument of Promoting Questioning Skills in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria (ILIPQSTI)” was constructed and subjected to validity and reliability test. A degree of internal consistency of 0.87 was obtained using Spearman-Brown split-half method. Data was analyzed using frequency count, percentage, mean and standard deviation to answer the three (3) research questions raised for the study. The two (2) research hypotheses formulated for the study were tested using Chi square statistic of independent sample at 0.05 level of significance with SPSS version 23.

## Results and Discussion

### Descriptive Analysis

#### Research Question 1:

Is there any relationship between indigenous languages and questioning skills in tertiary institutions in Nigeria?

**Table 1: Responses to relationship between indigenous languages and questioning skills in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.**

S/N	Items	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	SD
1	Indigenous language enables the development of people's skills and intellectual abilities necessary for questioning	69 (69.0)	23 (23.0)	7 (7.0)	1 (1.0)	1.40	.667
2	Indigenous language as a medium of education would enhance best result in	39 (39.0)	51 (51.0)	9 (9.0)	1 (1.0)	1.72	.668

	learning.						
3	A learner with language difficulty or learning disability can learn comfortably through indigenous language	60 (60.0)	35 (35.0)	5 (5.0)	0 (0.0)	1.45	.592
4	Native language is integral to the sense of well-being of native learners, and in turn, to their academic performance	39 (39.0)	44 (44.0)	14 (14.0)	3 (3.0)	1.81	.787
5	When an institution values and utilize student’s native language in the curriculum, there is increased student self-esteem, less anxiety and greater self-efficacy	63 (63.0)	25 (25.0)	12 (12.0)	0 (0.0)	1.49	.703
6	Giving instruction through indigenous language improves learners’ overall school performance, cognitive development, problem solving and creativity	46 (46.0)	31 (31.0)	22 (22.0)	1 (1.0)	1.78	.824
7	Good knowledge of indigenous language by the teachers enhances their questioning skills in tertiary institutions	70 (70.0)	20 (20.0)	6 (6.0)	4 (4.0)	1.44	.783

Table 1 showed the mean and standard deviation of items 1 to 7 regarding the response to the relationship between indigenous languages and questioning skills in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The table showed the mean scores ranging from 1.40 – 1.78 and standard deviation values (.498 – .824). Analysis of statement revealed that (92.0%) of the respondents believed that indigenous language enables the development of people’s skills and intellectual abilities necessary for questioning, while the remaining (8.0%) held contrary view.

It was further held that (90.0%) of the respondents indicated that indigenous language as a medium of education would enhance best result in learning, (95.0%) of the respondents said that a learner with language difficulty or learning disability can learn comfortably through indigenous language, (83.0%) of the respondents agree that native language is integral to the sense of well-being of native learners, and in turn, to their academic performance, (88.0%) of the entire respondent held that when an institution values and utilize student’s native language in the curriculum, there is increased student self-esteem,

less anxiety and greater self-efficacy, (77.0%) of the entire respondent held that giving instruction through indigenous language improves learners’ overall school performance, cognitive development, problem solving and creativity while (90.0%) of the entire respondents held that Good knowledge of indigenous language by the teachers enhances their questioning skills in tertiary institutions.

In summary, Table 1 showed the response to the relationship between indigenous languages and questioning skills in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. It was revealed that indigenous language enables the development of people’s skills and intellectual abilities necessary for questioning, and as a medium of education, would enhance best result in learning. Also, learner with language difficulty or learning disability can learn comfortably through indigenous language as it is perceived as an integral part to the sense of well-being of native learners, and in turn, to their academic performance. It was equally revealed that institutionalizing indigenous language into school curriculum and giving instruction through it will improve learners’ overall school performance, enhance cognitive development and creativity, boost students’ self-esteem, less their anxiety and enhances greater self-efficacy. Ultimately, good knowledge of indigenous language by the teachers enhances their questioning skills in tertiary institutions. Hence, there are relationship between indigenous languages and questioning skills in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

**Research Question 2:**

Will lack of knowledge of indigenous languages influence the promotion of questioning skills in tertiary institutions in Nigeria?

**Table 2: Responses to whether lack of knowledge of indigenous languages will influence the promotion of questioning skills in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.**

S/N	Items	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	SD
1	Instruction which includes posing question using indigenous language during lessons is more effective in producing achievement gains than instruction carried out without the knowledge of indigenous language.	73 (73.0)	25 (25.0)	2 (2.0)	0 (0.0)	1.29	.498
2	Students perform better on test items previously asked using indigenous language as recitation question than on items they were taught without using indigenous language	36 (36.0)	56 (56.0)	8 (8.0)	0 (0.0)	1.72	.604
3	Oral questions posed during classroom recitations in native language are more effective on	52 (52.0)	30 (30.0)	18 (18.0)	0 (0.0)	1.66	.768



	fostering learning than when they are written questions						
4	Knowledge of indigenous language plays a significant role in promoting questioning skills in tertiary institutions	54 (54.0)	32 (32.0)	11 (11.0)	3 (3.0)	1.63	.800
5	Teaching learners in a combination of English and native language opens up opportunities for multilingualism in classroom	49 (49.0)	38 (38.0)	11 (11.0)	2 (2.0)	1.66	.755
6	Teaching learners using indigenous language helps teachers to display their dexterity in the subjects.	55 (55.5)	31 (31.0)	11 (11.0)	3 (3.0)	1.62	.801
7	Teaching in indigenous language has a potential to boost teachers' pedagogical confidence and enhance their subject mastery as they witness the growth in their learners' understanding	69 (69.0)	23 (23.0)	7 (7.0)	1 (1.0)	1.40	.667

Table 2 showed the mean and standard deviation of items 1 to 7 regarding the response to whether lack of knowledge of indigenous languages will influence the promotion of questioning skills in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The table showed the mean scores ranging from 1.29 – 1.72 and standard deviation values (.498 – .801). Analysis of statement revealed that (98.0%) of the respondents believed that instruction which includes posing question using indigenous language during lessons is more effective in producing achievement gains than instruction carried out without the knowledge of indigenous language while the remaining (2.0%) held contrary view.

It was further held that (92.0%) of the respondents indicated that students perform better on test items previously asked using indigenous language as recitation question than on items they were taught without using indigenous language, (82.0%) of the respondents said that oral questions posed during classroom recitations in native language are more effective on fostering learning than when they are written questions, (86.0%) of the respondents agree that knowledge of indigenous language plays a significant role in promoting questioning skills in tertiary institutions, (87.0%) of the entire respondent held that teaching learners in a combination of English and native language opens up opportunities for multilingualism in classroom, (86.0%) of the entire respondents held that Teaching learners using indigenous language helps teachers to display their dexterity in the subjects while (92.0%) of the respondents held that teaching in indigenous language has a potential to boost teachers'

pedagogical confidence and enhance their subject mastery as they witness the growth in their learners’ understanding.

In summary, Table 2 showed the response to whether lack of knowledge of indigenous languages will influence the promotion of questioning skills in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. It was revealed that instruction which includes posing question using indigenous language during lessons is more effective in producing achievement gains than instruction carried out without the knowledge of indigenous language, which aids students’ better performance in test items previously asked using indigenous language as recitation question than on items they were taught without using indigenous language. It was further revealed that oral questions posed during classroom recitations in native language are more effective on fostering learning than when they are written questions as the knowledge of both English and indigenous language plays a significant role in promoting questioning skills in tertiary institutions and opens up opportunities for multilingualism in classroom. It was equally shown that teaching learners using indigenous language helps teachers to display their dexterity in the subjects and has a potential to boost teachers’ pedagogical confidence and enhance their subject mastery as they witness the growth in their learners’ understanding. Hence, lack of knowledge of indigenous languages does not influence the promotion of questioning skills in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

**Research Question 3:**

Is indigenous language responsible for the promotion of questioning skills in tertiary institutions in Nigeria?

**Table 3: Responses to whether indigenous language is responsible for the promotion of questioning skills in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.**

S/N	Items	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	SD
1	Native language enhances questioning skills	70 (70.0)	20 (20.0)	6 (6.0)	4 (4.0)	1.44	.783
2	Indigenous language is instrumental in conveying order and information	40 (40.0)	42 (42.0)	17 (17.0)	1 (1.0)	1.79	.756
3	Indigenous language helps to embody and enable thought	71 (71.0)	21 (21.0)	8 (8.0)	0 (0.0)	1.37	.630
4	Effective, explorative use of and development of indigenous language enhances questioning skills	47 (47.0)	40 (47.0)	13 (13.0)		1.66	.699
5	Indigenous language plays vital role in quest for academic excellence in tertiary institutions	49 (49.0)	32 (32.0)	12 (12.0)	7 (7.0)	1.77	.920
6	Indigenous language usage	58	21	18	3 (3.0)	1.66	.879



guide against misconception and vagueness in questioning.	(58.0)	(21.0)	(18.0)			
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Table 3 showed the mean and standard deviation of items 1 to 6 regarding the response to whether indigenous language is responsible for the promotion of questioning skills in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The table showed the mean scores ranging from 1.37 – 1.77 and standard deviation values (.630 – .920). Analysis of statement revealed that (90.0%) of the respondents held that native language enhances questioning skills while the remaining (10.0%) held contrary view.

It was further held that (82.0%) of the respondents agreed that indigenous language is instrumental in conveying order and information, (92.0%) of the respondents said that indigenous language helps to embody and enable thought, (87.0%) of the respondents agreed that effective, explorative use of and development of indigenous language enhances questioning skills, (81.0%) of the entire respondent held that indigenous language plays vital role in quest for academic excellence in tertiary institutions while (79.0%) of the entire respondents believed that Indigenous language usage guide against misconception and vagueness in questioning.

In summary, Table 3 showed the response to whether indigenous language is responsible for the promotion of questioning skills in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. It was revealed that indigenous language enhances questioning skills, instrumental in conveying order and information, helps to embody and enable thought, and plays vital role in quest for academic excellence in tertiary institutions and also guide against misconception and vagueness in questioning. Thus, indigenous language is responsible for the promotion of skills in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

**Hypotheses Testing**

**Hypothesis 1:**

There is no significant relationship between indigenous languages and questioning skills in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

**Table 4: Chi square analysis of therelationship between indigenous languages and questioning skills in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.**

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)	Point Probability
Pearson Chi-Square	9.034 <sup>a</sup>	4	.003	.017		
Likelihood Ratio	8.884	4	.0002	.050		
Fisher's Exact Test	9.404			.024		
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.973 <sup>b</sup>	1	.000	.010	.007	.003
N of Valid Cases	100					

*a. 4 cells (44.4%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .60.*

b. The standardized statistic is 2.641.

The result of the analyses in table 4 showed the effectiveness of indigenous language on questioning skills in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The chi-square test revealed that calculated  $\chi^2$  (.003) was less than the significant level at the 0.05. This implies that there is significant relationship between indigenous languages and questioning skills in tertiary institutions in Nigeria, hence the null hypothesis was not upheld.

**Hypothesis 2:**

The lack of knowledge of indigenous languages will not significantly influence the promotion of questioning skills in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

**Table 5: Chi square analysis of the lack of knowledge of indigenous language and its significant influence on the promotion of questioning skills in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.**

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)	Point Probability
Pearson Chi-Square	31.439 <sup>a</sup>	6	.060	.001		
Likelihood Ratio	36.958	6	.007	.020		
Fisher's Exact Test	32.033			.055		
Linear-by-Linear Association	8.648 <sup>b</sup>	1	.008	.003	.001	.001
N of Valid Cases	100					

a. 6 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .91.

b. The standardized statistic is -2.941.

The result of the analyses in table 5 showed the analysis of the lack of knowledge of indigenous language and its significant influence on the promotion of questioning skills in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The chi-square test revealed that calculated  $\chi^2$  (.060) was higher than the significant level at the 0.05. This implies that lack of knowledge of indigenous languages does not influence the promotion of questioning skills in tertiary institutions in Nigeria, hence the null hypothesis was upheld.

**Discussion of Findings**

In view of hypothesis one, the stated null hypothesis that there is nosignificant relationship between indigenous languages and questioning skills in tertiary institutions in Nigeria was rejected. This result implies that there is effectiveness of indigenous language on questioning skills in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

On the second hypothesis, the stated null hypothesis that the lack of knowledge of indigenous languages will not significantly influence the promotion of questioning skills in tertiary institutions in Nigeria was accepted. This implies that the lack of knowledge of

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indigenous language will not influence the promotion of questioning skills in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

### **Conclusion**

This paper established that indigenous language can play vital role in classroom questioning and improvement of academic performance of undergraduates in Nigeria tertiary institutions. Indeed, it is convincing that there is an urgent need to deliberately inculcate and imbibe right indigenous values and languages as sine qua non for student-centered academic development and excellence.

Language are the life wire of our mode of imparting knowledge in our institutions, therefore, effort should be made to take care of our lecturers through adequate funding to enhance proper stocking of libraries with relevant text with promoting information materials and others that will meet the information needs of the users. Academic lecturers should be able to display their good knowledge of questioning skills to render effective and efficient services that can promote sound education in our tertiary institutions. Lastly, the role of questioning skills in promoting indigenous language education among students in tertiary institutions is actual and should be taken into consideration.

### **Recommendation**

As it were, it is glaring that those in government in Nigeria are not doing enough to promote the use of indigenous language. Granted that Nigeria has so many languages and enormous resources would be required to develop all of them to deal with contemporary realities, but we do not need to develop all the languages at once. We recommend that Nigerian government must match actions with words by adopting policies that would promote their use by all and sundry, including the masses and the 'exploitative' elites and most importantly by tertiary institutions' lecturers as a medium of instruction, communication and in development of their questioning skills. Also, it is recommended that the learning of indigenous language be encouraged and the federal government should sponsor programmes or seminars motivating the languages more than before.

It is further recommended that the use of research findings should never be in ways that would be detrimental to the Nigerian populace and the world at large. Questioning pattern on scientific researches in our tertiary institutions should be based on indigenous languages.

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