

THE EFFECT OF LANGUAGE SHAMING ON SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS' SELF-CONFIDENCE

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Abstract

Shaming is a non-negligible factor that contributes to students' disengagement from second language (L2) learning, not only that, it is a deterrent factor that affects the physical and psychological mind set of learners. This paper argues that this phenomenon has been affecting learners over time. It also focuses on the effect of language shaming on learners of second language and the confidence level of such learners in Awka, Anambra State. The research method adopted in this study is qualitative analysis. The researcher collected data using a questionnaire distributed to 60 respondents, and the sampling technique used was a simple random sampling technique. In addition, observation and personal interviews were applied to get more insight. The result of this study will showcase the strong effects of language shaming on the self-confidence of learners of a second language. Besides the impact on confidence, some other factors seen were emotional, psychological, cognitive and behavioural impacts.

Keywords: Language Shaming, Self-Confidence, Second language learning

Introduction

Language is a powerful tool which human beings use to communicate with others and get feedback. However, with language, human personal and social relations could be hampered when such language is not used properly. Like every other new language learner, there are usually some points where the learner battles with the nuances of the new language, trying to master it. In this process of trying to master this new language that is not his mother tongue, the learner is faced with language shaming. Before exploring the dynamics of language shaming, it will be instructive to note that what this article seeks to do is to shed some light on the effects of this language shaming on second language learners using Igbo language learners as instances. Pearson's product moment coefficient of correlation (r) shall be adopted for data analysis and testing, this is, in order to find out the correlation between language shaming and self-confidence.

Language shaming as the name implies can be said to be the shame one experiences when one fails to use the second language effectively. This is presently a growing concept affecting language learners across the world. Linguistic shame is a kind of shame associated with language use (Liyanage & Canagarajah, 2019) and it occurs due to perceived failure to meet the standards and expectations of others (Gouva, Mentis, Kotrotsiou, Paralikas, & Kotrotsiou, 2015). It goes beyond not meeting the standard in language use to a whole lot of other factors.

Language shaming has categories; it is not merely criticizing someone who is not competent in a language. It goes beyond that, it could be shaming those who are not comfortable communicating in their native language. It could come in forms like; superiority of a language over another, improper communication in a language, wrong pronunciation, accent differences, wrong use of words and many others (Zheng 2008, Dembo 1991).

People of all language use could be victims of such a linguistic stigma. Oftentimes, it is passed subtly in sentences like:

You are Igbo yet you can't speak your language.

I know you are the type "my mama say I be Igbo"!

Uhhh what is this you're saying?

What gibberish is this you wrote?

Which tribe are you, do you even know the meaning of what you said?

Language learners face these unpleasant common reactions: external judgment or pressure from an outside influence (Lo & Fung, 2011, p.170). This is why Martha Nussbaum states that shaming is morally wrong as it fundamentally affects a person's dignity (Nussbaum, 2009).

Language shaming has a significant influence on learners as they face uncomfortable situations in the course of learning and speaking the language. These reactions come with external or pressure from an influence (Lo & Fung, 2011, p.170). Thus, the hurtful and deleterious effects on language users as a result reinforces low self-esteem and confidence, social alienation and communication isolation, which in turn serves as punitive to their psychology.

Based on this background therefore, the researcher aims to explore language shaming from the perspective of its impact on second language learners, especially teens whose first language is English and wants to acquire native language, non Igbo speakers who find themselves in a dominated Igbo language environment. I believe this work will provide a springboard in the area of motivation model for second language learning (SLL) and help people to be aware of the effects of language shaming on learners.

Literature Review

Shame is a response by an individual as a result of an external judgment or pressure from an outside influence (Lo & Fung, 2011, p.170). In general, shaming behaviours have been linked to being punitive and educative and as something that individuals seek to avoid experiencing again or use as the catalyst for restructuring behaviour (Leach & Cidam, 2015). Learners of language experience embarrassment in their perceived lack of fluency, communicative competence, grammatical competence, language proficiency and cultural understanding (Thanasoula, 2001).

Linguistic shame is a sense of shame related to language use that occurs through perceived failure to meet the standards and expectations of others (Gouva, Mentis, Kotrotsiou, Paralikas, & Kotrotsiou, 2015). It has been defined in another study as "embarrassment in using a language resulting from the social discourses and practices which denigrate the identities and outcomes attached to such language use" (Liyanage & Canagarajah, 2019, p. 2).

Language shaming may occur in the students' environments from peers, their instructors, or the wider community. Leach and Cidam (2015), meta-analysis of responses to shaming found that the level of reparability of a shame-causing event was positively correlated with a more constructivist approach. Individuals may attempt to adjust their own behaviour to avoid performing in ways that caused them to feel shame. This is important in considering how and why students may continue to work to improve their competency in a language when they may have felt shamed by others for their lack of fluency.

Wang (2020) while discussing shaming and speaking in English, identified factors that affect spoken English proficiency in China, which are three categories: student and psychological factors; teachers and experience factors; and other factors. She went further to note that students' learning motivation, interest, and attitude have an important impact on oral English output. In her finding, she outlined elimination strategies and adjustment strategies as means to handle shaming.

Classrooms have shown to be the slaughterhouse for language shaming, the manifestation of shaming in language is more dominant in classrooms. Abeysena (2022) in her examination addresses the emotional, personal, and societal processes that diversely encourage learners as well as practitioners to embrace shame in using English in the classrooms. The manifestation of the phenomenon of shame has different effects such as fear, guilt and envy. Complexes will be mitigated if practitioners show more concern about the pedagogical strategies to counter them effectively.

Furthermore, Okudo (2013) discussed the problems and prospects of teaching and learning Igbo language as a second language in secondary schools. She outlined issues such as inadequate Igbo text material, poor teaching methods and shortage of laboratories for teaching the language as issues that stave effective teaching of the Igbo language. Okudo's observation attests to the fact that learning a language is not as easy as people believe.

Galmiche presented participant accounts of learners of French as an additional language, the study addressed the impact of shame and anxiety on learners of English as a foreign language in France from the perspectives of psychology and psychoanalysis that further elaborated the psycho-societal implications of second language acquisition (SLA) in language classrooms. They include 'linguistic stress', fear of communication, loss of confidence, and, most importantly, loss of self to linguistic shame, thus affecting "the cognitive processes and in-class behaviours of students, and hinders their ultimate achievement" (Galmiche, 2017). The extreme levels of linguistic shame manifested in language classrooms could range from simple societal implications to severe psychological implications.

The Spread of Shaming

Language shaming is not an unfamiliar phenomenon; it is very common that one could admit it is so rooted in our culture and transpires in many domains but rarely noticed. It is common especially in social places like the workplace, commercial environment and in our educational system. It thrives well when there are differences in linguistic practice and ideology, multicultural and multilingual society. Anambra as a bilingual state has English as official language and Igbo as national language; a language of day to day activity. Igbo language has a high status and is common to the people, which indirectly encourages shaming of users of other languages in social context.

Igbo language has official status, and is widely spoken among the people, in schools, market places, homes and religious places. With the status of Igbo language, most people, especially parents place value in speaking the local language. The importance of Igbo language has made the spread of shame possible on non-speakers of the language. Unfortunately it goes to show superiority in a social setting, with lots of social differences and characteristics.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the effects of language shaming on second language learners' self-confidence in Awka.

The specific objective includes;

1. To determine the effect of language shaming on learners' of second language self-confidence in Awka .
2. To examine the influence of language shaming on communication of second language learners in Awka.

Research Questions

1. What is the effect of language shaming on second language learners' self-confidence in Awka?
2. To what extent does language shaming affect the communication of second language learners in Awka?

Conceptual Overview

Language Shaming

Linguistic shame is a sense of shame related to language use (Liyanage & Canagarajah, 2019) and it occurs due to perceived failure to meet the standards and expectations of others (Gouva, et. al., 2015). Shame plays a controversial role that varies linguistically across cultures, and communities. Although "guilt and shame are present in every society, not every society uses them in the same way" (Bedford, 2004, p. 29).

Language shame is a very strong dominant factor in multilingual society which affects learners of language and it is the expressive power of the mind and experience of a communicator. Language shame is a situation where a learner is meant to believe s/he is lacking in proficiency in a language and disparaged in interaction as a result of a particular way of using language. It comes with physical and psychological discomfort.

It is seen as verbal bullying. The physical humiliation is the negative remarks, attitudes towards proficiency; accent and pronunciation, usage, competency and cultural understanding. This kind of shaming is detrimental to learners in two ways: first, the learner is humiliated and his personal worth is diminished. Second, the focus on language rather than content deprives the learner of the opportunity to learn with ease.

Thus, it has deleterious effects on learners which may result in low self-esteem, lack of self-worth, and sometimes social alienation as it disrupts security and confidence and can lead to withdrawing and refusing to communicate with others in that language. Learners are afraid to mix-up on fear of being bullied linguistically.

Language shaming also has characteristics such as criticizing one's own language incompetency through a comparison with others, criticizing other people's incompetency in front of that person, and criticizing other people's incompetency without their knowledge.

Self-confidence

Self-confidence is a person's belief and behaviour in their own abilities and skills when they accept what is positive and negative. Ramadhany and Putri (2021) believe it is the ability to

accept and trust yourself and have a sense of control in your life and what is formed and learned through the learning process for the ultimate goal of making yourself happy.

Self-confidence is one of the basic requirements for us to carry out activities and creativity to achieve a goal. However, self-confidence will not increase by itself. Trust begins with a healthy interaction process in a person's social environment and continues continuously. Believe comes from within oneself because there is a certain process within us to build self-confidence.

Second Language learner

Second language learner is a person who acquires a target language other than the first or native language. Learners vary according to whether they lean towards learning experientially and also how active they choose to use the target language. There are reasons and purposes for language learning just as there are many ways of learning a second language (L2). Individuals that choose to learn a language have different ways in which they cope with the task of learning and using a second language (L2) and should be encouraged to feel comfortable expressing themselves.

Question is how many learners go on learning a language after being shamed by people? Most learners will be certainly discouraged. It is the negative attitudes and emotions that put such learners in the position where they feel discouraged to continue in the learning process of their target language. However, an instructor's motivational practice and attitude can determine a students' willingness to pursue or give up the learning of a second language (SL).

Language Shaming (X)	Self-Confidence (Y)
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Social and cognitive impact2. Emotional impact3. Psychological impact4. Avoidance Behaviour impacts	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Believing in oneself2. Optimism3. Objective4. Responsible5. Rational & Realistic

Source: Ramadhany and Putri (2021)

Hypothesis

Our hypothesis is based on the conceptual review and research model above, the following hypotheses are:

H_i: There is an influence of language shaming on second language learners and self-confidence of L2 speakers in Awka.

H₀: There is no effect between language shaming on second language learners and self-confidence of L2 speakers in Awka.

Methods

In this study two variables are used and they are connected. They show the significant effect between the independent variable (X), namely, language shaming and the dependent variable (Y), namely self-confidence, where there is significant effect of language shaming on self-confidence.

This research setting was physically conducted using a questionnaire. The time spent by researchers for this research started from April 2022 to November 2022. Population and sample population is a group of individuals, events or interesting things that researchers want to investigate to make a conclusion based on sample statistics. The population of the study were mainly students, non-Igbo speaking Igbo families and random people from different ethnic groups resident in Awka. The sampling technique in this research is purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a sampling technique that has certain considerations.

The data collection technique used in this study was a questionnaire. The researcher used data collected in a questionnaire to obtain significant data in the research design. Questionnaires were given by researchers that already contained statements related to language shaming on second language learners and student self- confidence. 70 questionnaires were distributed to people, out of 70 copies distributed, 60 copies were retrieved and were used in the data analysis for the study.

The questionnaire survey was designed in such a way that respondents resident in Awka were asked to assess the extent to which language shaming on second language learners and self-confidence in the use of second language affected them. By using Likert's five point scale referred to as: (1) Strongly Agree (2) Agreed (3) Undecided (4) Disagreed (5) and Strongly Disagreed responses were gathered to know how these language users were affected. The Likert Five Point Scale was later used to transform the data into scale measurement. For the purpose of testing the hypotheses, Pearson's product moment coefficient of correlation (r) was used for data analysis and testing as seen below using the formular,

$$r = \frac{n \sum XY - \sum X \sum Y}{\sqrt{n (\sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2) (n \sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2)}}$$

Where

- n = number of paired scores
- $\sum x$ = sum of the x scores
- $\sum y^2$ = sum of the square y scores
- $\sum xy$ = sum of the products of paired of x and y scores.

The Pearson's product moment coefficient of correlation is evaluated below:

Coefficient	Value of Relationship
0.00- 0.20	Negligible
0.21- 0.40	Low
0.41- 0.60	Moderate
0.61- 0.80	Substantial/High
0.81- 0.99	Very High/Almost perfect
1.00	Perfect

Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

N=60

Questions	Strongly agreed	Agreed	Undecided	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed
1	30	12	8	6	4
2	33 X	9	3	9	6
3	27	15	3	9	6
4	30 Y	12	3	3	12
5	22	12	6	10	10

Source: Field Survey, 2022

For the test of hypothesis, the study used the data as explicated on table 1 above. The testing of the hypothesis using Pearson's product moment coefficient of correlation is shown on table 2 below:

Hypothesis Testing

RESPONSE OPTION	X	Y	X ²	Y ²	XY
Strongly Agreed	33	30	1089	900	990
Agreed	9	12	81	144	108
Undecided	3	3	9	9	9
Disagreed	9	3	81	9	27
Strongly Disagreed	6	12	36	144	72
Total	60	60	1296	1206	1206

Substituting in the formular:

$$r = \frac{n\sum XY - \sum X \sum Y}{\sqrt{(n\sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2) (n\sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2)}}$$

$$r = \frac{5(1206) - (60)(60)}{\sqrt{5(1296) - (60)^2} \sqrt{5(1206) - (60)^2}}$$

$$\frac{6030 - 3600}{\sqrt{(6480 - 3600) (6030 - 3600)}}$$

$$\frac{2430}{\sqrt{(2880) (2430)}}$$

$$\frac{2430}{\sqrt{6998400}}$$

$$\frac{2430}{2645.44892}$$

$$r = 0.92$$

The empirical analysis shows that majority of the respondents agreed that language shaming exists, they also agreed that language shaming affects the level of self-confidence of learners of Igbo as a second language. Data collected and analyzed using Pearson's rule shows that $r = 0.92$, which indicates that, there is a very high positive relationship between language shaming and self-confidence, therefore, the null (H_0) hypothesis was rejected and alternative (H_1) hypothesis was accepted that is, there is a significant relationship between language shaming and self-confidence. Thus, the variable x data is valid because it fulfils the signal with a

significant value relationship of ‘‘Very High’’ with a ratio value of 0.92. This value is statistically significant at 90% level.

Also in the course of the research, the researcher found out that language shaming can have adverse effects on the self-esteem of the language learners. It goes further to prove that people suffering from language shaming are antisocial. Other factors such as emotional, psychological, cognitive and behavioural impacts were observed. They feel socially disconnected and inadequate whenever the language is in use, because they don’t understand it. They are also afraid to mix-up for the fear of being bullied linguistically. They feel devalued, bullied and outshined in communication and feel socially inadequate and nervous to communicate in the language.

Conclusion

From the research, sixty respondents representing 100% of the population attest to the existence of language shaming, this indicates the social and other related problems language learners face in the process of acquiring a second language. There are two variables; X and Y, X variable affects the Y variable. It can be concluded that there are adverse effects of language shaming on the self- confidence of second language learners in social settings when learning a second language. This means that H_1 is accepted, H_0 is rejected.

Recommendation

We learn a language by speaking it. Teachers or speakers should encourage learners by correcting them in love; encouraging them to communicate in the language without passing too much judgment on their inadequacies, thereby making them feel inferior, inadequate and unintelligent.

Language is not learnt overnight, every language user makes mistakes and learns in the process, so learners should develop initiative and enthusiasm using the language more often to improve on it, and equally feel good not minding the deficiency in usage.

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Appendix

QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION A: Personal Data of Respondent

Sex: Male [] Female []

SECTION B: Questionnaire Items

Instruction: Kindly read through all the item statements carefully and indicate your response against each statement by ticking [√] in the appropriate column using the following response options.

Strongly Agreed (SA)
 Agreed (A)
 Undecided (U)
 Disagreed (DA)
 Strongly Disagreed (SD)

Cluster One: language and self-confidence

1	Language shaming influences the second language L2 language learning process.	SA	A	U	DA	SD
2x	Do you think deficiency in a language affects the confidence level of an Igbo non speaker?	SA	A	U	DA	SD
3	Does mastering important elements such as pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, comprehension increase self-confidence?	SA	A	U	DA	SD
4	Is lack of self- confidence a barrier to learning a second language (Igbo)?	SA	A	U	DA	SD
5	Does language shaming affect learners' confidence level in Igbo language?	SA	A	U	DA	SD