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Editorial

One of the pressing questions that reverberates often in African Christianity is: What is an (African) Christian family? Family is very important to the traditional Africans. Raising a family is not just a social and cultural demand that has to be meant, but also a conditional for eschatological redemption or salvation. For the African Christian, the place of family cannot also be over-emphasised. Thus, prayers for the family in all its ramifications occupy the central stage in personal and intercession sessions. Although African Christians have for a long time contended with the notions of the Christian family in general, there is a progressive acceptance of its monogynous union based on heterosexuality. However, Western values and globalisation forces have continued to shape Christian family discourses and practices. Sex and sexuality issues have been escalated and mediated so much so that Christian 'theology' of family, sexuality, and sex has to contend with the throes of globalisation.

This volume, which is a product of the 2023 conference on the theme: Christian Family and Sexuality in Contemporary Society, critically reflects the tensions, challenges, and theological prospects of a Christian family. In the lead article, Professor Knoetze departs from the general conception of the Christian family based on Christ's salvation. Although he points out that family is a contested issue in Africa, he argues that a radical conception of the Christian family should centre around relationality, forging a missional relationship with the Trinitarian God. This is in contrast with the soteriological conception of family that has blurred the missional prospects that understanding family can birth for a long time.

Adu-Gyamfi's article also radically takes on the traditional conception of sex as a purely private issue, and attempts to strike a balance between it and the sexual revolution that theology of sexuality has to contend with. Coming from a heteronormative perspective, Adu-Gyamfi strongly maintains conservative theological stand on sexuality. He argues that the biblical

understanding of sexuality cannot be traded with the offering of the over-sexualised world.

On her own, Ayo-Oladayo explores the significance and nexus between language education and family development. She points out that effective communication in the family is a sine qua non for cohesion, unity, and progress. In addition to fostering cultural understanding, supporting cognitive growth, and fostering stronger family ties, it also improves communication abilities. Oladapo and Adererele examine the positive impacts of social change, particularly technological advancement, on the family. They opine that despite the advantages derived from modern communications devices, Christian theological understanding of the family should be countenanced and appropriated by Christian families.

Odesola and Odesola reflect on the significance of sex education in the church. Although sex education has not been a major interest in missional and catechetical teaching, they suggest that contemporary challenges make it imperative for the church to be interested in sex education. Otun's article introduces a philosophical dimension to sexuality discourse. Otun views the relegation of reason in choice- and decision-making processes as unacceptable and recommends a balanced deployment of both reason and faith in sexuality matters. Gombi re-examines the accounts of Genesis and contemporary sexual expressions. In the Genesis creation stories, an explanation of the nature of sexuality takes a central, climactic positioning and is given as a fundamental fact of creation. The excessive amount of material given to sexuality highlights its relevance in the Hebrew Bible within the cosmic context of the creation narratives. The foundation for the rest of the biblical narrative and discourse on human sexuality is provided by the profound depiction of God's original plan for human sexuality at the beginning of the canon, which also captures the core ideas of sexuality. Salifu enumerates the negative effects of street hawking, such as rape, unplanned pregnancies, and violence. He recommends that the state and social institutions should intervene to stem the corrosive tide of street hawking in Nigeria.

Biar explores the disagreement between 'pre-modernism' and postmodernism. He argues that the different positions these schools of thought hold have created serious tension in how to understand human sexuality. The recognition of feeling over reason and the relativistic contours that encircle the arguments of postmodernism, modernism, and premodernism all have impact on Christian notion of sexuality. He, however, maintains that the Bible still reserves the best model of sexual appreciation in contemporary society. For Kosoluware, the negative influences of postmodernism should be frontally addressed by contemporary African Christians. It is essential that the Church in Africa rise to the challenge through teaching, counseling and intentional preaching of the gospel. Atteh examines Christian moral victory, and points out the tensions that have characterised its different interpretations. He opines that the best approach to the theological issue is to insist that the victory believers have over the flesh nature is both positional and progressive, encompassing both the divine and the human responsibilities. Asaolu tackles the increasing cases of marital infidelity in society. Articulating the causes and effects of marital infidelity, Asaolu recommends that couples act in such a way that their actions could conform with Kantian categorical imperative. Finally, Ajao makes a case for sex education as a part of socialisation in the family. He notes that it is no longer possible to hold the view that sex talk is a taboo. Therefore, there should be a conscious approach to addressing sexuality issues.

This volume is a coterie of discourses on sex, sexuality and family. The burning issues raised from multidisciplinary perspectives enrich the volume and provide a critical resource for further engagement. However, the ideas are solely the responsibility of the authors rather than the editorial board of the journal.

Benson Ohihon Igbion
Editor-in-Chief

LANGUAGE EDUCATION AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Language education plays a crucial role in the development of both individuals and families. It encompasses the teaching and learning of languages, including native languages, second languages, and foreign languages. Language learning promotes social integration, cultural awareness, and cognitive development and facilitates successful communication. Language instruction develops close relationships, improves intergenerational dialogue, and supports the preservation of cultural heritage in the context of family development. Language education begins within the family unit, where children acquire their first language through interactions with parents and caregivers. Parents serve as primary language models, providing linguistic input and guidance to their children. Through early exposure to language, children develop foundational skills such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Moreover, language education within the family facilitates emotional bonding, as communication becomes a means to express love, support, and understanding. This paper will explain the concept of language education, describe the concept of family development, and discuss the connection/benefit of language education in family development.

Keywords: *Language, Education, Family, Development*

Introduction

The problem of language education and family development encompasses the challenges and issues surrounding the acquisition and development of language skills within the context of family dynamics. Language education plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' cognitive, social, and emotional development, and the

family environment significantly influences language learning outcomes. Understanding the complexities and interplay between language education and family dynamics is essential for designing effective interventions and strategies to promote optimal language development in children.

Language education plays a crucial role in the development of individuals and families. It encompasses the teaching and learning of languages, both native and foreign, and involves various aspects such as language acquisition, literacy skills, cultural understanding, and communication abilities. The importance of language education in family development lies in its ability to foster effective communication within the family unit, promote cultural diversity and inclusivity, enhance cognitive development, and provide opportunities for personal growth and educational advancement. This paper will explain the concept of language education, describe the concept of family development, and discuss the connection/benefit of language education in family development.

The Concept of Language Education

According to the 1988 edition of *Webster's New World Dictionary*, education is “training and developing the knowledge, skill, character, and mind.” The term “language” is defined by Altaie (2009, 199) as “a set of phoneme traditions inherited by the linguistic community from its ancestors, so it adheres to it, meaning that the individual who speaks the language of the society in which he grew up uses its sounds, formulas, vocabulary, and composition according to certain usage rules of the language.” Language is described as a general, communicative phenomenon in Encyclopedia (2019), particularly in instruction descriptions. Languages express meaning, ideas, and thoughts via sounds, symbols, and words. On the other hand, several definitions for education have been proposed by theorists across a range of disciplines. Curtis and colleagues (2013). The transmission of knowledge, skills, and character qualities are only a few of the aims that many people agree education is intended to achieve. (Chazan 2022, 13–21). Beyond these broad

characteristics, there is substantial disagreement over its precise nature. Some theories see education as primarily a process that occurs while students are enrolled in educational activities like schooling, teaching, and learning. (Peters, 1967). Education can be divided into numerous categories. The institutional setting determines whether education is formal, non-formal, or informal.

Thus, language education entails both teaching and studying a language. It comprises the efforts made by a student to hone his or her first language or to learn a second language. Language education is rooted in the belief that language is a fundamental tool for communication and understanding among individuals, families, and communities. According to Pichler (2015), structures, rules, and representation are all a part of language instruction. A wide variety of skills, including phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and a sizable vocabulary, must be acquired to successfully learn and utilize a language. Language education typically refers to the study of first-language acquisition, which examines how infants learn their native tongue, whether spoken or signed. However, it can also refer to a baby simultaneously learning two native languages, known as bilingual first language acquisition (BFLA). According to Dennis (1977, 107–108), language education has two main guiding principles: speech perception always comes before speech production, and a language is learned one step at a time, starting with the differentiation between individual phonemes.

Language education aims to provide students with the abilities and understanding they need to communicate effectively in various situations. Technology has been more important in language instruction during the past few years. Language learning has become more flexible and accessible thanks to online resources, mobile apps, and virtual classes. These online resources provide interactive activities, multimedia materials, and chances for live interaction with other students or native speakers. According to Phillips (2007), language education has four main learning categories: communicative competencies, proficiencies, cross-cultural experiences, and multiple literacies. A crucial component of

language education is cultural knowledge. Understanding the cultural context in which a language is spoken is essential to learning it.

In summary, language education is a comprehensive process that aims to develop proficiency in a language through various approaches, methodologies, and technologies. It recognizes the importance of communication, cultural awareness, individual differences, and technology integration in language learning. By equipping learners with language skills, education in languages contributes to personal development, intercultural understanding, and global communication.

Indices of Family Development

To comprehend the different indicators of family development, we must first understand the concept of family, development, and family development. A family is a unit of society that God created through marriage, adoption, or blood relations. It is a close-knit community united by blood, marriage, or other relationships. Despite being the smallest, it is society's most significant social unit. Oko-jaja, (2020 361). The term “development” refers to a process of expansion, advancement, positive change, or the addition of physical, economic, environmental, social, and demographic elements. A rise in the standard and calibre of living is also considered development (Sid-Israel 2023). Generally, the term development describes good change.

Family development refers to the process by which families develop and expand. It includes a variety of factors, including the transfer of beliefs, parenting techniques, communication habits, and overall well-being. According to Mattessich and Hill (1987), family development is the systematic and structured changes that families go through as they move through their lives.

On the other hand, Indices of Family Development refer to numerous measurements or indicators used to evaluate the growth and well-being of families. These indices offer a framework for comprehending the dynamics and operation of families while also

highlighting areas of strength and those that could need assistance or intervention. (UNESCO, 2023). The following indices in this study can be used to gauge family development.

1. **Family Structure:** This examines the composition and organization of the family unit, including factors such as marital status, presence of children, and living arrangements. It provides insights into the diversity of family structures and their implications for family functioning.

2. **Family Functioning:** This focuses on the quality of interactions within the family system, including communication patterns, problem-solving abilities, and levels of cohesion and adaptability. It assesses how well family members work together, support each other, and navigate challenges.

3. **Parenting Practices:** This evaluates the strategies and behaviours employed by parents in raising their children. It includes dimensions such as warmth and responsiveness, discipline techniques, monitoring and supervision, and involvement in children's education and activities.

4. **Economic Resources:** This examines the financial resources available to families, including income levels, employment stability, access to social support programs, and wealth accumulation. It considers how economic factors influence family well-being and development opportunities.

5. **Social Support Networks:** This assesses the availability and quality of social support networks that families can rely on during times of need or stress. It includes formal supports (e.g., community services) and informal supports (e.g., extended family, friends) that contribute to resilience and overall family functioning. These indices can be employed singly or in combination to acquire a thorough picture of family dynamics and well-being.

Nexus of Language Education and Family Development

Language education is vital for family development because it dramatically impacts social integration, cognitive growth,

communication, and cultural preservation. Language education is vital in family development, social interaction, cultural exchange, economic development, and personal growth. The relationship between language education and family development is multifaceted and encompasses various aspects that contribute to the overall well-being and growth of the family.

Communication: Effective communication within the family is facilitated by language education. Family members can better communicate their needs, wants, and thoughts when they speak a common language or are fluent in it. Effective communication strengthens family bonds, fosters understanding, and promotes healthy relationships among family members. It allows parents to effectively convey their children's values, expectations, and guidance while providing them with a platform to express their thoughts and concerns.

Cultural Preservation: Language education plays a vital role in preserving cultural heritage within families. Many families have distinct cultural backgrounds and languages passed down through generations. By providing language education, parents can ensure that their children maintain a connection with their cultural roots. This helps preserve traditions, customs, and values integral to the family's identity. Language education enables children to understand and appreciate their cultural heritage, fostering a sense of belonging and pride within the family.

Cognitive Development: Language education profoundly impacts cognitive development within the family. Research has shown that early exposure to multiple languages enhances cognitive abilities such as problem-solving skills, critical thinking, creativity, and memory retention. When parents provide language education to their children, they stimulate their intellectual growth and expand their cognitive capacities. This not only benefits individual family

members but also contributes to the overall intellectual development of the entire family unit (LaRue Allen and Bridget B. Kelly, 2015, 323).

Social Integration: Language education promotes social integration within families by enabling them to participate fully in society. Proficiency in the community's dominant language allows families to engage in various social activities such as school events, community gatherings, and interactions with neighbours. It facilitates integration into the broader society, enhances social connections, and provides opportunities for personal and professional growth. Language education equips family members with the necessary linguistic skills to navigate social environments, fostering a sense of belonging and inclusion.

Parent-Child Bonding: Language education strengthens the bond between parents and children. When parents actively engage in language education with their children, it creates a shared learning experience that fosters closeness and trust. Parents can act as role models, guiding their children through the language learning process and providing support and encouragement. This shared endeavour enhances the parent-child relationship and promotes a positive learning environment within the family.

Educational Success: Language education significantly impacts educational success within families. Proficiency in the language of instruction is crucial for academic achievement. When parents provide language education to their children, they equip them with the necessary language skills to excel in school. Language proficiency enhances reading comprehension, writing abilities, and overall academic performance. It also opens doors to higher education opportunities and future career prospects.

Strategies for Implementing Language Education in the Family

Implementing language education in the home can be a very advantageous and successful strategy to enhance children's language development. Parents can assist their children in learning various languages, improve their cognitive capacities, and promote cultural understanding by providing a language-rich atmosphere at home. There are several strategies that families can employ to implement language education effectively. According to ACTFL, the following strategies can be used to implement language education in the family.

1. **Create a Language-Rich Environment:** Creating a language-rich environment at home is one of the most crucial ways to integrate language education in the family. Using various media, including books, music, films, and discussions, involves introducing kids to the target language(s) as much as feasible. Children can be exposed to the target language through reading aloud to them, playing educational games, and having interactions with native speakers or other language learners. Children will have more exposure and opportunities to practice and improve their language abilities if immersed in the target language(s).

2. **Establishing distinct language learning objectives for each family member** is another suitable method. This could include goals like learning a certain amount of new vocabulary words each week, honing speaking abilities for a set time each day, or finishing language exercises or projects as a family. Setting goals enables everyone to keep track of their progress while providing structure and motivation for language learning within the family.

3. **Integrate Language into Daily Routines:** Incorporating it into your daily activities is a great technique to help your family learn a language. During activities like mealtime chats, bedtime tales, or even household tasks, parents might include the target language(s). They may, for instance, use the target language(s) when cooking or doing their grocery shopping, label objects around the house with the language(s) that correspond to their names, or watch movies or TV

episodes in the language(s) together as a family. Children will understand the practical importance of the language and be more motivated to learn and use it if language learning is integrated into daily life.

4. **Make Use of Technological and Online Resources:** In the modern digital age, various technological tools and online resources are accessible to help language learning in the family. Parents can leverage language learning apps, websites, and online courses designed for children and families. These resources often provide interactive activities, games, and exercises that make language learning engaging and enjoyable. Additionally, there are online communities and forums where families can connect with other language learners or native speakers to practice their skills and seek guidance.

5. **Encourage Language Immersion Experiences:** Providing opportunities for language immersion experiences can significantly enhance language education in the family. This could involve enrolling children in language immersion programs or camps, participating in cultural events or festivals related to the target language(s), or even travelling to countries where the language is spoken. Immersion experiences allow children to practice their language skills in real-life situations, interact with native speakers, and gain a deeper understanding of the culture associated with the language.

6. **Be a Language Role Model:** Parents play a crucial role in modelling language behaviour for their children. By consistently using the target language(s) themselves, parents demonstrate the importance and relevance of learning and using the language. Parents should strive to speak the target language(s) as much as possible when communicating with their children, even if they are not fluent. This helps create a positive language-learning environment and encourages children to use the language confidently.

7. **Celebrate Language Achievements:** Recognizing and celebrating language achievements within the family can boost

motivation and reinforce the importance of language education. Parents can acknowledge milestones such as reaching a certain level of proficiency, completing a language project or assignment, or even speaking confidently in front of others in the target language(s). Celebrations can take various forms, such as small rewards, certificates of achievement, or family outings to cultural events related to the language(s).

In summary, language education plays a vital role in family development by facilitating effective communication, preserving cultural heritage, promoting cognitive development, enabling social integration, strengthening parent-child bonding, and contributing to educational success within the family unit. By recognizing the importance of language education and actively engaging in it, families can enhance their overall well-being and create a nurturing environment for growth and development. The family serves as a significant context for language learning and development. The type of family bonds, parental involvement, and support significantly impact children's language acquisition outcomes.

Recommendations

1. **Bilingual Education Programs:** Enrolling children in bilingual education programs or schools that provide language immersion can be beneficial. Children can participate in these programs and learn a second language while excelling in their first language. It has been demonstrated that bilingual education improves academic achievement, cognitive flexibility, and problem-solving abilities.
2. **Parental Involvement:** Parents should actively engage in their child's language acquisition process by having conversations with them, reading aloud to them, and creating a language-rich home environment. It can help children's language development by regularly exposing them to age-appropriate books, educational applications, and interactive media.

3. Cultural Immersion Programs: Children can learn the target language in a real-world setting by participating in cultural immersion or exchange programs. Children can connect with native speakers, develop their language abilities, and learn more about the culture related to the language through immersion programs.
4. Digital language learning materials can be used to supplement traditional language instruction. Examples include interactive websites, online courses, and language learning apps. These tools frequently provide engaging exercises, tests, and interactive courses accommodating various learning preferences.
5. Language Exchange Programs: Exercising your speaking abilities and learning about other cultures can be accomplished by participating in language exchange programs or locating language partners. Platforms for language exchange connect people eager to learn one another's native tongues, facilitating cross-cultural interaction and mutual language practice.
6. Authentic Language Use: Family members should encourage adolescents and adults to use authentic language to ensure fluency development. This can be achieved through activities such as reading books or articles in the target language, watching movies or TV shows without subtitles, participating in conversation groups or clubs, and travelling to countries where the target language is spoken.
7. Create a Language-Rich Environment: Families can create a language-rich environment by incorporating the target language into daily routines and activities. This includes using the target language during mealtime conversations, playing games that involve language learning, and watching educational videos or shows together. Families can build a language-rich environment by working the target language into regular routines and activities. This comprises engaging

in language-learning games, viewing instructive movies or television shows, and conversing with one another during mealtimes in the target language.

8. **Cultural Appreciation:** Promoting cultural appreciation among family members aids in developing a broader awareness of many cultures and languages in children and adults. This can be done through participating in cultural celebrations, tasting cuisine from various regions, attending cultural events, and learning about the traditions and history of various languages.

Conclusion

The formation of families is greatly influenced by language education. In addition to fostering cultural understanding, supporting cognitive growth, and fostering stronger family ties, it also improves communication abilities. Families can create an environment that supports their overall growth and success by providing children with a solid foundation in language learning. Language education equips individuals with the necessary tools to navigate the complexities of the modern world, enabling them to participate actively in society and contribute to their communities. Furthermore, it allows families to protect and pass on their cultural heritage to future generations. In order to encourage family growth and guarantee a better future for everyone, it is crucial to invest in language education.

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