

Eradicating Marine Debris in Bayelsa State: The Role of Language Education

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ABSTRACT

The ocean is a major natural resource that supplies food such as fish, prawns, lobster, etc. It is also a platform for conveying materials and men, and it serves as a source of recreation for humans. Generally, one can authoritatively assert that the ocean is critical to life on earth, hence, it is almost impossible to overemphasize its usefulness. Therefore, this study explored the role of language education in eradicating marine debris in Bayelsa State. The concept of language and language education, sustainability and marine debris were clarified. Factors militating against the eradication of marine debris and language education and creating awareness were discussed. It was recommended amongst others that the government should inculcate the services of language experts for effective eradication of marine debris.

Keywords: education, exploring, language, Marine debris, sustainable.

Published Online: January 9, 2023

ISSN: 2796-0064

DOI: 10.24018/ejlang.2023.2.1.51

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I. INTRODUCTION

The ocean is a major natural resource that supplies food such as fish, prawns, lobster, etc. It is also a platform for conveying materials and men, and it serves as a source of recreation for humans. (Ateme, 2021). It is a platform that accommodates minerals (salt, sand, gravel, copper, nickel, iron, cobalt, etc.) and crude oil deposits. Obviously, the marine environment plays a critical role in controlling carbon (II) oxide elimination and oxygen production. Medically speaking, the ocean regulates the earth's climate and serves as a major source of important biomedical organisms which have enormous potential to fight diseases. Generally, one can authoritatively assert that the ocean is critical to life on earth, hence, it is almost impossible to overemphasize its usefulness.

In the recognition of the usefulness of the ocean to human existence and the subsequent actions taken by well-meaning world citizens to save it from destruction, Nigeria as a nation embraced a handful of global protocols such as Glolitters Partnership Project, etc. and was labelled the first Lead Partnering Country (LPC) in Africa. All these initiatives and projects are primarily aimed at reducing the effect of plastic litter and other marine debris. Nigeria by default is a maritime state, which has 9 out of the 36 states along the coastline in the Atlantic Ocean. Bayelsa State, being one of the states in the coastline has not done much in the fight against marine debris.

Marine debris is any waste that is released into a sea or ocean. It can be created by man's activities or natural resources. Examples of marine debris are plastic litter, nylons, garbage, unused fishing nets and spears, discarded engine parts, etc.

The United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goal 14 code named "Life Below Water," as a way to reduce the impact of marine debris globally.

Ateme (2021) identified lack of awareness as a major barrier in the fight against marine debris in Nigeria. Language education on the other hand is a branch of linguistics designed to equip learners with adequate knowledge of communicative situations. Since the lack of awareness is a major barrier in the fight against marine debris in Nigeria, and language education on the other hand can produce effective communicative platform needed to improve the awareness of citizens, then there is need for effective collaboration between language education and task of fighting marine debris in Bayelsa State. Hence, this study explored how language education can sustain the fight against marine debris in Bayelsa, Nigeria.

II. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

A. Language and Language Education

Language is one of the attributes of humans. It is a medium through which Ideas opinions and feelings are expressed. It is indispensable in the co-existence of humans. Language education is an aspect of education which is aimed at bringing the learner to a level of proficiency in the use of language, so that

when he/she listens or speaks, reads, or writes it will reflect the totality of culture it represents. Idu and Obam (2021) posits that language education is designed to equip the learner with adequate knowledge and practical skills. It is also the process and practice of acquiring a second foreign language. It is a branch of applied linguistics and is considered an interdisciplinary field. This implies that it can be useful to any field of human endeavor of which medical science is a part.

B. Marine Debris in Bayelsa State

Bayelsa state being one of the 9 states in Nigeria along the Coastline of the Atlantic Ocean has mainly plastic litters, Abandoned, Lost or other Fishing Gears (ALDFG) and crude oil as the major sources of marine pollution.

Plastic litter takes the form of plastic bags and other single-use plastic products such as take-away food packs, straws, cups, spoons, bottles, sachet bags, etc. Once discarded, they are weathered and eroded into very small fragments which clung as deposits in beaches. Akankali (2015) reported that these plastic debris cause deaths of more than a million seabirds every year, as well as more than 100,000 marine mammals. Plastics and other litters hamper access to exploit fish resources.

Abandoned, Lost or other Fishing Gears (ALFG) is another major source of marine pollution in Bayelsa State. In simple terms, they are gears, spears, leads, etc. that have been abandoned or lost in the ocean. Vessels or fishing gadgets such as spears & gears abandoned in the marine environment have the potential to degrade the environment severely. It constantly catches threatened and endangered species, thereby further worsening the biodiversity depletion in species of both biological and economic importance from coastal waters.

The crude oil waste which comes in the form of effluent or gas flaring affects the marine environment adversely. Rampant discharge of hot effluents into our coastal aquatic environment is quite common off the coasts of Lagos and major industrialized cities of the Niger Delta Region. Also flaring of associated gas especially at the flare pits are a severe source of thermal pollution in the coastal environment of Nigeria. Within the Niger Delta region, there are so many flare pits. The scorching heat from such flare sites destroys wildlife over a considerable radius of the areas around and drastically distorts natural the population density of nocturnal animals through constant illumination of the forest.

Studies by Ateme (2021) and Dunbili (2021) reported that the major causes of these afore mentioned state of the marine environment are lack of awareness, values, and poor waste management infrastructures.

III. FACTORS MILITATING THE ERADICATION OF MARINE DEBRIS IN BAYELSA STATE

Yanful (2009) averred that to sustain the solutions plastic litters and waste management in Nigeria will require an effective political and social willpower. For instance, Kenya has implemented a law restricting the use of plastic bags since 2017, while the story is different in our country Nigeria. Jambeck (2018) observed that till date, no legislative framework and consequent implementation has been taken in this regard by the Nigerian government.

In countries like Wales and Portugal the use of levies/taxes on single-use plastic bags to control its usage and consumption. For this measure to be effective in Nigeria, government through its relevant institutions should collaborate with the industries for the provision of sustainable alternatives. Retail outfits should adopt an effective recycling strategy.

SAPEA (2018) summarized the strategies for reducing the effect of plastic litters on our marine environment as:

- 1) Policymakers should introduce interventions to encourage plastic sachet buyback (buyback pack) from users.
- 2) Encourage the use of refillable sachet water packaging in place of the extant single-use sachets. The government and other stakeholders should subsidize or fund the initiative.
- 3) There must be sustainable alternatives in place for these suggested regulations to succeed.

Also, Wagner-Lawlor (2017) suggested that artists in Nigeria could utilize plastic waste for their artistic works. These measures could reduce the reckless disposal of plastic sachet bags/products and the burden of uncollected plastic debris that exacerbates plastic (landfill and marine) pollution in Nigeria.

Actions that will cause a change in behavior are major sources to the menace marine debris. This is crucial because behaviour remains the only factor behind actions against the marine environment. Activities that will target the attitude of citizens towards marine environment will be a high asset.

IV. LANGUAGE EDUCATION AND CREATING AWARENESS

An essential step designed to reduce marine litters should be an evidence-based education that will create awareness of the dangers of plastic pollution among indigenes of Bayelsa. Reports from Creel (2021) revealed that, this measure has facilitated the reduction of debris in the marine environment in Rwanda and

other African countries. Designing evidence-based educational or interactive programs that can help create awareness of the problem of plastic pollution and the collective responsibility for solving it should be encouraged. Creating awareness would trigger more extensive public/societal engagement with plastic pollution and how it may be addressed collectively. This is evidenced in a study conducted in Europe, where educators and students were empowered in regard to how to engage with plastic litter to solve the problem through an online training course and educational video competition on marine debris (Hartley, 2018). At the end of the course,

Educators felt more able and confident to include marine litter in them teaching while students felt more concerned about marine litter, had a better understanding of the issue, causes and impacts, and reported performing more waste-reduction behaviors [Hartley, 2018, p.227].

Language education also has a role of featuring traditional and social dimensions in creating significant awareness and education strategies. This would help communities to understand the magnitude of the problem, how their actions contribute to it (SAPEA, 2019), and how they may participate in solving it while also challenging barriers to change.

Creating cultural norms around the recycling of plastic waste would not only reduce the number of plastics reaching the marine ecosystem but would also reduce plastic pollution on land. Therefore, there is an urgent need to finance and/or build infrastructure that will aid waste

collection and the recycling, repurposing, and reusing of plastics (Jambeck, 2018), in Nigeria. Top-down solutions do not work-we need to unpack the culturally specific ways we engage with plastic pollution as communities.

V. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The study has shown that language education is a lead component for effective public awareness in Bayelsa State, if the fight against marine debris must be victorious. This implies that incorporating language education content into the programme of environmental education will sustain the intent of Sustainable Development Goal 14 “Life Below Water.” With this position, the following suggestions are given:

- 1) The services of language experts should be inculcated into the fight against marine debris for effective service delivery.
- 2) Adopting Marine Debris Education in a non-formal setting
- 3) To be effective the non-formal education programmes will be launched on social media and systematic ways of evaluating its progress/outcome will be instituted.
- 4) Funding of Centre for Medical Waste Management
- 5) Funding in the form of grants for research fellowships and post-doctoral fellowship in this area will give birth to ideas that will address the issue.

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