

Effect of Indigenous Language as a Medium of Learning in Primary Schools of the FCT-Abuja-Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: Relevance of indigenous language and mother tongue in teaching and learning cannot be overemphasized due to the fact that, the child first contact with spoken words starts from home, as the medium of communication. Therefore, the child comprehension and reasoning among others, starts with the mother tongue. Invariably, comprehension of another foreign language becomes a problem for the child as the official medium of communication in schools. In order to achieve the objectives of Nigeria educational policy, the use of indigenous language in the dominant environment must be used as the medium of communication in the learning process in our schools, specifically, in the Early Childhood Care and Education and primary school levels of the child. For instance, the importance of indigenous language as a medium of communication in the early learning process have greatly enhanced the advancement of countries like China, India, Japan, Russia, Germany, as a result of teaching their children in the language they understand, hence, learning of different subjects made easy for the children, which in turn enhance the potentials of the children as they progress in their educational pursuits. Thus, this research work adopts a descriptive survey research design. Population comprises of selected primary schools in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Simple random sampling techniques was used to select four (4) primary schools in the six (6) Area Council of the FCT, in which twenty five (25) pupils were randomly selected from each of the chosen schools totalling one hundred (100) respondents was the instrument used for data collection, which was developed in closed-ended of Yes or No. The efficacy of the instrument was moderated by experts as far as the validity is concerned, while the Reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha. Data analysis was carried out using sample percentage statistical tool. Findings revealed that, communication requires more concerted efforts on the parts of the teachers as well as the parents, as the comprehension of the indigenous language will assist the pupils in their learning process. The National Language Policy on indigenous languages as a means of communication in the child immediate environment needs to be encouraged.

KEY WORDS: Indigenous, Language, Learning, Medium.

I. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria educational system has given little interest to the development of using indigenous language as a medium of communication to teach pupils/students. But, indigenous language alone cannot be used as means of instruction in the classroom, however, indigenous language can be mixed to compliment English language as it will enhanced the understanding of the subject matter by the pupils/students. Unfortunately, children's mixing of languages in the process of language acquisition has been viewed unfavourably by the mainstream society, and it has been "the least systematically studied". As a result, there is a great need to examine bilingual children's code switching language behaviours in an educational setting. So that, a more comprehensive understanding of his phenomenon can be reached and be used to inform the instructional practices of the teachers of bilingual children in Nigerian schools. Studies by [1] and [2] have shown that, the use of multilingual being applied in teaching mathematics in South Africa is a valuable communicative strategy for learning contents. But, in Nigeria, the use of native language (code switching in teaching and learning has not been adequately examined, especially the supplementation of English with the pupils home language can lead to a better understanding of the contents being learnt).

According to [3] English Language is not an indigenous language to Nigeria, because, Nigerians already have their own spoken language that is, mother tongue. Majority of Nigerian learning the English Language are usually faced with a complex language situation towards language development. Education is geared towards servicing the purpose of equipping a child with the necessary tools for the child to be a productive member of the society. According to [3]. The central tenet of Education typically includes the imparting of knowledge and skills, as well awakening and developing the intellectual potentials of the learner. Therefore, this underscores

the point that, the role of language use a medium of communication in the learning process is important. Accordingly, [4] stated that, the effectiveness or otherwise of the teaching and learning process at whatever levels depends on whether or not effective communication has taken place between the teacher and the learner. Using of non-indigenous language as a medium of instruction in primary schools has some disadvantages. According to the Fafunwa foundation internet Journal of Education, the most common language used in education is English, but pupils in Nigeria may also use other foreign languages like, French and Arabic in schools. This is a real problem, because if a pupil/student does not know one of their non-native languages before enrolling at school, than much time will be used to teach a language before instruction on other subjects begins. Therefore, using non-native languages does not provide an equal access to education for all. [5] opined that: Language enables man to relate to his environment, to describe and identify natural and cultural objects, and to organize and coordinate man's activities. Language is the principal means through which human being communicate ideas, feelings, knowledge, information etc among themselves. No meaningful development can be witnessed in a given society without the use of language. Scholars had simply described language as determinant of our thought and the way we perceive and interpret things in the cosmos. It can be finally added that human language makes survival, social cohesion and interaction possible through communication and it has been found out that there is a mutual connections between language and culture such as when we talk about one, the other is indirectly being referred to. With these assertions it is noted worthy to realize that language is very important to man and in extension to education as a vehicle for human civilizations.

Without a virile National Policy on education there will be no meaningful development in education sector and without a clear and well integrated language policy, considering the language problem already existing in Nigeria, the road to national development via economy, social, political and educational will not be cleared [6]. The Federal Government knows the important of language in the development of the country when it stated among other things that: In addition to appreciating the importance of language in the educational process, and as a means of processing the people's culture, the government considers it to be in the interest of the national Unity that each child should be encouraged to learn one of the three major languages other than his own mother tongue. In this connection, the government considered the three major languages in Nigeria to be Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba [17]. Paragraph 8. The unfortunate thing about this policy is that it is a window-dressing policy. Going by what is going on in our Primary and Secondary Schools, this policy do not hold water. It is just like paper statement, the state and federal government does not handle this policy effectively. The principal of both private and public schools does not encourage students to study native languages. No wonder in colleges of education and University in Nigeria few Students are studying Nigerian languages.

Hence, the Osun State government realizing the danger ahead of playing with education policy, that is the pillar of development of any state passed a bill "Osun State Education Amendment bill 2014, according to Afolabi, the bill seeks to promote the use of Yoruba language, culture and tradition among the language from going into extinction. Section 18 subsection 2 of the bill stated that any person being the proprietor of public or private Schools who fails to comply with the directive shall be liable to a fine of N10,000.00. Nigeria government need to ensure that, this policy is implemented to the latter for the sustainability and growth for national development. It is worth of note that, International Development Professionals often debate the role of languages in education policies of countries like Nigeria. On the other hand, equipping Nigerian pupils/students with International languages like English, French, Arabic may helps them adjust and prosper in the global economy, but using indigenous languages, has other benefits that outweigh any disadvantages of using native languages in schools. For instance, one of the most significant advantages of using indigenous language in Nigerian education entails the impact on Nigeria's national culture language is one of a country's most significant components of its national identity. [7] Teaching pupils in an indigenous language ensures that they can grow up to produce and enjoy great works in a native language. "The Trial of Brother Jero" which was written by Wole Soyinka, a Nobel Laureat published in Yoruba, is a vivid example of how creating cultural works in a native language can inspire people and evoke national pride, the play explores the extreme measures that, the Nigerian government took against anti-social elements in the play. This internally renowned work was a great source of pride for Nigerians. Another benefit derived from using indigenous languages in Nigerian education is the teaching opportunities it creates for native Nigerians. Because using English, French or Arabic in schools means that many teachers must come from abroad since few Nigerians fluently speak these foreign languages. Using native languages will ensures that, teachers can themselves be Nigerians, which will in turn creates opportunities for stable and economically beneficial jobs for native Nigerians, which helps spur increased economic development. Thus, this research work seeks to ascertain the effectiveness of using indigenous languages as medium of instruction or communication on learning in primary school pupils academic performance in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Indigenous Language, mother tongue and medium of instruction: An indigenous language is a language that is native to a region and spoken by indigenous people, often reduced to the status of a minority language. This language would be from a linguistically distinct community that has been settled in the area for many generations. Indigenous language are not necessarily national language, and the reverse is also true. In other word, a local means of communication between members of a people or community, it contains within it the essence of considerable information and knowledge and wisdom of the people or community. Many indigenous peoples worldwide have stopped passing on their ancestral languages to the next generation, and have instead adopted the majority language as part of their acculturation into the majority culture. Furthermore, many indigenous language have been subject to *linguicide* (language killing). Recognizing their vulnerability, the United Nations proclaimed 2019 the International Year of indigenous languages, "to draw attention to the critical loss of indigenous languages and the urgent need to preserve, revitalize and promote indigenous language [8].

Mother tongue refers to language of the immediate environment, which is accomplished in the environment in which the child lives. Mother language also means first language native language, mother tongues, arterial language is the language or is the languages a person has learned from birth, or within the critical period, or that a person speaks the best and so is often the basic for sociolinguistic identity. In some countries, the terms native language or mother tongue refer to language of one's ethnic group rather than the one's first language, children brought up speaking more than one language can have more than one native language and be bilingual. According to [9], the term "mother tongue" was first used by Catholic monks to designate a particular language they used, instead of Latin, when they are "speaking from the pulpit". That is, the "holy mother the church" introduced this term and colonies inherited it from the Christianity as a part of colonialism. According to [10], it is believed in educational linguistics circles that, the mother tongue (MT) and not just any language are more effective in learning should therefore be used as the medium of instruction in schools. This is because it is the language, which a group of people in an area acquire in their early years and which normally becomes their instrument of thought and communication. To stress this, United Nation Education Scientific and Cultural Organization [11] emphasizes on the importance of mother tongue and recommended that, the pupils should begin their schooling through the medium of mother tongue (MT) and it should be extended to late stage in education as possible.

From the above, it has shown that, a major militating factor that is affecting the development of science and technology is, medium of instruction or teaching and learning in schools. That is, instructions were done English language which requires an understanding of the foreign language on the part of the students before comprehending in their respective mother tongue and subsequently give response. This situation has an adverse effect on the student because, two languages and the mother tongue which has been learnt from home to make the learning process easier, there is the need to adopt a local language of the environment which is predominate in the area, that the school is domiciled, as the medium of instruction. Furthermore, to make the teaching and learning result oriented in relation to students innovations especially in the build of science and technology advancement, translation of the different subjects should be in the indigenous language. Since it is the mother tongue that is the medium of communication/instruction the child is used to, from his/her respective homes. For instance, Hausa Language is one of the three major Nigeria languages spoken in this country, since the introduction of formal school system in Nigeria. According to [12] cited in [13] contends that, Hausa language has always had a place in the educational system of most Hausa speaking area, such as Kano, Katsina, Sokoto, Zamfara, Kaduna including at least two-third of the former Northern region of Nigeria. The language of Hausa was used as a medium of instruction right from the establishment of the first government school in Kano. The Rumfa College in 1963, Hausa language was used for the teaching of subjects such as History, Geography and Mathematics. The language of Hausa does not only serve as a medium of instruction but a subject of study both nationally and internationally. Degrees and certificates are awarded to deserving students by universities and colleges of education. The language can serve as a medium of instruction in pre-primary school level, particularly in the Hausa speaking areas. This will improve the learning ability of the learners since it is the language of the immediate environment. Furthermore, it will enable him to understand, analyze and manipulate any learning input given to him by the teacher and comprehend within shortest possible time, rather than delivering the learning inputs in any foreign language that is entirely new to a child. If Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba language could be maintained and properly utilized as a medium of instruction at pre-primary and primary level particularly in their dominant areas, the objectives of Universal Basic Education Programme (UBEB) could be achieved.

It is widely accepted that before a child learns to read and write in a language he must use and understand the language theme spoken first. The child coming to school had already understood and could speak his mother tongue and could therefore find it possible to read and write in that language than in a second language. The damage to this system of using mother language for teaching and learning started with the prominence given to English language and this had a negative effect on the teaching of literacy in our languages and by extension using them as a media of information, knowledge and skills. The introduction of UPE in 1970s made the situation even worse, what was remaining of the respect for native language was swept away by UPE, the real straight for English started. A medium of instruction is a language used in teaching. It may or may not be the official language of the country or territory. If the first language of students is different from the official language, it may be used as the medium of instruction for part or all of schooling. Bilingual or multilingual education involves the use of more than one language of instruction. UNESCO considers that "providing education in a child mother tongue is indeed a critical issue". The medium of instruction is the language used by the teacher to teach. Teaching the language, or educational content, through the target language increases the amount of exposure the learner gets to it, and the opportunities they have to communicate in it, and therefore to develop their control of it. Example, English is used from the beginning of a course as the main language in class, and the teacher adapts their methodology to support meaning, by using a lot of visual information and non-verbal communication to support meaning. In the classroom the question of which medium of instruction to use, and the impact on learners and learning, is a complex one. It is useful to consider how the language used supports the aim of the class. For example, it may fit the aim to give all classroom instructions in English in a low level class, because this is useful exposure to new language and will be learnt, but explaining the methodology behind an activity to the same group might be done in L1[6].

Importance of Mother Tongue : The first language of a child is part of their personal, social and cultural identity. One of the importance of mother tongues is that it brings about the reflection and learning of successful social patterns of acting and speaking. It is basically responsible for differentiating the linguistic competence of acting. While some argue that, there is no such thing as "mother tongue", it is importance to understand what it means to be a "non-native" speaker and the implications that it can have on one's life. Research suggest that while a non-native speaker may develop fluency in a targeted language after about two years of immersion, it can actually take between five to seven years for that child to be on the same working level as their native

speaking counterparts. Some of the importance of mother tongue are;

1. Mother tongue for emotional and mental growth: mother language has a very powerful impact in the information of the individual thought, emotion, psychological behaviour and personality.
2. Mother tongue is an indicator of cultural identity: A child connects to his parents, family, relatives, culture, history, identity and religion through his Mother tongue and it links the child the culture of the society. Mother tongue provides the basic for learning other languages: [14] also underscores the importance of preserving Mother tongue; "children who come to school with a strong foundation in their mother tongue excels".

Objectives of the Study:

The general objective for this study is to ascertain the effectiveness of the academic performance of primary schools using indigenous language as a medium of instruction in the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja. The research work will cover primary schools in the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja. Specifically, the objective of the research work are to:

- ❖ To find the effect of the use of indigenous language on primary school pupils in the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja.
- ❖ To find out whether gender has any influence on using indigenous language as a medium of instructions in primary school in the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja.

Research Questions

- What is the effect of indigenous language as a medium of teaching primary school pupils in the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja?
- What is the influence of gender on indigenous language in teaching primary school pupils in the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja?

III METHODS

Research Design : The study adopts a descriptive survey research design. Questionnaire was used as instrument for Data collection. The options is a closed ended Yes or No to the questionnaire. Based on the pupils responses to the ten (10) items.

Population for the Research : The population for this study research work comprises primary school pupils in all the six (6) Area Council of the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja. The target population groups will be primary VI pupils in the four randomly selected Area Councils of the FCT-Abuja. The proposed primary VI pupils is as a result of the fact that, it is at this level that, pupils are exposed to social studies education more so, they are expected to be able to comprehend the questions and give appropriate responses.

The proposed four primary schools to be sample from the selected four Area Councils are; LEA primary school Zuba in Gwagwalada Area Council, LEA primary school Kubwa in Bwari Area Council, LEA primary school and Maitama in the Municipal Area Council and LEA primary school in Kuje, Area Council of the Federal Capital Territory-Abuja.

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques : In all the population, twenty (25) pupils will be selected from each of the four (4) LEA primary schools using simple random sampling techniques. Therefore, the sample size constitute a total of eighty (80) pupils, this will be makeup of male and female pupils as respondents.

Table 1: Name of Primary Schools and their corresponding Locations

S/N	Name of Primary School	Area Council
1	LEA Primary School Maitama	AMAC
2	LEA Primary School Kubwa	Bwari
3	LEA Primary School Zuba	Gwagwalada
4	LEA Primary School	Kuje

Instrumentation

Translations of the following items in English language to indigenous language

S/N	ENGLISH	HAUSA	YORUBA	IGBO
1	AUNT			
2	COUSIN			
3	CULTURE			
4	COWRIES			
5	CUSTOMS			
6	DOWRY			
7	GOVERNMENT			
8	TRADITIONAL FESTIVAL			
9	UNCLE			
10	UNITY			

Adoption from [15]

Presentation of Data Analysis and Result Discussion

Table 1: What is the effect of the indigenous language as a medium of teaching and learning in primary schools in the FCT, Abuja.

1. Translate the following ten (10) derived words in social studies to Hausa language.

Yes	%	No	%	Total	%
Frequency		Frequency		Frequency	
20	20	80	80	100	100

The research work above shows that 80 pupils representing 80% of the respondents (Hausa) could not translate the ten (10) derived words from social studies subject in their indigenous language, while the remaining 20 pupils representing 20% of the respondents got the translation correctly.

2. Translate the following ten (10) derived words in social studies to Igbo language.

Yes Frequency	%	No Frequency	%	Total Frequency	%
25	25	75	75	100	100

The research work above shows that 75 pupils representing 75% of the respondents (Igbo) could not translate the ten (10) derived words from social studies subject in their indigenous language, while the remaining 25 pupils representing 25% of the respondents got the translation correctly.

3. Translate the following ten (10) derived words in social studies to Yoruba language.

Yes Frequency	%	No Frequency	%	Total Frequency	%
20	20	80	80	100	100

The research work above shows that 80 pupils representing 80% of the respondents (Yoruba) could not translate the ten (10) derived words from social studies subject in their indigenous language, while the remaining 20 pupils representing 20% of the respondents got the translation correctly.

Question 2: What is the influence of gender on indigenous language in teaching primary school pupils in the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja?

4. Male pupils are better than the female pupils in indigenous language

Male	%	Female	%	Total Frequency
44	44	46	46	100

The research shows that, there is no significant difference between the male pupils and the female pupils level of translation, because the male pupils scores 44% while the female pupils got 46%.

V CONCLUSION

Mother tongue is very significant in education; this is because it is the language of the immediate environment. For any educational policy to achieve its objectives, the use of the mother tongue as a medium of teaching and learning must be enhanced. The Chinese, Russian, Indians and Japanese knows the importance of mother tongue in teaching and learning as seen in these countries Technological development strides. There is need for proper utilization of our languages in the pre-primary and primary schools levels, these will make learning easier and bring development to Nigeria within the shortest possible time. The paper makes some suggestions on how educational objectives could be achieved, this is through publication of books in local languages and training teachers using modern technology. If these suggestions are taken into cognizance, it would enhance the acceleration of science and technology amongst pupils.

Recommendations

1. The use of mother tongue for teaching and learning should be made compulsory, this is because there are teachers that are teaching pre-primary /primary school pupils in Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba dominated areas in English languages.
2. Nigeria is a country with different ethnic groups, the learning of the three major Nigerian languages, in Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba as recommended by the National Policy on Education should be strengthened, this will help in producing teachers at NCE and University levels, who will later become teachers in our learning pre-primary schools.
3. The number of language teachers could not satisfy the need of our schools; books for all levels of pre-primary education should be published in the three major languages in all subjects to enable the pupils enjoy the basic literacy and prepare them for future studies.
4. Some modern technology should be adopted e.g. computer assisted language instruction (CALD) as developed by Lawlev (1989), as computers are almost available in all government should including primary schools, the adoption of such learner central technology would tremendously alter the learning environments and attitudes to make them more positive and self actualizing.
5. Language teachers should attend conferences, seminars and workshops on the significance of mother tongue in teaching primary school pupils, this will give them the ability to teach and use proper method in achieving the objectives of the UPE.

6. Emphasis should be giving to the use of mother tongue both in the classroom for communication at the lower level of education, this will enable the child to appreciate and be proud of the language of the immediate environment before introducing him to any foreign language.

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