

PUPILS' PERCEPTIONS OF MOTHER TONGUE AS A MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF SOCIAL STUDIES IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN ABEOKUTA METROPOLIS, OGUN STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated the pupils' perception of mother tongue as a medium of instruction for effective teaching and learning of Social Studies in primary schools in Ogun State. A total of one hundred and eighty (180) primary school pupils were randomly selected in name the community, state. Frequency counts, simple percentages, t-test and ANOVA statistical analysis were used for data analysis. This study revealed that gender and school setting have great influence on how effective pupils will learn, master and use mother tongue in their day-to-day communication. In view of these findings, it was recommended that teachers should cultivate the habit of using indigenous languages to teach their pupils in the Social Studies classroom, and they should periodically organize essay writing competition, quiz, and games etc among the pupils to develop their communication skills in mother tongue.

Keywords: Mother-tongue, medium of instruction, effective teaching and learning, social studies

Introduction

Language and education are inseparable because the use of language as a medium of instruction in the teaching/learning situation goes a long way in determining the success achieved by the learner. A medium of instruction is the language used in imparting knowledge and inculcating values and norms of the society in the young ones in the formal school system. Language performs different functions including a means of communication, expression and conceptualization. It can also be used as a means of domination and discrimination; an instrument to give or block access to economic and political processes (Salawu, 2005). Above all, the role of language in education has been found to be very significant. Learning a foreign/second language differs from learning other academic subjects. Brown (1995) theorized that learning another language requires such a devotion on the part of learners that "your whole person is affected as you struggle to reach beyond the confines of your first language and into a new language, a

new culture, a new way of thinking, feeling, and acting".

Mother tongue, which is also widely known as native language, is the indigenous language of one's parents which is usually the first language learnt by children. In the same vein, it is also referred to as the language of one's environment. Suffice to say that, one's mother tongue is an apparent indication of where one hails from. Mother language is often regarded as one's "First Language". Therefore, by contrast, a second language is any language that one speaks other than one's first/native language. The mother language is noted as 'first' because it is regarded as the most important language spoken by anyone due to its hereditary value as well as its cultural impact on the concerned individuals. No doubt, mother tongue or first language contributes immensely to a child's personal, social, cultural, intellectual, educational and economic life (Baker, 2000).

The use of mother tongue as medium of instruction during one's early years of schooling, results in improved acquisition of

knowledge by pupils (Byram & Fleming, 2008). It has also been established that the use of the mother tongue as language of instruction is effective in helping with the acquisition of second language (Heugh, 2006). Experiences in Africa and many parts of the world have shown that cognitive development is achieved faster by using the mother tongue as language of instruction in primary education (Bunyi, 2009). The use of indigenous language for instruction promotes culture and identity of the people. It facilitates the integration of African culture into the school curriculum thus creating a culturally sensitive curriculum and develops a positive perception of culture (Alidou, 2006). This will also ensure that the parents are involved in school activities hence making the school part of the community. It is through indigenous languages that education can best perform the role of cultural transmission. Alidou further note that use of imperial languages as the media of instruction leads to differential educational treatments and consequently to the maintenance of socioeconomic inequalities. It excludes the common man from participating fully in development activities.

The benefits of mother tongue in the education of the child, especially at primary school level cannot be overemphasized. Psychologically, the proper development of the child is closely bound with the uninterrupted use of the language in which he has acquired his first experience of life, the one in which he dreams and thinks and in which he can effortlessly express his feelings and emotions (Cummins, 2000). To ignore this familiar language and begin to teach him a foreign and unfamiliar language as soon as he comes to school, says Ogunnowo (2006), is like taking the child away from his home and putting him among strangers. Educationally, instruction in the mother tongue will help the child to understand concepts easily, because he is familiar with their vocabularies. Thinking in his mother tongue and expressing himself in the same will enhance his academic achievement. This implies that, if the medium of instruction at the early stages is the language that the learner understands very well, he/she can

understand instructions and fully participate in the educational processes. Findings of that report stated: "...the best medium for teaching a child is his mother tongue" (Pflepson, 2011). It is also pointed out according to Ande (2010) that use of the first language is a factor in educational achievement and that the educational process in any society ought to be conducted through a language that both learner and teacher command well.

Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) stated that language and culture are inseparable. Hence, a child who has been in contact with the mother tongue will imbibe cultural values that will guide him to respect basic values of the society where he lives. Although English language usage is relevant to our modern living and Nigerian children must learn it in schools, the point still remains that the best medium for starting off the child's education is the mother tongue, and it is after a sound linguistic foundation has been laid, that there can be a change to use a foreign language (English) as a medium of instruction at later stages. However, the reverse is the case as many parents take delight in sending their children to nursery schools to learn English language so that their dreams of wanting them to become doctors, lawyers, engineers and teachers will be realized as fast as possible. Results have shown that professionals in the various fields of life who are fluent in English language but can hardly express themselves in their mother tongue (Musa & Musa, 2007).

Education wise, students who learn a second language and continue to develop their native language would have chances of higher academic achievement in later years than those who learn their second language at the expense of their first language. More so, economically, there are available better employment or job opportunities in Nigeria and in the diaspora for individuals who are conversant with official language as well as another language probably a native (Nwaozor, 2015). Nigerian's philosophy of education is hinged on the premise that education is an instrument for national development. According to the National Policy on Education (NPE, (2004), education fosters

the worth and development of the individual, for each individuals sake and for the general development of the society, it is also believed that there is need for quality educational opportunities for all Nigerian children, as well as the need for functional education for the promotion of a progressive and united Nigeria. To this end, school programmes need to be relevant, practical and comprehensive for the full integration of the individual into the community (Musa & Musa, 2007). The realization of the National Education goals of inculcating national unity, right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual for the Nigeria society for instance, depends on a variable like the mother tongue. The destruction of language and culture in schools is highly counterproductive for any society (Adediran & Adu, 2013). Mother tongue and other indigenous languages will enhance national development. The challenge therefore is for educators and policy makers to shape the evolution of national identity in such a way that the right of the school children are respected, the culture, linguistic and economic resources of the nation maximized.

Social Studies as a school subject teaches children the total summation of all experiences within their environment, which they need to live in the world. The subject is particular in developing their appropriate skills and attitudes which will make them to become activists and contributors to the community. The children according to Aguokogbwo (2000) need to know about their society; its nature, its problems and its prospects. Certain peculiar materials are found in Social studies, which constitutes its major characteristics. One of the focuses of social studies is the study of humans. It is not a study of animals, plants and organic or non-organic materials. The interest of the subject is on how human beings behave (that is, the reaction of an individual or individuals in any situation); what man believes (values) that is, ideas which a society cherishes and sees to achieve; how human's living together is safeguarded, and how man's problem of survival is being tackled. Therefore, all Social studies programmes emphasize the relationship human being have with their physical and social

worlds which culminate into the usage of mother tongue in the immediate environment.

Social Studies according to Nwaham and Odor (2005) is societal-oriented and culture-bound. This means that the material and knowledge gained in the subject is first and foremost those that relate to, relevant to and useful to a particular society and a particular culture. Rather an individual country develops her own social studies programmes. We have the Nigeria social studies programme, which is developed and implemented only in Nigeria. Each country has her own particular purposes and objectives of social studies. Though in general, social studies may be seen as a tool for national development, the fact of unequal stages of national development means variation in purposes and objectives. Implications of these characteristics of the subject are equally many. Prominent among them are the following. One, there are many definitions of the subject, arising from different conceptualizations and emphases. Two, Social studies varies from place to place in details and orientation. Three, Social studies is continuously modify from time to time. That is why the usage of mother tongue is important for the effective teaching and learning Social Studies among primary school pupils so as to familiarize themselves with their culture values in their immediate environment (Adediran, 2017).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to investigate pupils' perceptions of mother tongue as a medium of instruction for effective teaching and learning of social studies in primary schools in Abeokuta metropolis, Ogun state. However, the specific objectives are to:

- i. examine the perception of primary school pupils on the role of mother tongue as a medium of instruction for effective teaching and learning of Social Studies
- ii. examine the perception of rural and urban primary school pupils on the role of mother tongue as a medium of instruction for effective teaching and learning of Social Studies
- iii. examine the perception of private and public primary school pupils on the role of mother tongue as a medium of instruction

for effective teaching and learning of Social Studies

Research Question

What is the perception of primary school pupils on the role of mother tongue as a medium of instruction for effective teaching and learning of Social Studies?

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female primary school pupils on the role of mother tongue as a medium of instruction for effective teaching and learning of Social Studies.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the perception of rural and urban primary school pupils on the role of mother tongue as a medium of instruction for effective teaching and learning of Social Studies.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in the perception of private and public primary school pupils on the role of mother tongue as a medium of instruction for effective teaching and learning of Social Studies.

Methodology

The researchers employed simple random sampling technique in the selection of six (6) primary schools in Abeokuta Township in Ogun State. Three (3) out of them were private primary schools and the other three (3) were public primary schools. The schools selected were; St. Mary Primary School, Osiele, OLG Primary School, Obantoko and Method Primary School, Odeda, for the public and FCE Staff School, Osiele, Emmanuel Anointed Nursery and Primary School, Camp, Four Square Nursery and Primary School, Odeda for the private. Thirty (30) primary school pupils of basic 5 & 6 were randomly selected in each of the selected primary schools making a total of 180 students. In collecting data for this study, the researcher made use of self-developed questionnaire titled; Pupils' Perceptions of Mother Tongue as a Medium of Instruction [PPMTMI] which had 20 items designed to 4-point Likert-type scale. The t-test and ANOVA statistical methods were used to analyze the data obtained in the study.

Results

Research Question: What is the perception of primary school pupils on the role of mother tongue as a medium of instruction for effective teaching and learning of Social Studies?

Table 1: Analysis of perception of primary school pupils on the role of mother tongue as a medium of instruction for effective teaching and learning of Social Studies

S/N	Items	Accept	%	Reject	%
1.	Teachers' inadequate use of Mother Tongue in the teaching of Social Studies reduces learners' interest.	103	59	77	41
2.	Society disregard speakers' of local languages	108	59	74	41
3.	Use of local languages in the church or mosque promoted my interest.	102	55	85	45
4.	Non-availability of necessary textbook can affect the usage of Mother Tongue for effective teaching and learning Social Studies	128	71	53	29
5.	Home background can affect the usage of indigenous language as a medium of instruction for teaching and learning of Social Studies	82	46	98	54
6.	Teachers do not use appropriate teaching aid to teach Social Studies through the usage of indigenous language	93	51	88	49
7.	Speaking English at home hinders my interest in indigenous language/MT	115	63	67	37
8.	Teachers' method of teaching Social Studies encourage speaking of mother tongue	147	80	36	20
9.	Love of the foreign culture discourage the usage of indigenous language/MT as a medium of instruction in Social Studies class	140	78	40	22
10.	Teachers' communicating always in English language in the school affect the speaking of indigenous language/MT	154	84	30	16
11.	Learning of the M.T/indigenous language only as a school subject discourages the use of indigenous language.	137	72	52	28
12.	Developing interest in learning the language only without using it as a means of instruction or communication kills our culture	159	88	21	12
13.	Teachers' behavior towards the usage of indigenous language as a medium of instruction motivates me to learn the language	150	80	38	20
14.	Teachers' method of teaching enhances understanding of the indigenous language/(M.T) more	156	86	25	14
15.	Parents' interest in the indigenous language/(M.T) helps learning	113	80	29	20
16.	Parents' proficiency in the indigenous language aids my understanding of learning Social Studies in the school	130	71	53	29
17.	My dialect interferes with my speaking of indigenous language/(M.T)	129	71	53	29
18.	Fear that learning mother tongue or indigenous language can cause mistake in my use of English language	117	63	68	37
19.	The use of English as a medium of communication at home affects my interest in learning indigenous language/(M.T)	142	79	38	21
20.	Reading of novels and newspapers facilitate my of learning indigenous language/(M.T)	158	87	23	13
TOTAL			2563	1042	

The result in Table 1 shows that all the listed factors are to be accepted except item 5, this is because the pupils believe that their family background does not affect the usage of

mother tongue as a medium for teaching and learning of Social Studies. While 80% agreed that teacher's method of teaching encourage the usage of mother tongue as a medium of

instruction in teaching Social Studies, 78% agreed that they like mother tongue as a means of cultural integration in the society, 84% agreed that their Social Studies teachers are not competent in the usage of indigenous as medium of instruction in the class, 72% agreed that they only know about the mother tongue as a societal language. 71% also agreed that parents influence on the learning of mother tongue can help the children, Also, 71% agreed that, their dialects interfere with their speaking of mother tongue, 79% agreed that they use mother tongue as a medium of communication

at home, 87% agreed that the reading of novels and newspapers facilitates the learning of mother tongue as first language any child can learn as he is growing up.

Ho₁: There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female primary school pupils on the role of mother tongue as a medium of instruction for effective teaching and learning of Social Studies.

Table 2: T-test comparing mean and standard deviation of male and female primary school pupils

Sex	Mean	Std. Deviation	T-calculated	T-tabulated	Remark
Male	2.0903	0.95935	2.351	0.019	Accept
Female	2.0081	0.98848			Ho

Table 2 reveals that there is significant difference between the perception of male and female primary school pupils on the usage of mother tongue as a medium of instruction for effective teaching and learning of Social Studies. The p-value is 0.19 which is less than the level of significance ($\alpha=0.05$).

Ho₂: There is no significant difference in the perception of rural and urban primary schools on the role of mother tongue as a medium of instruction for effective teaching and learning of Social Studies.

Table 3: Analysis of variance (ANOVA) comparing respondents based on school sex and setting

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	14.253	2	7.126	6.857	.001
Within groups	3727.987	3587	1.039		
Total	3742.240	3589			

Table 3 shows that the f-value which is 6.857 is greater than the critical of 0.01 at 0.05 level of significant. It can be concluded that perception of students on the role of mother tongue speaking based on the location of the school (i.e. urban and rural) are not the same.

Ho₃: There is no significant difference in the perception of private and public primary school pupils on the role of mother tongue as a medium of instruction for effective teaching and learning of Social Studies.

Table 4: T-test comparing the perception of the private and public primary school pupils

Variable	Mean	Std. deviation	t. tabulated	Calculated
Public	2.0806	1.01533	0.349	0.936
Private	2.0486	1.01778		

Table 4 above indicates that the t-calculated (0.349) is lower than the t-tabulated (0.936) at 0.05 level of significance. It can then be concluded that there is no significant difference in the perceptions of pupils from private and public primary schools on the role of mother tongue as a medium of instruction for effective teaching and learning of Social Studies i.e. they are the same. The hypothesis is thus accepted.

Discussion of Findings

Table 1 is on frequency counts and simple percentage of the factors affecting mothers tongue in the society. The findings in the table revealed that items 3, 4, 17 and 18 which have the percentage of acceptance as 55%, 71%, 71% and 63% respectively, shows that the factors emanating from the environment which include the church, mosque, the community and their peers, affects the children’s effort in imbibing the essence of mother tongue. These findings agreed with the finding of Baker (2000) who believes that pupils are sensitive to rejection from their environment or peers if they should make mistake of understanding of the importance of mother tongue. The findings also agreed with the result on the table 1 which shows that item 17 has 71% acceptance and 29% non-acceptance, reveals that to a large extent, the mother tongue have a great effect on pupils’ mastery and use of other languages. This result agrees with the findings of Cummins (2000) that prior knowledge of another language will interfere with the learning of mother tongue

In table 2, the result shows that there is no difference in the perception of male and female pupils on the roles of mother tongue as a medium of instruction for effective teaching of Social Studies. It can then be deduced from the findings of study that, the gender of the pupils may not necessarily affect the perception of

pupils on the role of mother tongue as medium of instruction for effective teaching and learning of Social Studies. The result in Table 3 revealed that there is no significant difference in the perception of students from urban and rural locations on the role of mother tongue as medium of instruction for effective teaching and learning of Social Studies. This is in line with the study of Adediran, Solomon and Adebajo (2013) which revealed that urban/rural centre dichotomy is not as marked as they are in cosmopolitan cities.

In table 4, the findings of the study shows that there is no difference in the perception of students from private and public primary schools on the role of mother tongue as medium of instruction for effective teaching and learning of Social Studies. The findings revealed that the school attended will not have effect on the students’ perception of the importance of mother tongue in the society.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is significant that mother tongue plays an important role as medium of instruction for effective teaching and learning of Social Studies. This is because native languages are part of our culture that can help in the development of the society. This is telling us that we should imbibe our cultural heritage and make sure that our children become familiar with the indigenous languages in the society. Summarily, if students change their perception on the role of mother tongue/indigenous languages, understanding will be enhanced, our cultural heritage will be preserved, self-worth will be promoted and all these will positively enhance our national development.

Recommendations

In view of the findings from the study, the following recommendations are made.

- 1) Pupils should be encouraged towards learning and speaking of their mother tongues.
- 2) Teachers should periodically organize quiz, essay writing competition, games, etc among students to develop their communication skills and interest in mother tongue languages in related subjects.
- 3) The home and community should affect the child's effort in imbibing the essence of mother tongue by encouraging communication in their native language
- 4) Teachers of social studies should ensure the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction in the classroom teaching.
- 5) Parents should change their perception towards the native languages and discontinue enforcing their children to communicate in foreign languages.
- 6) The language provision of the national policy on education which states that students in secondary schools should register the mother tongue or indigenous language of immediate environment and any other Nigeria language (making two) should be implemented.
- 7) The government should create monitoring unit through Ministry of Education that will monitor schools in implementing the indigenous language provision policy of NPE.

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