

CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION IN MOTHER-TONGUE AND STUDENTS ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN ILORIN WEST SECONDARY SCHOOLS KWARA STATE NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study is aimed at determining the influence of mother tongue on the academic performance of students. Krejcie and Morgan sample calculator was used to select 240 teachers as respondents. The respondents were selected across 24 secondary schools in Ilorin metropolis, that is, minimum of 10 teachers from each school. The mean ratings were used to answer the research questions, while the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. The findings from this study among others revealed that language of interaction, vernacular speaking did not influence the academic performance of students. It was concluded that since there is no impact of mother tongue on students academic performance the curriculum planners have to structure the curricula in such a way that classroom interaction brings about positive influence on the learners. Therefore it was recommended among others that teachers should co-mix language of instruction for better understanding

Keywords: Mother tongue, Classroom instruction, Students, Academic performance and Classroom interaction

Introduction

The term, mother-tongue-in-education is often associated with the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction in schools. Yet, there is a second aspect, which is often forgotten: studying it as a subject in school. While the former is mainly concerned with pedagogy, the latter relates more with cultural transmission. Although teaching through the mother tongue (MT) has been identified as having a lot of cognitive and academic benefits, studying it as a school subject enables students to consolidate their competence, performance and knowledge of the socio-cultural aspects of the language. Mother tongue for pedagogical purposes has gained more attention perhaps because of its identified roles in enhancing learning and making education accessible to the indigenous children who speak minority languages and are often disadvantaged.

Oscar (2017) considers the mother tongue as a tool which every human being relies on for learning and for self-expression. It is also the basis of thought (Diaz & Perez, 2015). Since one of the fundamental principles of education is that learning should proceed from the known to the unknown, learners' prior knowledge is best expressed through the language they are more at home with. Cook (2017) notes that according to some studies on cognitive processing, even advanced second language learners are less efficient at absorbing information from the second language L2 than from the first language (L1). Hence, the mother tongue remains relevant even when a second language has been learned.

A synthesis of mother tongue based bi/multilingual education programmes around the world has shown dramatically increased academic achievement (Pinnock & Vijayakumar, 2019). Teaching through the mother tongue is also said to enhance the cognitive development of critical thinking skills and results in increased learning, access and equity, improved learning outcomes, lower overall costs and reduced chances of repetition and dropping out of school (United Nations, 2016: World Bank, 2015). It enables learners to have a strong sense of confidence, self-esteem, motivation, initiative as well as creativity (Benson, 2014; Njoroge & Gathigia, 2016) and could facilitate the learning of additional languages (Ball, 2017). These are possible because proficiency in the language of instruction enhances active participation in the learning process.

Statement of the Problem

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. The Nigerian National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004) stipulates that the medium of instruction in the education should be the mother tongue or the language of the immediate environment and at a later stage English. Adeyemi (2016) rightly noted that for proper meaningful and purposeful education in the primary level. The mother tongue or the prevailing language of the locality should be used as the language of instruction. Also, Oyekale (2007) agreed with many other researchers by noting that the initial reading at the primary school level and adult literacy classes are best taught in the mother tongue.

Several studies have been conducted on the existence of mother tongue and its impact on the academic performance of students/pupils at all levels and geographical locations. Some scholars who have conducted extant studies in the past have attested to the positive outcome of mother tongue education in the various schools' examinations. One of the study that was conducted in Ife revealed that the outcome of the Ife Six-Year Primary Project also lends credence to the indispensable role of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction in the primary school (Oyeyisi, 2017). There was also the control group that was taught with the English medium. In the final analysis, the cost of providing initial literacy in the various dialects in limited language usage was easier and more cost effective than in the English medium. Similarly, the Iloilo experiment in Senegal also confirmed the superiority of starting off learning with the mother tongue. At the end of the experiment, this lasted two years, the local Senegalese vernacular. Higaynon, was found to be much more effective in the first two primary grades than English or French (Fakeye, 2011).

In Nigeria, a majority of public primary school pupils come from homes where English is not used at all in communication (Olaoye, 2007). First, a majority of children, especially in rural areas, never go to pre-primary schools. They simply begin their education at the primary school level. Children who go to pre-primary schools who are mainly children of the wealthy and of the elite, begin with an early immersion in English. The child therefore has not attained a sufficient level of proficiency in the English language to enable him/her learn the subject effectively. Specifically, the studies have focused on the impact of mother tongue on the teaching and learning of various subjects in different geographical locations. However, to the best knowledge of the researcher, little has been done to pay attention to Classroom Instruction in Mother Tongue and Students' Academic Performance in Ilorin metropolis Secondary Schools, Kwara state. The present study seeks to cover the identified gap in literature.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to examine the Classroom Instruction in Mother Tongue and Students' Academic Performance in Ilorin metropolis Secondary Schools, Kwara state. Specifically, the study sets:

1. To determine the language mostly used in teaching in Ilorin-west, Secondary schools, Kwara State.
2. To identify the language of interaction among students and teachers in Ilorin-west, Secondary schools, Kwara State.
3. To find out if students speak vernacular during lessons in Ilorin-west, Secondary schools, Kwara State.

Research Question

The following research questions have been formulated to guide the researcher in the conduct of the study:

1. What is the language mostly used in teaching in Ilorin-west, Kwara State?
2. What is the language of interaction among students and teaching in Ilorin-west, Kwara State?
3. Do students speak vernacular during lessons in Ilorin-west, Kwara State ?

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses have been formulated for the conduct of the present study:

H₀₁: there is no significant relationship between the mostly used language used in teaching and students' academic performance in Ilorin-west, secondary schools, Kwara State.

H₀₂: there is no significant relationship between interaction in mother tongue with teachers and students' academic performance in Ilorin-west, secondary schools, Kwara State.

H₀₃: there is no significant relationship between speaking of vernacular in classrooms and students' academic performance.

Notions of Mother Tongue in Nigeria Education

This is a language a child first came in contact with in life. It is the language of the immediate environment. Some scholars claim that it is acquired and not learnt. It is the language that one grows up with, Ajulo (2008). When Chomsky theorized on the innate capacity of human to acquire language like English or a foreign one, depending on which the child is exposed to early in life. This implies that in Nigeria, Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, Efik, Tiv, and others are majority tongue but English or Arabic could be a mother tongue (MT) for a Nigerian speaker whose father is a Yourba, if either of the foreign languages was what he/she was exposed to. In teaching and learning process in Nigeria, the mother tongue of the child is of great importance. Realizing the importance of mother tongue in Nigeria education. Mother tongue in Nigeria education was encouraged for many reasons as stressed by scholars, such as Fafunwa who explained that a child learns best in his mother and that is natural to him as mother's milk, therefore, it would not be astonishing that the mother tongue should be encouraged in young people at the primary school level. He explained further that, the mother tongue is a way of promoting our culture and if a subject like English is made compulsory at the primary school level, pupils will recognized its importance and will lead to understanding of English language.

The first language of a child is part of his personal, social and cultural identity. Another impact of the first language is that, it brings about reflection and learning of successful social patterns of acting and speaking. It is basically responsible for differentiating the linguistic competence of acting. To a person, his mother tongue is a "blessing in disguise" it is not merely a timetable subject in his education but is forced upon him from all sides. It is learned by both the conscious and unconscious methods. The conscious supplement and regulate the knowledge gained by hearing. The mother tongue is an indispensable instrument for the development of the intellectual, moral and physical aspect of education (Oyewole, 2017).

The use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction in education has generated a serious controversy in Nigeria. Some assume that, it is not practical and anti-nationalistic and divertive. They lose their contention on social political factors. For instance, the linguistics tell us that we have (300) different languages (excluding dialect) in Nigeria, and that if each linguistic groups insist on giving educational instruction in their mother tongue, the objective of primary education in Nigeria will become unattainable. According to Gimson (2010), who argues that in a country like Nigeria, the mother tongue education is hardly feasible in real term, if pursued to its logical conclusion, he says further that, the mother tongue proposal may even destroy some of the principles the country should cherish.

Concept of Students Academic Performance

Academic performance refers to the degree of a student's accomplishment of his or her tasks and studies. It should be a multi-faceted construct that comprises different domains of learning. Because the field of academic performance is very wide-ranging and covers a broad variety of educational outcomes, the definition of academic performance depends on the indicator used to measure it. The most well-known indicator of measuring academic performance is grades which reflect the student's "score" for their subjects and overall tenure. Academic performance could be defined as self-perception and self-evaluation of one's objective academic success. Academic achievement generally indicates the learning outcomes of students (Shobhna & Rekha, 2009).

Academic performance is the yardstick to measure educational outcomes is paramount to the economic, scientific and technological advancement of a nation (Jansen, 1998). On their own part, Adeoye and Emeke (2006) defined academic performance as the ability of an individual to accomplish set educational objectives or goals.

Methodology

The research design adopted for this research is the descriptive survey method. The population of the present study consists of all the teachers in secondary schools in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara state. According to the statistics obtained from the ministry of education, there are 1969 secondary school teachers in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara state. Using krejcie and morgan sample calculator however, 240 teachers were selected as respondents. The respondents were selected across 24 secondary schools in Ilorin metropolis, that is, minimum of 10 teachers from each school. A researcher designed questionnaire titled Influence of mother tongue questionnaire (IMTQ) was used to collect relevant information for the study. In the analysis of the demographic data and research questions, statistical tool of frequency counts, percentage and mean in the SPSS were utilized while Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the research hypotheses.

Results

Research question one: What is the language mostly used in teaching in Ilorin-west, Kwara State?

Table 1: The mean ratings on the language mostly used in teaching in Ilorin-west, Kwara State

ITEM	MEAN	SD	REMARK
1. I find it difficult when I teach due to the language of interaction	1.60	0.579	Disagreed
2. My student find difficulty in assimilating the topic	1.69	0.767	Disagreed
3. I find it hard to explain the topic to the student	1.50	0.729	Disagreed
4. My student understand the teaching when I explain	1.59	0.886	Disagreed
5. My student find it difficult to answer my question	3.64	0.571	Agreed
Weighted Mean	2.00		

Benchmark: 2.50

Table 1 shows the mean ratings on the language mostly used in teaching Ilorin-west, Kwara State. The results showed that language mostly used in teaching has no impact on the academic performance of students.

Research question two: What is the language of interaction among students and teachers in Ilorin-west, Kwara State?

Table 2: The mean ratings on the language of interaction in Ilorin-west, Kwara State

ITEM	MEAN	SD	REMARK
1. I have problem when interpreting the textbook	3.36	0.482	Agreed
2. I find it difficult to explain grammar, concepts	3.45	0.498	Agreed
3. Developing teaching material is difficult	3.08	0.855	Agreed
4. The textbooks provided are inadequate	3.00	0.609	Agreed
5. There is low interaction in	3.40	0.784	Agreed

teaching and learning
Weighted Mean 3.26

Benchmark: 2.50

Table 2 shows the mean ratings on the language of interaction among students and teaching in Ilorin-west, Kwara State. From the results, it is revealed that there is problem of interpreting the textbook, difficulty to explain grammar, difficulty in developing teaching material, inadequate provision of textbook and low interaction teaching and learning.

Research question three: Do students speak vernacular during lessons in Ilorin-west, Kwara State?

Table 3: The mean ratings on the vernacular speaking in Ilorin-west, Kwara State

ITEM	MEAN	SD	REMARK
1. Using vernacular in the class does not help the student perform well during examination	1.60	1.084	Disagreed
2. Every time I feel like my students are having difficulty in understanding the topic , I use vernacular	3.23	0.730	Agreed
3. My students express themselves well in vernacular	3.49	1.045	Agreed
4. I do not enjoy using vernacular to teaching	1.64	1.032	Disagreed
5. To make it easier for students to acquire and grasp the lesson, I use vernacular as a medium of instruction	3.64	0.774	Agreed
Weighted Mean	2.72		

Benchmark: 2.50

Table 3 showed the mean ratings on the language mostly used in teaching in Ilorin-west, Kwara State. Results revealed that the students have a better understanding and assimilation of the subject taught when vernacular is used.

Testing of Hypotheses

H₀₁: there is no significant relationship between the language mostly used in teaching and students’ academic performance in Ilorin-west, secondary schools, Kwara State.

Table 4: Relationship between the choice of language used in teaching and students’ academic performance in Ilorin-west, secondary schools

	Mean	SD	Pearson Sig. Correlation	2-tailed	REMARK
Teaching Language	16.29	1.73	-0.027	0.633	Not Significant
Academic Performance	17.40	9.06			

p<0.05

Table 4 revealed that $r = -0.027$, $p\text{-value} = 0.633$. Results showed that the Pearson Correlation is very weak and negative. This shows that there is no significant relationship between the choice of language used in teaching and students’ academic performance in Ilorin-west, secondary schools, Kwara State. Therefore the choice of language used in teaching does not influence students’ academic performance.

H₀₂: there is no significant relationship between language of interaction and students’ academic performance in Ilorin-west, secondary schools, Kwara State.

Table 5: Relationship between language of interaction and students’ academic performance in Ilorin-west, secondary schools, Kwara State.

	Mean	SD	Pearson Sig. Correlation	2-tailed	REMARK
Language of Interaction	10.01	2.17	-.033	0.560	Not Significant
Academic Performance	17.41	9.06			

p<0.05

Table 5 showed that $r = -0.033$, $p\text{-value} = 0.560$. Results revealed that the Pearson Correlation is very weak and negative. This shows that there is no significant relationship between language of interaction and students’ academic performance in Ilorin-west, secondary schools, Kwara State. Hence, the language of interaction has no influence students’ academic performance.

H₀₃: there is no significant relationship between speaking of vernacular and students’ academic performance.

Table 6: Relationship between speaking of vernacular and students’ academic performance in Ilorin-west, secondary schools, Kwara State.

	Mean	SD	Pearson Sig. Correlation	2-tailed	REMARK
Speakers of Vernacular	13.60	1.66	-0.044	0.436	Not Significant
Academic Performance	17.41	9.06			

p<0.05

Table 6 showed that $r = -0.044$, $p\text{-value} = 0.436$. Results revealed that the Pearson Correlation is extremely weak and negative. This implies that there is no significant relationship between speaking of vernacular and students’ academic performance in Ilorin-west, secondary schools, Kwara State. Hence, vernacular speaking has no influence on students’ academic performance.

Discussion of findings

Findings from the research question one revealed that the language mostly used in teaching has no impact on the academic performance of students. This is in line with the findings of Cummins (2010) who emphasized that the level of development of children's mother tongue is a strong predictor of their second language development. When the mother tongue is promoted the concepts and literacy skills can transfer to the second language. This also corroborates Koda et al (2016) who found that there is a high correlation between learning to read in mother tongue and subsequent reading achievement in the second language has been found.

It was revealed from the research question two that the secondary schools in Ilorin-west, Kwara State has a problem of interpreting the textbook, difficulty to explain grammar, difficulty in developing teaching material, inadequate provision of textbook and low interaction in teaching and learning. This corroborates Adegbija and Falode (2014) who reported that the language policy relating to primary school education in Nigeria stated that the first language is to be used in the early stages of education and English at a later stage. It is, however, vague on when this later state should occur. Consequently, most primary school teachers oscillate from the first languages to English. Understandably, this is sometimes done out of the desire to be understood and it has created problems to both the learners and the teachers. This is also in line with

Oyewole's (2017). who asserted that the rate of failure recorded every year in most external examination constitutes a major concern to the education sector.

Findings from the research question three revealed that the students have a better understanding and assimilation of the subject taught when vernacular is used. This findings is line with that of Amao (2010) that noted that there is no reason why the first-language medium policy cannot succeed in such cosmopolitan areas because the majority of children are normally from a particular language group. Her findings further revealed that mother tongue interference has impact on the writing and spoken of English language among secondary school students.

Findings from the research hypothesis one stated that there is no significant relationship between the choice of language used in teaching and students' academic performance in Ilorin-west, secondary schools, Kwara State. Therefore the choice of language used in teaching does not influence students' academic performance. Oyewole (2017) believed that the use of mother tongue in primary education would make Nigeria genuinely bilingual as they would become thoroughly proficient in both mother tongue and English language and it will pave way for better results. Also Adebayo (2012) found that mother tongue influences the students' poor performance in English language in Junior School Certificate examination.

Findings from the research hypothesis two showed that there is no significant relationship between language of interaction and students' academic performance in Ilorin-west, secondary schools, Kwara State. Hence, the language of interaction has no influence on students' academic performance. This corroborates Akinwale (2015) who noted that the assumption that a child learns better or easily when instructions is given out in its mother tongue can only be true in a basically monolingual environment .

Findings from the research hypothesis three revealed that there is no significant relationship between speakers of vernacular and students' academic performance in Ilorin-west, secondary schools, Kwara State. Hence, vernacular speaking has no influence on students' academic performance. The mother tongue is an indispensable instrument for the development of the intellectual, moral and physical aspect of education (Oyewole, 2017). Since most of the children are brought up in environment where mother tongue is the predominant means of communication, then, it is only logical that they are inducted into the world or society through the agency of such language. It is also true that education depends specifically on language, therefore, if the second language is used as a medium of instruction, there is danger of cultural deprivation.

Conclusion

It is concluded in this study that neither language of interaction nor vernacular influenced the academic performance of students. Therefore, curriculum planners still have to plan the curriculum in such a way that the language of instruction influences learning in our educational system to bring about all round development in the Nigerian child.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings;

1. Teachers should help the students interact in English language. Because all other subjects are not taught or written in the mother tongue but in English.
2. Rather than interpreting the subject taught in the mother tongue, a sound English and phonics teacher should be employed to help build the foundation of the students in English language.
3. Except for during language classes, all other subjects should be taught in English.
4. Teachers should help students to learn both in English and mother tongue

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