EMERGING TRENDS IN THE USE OF MOTHER-TONGUE AS A LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION IN LOWER NIGERIAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract
Despite the fact that many researchers have highlighted the benefits of the use of mother-tongue for instruction, it is still observed that the policy implementation has not been adequately enforced in many lower schools. This research was therefore out to examine if the policy is being followed and what are the inhibiting factors to its full implementation. This is a survey research. Stratified sampling technique was used to select seventy one (71) Yoruba language teachers from eighteen public and nine private primary schools in one Local Government Area each from Oyo, Osun and Ekiti States. Four null hypotheses were posed. Yoruba language teachers questionnaire with Cronbach reliability co-efficient 0.71 was the only instrument used for data collection, 7 analysed using T-test and One-way ANOVA. Findings revealed that nearly all (95%) sampled schools deviated from the norm. However, there was no significant difference in the use of mother-tongue as a mode of instruction among male and female, public and private schools and varying ages of teachers. Teachers with teaching qualification, are significantly better in the policy implementation (t = 6.227, p<0.05). It was therefore suggested that the Federal Ministry of Education should enforce the policy implementation by appointing more professional teachers in different subject areas, more importantly Yoruba language teachers so as to enhance relevant teaching approaches and methodologies in the lower primary schools in the South-West Nigerian Schools. Also, school administrators should encourage the use of mother tongue in the teaching learning process to make the implementation reality.

Keywords: mother-tongue, language of instruction, primary school, policy statement, policy implementation

INTRODUCTION
Language in education has been a contentious issue in Africa Rafiu. (2011) It has attracted a considerable amount of controversy from both language experts and educationist. This is so because of the multiplicity of languages in the continent. Education can not be divorced from language. Education, according to Awoniyi (1978) is meant to be embedded in the society, drawing inspiration and nourishment from it and in turn, contributing to societal opportunities for growth and renewal. However, the languages that are supposed to be used for formal and non-formal education are fast facing extinction. While some of them have been pronounced dead, many are at the varying degree of loss Rafiu (2011). Given the rate at which languages are dying, one could conveniently say that the advocacy that the mother-tongue should be used to teach in schools for better performance, especially at the primary school level is becoming impracticable. This is so because the endangerment of some of these languages has shifted their use in certain important domain like playground, recreation centers, markets etc. This is further made worse as there are no written materials on the majority of the languages in question.

Mother-tongue in education refers to the use of the native language or the first language to teach at formal and non-formal levels. Mother-tongue in education is situated within the general concept of language in education. It is claimed that no educational system stands apart from the society which establishes it. (Awoniyi 1978). This presupposes that for a society to be in the right direction, education must be given its rightful place. Given the assertion that education is embedded in the society, the medium through which the norms of the society are packaged and handed down to generations, therefore, becomes very important. For mother-tongue in Nigeria education to be appreciated, we need to look at it from the formal and non-formal perspective. Mother-tongue is the language a child first encountered as he grows up. Through this medium, he is exposed at the non-formal level, to the techniques and skills of communicating with is peer, elders and parents. Stories, myths, legends, songs and other traditional practices, which are given in mother-tongue play a major role in this regards and in preparing himself for the larger society and even bigger challenges. At the formal education level, however, the Nigerian child is faced with the task of learning other languages he comes in contact with Bamgbose (1991). In most cases, the Nigeria child is not privileged to be taught in his mother-tongue. He may have to contend with a language of wider communication e.g. (English language).

Yoruba language is one of the indigenous languages in Nigeria. It is the mother-tongue of people in eight states in Nigeria. These are Oyo, Osun, Ogun, Ondo, Ekiti, Lagos, part of Kwara and Kogi states of Nigeria Abijo (2009). Speakers of Yoruba language could also be found scattered in countries like Benin Republic, Togo, Sierra Leone, Cuba and Brazil. As a result of the multiplicity of languages in Africa, English language has been adopted as the official language of government, business, education and mass media. English language is so important that it assumes a greater status than Nigerian languages. It thus reducing the scope of Nigerian languages. The consequence of this is that, Nigerian equates formal education with the knowledge of English.
language. Hence, some educated Nigerians believe that there is nothing worth studying in Nigerian languages. Rather, they take pride in their command of English language as being equivalent to “intellectual competence” Abijo (2009). These people claimed with pride and misplaced sense of accomplishment that they speak the acquired foreign language better than their mother-tongue. The student and the society tend to consider teaching mother-tongue in school as a lazy mans work and for this do not accord much respect to students and teachers of the language Adeyinka (1998). The students and the society tend to consider the subject as inferior to other school subjects Abijo (2009).

It is a policy that Yoruba language as one of the three major languages in the country should be used as language of instruction for pupils right from primary one to primary three. (FRN, 2004). Not only that, the government considers it to be in the interest of national unity that each child should be encourage to learn not only his own mother-tongue but also another Nigerian language. Experts, governments, linguists, educationists and international bodies like UNESCO have accepted the fact that children learn better through their mother-tongue Adeagbo (2004). The findings of Ande (1990) and Akinbote (1996) shows that children who were taught different subjects in Yoruba language performed significantly better than their counterpart who were taught in English language.

Several researches have been carried out by Linguist, Psychologists, Sociologists and Counselors to show that the mother-tongue should be used in teaching pupils in primary schools. The Ife six year primary project Afolayan 1976 and the Rivers Minor language education project spearheaded by professor Kay Williams are cases in point. The comment of Fafunwa (1989) cited by Adeyinka (1998) is very pertinent here

If the Nigerian child is to be encouraged from start to develop curiosity, manipulative ability, spontaneous flexibility, initiative, manual dexterity – he should acquire these skills and attribute through the mother-tongue as a medium of instruction which is the most natural way of Education Adeyinka (1998).

The objective of teaching Yoruba language in schools are stated as follows: That pupils/students should be able to accomplish the following:

- Express himself correctly in the appropriate Nigerian language emphasizing appropriate lexis and figures of speech (vocabulary, idioms proverbs etc)
- Demonstrate familiarity and acquaintance with and ability to discuss and explain elements of oral tradition of the language (Folktales, riddles, games, songs etc)
- Read and appreciate literature written in Nigerian languages e.g (Yoruba) without difficulty and at a reasonable speed
- Carry out continuous writing in Nigerian languages employing correct usages of grammar, idiomatic expression, orthography and other mechanics of the language
- Manifest creativity in Nigerian languages through composition of short stories, plays, newsheets, word games, songs etc in the language and
- Acquire the necessary tools to cope with further studies in Nigerian languages, if so desired. (FGN2004)

Going through the pathetic nature of teaching Yoruba language in most of Nigerian public and private primary schools in Nigeria, today, certainly, without an iota of doubt, there is a need to ask this pertinent question-To what extent does the government policy statement of teaching using mother-tongue(Yoruba language inclusive) as a medium of instruction in the lower classes of primary schools effective?. And that if not effective, what are those factors hindering its effectiveness in Nigerian primary schools?

Despite the popular advocate for the use of mother-tongue in the lower classes of our basic education stratum and the benefits accruable from such practices, languages other than mother-tongue had eroded the practice and the benefits, and had almost made the policy statement a mere slogan that had no future enrichment. The present study therefore sought the extent to which the policy had been implemented in Nigerian primary schools and the constraint to the smooth implementation of the policy in all the Yoruba speaking states primary schools in Nigeria.

**RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS**

$H_0$: There is no significant difference in the use of mother-tongue in teaching the Lower Classes of Primary Schools in the South-Western Nigerian Schools among:

1. Male and Female teachers;
2. Public and Private school teachers;
3. Teachers with varying ages;
4. Teachers with/without teaching qualifications.

**METHODOLOGY**

Stratified sampling technique was used to stratify the south-west Nigerian states into eight Yoruba speaking states. Each state was stratified into local governments, and to primary schools. Three Yoruba language teachers were purposively sampled from three schools, one private and two public in each of the three in rural and urban settings of the local governments in at least two of the eight states to make seventy one (71) Yoruba language teachers as the total sample for this study. Four research hypotheses were posed and Yoruba Language Teachers Questionnaire with cronbach reliability co-efficient of 0.71 was the only instrument to elicit information from data collection while T-test and One way ANOVA was used to analyse data.

**RESULT**

$H_0$: There is no significant difference in the use of mother tongue in teaching the lower classes of south-West Primary schools among male and female Yoruba language teachers.
Table 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. deviation</th>
<th>Std Error</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Error</th>
<th>t-test for equity of means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>20.22</td>
<td>3.722</td>
<td>.658</td>
<td>1.244</td>
<td>.877</td>
<td>.142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>18.97</td>
<td>3.638</td>
<td>.583</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table 1 above gave the t-test analysis of gender-male and female Yoruba language teachers’ use of mother tongue to teach lower classes of Nigerian Primary Schools. The calculated mean for male teachers was 20.22 while the calculated mean for female teachers was 18.97 with standard deviation of 3.722 for male and 3.638 for female teachers respectively. The standard error mean for male was .058 and .583 for female teachers. The f ratio calculated was .142 with the t-value 1.419 for male and t-value 1.416 for female teachers. The degree of freedom (df) for male was 69 and 65.711 for female teachers. The significant level calculated was .708 and at 2 tailed, for male = .160 and for female = .162. Therefore, there was no significant difference in the use of mother tongue in teaching the lower classes of Nigerian primary schools among male and female Yoruba language teachers as the calculated significant levels at 2-tailed and when calculated using Levene’s test for Equality of variances were greater than alpha level of 0.05 (see table 1 for more detail).

Ho2: There is no significant difference in the use of mother tongue in teaching the lower classes of South-West Nigerian Primary Schools among public and private school teachers.

Table 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of schls</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Deviation</th>
<th>Std Error</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sign</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>20.46</td>
<td>3.684</td>
<td>.590</td>
<td>1.640</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>2.405</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>18.41</td>
<td>3.453</td>
<td>.610</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.421</td>
<td>67.738</td>
<td>.018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 above shows the calculated t-test analysis of public and private south-West Nigerian Primary Schools’ teachers in their use of mother-tongue as a medium of instruction in the lower primary schools. The calculated mean for public school teachers was 20.46 and 18.41 for private school teachers with standard Deviation of 3.684 for public and 3.453 for private schools respectively. The error mean for public was .590 and .610 for private schools.

The f ratio was 1.640 significant at .05. The t-values at equal variances assumed was 2.405 and 2.421 at equal variance not assumed. The level of significance at 2-tailed for equal variances assumed was .019 and .018 at equal variances not assumed. These were significant at 0.019 and 0.018 less than 0.05 alpha level. However, it was not significant when calculated together at .205 greater than 0.05 alpha level. This shows that there is no significant difference in the use of mother tongue between the public and private school in the South-West Nigeria.

Ho3: There is no significant differences in the use of mother tongue in teaching the lower classes of south-West Nigerian Primary Schools among teachers with teaching qualifications and those without teaching qualifications.

Table 3: One way ANOVA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Deviation</th>
<th>Std Error</th>
<th>95% confidence Interval for mean</th>
<th>minimum</th>
<th>maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B.Ed Yoruba</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24.00</td>
<td>2.608</td>
<td>1.065</td>
<td>21.26 - 26.74</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.Ed Yoruba</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18.42</td>
<td>1.975</td>
<td>.570</td>
<td>17.16 - 19.67</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.Sc/HND</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19.06</td>
<td>1.886</td>
<td>.458</td>
<td>16.09 - 18.03</td>
<td>18.03</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ND</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20.58</td>
<td>4.502</td>
<td>1.300</td>
<td>17.72 - 23.44</td>
<td>23.44</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>19.54</td>
<td>3.703</td>
<td>.439</td>
<td>18.66 - 20.41</td>
<td>20.41</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 above the One-way Anova showing the analysis of South-West Nigeria Yoruba language teachers in the lower primary school teachers’ qualification in relation to the use of mother-tongue as a medium of instruction. The df (degree of freedom for between Groups was 4 and 66 for the degree of freedom for within Groups. The mean square for Between Groups was 68.732 while for Within Groups was 10.557. The f-calculated was 6.227, significant at 0.00 less than alpha level of 0.05. This, therefore, shows that there is a significant difference in the use of mother-tongue among the South-West Nigerian lower primary school Yoruba language teachers with teaching qualifications and those without teaching qualifications.
This supports the findings of Abijo (2009), Adeyinka 1998 and Adegbo (2005) who all agreed that Yoruba language teachers must have the basic training and must have acquired basic teaching qualification which should be put in use in their teaching methodologies to enhance good learning outcomes. The use of mother-tongue as a policy must therefore be adhered to so as to male teaching-learning effective.

\[ H_0: \text{There is no significant difference in the use of mother-tongue at a medium of instruction in lower classes of south-West Nigerian Primary schools among teachers with varying ages.} \]

Table 4. One-way ANOVA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ages</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Deviation</th>
<th>Std Error</th>
<th>Lower bound</th>
<th>Upper Bound</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers in age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bet. 18-25</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17.71</td>
<td>3.124</td>
<td>.835</td>
<td>15.91</td>
<td>19.52</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bet. 36-50</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19.65</td>
<td>3.878</td>
<td>.760</td>
<td>18.09</td>
<td>21.22</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 and above</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20.33</td>
<td>5.046</td>
<td>2.060</td>
<td>15.04</td>
<td>25.65</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>19.54</td>
<td>3.703</td>
<td>.439</td>
<td>18.66</td>
<td>20.41</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table 4 shows the South-West Nigerian Yoruba language teachers in their age groups in relation to using mother-tongue as a medium of instruction in the lower primary schools. The sum of squares between groups = 63.027 and within Groups = 896.635 with degree of freedom (df) 3 and 67 respectively. The mean square for between groups = 21.009 and within Groups = 13.383. The F-ratio was 1.570 with significance of .205 greater than the 0.05 alpha level of significance. This shows that there is no significant difference in the use of mother-tongue among Yoruba language teachers in the South-West Nigerian lower primary school in their age groups. Therefore ages of Yoruba language teachers have no significant influence of adherence to the mother-tongue policy. This supports the findings of Rafin 20-11 and Adegbo (2005).

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The Federal Ministry of Education should enforce the policy implementation by approving more professional teacher in different subject areas; more importantly Yoruba language so as to enhance relevant teaching approaches and methodologies in the lower primary schools in the south-West, Nigeria.
- Yoruba language teachers should desist from using another language different from Yoruba as a medium of instruction in the lower primary schools.
- School administrators should enforce compliance with the policy among the Yoruba language teachers so as to make the policy a reality.
- Adequate and sufficient teaching materials (instructional materials) should be made available to Yoruba language teachers in the lower primary schools so as to enhance effective teaching that will eventually bring about positive learning outcomes.

**REFERENCES**


