

Effect of Yoruba as Language of Instruction in Social Studies on Junior Secondary School Student's Performance in Ilorin-West, Kwara State

¹Owolabi H. O., ²Olaoye D. D., ³Olaoye O. T. and ¹Olatunji, R. A.

¹University of Ilorin, Department of Adult and Primary Education. ²University of Ilorin, Department of Social Sciences Education. ³Kwara State College of Education ('T'), Lafiagi.

Corresponding author: olaoyedamilola2020@gmail.com

Abstract

Language is a weapon which countries use for development. Therefore, this study examines the effect of mother tongue instruction in Social Studies on performance of junior secondary school students in Ilorin West LGA, Kwara State, Nigeria. An experimental research design was adopted with a total number of 39 students from sampled junior secondary school. The study was guided through three research questions and hypotheses each. A pre-test was developed by the researcher to assess the student's previous knowledge with the use of English Language, and a post-test was also developed by the researcher to assess the students with Mother tongue (Yoruba Language) based on teaching with Yoruba Language. A well-structured Pre-test and posttest were used to test the performance of student before and after being taught in their mother tongue while the hypothesis was tested using T-test. Findings revealed that student performed above average in the Pre-test and Post-test with means scores of 16.05 and 18.21. Also, students perform better in post-test than the Pre-test with mean difference of 2.16. Pearson product coefficient of pre- test and post- test was found to be moderately positive and statistically significant ($r=0.452$, $p<0.05$). There was a statistical difference in the mean Pre-test and Post-test of the students and based on gender with the following findings $t=5.005$ $p<0.05$, 2.992 $p<0.05$ respectively. The researcher recommended the need to reposition the education sector to provide mechanism for regular monitoring of language policy implementation; motivation and regular workshop should be put in place for teachers and stakeholders in education on the language policy issues; Late-exit transitional bilingual education programme; instructional materials should be made in line with mother tongue which will help to enhance better understanding of the students in the concepts being taught.

Keywords: Instruction, Teaching, Mother Tongue, Social Studies, Yoruba, English Language.

Introduction

The intricacy of African situation as regard education and language issues are very complex because of its multi-ethnic and multilingual situations (Musa, 2012). Nigeria as an African country is also known to be facing some problems of language choice (Awopetu, 2016) while her linguistic plurality even contributes more to the challenges. Besides that, language is a critical tool for human communication (Awour, 2019). It also serves a myriad of functions in every social unit including schools and classroom levels. The issue of language preference is thus an imperative concern to educators and administrators of the

Nigeria's educational system. While mother tongue has been globally recommended as the medium of instruction in lower junior secondary schools (Umar, 2018), many governments in developing countries also designed their education language policies in such a way that facilitates learners' transition from mother-tongue to English instruction (or other foreign language) after completing few years of junior secondary schooling (Yared, 2017).

Interestingly, the Nigerian government acknowledged the significance of mother tongue instruction by making provision in its National Policy on Education (NPE) that, "the medium of instruction in the junior secondary school shall be the language of the immediate environment for the first three years in monolingual communities" while English shall be taught as a subject during that period (FGN, 2004). This indicates that mother tongue, otherwise called the first language, is of crucial importance in the education of young children.

Furthermore, Akpabio (2013) stressed that the use of mother tongue in early childhood education helps in facilitating learning because it serves as a motivation as the child moves from the known (i.e., the mother tongue) to the unknown (i.e., the second language). Inasmuch as studies have demonstrated that learning to read and write in the languages of the community has a strong effect on children's assimilation, Nyika (2015) further advanced that the use of a local language as a medium of instruction is beneficial across all levels of education; therefore, using mother tongue for knowledge impartation cannot be trivialized (Awuor, 2019).

Adebiyi (2013), also noted that the UNESCO report of 1953 revealed that instructions received in the mother tongue are easily assimilated and permanent than those received in a foreign language. Mother tongue, being the junior secondary language, an infant acquires from their parents or the immediate environment, is widely acknowledged for its effectiveness in the dual process of teaching and learning (Akpabio, 2013; Awopetu, 2016). Apart from enhancing the cultural identity of the child, the mother tongue facilitates learning and makes it relevant to students (Awuor, 2019). This agrees with Trudell (2016) who submitted that using mother tongue in the classroom improve classroom participation, reduces attrition, and increases the likelihood of family and community engagement in the child's learning.

Incidentally, it appears that the rationale for which mother tongue was recommended for classroom instructions has been largely ignored. Taking instance from the prevailing practices in the Nigerian basic schools, there is a discrepancy in the language of instruction being used in the private and public junior secondary schools as pointed out by Adebiyi (2013). In effect, children are becoming more exposed to English language instructions at the detriment of their mother tongues and this is partly because of civilization and the preference of parents for fluency in English language instruction. Moreover, Adebiyi (2013) findings reveal that many Nigerians now prefer to speak and communicate in their second language (i.e., English language) than their mother tongue. She stated further that most

parents prefer to communicate with their children in English language thereby depriving them of cultural emancipation, intellectual depth and mental resourcefulness.

However, Kayaoglu, (2012) disclosed that there has been a longstanding debate as to whether mother tongues should be discarded or retained for foreign language classroom. In the same direction, Awopetu, (2016) affirmed that researchers hold different views as to whether the medium of instruction and communication in a pre-school classroom should be mostly in the language of the immediate environment or in the official language of the country, while Trudell (2016) highlighted that the issues of language and education are hotly debated particularly where junior secondary education is concerned and summited that: "The international languages have gained a strong foothold in Africa continent which were formally enacted by colonial governments for training local civil servants, and for formal education system; as a result of the influence of globalization and prestige of international languages (particularly English) in education system, these are now seen as the gateway to global citizenship, economic progress and enhancement of social standing (pg. 7)."

Contrary to the above citation, recent studies (Adebiyi, 2013; Akpabio, 2013; Bajqinca, 2019; Sahin, 2018) have sufficiently demonstrated that a native language is the most ideal for good concept formation in the early years. Also, Awopetu (2016) posited that using mother tongue would go a long way in fostering proper and adequate communication between teachers and students and also promote learning because it characterizes a large part of the child's environment that are so endearing to his/her identity. Moreover, before the National Policy on Education advocated the use of indigenous languages for instructions at the basic level of education, English language had remained the medium of instruction in Nigerian schools due to its colonial history (Ibrahim and Gwandu, 2016). English instruction has, however, dominated mother tongue instruction remarkably –even in junior secondary schools – whereas the policy encouraged the use of indigenous languages for teaching and learning at the basic level (Ibrahim & Gwandu, 2016). It is in view of this that the present study investigated the effect of mother tongue on the teaching and learning of social studies in junior secondary school classrooms so as to evaluate the strengths and threats of endorsing mother tongue for classroom instructions in junior secondary schools.

Statement of the Problem

The multilingual nature of Nigeria has become one of her greatest challenges in the recent time (Ajepe & Ademowo, 2016) and so the language of instruction become a matter of concern to educators and educational planners (Ibrahim & Gwandu, 2016). Although many school practitioners across the world approved the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction in the early years of learning but several studies have pointed out that it is still unclear whether schooling in children's native language is an effective approach to improving their learning abilities (Bella, 2008; Awopetu, 2016).

Also, in the review of languages, policy and practice on education system, Trudell (2016) asserted that the national language policy environment in over 90 percent of the targeted countries (in the study) supported the use of local languages of instruction in early junior secondary grades. Classroom practice, however, does not generally conform to these pro-local language policies as classrooms commonly use international languages as means of instruction, hence the lack of alignment between the national policy and classroom practice in effect nullifies the policy's intended purposes (Trudell, 2016). Essentially, Kioko, Ndung'u, Njoroge, and Mutiga (2014) argued that an education packaged in a language which the child does not understand is simply a torture to the child and this is the first reality that needs to be publicized. And more often than not, a significant contributing factor to poor quality education, low literacy outcomes, and high drop-out rates in many countries is because children are taught in a leading/popular language which is different from the one, they speak at home (Global Campaign for Education, 2016). Kioko et al. (2014) opine further that when schooling starts in a language that is foreign to the learner(s), they will encounter a barrier and frustration. This was supported in (Awuour, 2019; Mirvan, 2013; Abidogun and Adebule, 2014; Turin, 2014) that favouring the use of English language than home or indigenous language change the focus of learning from being learner-centered to teacher-centered as learners are passive and silent in classrooms thereby reduces their potential and liberty to express themselves freely.

Regrettably, Africa is the only continent where the majority of children start school using a foreign language (Ouane and Glance, 2010; Global Campaign for Education, 2016; Fafunwa, 1974). Whereas leading countries (e.g., China, Asia and North America) allow their children to go through junior secondary, secondary and tertiary education in their mother tongues. Nevertheless, it has been long realized that educational results may be impacted negatively if there is a difference between the languages that children speak and those used in the educational system, and that the use of mother tongue as the language of instruction in lower grades has more strength than weaknesses (Awuor, 2019).

Conversely, the use of vernacular or local languages as mother tongue is becoming obsolete in our society (Syaodih, 2017) and many education systems favour using a national or global language instead of mother tongue teaching as they believe that such an international language gives children a competitive advantage in later life (Global Campaign for Education, 2016), also, Khejeri, (2014) observed that the pedagogical appropriateness of mother tongue still remains disputed. It is on this background that the study will examine the efficiency of Yoruba language instructions in a contemporary light by investigating its effect on the teaching and learning of social studies in Junior secondary classrooms through experimental study in Ilorin West LGA, Kwara State. Thus, the study aimed at assessing the effect of mother tongue instruction on the teaching and learning of social studies in junior secondary school. More specifically, to determine the performance of students taught using mother tongue in social studies.

Research Questions

The following questions were raised to guide the study:

1. Is there any difference in the pre-test and posttest academic performance of student that were taught with mother tongue in social studies?
2. Is there any difference in the students' performance of student taught social studies in mothers' tongue on the basis of gender?
3. Is there any difference in the students' performance, of student taught social studies in mothers' tongue on the basis of age?

Research Hypothesis

The following hypothesis were stem from the research questions to sharpened the focus of the study:

1. **Ho₁:** There is no significant difference between pre-test and posttest academic performance of student that were taught with mother tongue thought social studies.
2. **Ho₂:** There is no significant difference in the students' performance of student taught social studies in mothers' tongue on the basis of gender.
3. **Ho₃:** There is no significant difference in the students' performance, of student taught social studies in mothers' tongue on the basis of age.

Literature Review

In the history of Nigeria's education, formal language education was introduced by the Christian missionaries in the nineteenth century and the development became necessary in view of globalization (Akase, 2019.). It was also pointed out by Musa (2012) that the policy on language education in Nigeria dates back to the colonial era when the Phelp –Stokes commission of 1922 emphasized the importance of indigenous languages in the school system. No wonder, Adebowale (2015) emphasized the well-known belief that the African child could be best taught in his native language. Also, the interests of Christianity would be achieved by actually propagating that religion in indigenous languages (Adebowale, 2015). Then, it is not at all surprising that the teaching and learning of indigenous languages received much genuine attention in those early days of western type of education in the country.

Likewise, the wisdom of giving English so much importance in Government and Education also began gradually to be questioned following the attainment of political independence in 1960. Thus, some people felt, and openly canvassed in Parliament for English to be replaced as official language by one of our indigenous languages some twenty years after independence (Awopetu, 2016). Others who were particularly worried about the problem the country indigens have in understanding English and communicating well in it, suggested that more effort should be put into the teaching of the major indigenous languages so as to serve as an alternative to English which is official means of communication in Government and Business. Therefore, the overall effect of these

philosophies is to bring about an important paradigm shift in the attitude of the government, particularly at the Federal level to indigenous languages (Trudell, 2018).

It is common knowledge that mother tongue plays a vital role in children's growth and development both in the areas of academic and social life. In furtherance to demonstrating this, every 21st – 22nd of February is annually set aside globally as the International Mother Tongue Day (Abidogun and Adebule, 2014). To Syaodih (2017), mother tongue has a great influence on children particularly in their second language acquisition. Research has also established, in the last few decades, that the quality of language of instruction has some influence on the learning abilities of preschool children (Awopetu, 2016). Apart from being relevant to the learning context, mother tongue is also believed to help the child in his mental, moral, and emotional development (Noormohamadi, 2008). Also, from psychological point of view of Akpabio's (2013), "the proper development of a child is closely related with continued interrupted usage of the language of his immediate family, friends and people that the child is acquainted with."

In another development, Hassanzadeh et al. (2011) maintained that the home language of the child is particularly important for the development of his/her positive self-concept and well-being; this is enough reason why UNESCO has encouraged the mother tongue as the medium of instruction in junior secondary education since 1953. Furthermore, Njogu (2015) mentioned that children develop language at a very rapid pace in their first five years and Awopetu (2016), recommended that in consideration of the importance of language of the immediate environment in a child's life, parents should be educated to encourage children to speak their native language at home.

Similarly, Ondari & Michieka (2014) stated that the use of a child's mother tongue affords students to make sense of their reading much faster than when literacy is introduced in a foreign or unfamiliar language. As a matter of fact, it remains valid that language and culture cannot be separated, no wonder Ajepe & Ademowo, (2016) opined that mother tongue is a sufficient condition to attaining the learning domains as in Bloom's taxonomies. Therefore, since every child grows and socializes within the context of their cultural identities of which language is infinitely essential, it may be concluded that their first language is highly substantial to their growth and development.

Empirically, Awuor (2019) studied the use of mother tongue in the teaching of mathematics among junior secondary school students in selected public junior secondary schools in Delta State revealed that those students that were taught using mother tongue performed excellently compared with those that were taught using English Language as a mode of instruction. Also, Bassey and Ibanga, (2018) studied the challenges of using mother tongue as a mode of instruction among Junior Secondary School students in Bayelsa revealed that the teachers and school administrators face the challenge of implementing the use of mother tongue because of the linguistic diversity in the classroom. While Aliyu, (2016) studied the use of mother tongue to teach Basic Science among the Junior Secondary in Sokoto and study concludes that mother tongue as a subject and medium of instruction in

lower junior secondary schools is often downplayed when important decisions regarding languages of education are taken.

However, this study examined the effect of mother tongue on the teaching and learning of social studies in junior secondary school. From the review, it is found out that there are many studies on the use and adoption of mother tongues in teaching and learning majorly in lower basic classrooms and few experimental studies on effects of mother tongue on the performance of students which are carried out in Sokoto and Delta state in lower basic classes. However, there are a few studies on the subject matter in Kwara State. Therefore, to the best of the researcher knowledge, there is no empirical study on the effect of mother tongue on the teaching and learning of social studies in upper basic classrooms. In order to fill this gap, this study examines the effect of mother tongue on the teaching and learning of social studies in junior secondary school of Ilorin West, Kwara State.

Methodology

This study adopts pre-experimental design called one-shot case study (using pre-test and post-test). The method affords a researcher to study a single group of participants to which pretest, treatment and posttest are administered (Mertens, 2015). The design is considered suitable for the present study since the researcher seeks to assess the impact of mother tongue instructions on the teaching and learning in upper basic classrooms. Also, the population of the study will constitute the entire Junior Secondary School students in all public secondary schools within Ilorin West Local Government of Kwara state while the target population is a single class of Junior Secondary Schools students purposively chosen from the others. The population of the class is ninety. Participants were selected based on their availability in class. The students that the researcher met in the class during her experiment were thirty-nine (39) thus, the sample size for this study was thirty-nine (39).

Also, the researcher design and produce modules for 2 weeks of teaching. Also, the pretest was administered to the selected class in English based on the topics taught by their social studies subject teacher and after the pretest, the researcher teaches the new topics for the two (2) weeks using mother tongue (Yoruba Language). After the treatment of teaching the students in the class for two weeks the posttest was carried out. This pretest was conducted on what they have been taught in social studies using English language and posttest were conducted on what the researcher have taught them using mother tongue. Content validity was used to ensure the validity of the instrument where experts were given the instrument and they adjudged the instrument to be good as it measured what it was supposed to measure and reliability of the instrument was ensured using split-half method with Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) and the coefficient was 0.87 that indicate strong correlation indicating strong reliability.

Frequency distribution tables, percentages, and measure of central tendency were utilized in analyzing the background information of the participating students while inferential statistical method was employed for data analysis. Mean scores will be computed from test

scores to be obtained. Also, T-Test was used for testing three research hypothesis for the study at 0.05 level of significance.

Result

Demographic profile of the respondents that were involved in the study was presented using frequency counts and percentages. Research question raised was answered through mean and standard deviation, while hypotheses generated were tested using t-test. Finally, findings of the study from the analyses were discussed.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Female	23	59
Male	16	41
Total	39	100.0
Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<13 years	29	74.4
≥13 years	10	25.6
Total	39	100.0

The demographic profile of the respondents shows that 23 (59%) of the students were female and 16 (41%) were male. Also, majority of the respondents 29 (74.4%) were below 13 years. 10 (25.6%) of the respondents were 13 years and above. This show that there are more female in the study than their male counterpart.

Research Question One: *Is there any difference in the pre-test and post-test academic performance of students that were taught with mother tongue in Social Studies?*

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Pretest and Posttest Scores of Junior Secondary School Students in Social Studies

	N	Mean	S. D	Mean Score Difference
Pretest	39	16.05	2.96	
Posttest	39	18.21	1.64	2.16
Valid N (listwise)	39			

The result in Table 2 reveals that the respondents performed above average in the pre-test and post-test with means scores of 16.05 and 18.21 respectively. Also, the respondents performed better in post-test than the pre-test with mean difference of 2.16.

Ho₁: *There is no significant difference in the pre-test and post-test scores of the students in Social Studies using mother tongue.*

Paired sample t-test was employed for this hypothesis because it involves one sample participating in two independent tests.

Table 3a: Paired sample t-test of the Junior Secondary School Students Pre-test and Post-test Scores in Social Studies

		N	Mean	S. D	t-value	Df	Sig.
Pair 1	Pretest	39	16.05	2.96	5.005	38	0.00
	Posttest	39	18.21	1.64			

Table 3b: Paired Samples Correlations of Pre-test and Post-test Scores

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair1	Pretest & Posttest	39	.452	.004

As shown in table 3, the calculated significance value of 0.000 is less than the chosen 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, there is a significant difference in the performance of junior secondary school students in Social Studies before and after being taught using mother tongue as language of instruction. This implies that teaching students with Yoruba as a language of instruction significantly influenced academic performance in Social Studies. Also, the result of table 3b indicates that the two scores were correlated, hence fulfilling the assumption of paired t-test. Furthermore, correlation value of 0.452 show that pretest is moderately positively related to posttest hence, the more use of mother tongue in teaching will enhance better academic performance of learners.

Ho₂: *there is no significant difference in the students' performance of student taught social studies in mothers' tongue on the basis of gender.*

Table 4: Mean Difference in the Performance of Male and Female Students in Social Studies

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Df	t-cal.	Sig.
Female	23	17.61	1.80	37	2.992	0.005
Male	16	19.06	0.85			

The result of Table 4 shows that the calculated significance value of 0.005 is less than the chosen 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. Thus, there is significant difference in the students' performance of student taught social studies in mothers' tongue on the basis of gender. This implies that male and female students when taught with mother tongue as language of instruction performed differently in Social Studies.

Ho₃: *There is no significant difference in the students' performance, of student taught social studies in mothers' tongue on the basis of age.*

Table 5: Mean Difference in the Performance of Students in Social Studies based on Age

Age	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Df	t-cal.	Sig.
<13 years	29	18.03	1.74	39	1.109	0.275
≥13 years	10	18.70	1.25			

The outcome of Table 5 shows that the calculated significance value of 0.275 is greater than the chosen 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is not rejected. Thus, there is no significant difference in the students' performance, of student taught social studies in mothers' tongue on the basis of age. This implies that students when taught with mother tongue as language of instruction perform equally in Social Studies based on age.

Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that respondents performed above average in the pre-test and post-test with means scores of 16.05 and 18.21 respectively. Also, the respondents performed better in post-test than the pre-test with mean difference of 2.16. This is in line with Awuor, (2019) and Aliyu, (2016) who averred that student taught using mother tongue outperformed those that were taught using English language. This may be true because most children were exposed to mother tongue at home which makes learning easier for them in mother tongue.

Also, the outcome of the study showed that there was a significant difference in the performance of junior secondary school students in Social Studies before after being taught using mother tongue as language of instruction. This implies that teaching students with Yoruba as a language of instruction significantly influenced academic performance in Social Studies. This finding lends credence to (Syadiah, 2017; Ajepe & Ademowo, 2016; Noormohamadi, 2008) and Okonkwo (2013) who discovered that exposure of students to Igbo language enhances academic performance. This is probably due to the fact that students preferred being taught using mother tongue which they understand better than foreign language.

The finding of hypothesis two showed that there is significant difference in the academic performance of students in Social Studies after being taught using mother tongue as language of instruction based on gender. This implies that male and female students when taught with mother tongue as language of instruction performed differently in Social Studies. This outcome supports the assertion of Akere (2005) who submitted that gender influence academic performance of students in Social Studies.

The result of hypothesis three showed that there was no significant difference in the academic performance of students in Social Studies after being taught using mother tongue as language of instruction based on age. This implies that students when taught with mother tongue as language of instruction could perform equally in Social Studies based on age. This finding is against that of Oluwole (2008) who observed that age influences students' academic performance of students in secondary schools. This may be as a result of fact that majority of the respondents are young and are still so much happy speaking and communicating in their mother tongue.

Conclusion

Study revealed that students performed better academically when taught with their mother tongue as language of instruction in social studies. Also, mother tongue as language of instruction significantly influenced academic performance of students in social studies. Likewise, gender of the students significantly influenced the academic performance of the students in social studies when taught using mother tongue. However, age did not significantly influence academic performance of the students in social studies when using mother tongue as language of instruction.

Recommendations

Based on the results and findings the following recommendations were suggested:

1. There is need to reposition the education sector to provide mechanism for regular monitoring of language policy implementation.
2. Motivation, regular workshop and seminars should be put in place for teachers on how to use mother tongue as language of instruction in the school. Such seminars will help teachers to be familiar with the method of teaching students in their mother tongue.
3. Late-exit transitional bilingual education programme that allows for a longer period of mother tongue use is recommended. This is to ensure that the child would have had enough foundation to help gradual transfer to English medium. This paper proposes mother tongue use up to the upper basic level.
4. Government and curriculum experts whose duty it is to oversee the production and provision of language textbooks and other materials to school should encourage production of textbooks in mother tongue.
5. instructional materials made in line with mother tongue should be encouraged in the school when they are being taught using mother tongue. This will help to enhance better understanding of the students in the concepts being taught.

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