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TEACHERS' PERCEPTION ON THE STATUS OF YORUBA LANGUAGE IN OGBOMOSO BASIC SCHOOLS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION

OGUNNIRAN, VICTORIA OLUDUNNI

Department of Arts Education, Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.
Email: ogunniran.vo@unilorin.edu.ng; vogunniran@yahoo.com

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the status of Mother Tongue as a medium of instruction in lower basic schools in Ogbomoso Zone, and also to ascertain teachers' perception on the status of Yoruba language instructional issues in Nigerian pre-basic and lower basic schools in the context of National Policy on Education. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The sample size consisted of 300 pre-basic and lower basic school teachers in the public and private basic schools. Teachers were selected using purposive sampling techniques from the five local governments in Ogbomoso Zone. The 20 basic schools were selected using stratified random sampling techniques, and the stratum took care of the public and private schools. Questionnaire titled "Status of Yoruba Language in Basic Schools" (SYLBS) was designed by the researchers for the study. Five research questions were raised and answered, while research four hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance. Data were analysed using percentages and the t-test statistics. The results showed the perception of teachers on the status of Yoruba in basic schools, 80% claimed that they did not ever consider the status of Yoruba language in the context of National Policy on Education, 20% of the respondents confessed that they are aware of the mother policy but they found it difficult to implement it because they were trained through the English language, no material in the local language, English language is the language of examination, the English is the language preferred by parents both in the public and private basic schools, more importantly the local language is associated with illiteracy. Results further showed no significant differences in the responses of public and private, male and female, basic school teachers on the status of Yoruba as a medium of instruction on the context National Policy on Education. The study adopted the Choice theory and Transitional language model in the theoretical framework. It was recommended that appropriate avenues should be provided for teachers and parents' awareness of the status of Yoruba language as specified in the NPE and adequate strategies should be put in place for their implementation. Proper

monitoring would be required to ensure compliance.

Keywords: Implementation, status, mother tongue (MT), basic schools (pre and lower basic schools), foreign language, medium of instruction.

Introduction

The roles language plays in educational sector is very indispensable, it is the medium of impacting knowledge and the act of instruction between teachers and learners. Nothing can be perfectly done without the language in the institution of learning. The language of instruction should be simple, meaningful and adequately appropriate to pass instruction to learners. Language of instruction policies are designed to help maximize the benefits for learners during the instruction and learning process in basic schools. Appropriate language of instruction policy in early childhood education and for basic education potentially provides the children with a head-start and good foundation for social and education progress.

It has long been acknowledged that educational outcomes may be negatively affected if there is a difference between the languages which children speak at home and the languages used in the educational system. Empirical studies for both developed and developing countries show that pupils who have another home language apart from the language of instruction experience higher dropout rates, higher repetition rates and have lower levels of attainment and achievement generally (Bamgbose, 2005; Lewis, 2006). Especially with respect to disadvantaged, vulnerable groups, a difference between the home language and the language of instruction has a negative influence on schooling attainment and achievement. Therefore, many students enter school facing a foreign medium of instruction or a language that differs from the one spoken at home. Research studies have consistently shown that children acquire linguistic and cognitive skills more readily in their mother tongue and are then able to transfer these to a widely used, national and regional language (Bamgbose, 2005).

Van Dyken (1990) argues that millions of African children find their first days at basic schools bewildering as they are not only to adjust to the strange environment of school, but also to a teacher who does not speak their language. Benson (2002) asserts that when teachers and pupils are both speaking the same language, teachers can get a much better idea of what their pupils are learning (Klaus, 2003). Benson (2000) affirms that pupils do not only benefit from the use of the mother tongue in terms of cognitive skills and bilingualism, but also in terms of classroom participation and self-confidence. The author argues that instruction in one's home

language increases self-esteem in at least two ways. First, teachers can get more immediate and comprehensible feedback about what pupils know and what they are learning, so they can make more realistic evaluations of their pupils' performances. Second, children are allowed to express their full range of knowledge and experience in a language in which they are competent (Klaus, 2003, Dutcher, 2004).

Nigeria is a multilingual and multiethnic environment and has a large number of indigenous languages of about 450 (Bamgbose 2013). The developed languages are those with stable orthographies, standard written forms and a large population of speakers who are both native speakers and those who have acquired them as second language. Hence, in Nigeria, Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa are the developed and categorized as the major languages (Bamgbose 2013), these three languages are regarded as the national languages and are expected to use them as media of instruction at basic schools in their respective areas.

Basic education is the education given to children aged 0-15 years. There is pre-basic class (crèches, nursery and kindergarten), lower basic class 1-3, middle basic 4-6 and upper basic class J.S.S.1-3 under basic education. The basic education is pronounced free and compulsory for every Nigerian child of school age. The purpose is to reduce the incidence of drop-out from formal school system, through improved relevance, quality and efficiency (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). The pronouncements concerning the language policy in pre-basic and lower basic is specific; that the mother tongue or the language of the immediate environment should be principally used as a medium of instruction. A number of goals are discussed for pre-basic education including among others; effecting a smooth transition from home to school; and preparing the child for the primary level of education and inculcating in the child social, norms and values. This stage of schools is left mostly in the hands of the private sectors, then, they decided to make their choice of language of education and renounced National Language Policy (FRN, 2013).

Mostly, training of teachers in the local languages is paramount in order to achieve those objectives. The disconcerted questions are: are the teachers, the implementers of the language policy carried along, are they adequately aware of the expected language in the pre-basic and basic schools, do government organize seminars to enlighten the teacher? The teachers are trained through the strange language and the materials of instruction are sufficiently available in that language, therefore, it is obvious that teachers would admire the foreign language as a preferred language of instruction in education. The deflated teachers are sent to the river, and compelled to come out with fish, after a lot of sweat, they will use the

available and unproductive weapon to fulfil the objective, that is what is operating in Nigerian basic schools.

Fafunwa (2005) & Akindele & Adegbite (2005) agreed that mother tongues ought to be the medium of instruction of children who are still on their mother's laps, in other words, at the early stages of their lives using the mother tongue at the nursery, creches and kindergarten will complement children's acquisition of the language at home and this helps them to further learn their environments' socio-cultural norms (Akindele & Adegbite, 2005). It is, however, disheartening that this pronouncement on the language policy exists only on paper as the government finds the enforcement of mother tongue instruction difficult. A null shell, what operates in reality is different from the policy statement at the pre-basic and basic 1-3 school levels, where English is used as the medium of instruction. It was noted that since most of the pre-basic schools are privately owned, the government finds it difficult to control the language of instruction at this level. Akindele & Adegbite (2005) observed that pre-basic schools are elite institutions attended by a negligible number of the nation's children and it is the wish of the proprietors of these institutions and elite parents' of the children that English be used as a medium of instruction. To many parents, speaking or instructing their children in mother tongue is a signal to poor academic performance. Thus, parents pay exorbitantly to send their children to private owned nursery schools where English is used to teach. Namibia pronounces that the language of instruction should be used at the lower basic school to promote language and cultural identity, but unpleasant opportunity is given to the private basic institutions to choose any language for their instruction and make sure that the local language is taught as a subject (Namibia Educational Research Association 2000). It should be noted that the constitution or any policy statement is binding on all the citizenry. Thus, there is the need for all the stakeholders in education industry to ensure that the implementation of the policy is fully entrenched at the pre-basic school level.

Likewise, the language policy for the lower basic education recognizes the importance of both the mother tongue and English at this level. The medium of instruction in the primary school is initially the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community and, at a later stage, English" (FRN, 2013). Federal Government recognizes the appropriateness of the mother tongue to childhood. It is firmly pronounced that the medium of instruction at the lower basic 1-3 should mainly be the mother tongue or the language of the immediate environment. It means, all subjects in the lower basic curriculum would be taught through the mother tongue (MT) of pupils except English language that would be taken as the second language (L2).

The middle basic 4-6 is the transitional period when the English language would eventually become the instructional medium and Yoruba language would be taught as a L2 subject. In appreciating the importance of a language in the educational process, and as a means of preserving the people's culture the government considers it to be in the interest of national unity that each child should be encouraged to learn one of the three major languages other than their own mother tongue (FRN, 2013). The mother tongue is the most useful language to a bilingual child in the formative stage of life. It is also the means by which his/her attitudes and aptitudes are best developed. The child should thus be encouraged in his first twelve years in life to master his/her mother tongue for the positive development of his physical, mental and intellectual potentials.

Effective language planning is crucial to the success of basic education in a multi-lingual setting in which the language of the home – mother tongue is quite often different from that of the school. Mother tongue and English are used to be uncoordinated thereby resulting in a serious medium transitional problem (Olaoye 2007). The sudden shift from MT to English which is effected in basic four is too abrupt as the pupils are not likely to be sufficiently prepared for the change. It is also simultaneous because the switch will affect all subjects on the school curriculum. Olaoye (2007) opines that the pupils are likely to be handicapped because their level of proficiency in English in basic 4 is such that cannot help them benefit from lessons all taught in English. Teaching subjects likes basic science and mathematics in an unfamiliar language may be wearisome, pupils will struggle with the concept of the subject, and the interpretation of the language of instruction at the same time. Olaoye (2007) therefore observes that the situation can be best described as double tragedy in the sense that pupils are not likely to be well grounded in their mother tongue by the time they change to English language as a medium of instruction nor are they sufficiently knowledgeable or literate in English to enjoy lessons in such areas as sciences taught in English. Therefore, exist transition is perceived as the best since another language is introduced when the child is matured cognitively.

Ejieh (2004) looks at the attitudes of student teachers toward teaching in the mother tongue in Nigerian primary schools. Data for the study were gathered by means of a questionnaire administered to 106 students in a Nigerian college of education. It was found out that the students had a generally negative attitude towards teaching in the mother tongue. Teachers and parents are satisfied with the medium of instruction being a dominant language if they see the dominant language as a possible vehicle for social advancement. Replacing it with native languages as medium of instruction will displease the parents who will want their children to have

a competitive chance to use their education in the job market. Lawal (2005) noted that "teachers and the school administrators out of ignorance insulate the children from the mother tongue to induce facility in the use of English Language thus depriving children of a basic source of education and imaginative development. Iyamu and Ogiegbaen (2007) looked at parents and teachers' perspectives of mother-tongue medium of instruction policy in Nigerian primary schools. They found out that many inadequacies of Nigeria's schools; they have put a lot of premium on the language of the colonisers to the detriment of African languages. There is also considerable opposition to the use of mother tongues as the medium of instruction. Though, teachers were found to appreciate the advantages of mother-tongue education, but parents would not subscribe to their children being taught in the mother tongue in this era of globalization.

Statement of the Problem

A study on language policy at the basic schools is found necessary due to the fact that this level is a crucial transitional stage from home to formal learning. This is also the level at which the language implementation of the language policy in education in Nigeria can be easily assessed. It is also at this level that some stakeholders in the education sector have been known to violate the language policy. Despite the crucial role played by the mother tongue in early learning in Nigeria, teachers continue using ex-colonial language in teaching basic school pupils, thus the child is bound to face myriad problems when he or she starts formal learning in a foreign language right from kindergarten (Akindele & Adegbite 2005; Bamgbose 2013).

Research Questions

What is the teachers' perception on the status of Yoruba language in Ogbomoso?

1. Is there any difference in the perception of male and female basic teachers on the status of Yoruba in the context of National Policy on Education?
2. Is there any difference in the perception of rural and urban basic school teachers on the status of Yoruba in the context of National Policy on Education?
3. Is there any difference in the perception of private and public basic school teachers on the status of Yoruba in the context of National Policy on Education?
4. Is there any difference in the perception of experienced and less experienced basic schoolteachers on the status of Yoruba in the context of National Policy on Education?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

- Ho₁:** There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female basic school teachers on the status of Yoruba in the context of National Policy on Education.
- Ho₂:** There is no significant difference in the perception of rural and urban basic school teachers on the status of Yoruba in the context of National Policy on Education.
- Ho₃:** There is no significant difference in the perception of private and public basic school teachers on the status of Yoruba in the context of National Policy on Education.
- Ho₄:** There is no significant difference in the perception of experienced and less experienced basic school teachers on the status of Yoruba in the context of National Policy on Education

Methodology

This research adopted the descriptive survey design. The population for the study comprised all pre basic and basic school teachers in Nigeria. In each local government, four streams of classes, Pre-basic, basic 1, 2, and 3 were selected using stratified random sampling. The stratum took care of the private, public, rural and urban basic schools. The sample size consisted of 300 basic school private and public teachers from the five local governments in Ogbomoso zone. The 300 teachers were selected using purposive sampling technique. One instrument titled "Status of Yoruba Language in Basic Schools Questionnaire" (SYLBSQ) was designed by the researcher to collect data for this study. Four research questions were raised and answered, while four research hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance. The t-test statistics was used to analyse the research hypotheses. The questionnaire has two sections. Section A consists of items on teachers' demographic data such as: gender, school location, school type, work experience and the class taught. Section B consists of 20 items on statements relating to the status of Yoruba language as a medium of instruction in basic schools. Respondents were expected to choose from each of the items on a five-point adapted Likert-type scale ranging from "Not at all to Great Extent". The instrument was scored 0 for Not at all, 1 for Undecided, 2 for Little Extent, 3 for Some Extent, and 4 for Great Extent.

Results

Research Question 1: *What is the teachers perception on the status of Yoruba language in Ogbomoso?*

In order to answer this research question, participants' responses on the status of Yoruba language were collated and analysed with mean rating and rank order. The summary of the result is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Mean rating on the perception of teachers on the status of Yoruba language in Ogbomoso

S/N	Factors	Mean	Rank
1	There are seminars to make you conversant with the Yoruba medium in the basic schools	3.04	1 st
2	Teachers are provided with adequate information on the status of Yoruba Language in the NPE	2.89	3 rd
3	I perceive Yoruba is the best medium of instruction in basic schools	2.73	7 th
4	Pupils participate actively when teaching through Yoruba	2.87	5 th
5	Basic teachers are ill-equipped for Yoruba Language as a medium of instruction	2.80	6 th
6	School administrators support Yoruba as a medium of instruction in basic schools	2.88	4 th
	Parents are in support of Yoruba as a medium of instruction in basic schools	3.02	2 nd

Table 1 shows the response on the perception of teachers on the status of Yoruba language in Ogbomoso. With a benchmark mean of 2.5, any item that is less than the benchmark mean is considered not to be one of the teachers' perceptions and any variable that is greater is considered to be one of the teachers' perceptions. However, from the table, it can be seen that all the items are the perception of teachers on the status of Yoruba language in Ogbomoso. However, item one which states that 'there are seminars to make you conversant with the Yoruba medium in the basic schools' with a mean of 3.04 was ranked first and item three which states that 'I perceive Yoruba is the best medium of instruction in basic schools' with a mean of 2.73 was ranked last. This shows that all the items listed are the perception of teachers on the status of Yoruba language in Ogbomoso.

Hypotheses Testing

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female basic school teachers on the status of Yoruba in the context of National Policy on Education

Table 2: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-test Analysis on the difference in the Perception of Male and Female basic school Teachers on the Status of Yoruba Language in the Context of National Policy of Education

Gender	No	Mean	Std	df	Cal.t	Sig.(2-tailed)	Decision
Male	123	34.24	6.29	298	1.74	0.08	H ₀₁ Not Rejected
Female	177	33.01	5.82				

P > 0.05

Result on table 2 shows, t-value = 1.74 with p-value = 0.08 > 0.05 alpha level. Since 0.08 is greater than 0.05 alpha level, hypothesis one is thus not rejected. This indicates that there is no significant difference in the perception of male and female basic school teachers on the status of Yoruba in the context of National Policy on Education ($t_{(298)} = 1.74$; $P > 0.05$).

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the perception of rural and urban basic school teachers on the status of Yoruba in the context of National Policy on Education

Table 3: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-test Analysis on the difference in the perception of rural and urban basic school teachers on the status of Yoruba in the context of National Policy on Education

School Location	No	Mean	Std	df	Cal.t	Sig.(2-tailed)	Decision
Rural Urban	100	34.38	7.08	298	2.512	0.12	H ₀₂ Not Rejected
	200	33.08	5.41				

P > 0.05

Result on table 3 shows, t-value = 2.512 with p-value = 0.12 > 0.05 alpha level. Since 0.12 is greater than 0.05 alpha levels, hypothesis two is thus not rejected. This indicates that there was no significant difference in the perception of rural and urban basic school teachers on the status of Yoruba in the context of National Policy on Education ($t_{(298)} = 2.512$; $P > 0.05$).

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in the perception of private and public basic

school teachers on the status of Yoruba in the context of National Policy on Education

Table 4: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-test Analysis on the difference in the perception of private and public basic school teachers on the status of Yoruba in the context of National Policy on Education

School Type	No	Mean	Std	df	Cal.t	Sig.(2-tailed)	Decision
Private	180	33.22	4.44	298	1.01	0.31	H_{03}
Public	120	33.94	6.41				Not Re-jected

$P > 0.05$

Result on table 4 shows, t-value = 1.01 with p-value = 0.31 > 0.05 alpha level. Since 0.31 is greater than 0.05 alpha level, hypothesis three is thus not rejected. This indicates that there was no significant difference in the perception of private and public basic school teachers on the status of Yoruba in the context of National Policy on Education ($t_{(298)} = 1.01$; $P > 0.05$).

H_{04} : There is no significant difference in the perception of experienced and less experienced basic school teachers on the status of Yoruba in the context of National Policy on Education

Table 5: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-test Analysis on the difference in the perception of experienced and less experienced basic school teachers on the status of Yoruba in the context of National Policy on Education

Experience	No	Mean	Std	Df	Cal.t	Sig.(2-tailed)	Decision
Experienced	98	32.88	5.94	298	1.27	0.21	H_{04}
Less Experienced	202	33.82	6.08				Not Re-jected

$P > 0.05$

Result on table 5 shows, t-value = 1.27 with p-value = 0.21 > 0.05 alpha level. Since 0.21 is greater than 0.05 alpha level, hypothesis four is thus not rejected. This indicates that there was no significant difference in the perception of experienced and less experienced basic school teachers on the status of Yoruba in the context of National Policy on Education ($t_{(298)} = 1.27$; $P > 0.05$).

Discussion of Findings

The language used for instruction varied with school management, school location, school type, teachers' gender and the teachers' experience. It was observed that none of the schools studied adhered to the national language policy in education. Instead code mixing and switching of Yoruba and English was the main strategy used for instruction in basic schools in the public schools, while the private schools adhered to English language as the teachers had been instructed by the school managements. This finding is in line with the study of Iyamu & Ogiegbaen (2007), Adeyemi & Ajibade (2012), Gobana (2014) who found out that the basic schools are using English rather than the pupils' language. Though, Yoruba language is taught as a subject rather than a medium of instruction from pre-basic to basic 3.

The findings of the study show that the variable of gender does not have any significant difference on the teachers' perception on the status of Yoruba as a medium of instruction in basic schools. This means, in language implementation, the gender factor does not have any significant influence at all, because both male and female teachers do implement the curriculum equally when given equal exposure and opportunities to learning and teaching. This finding is in agreement with the submission of Adeyemi & Ajibade (2012), Winkelman 2016 concurred that gender had no significant influence on the language implementation, but linguistic competence of the target language.

The outcome of the study reveals that there is a no significant between the experienced and the less experienced teachers. Though the experienced teachers were aware of the status of Yoruba as a medium at basic schools, because there was a UBE organized and sponsored a Teacher Professional Programme (TPSP) in 2003, but the implementation is not seriously handled. This is in line with the submission of Adeyemi & Ajibade (2012) and even the Fafunwa's (1970-1978) project confirmed that both experienced and less experienced teachers were trained to acquire a high level of expertise in MT.

The outcome of the study reveals that there is no significant difference in the perception of teachers in the rural and urban basic schools. The urban public basic school teachers perceived that local language or Yoruba cannot be feasible in the heterogeneous linguistically area, this finding agrees with (Akinaso, 1988) who asserts that the private schools and the basic schools in urban areas are, of course, capitalising on the concessional provision that English may be used as the medium of instruction where the school is "multinational" in character. The rural public basic schools teachers embraced the use of the pupils' mother tongue as the

medium of instruction, since they are in linguistically homogeneous schools. This outcome is in line with the submission of Etim (1985) who stated that the mother tongue is used as a medium of instruction in linguistically homogeneous rural schools if personnel and materials are available in the local language. Meanwhile, the rural private basic schools are mixing English with Yoruba language when teaching.

Conclusion

It was discovered that the teachers' perception of the experienced and less experienced on the mother tongue was detrimental; they felt the mother tongue is not feasible enough to teach basic schools mathematics, social studies and science. Therefore, teachers set up their own language policy apart from the National language policy.

The findings of the study show that the variable of gender does not have any significant difference on the teachers' perception on the status of Yoruba as a medium of instruction in basic schools. It was discovered that both male and female in basic schools are teaching through the language of their choice.

The findings of the study shows that the urban public and rural basic teachers are code switching and code mixing, they did not follow the policy abstractly because they felt that using mother tongue to teacher will produce second class citizen, since they want their pupils to compete with the private basic pupils they resolved in mixing the mother tongue with the English language.

Private basic schools language of instruction is highly determined by the schools' proprietors and parents; there are no teachers that are dare to use any language apart from the proprietors and parents' preference language. The private basic teachers' perception on the status of Yoruba as a medium of instruction is low; they anticipated that he who pays the pipe dictate tune.

Urban and rural basic schools teacher are complete opposite, the teachers at basic schools in urban areas are forced to mixing the language of instruction because they are in the heterogeneous linguistically area, but the rural basic schools teachers teach in the language of the immediate environment for they are faced with the homogeneous linguistically area, except the rural private that code-switch when teaching.

Recommendations

Language policy requires appropriate strategies for implementation. Therefore, teachers should not only be aware of language provisions, but should be involved in coming up with strategies for implementation. This implies that basic teachers in

public and private, rural and urban schools should all be involved at both policy planning and implementation stages for a successful implementation of language policy in the context of National Policy on Education.

Experienced and less experienced teachers should be trained and equipped with the local materials, then adequate seminars will motivate and enlighten them on the value of the local language as the medium of instruction in pre and lower basic schools.

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) officials must monitor the basic schools vigorously to enforce the use of mother at the pre basic and lower basic and its teaching as a second language in the middle and upper basic schools. There is need, therefore, for the UBE officials to monitor whether recommended language(s) are used for instruction in pre and basic lower schools in private and public schools, both in the urban and rural areas.

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