

Mother Tongue of learners to effectively explain the content of the English when necessary.

Keywords: Mother tongue, performance, proficiency, first language, English language, medium of instruction

Introduction

The Mother Tongue (MT) is the individual's first language (L_1) and the language he naturally acquires in the early stages of his life, and because it is acquired before any other language, it is referred to as L_1 . Moreover, it is acquired prior to the second language (L_2) or foreign language (FL) which are learnt rather than acquired. The acquisition of the L_1 is facilitated by unlimited exposure which the individual enjoys. It is relevant to note that the L_1 grows along with the individual's physical growth and influences his personality in subtle ways (Awopetu, 2016). Yoruba is the specific Mother Tongue of interest in this study. It is a language in South-western, Nigeria (Fagborun, 2004).

The Mother Tongue which is the language at home, can serve as a complementary medium in the English class. It is the child's access to education, for it is one's inner thought and contemplations (Olajide, 2007 and Chanda, 2010). Hence, for acquiring knowledge in a better and unambiguous way, the MT is the best medium. It has been scientifically proved that assimilation of facts is easier through an individual's language. The Mother Tongue develops the learners' cognitive and intellectual capacity. Fudor (2004) affirms that language is a decisive factor in the development of thinking, formation of concepts and release of potential intelligence. In which case, anything learnt in one's MT will have more personal meaning and relevance to him. He notes that 'there is a medium in which we think, and of course it is a language'. By extension, the English native speakers think in English and so do the French people. The Yorubas do think, perceive and translate definitely in their language.

The proficiency in the language acquisition (MT) will aid the learning of English. In a nutshell, the MT of learners can be employed in the English class to: introduce a new topic; presenting and explaining grammatical items; to check the comprehension of learners; to explain difficult concept; and to make them feel comfortable and confident (Chisunum & Ejie (2014). Anyway the amount of the systematic and judicious use of the MT in the English depends on how proficient the students are in the English language.

English language plays a vital role in Nigeria. It is the medium of instruction right from primary four up to the tertiary educational level. As a matter of fact, English features prominently in the entire school curriculum. Apart from being a core subject, it is also the medium of instruction for other school subjects. There are factors that are contributing to the poor performance of students in English, these

factors include, among others; lack of competent teachers, unavailability of instructional materials, the unserious attitude of students but the task of teaching a foreign language with an absolute foreign medium complicated the woeful performance of students in English. Recently there has been a revival of interest to using of the mother tongue as a resource for the promotion of language learning for accuracy, clarity, and flexibility Ross, (2000). Bamgbose (2013) cites the Ife Six Year Primary Project of 1970 to establish the effectiveness of the first language as compared with English. In his word: "the results of the experiment clearly showed that indigenous languages facilitate more meaningful learning than English" (p2). Cook (2001) confirms that MT avoidance promotes a "pretend monolingual situation" in the English class and this diminishes classroom reality. The students are pretend native speakers of the second language rather than true English users. English learning is maximized when students and teachers share a strong rapport, the students will feel safe, confident and the class will be students-centered.

There are samples of research that show students' academic performances when the Mother Tongue of learners was used as the medium of instruction or the complementary language in the teaching and learning of English language. Varvara (2009) carried out an experiment on the use of the Mother Tongue in English classes for young learners in Greece. The study was conducted to find out the extent the learners' native language could be used in English classes and investigates at which lesson sections teachers could resort to the use of Greek. The experiment also involves English translation, from English to Greek and vice-versa. She found out that the teachers' and students' belief on the MT in the English classes. The study involves the participation of both teachers and students in a school (Cram School) in Greece. At the end of the experiment the students felt secured, participated fully and this enhanced their comprehension tremendously.

Sumayah (2002) carried out an experiment on the attitude of students towards using Arabic in English language classrooms at Yarmouk University in Jordan. The study focuses on the variables of gender, level of study and students' proficiency level in English. The study observed 206 students who were enrolled in the compulsory University English courses offered by the Language Centre at Yarmouk University. Those compulsory courses in English consist of: English 099, (Pre-requisite English Language skills); English 100 (English language skills 1); and English III (English Language 2). Most students come with a weak background in English. They always ask teachers to use Arabic in explaining lessons and they even register their courses with teachers who use Arabic and tend to drop the courses if the teachers use only English in the classroom.

Questionnaire was used to elicit information on the attitude of students towards using the Mother Tongue in English classroom. 92.2% of the students strongly agreed that the teacher should clarify difficult exercises in Arabic. 91.2% of the students strongly agreed that new vocabulary should be translated into Arabic. About 90.5% of the students strongly agreed that Arabic can help them to express

their feeling and ideas that they can not explain in English. 87.9% of the students strongly agreed that they can understand the lesson much better if their teacher uses Arabic. 84.4% of the students strongly agreed that they feel more comfortable, if examination instructions are given in Arabic. Thus, students learn conveniently and perform excellently when their MT is employed in the English classroom.

Paker and Karaagac (2015) examined the use and functions of Mother Tongue in English Foreign Language (EFL) Classes. They discovered that the use of the mother tongue (L1) in foreign language classrooms is inevitable. The study was conducted in the School of Foreign Languages at Pamukkale University, and it was based on both qualitative and quantitative research designs. The participants were 20 English instructors working in the School of Foreign Languages and 286 students. The data were collected through classroom recordings, questionnaires that were administered both to the instructors and the students, and interviews were conducted with all of the instructors and randomly chosen 39 students. The data revealed that mother tongue is an inseparable part of language teaching, and it actually has different functions like "rapport building purposes", "making the topic/meaning clear (by giving examples, explaining, making extra explanations, etc.)", "explaining difficult concepts or ideas", etc. It was also found out that both the instructors and the students were aware of the importance of using the target language as much as possible in the classes, however, they could not deny the need of mother tongue from time to time. It was discovered also that once both boys and girls are helped through the MT in English class, they perform significantly better in English.

Harker, (2000) investigated gender differences in achievement of boys and girls in Mathematics in New Zealand. The result showed that there was significant difference in the performance of boys and girls, he explained that boys performed better in Mathematics, while girls performed better in English. However, Okeke (2004) explains that there is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls in Science. Sumayah, (2002); Varvara, (2009); Paker and Karaagac, (2015) confirmed that, the MT in the English class will make a difference in the students' performance in English, but not the gender of the students.

Incidentally, the academic performance of Senior Secondary Students in English in Nigeria has not been encouraging over some years. Tables 1 and 2 are presented to provide an empirical support for the above observation. Table 1 shows the result in English from year 2006 to 2010 SSCE as conducted by WAEC and NECO:

Table 1: WASSCE (ENGLISH)

Year	No. of Students	Students with A - C Grades	Percentage (%)
2006	526	12	2.28%
2007	829	5	0.60%
2008	589	8	1.36%
2009	505	5	0.99%
2010	386	44	11.40%

Source: Collection from five Secondary Schools in Ogbomoso South Local Government Ogbomoso, Oyo State.

Table 1 confirms the earlier assertion that the academic performance of Senior Secondary School students in English has been poor over the years. Yet, English is one of the core subjects. Without a credit pass in English, students cannot be admitted into Nigerian Universities. One basic explanation for the phenomenon of poor academic performance in English is that students do not have a good grasp of the subject because they are taught solely in English. Yet the MT of learners develop the: Cognitive: mental skills (Knowledge), Affective: growth in feelings or emotional areas (Attitude) and Psychomotor: manual or physical skills (Skills).), which include physical movement, coordination, and use of gross and fine motor-skills At this juncture, it becomes very important to look at mother tongue as an auxiliary medium of instruction from the perspective of its effectiveness in fostering learning in the English class.

Statement of the Problem

The woeful performance of the students in English has been the concern of students, parents, teachers, government and the society as a whole; it is the compelling issue that led to this study.

There are researchers that have worked on the effectiveness and functions of the MT in English classes. In fact, the use of mother tongue may contribute to language learning process in various occasions in the learning-teaching process. Sumayah, (2002); Varvara, (2009); Paker and Karaagac, (2015) examined the use of the MT in the English classes and confirmed their findings that the moderate and judicious use of the mother tongue is helpful and can facilitate the learning and teaching of the target language. Cook, (2001) asserts that "starting with the L1 provides a sense of security and validates the learners' lived experiences, allowing them to express themselves. The learner is then willing to experiment and take risks with English. Actually, the learners of second language draw knowledge from their MT as they discover the complexities of the new language they are learning.

It is thus evident that there is paucity of studies establishing the effect of the

MT on the performance of students in specific school subjects. The study differs from the work of Sumayah, (2002); Varvara, (2009); Paker and Karaagac, (2015) in respect of its timing, location, duration and sample and sampling technique among other discrepancies.

Purpose of the Study

The following are the purpose of this study:

- 1 To investigate the difference in the performance of students who were taught English language through the medium of English and the Mother Tongue and their counterparts taught in English without the Mother Tongue
- 2 To examine the difference in the performance of male and female students taught English through the medium of English and the Mother Tongue.

Research Hypotheses

Ho₁: There is no significant difference in the performance of students who were taught English through the medium of English and the Mother Tongue and their counterparts taught English without the Mother Tongue.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference in the performance of male and female students who learnt English through the medium of English and the Mother Tongue.

Methodology

The non-equivalent control group design which is one of the quasi-experimental designs was adopted for this study. The non-equivalent control group design is structured like the pre-test, post-test control group design. The difference is that the non-equivalent control group design does not involve random assignment of subjects to groups. This means that, two existing-groups were pre-tested; a treatment was administered and post-tested. 118 students participated in the study, 62 (52.5%) were in the experimental class while 56 (47.5%) were in the control group. The participants came from 5 of the existing 20 Public Secondary Schools in Ogbomoso South Local Government. The experimental group was taught English through the medium of English and the Mother Tongue while the control group were taught English without the Mother Tongue.

Three instruments were used for this study: a pre-test, post-test and teaching package. The test items and teaching packages were prepared based on the topics in the Senior Secondary School English. In order to establish the content and face validity of the instrument, the split-half method was used to estimate the reliability value which stood at reliability value of 0.77 in English. The two postulated hypotheses were tested using the Analysis of Co- variance (ANCOVA) at the 0.05 level of significance. The results are presented below:

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the performance of students taught English through the medium of English and the Mother Tongue and their counterparts taught in English without the Mother Tongue.

Table 2: ANCOVA Analysis Showing the Performance of Students in English

Source	Type III Sum Of Squares	df	Mean Square	Calculate F Value	Sig
Corrected model	4781.727 ^a	2	2390.863	110.293	0
Intercept	2190.728	1	2190.728	101.061	0
Pretest	68.722	1	68.722	3.17	78
Groups	4765.684	1	4765.684	219.847	0
Error	2492.892	115	21.677		
Total	79285	118			
Corrected Total	7274.619	117			

a. R. Squared = 657 (Adjusted R Squared = 651) p less than 0.05

Table 2 shows that the calculated F-value is 219.847 (1:117) = (0.000) computed at critical p-Value of 0.05. Since the calculated p-value (0.000) is less than the critical p-value 0.05, hypothesis 1 is rejected.

This implies that there is a significant difference in the performance between students who learnt English through the medium of English and the Mother Tongue and their counterparts taught in English without the Mother Tongue.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the performance between male and female students who learnt English through the medium of English and the Mother Tongue.

Table 3: ANCOVA Analysis showing the Significant Difference in the Performance of Male and Female Students in English

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	Calculate F Value	Sig
Corrected model	73.070 ^a	2	36.535	0.678	0.510
Intercept	3154.113	1	3154.113	58.514	0.000
Pretest	28.904	1	28.904	0.536	0.465
Gender	42.183	1	42.183	0.783	0.378
Error	6198.904	115	53.904		
Total	92889	118			
Corrected Total	6271.975	117			

a. R Squared = 012 (Adjusted R Squared = -.006).

Table 3 reveals that the calculated F value $0.783 (1:117) = (0.378)$ computed at the critical p-value of 0.05. Since the calculated p-value is greater than 0.05, hypothesis 3 is accepted. This implies that there is no significant effect of gender in the performance of male and female students in English.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study showed that there is a significant difference in the academic performance of students in the experimental group that are taught English through the medium of English and the Mother Tongue. These performed better in English, than their counterparts that are taught in English without the Mother Tongue. This result agrees with the findings of Sumayah (2002) and Varvara (2009) who found significant difference in the performance of students in English when they are taught through the medium of English and the Mother Tongue.

Furthermore, the findings of this study also indicated that gender has no significant effect on the performance of students in English when the students are taught in English and the Mother Tongue. This is similar to the findings of Drosatou (2009) who also found that no significant difference existed in the performance of male and female students in English when they were exposed to the same treatment.

Conclusion

1. It was therefore concluded that there was a significant difference in the performance of students in English when they are taught through the medium of English and the Mother Tongue as compared to their counterparts taught in English without the Mother Tongue. This is in favour of the experimental group taught through English and the Mother Tongue.
2. The finding showed that since the participants in the experimental group were exposed to the same treatment there was no significant gender effect in the performance of male and female students in English.

Recommendations

Consequent upon the findings of this study, it is recommended that:

1. Teachers of English language can employ the use of learners' MT to facilitate the teaching and learning of English language.
2. Teachers should understand that there is no gender disparity, once the boys and girls are exposed to the teaching of English through the complementary medium of the mother tongue, this would enable them to have a mental translation of the concepts presented in English and improve their performance.

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