

Head Teachers' and Proprietors' Awareness of and Attitude to Yoruba Language as a Medium of Instruction in Private Primary Schools in Oyo State

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Abstract

Yoruba, just like other languages of the immediate environment in Nigeria, is pronounced as the language of instruction at the lower primary level of education by the National Policy on Education. However, while government has not done her part in supplying necessary human and nonhuman resources and enforce its effective implementation, many private primary schools, as observed, are not also at home with the policy. To empirically accept or refute this claim, this study investigated the head teachers' and proprietors' level of awareness of and attitude to the use of Yoruba as medium of instruction in some private primary schools in Akinyele LGA, Oyo state. Five research questions were posed and answered. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design and 50 head teachers/proprietors were randomly selected in Akinyele LGA to take part in the study. Two self-designed questionnaires were used for data collection. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistic of frequency count, mean and standard deviation and the inferential statistics of Chi-Square analysis. Results revealed that head teachers and proprietors were aware of the mother tongue medium of instruction policy (W.A = 3.16) and had positive attitude (W.A = 2.78) to its use; head teachers' and proprietors' educational qualifications did not significantly influence their awareness ($F_{6,43} = 0.99$; $P > 0.05$) and their attitude ($F_{6,43} = 0.75$; $P > 0.05$). Based on these findings, it was recommended, among others, that government should provide necessary resources and enforce the effective implementation of the policy.

Keywords: *Awareness, Attitude, Language Policy, Medium of Instruction, Yoruba language*

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Background to the Study

Yoruba is one of the three major indigenous languages officially recognized by the federal government of Nigeria. It is the language of the indigenes and residents of the Southwestern part of Nigeria. It is therefore the mother tongue of these people, because they acquired and grew up with the language. Majority of these people are most familiar with this language and are best at using it to meet native, linguistics and communicative needs. Their children are not exempted from all these. Because the government of Nigeria realized the numerous roles a child's mother tongue plays in its physical, cognitive and emotional development as well as the roles mother tongue plays in providing equal and quality education for national development, the National Policy on Education (FGN, 2004) stipulates that the first three years of primary education should be taught in learners' mother tongue;

Government will see to it that the medium of instruction in the primary schools is initially the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community and at a later, English p. 13

As explained by Cummins (2001), the concept of the mother tongue enjoys considerable popularity and acceptance in educational circles, because it provides a natural and effective way of communication, and closes the gap between the child's home and school. One of the crucial reasons advanced for the integration of the major Nigerian languages in the National Policy on Education NPE, (2004), is the preservation of people's culture. It recognizes the fact that language is one of the key factors in expressing a people's cultural identity and autonomy (Makinde, 2007). Abidogun, (2012) asserts that for a child to function effectively in his community, he is compelled to acquire his home language or the language of the immediate environment early in life.

Arohunmolase, (2006) maintains that if learners in Nigerian primary schools are appropriately taught in Yoruba, they would begin to understand the cord that links the Yoruba language to other indigenous languages. It creates a bond between Yoruba and other language scholars, reminding them of their shared origins. Alao, (2006) emphasizes the fact that no individual can acquire language in isolation from his cultural background, because language is acquired at home and prepares the child for future literacy and numeracy education at school. Oderinde, (2005) affirms that introducing the child early to a foreign language can disconnect the child from his home language and culture. Such disconnection can confuse learners culturally and linguistically. Afolayan, (2001) recommends the use of Yoruba as a language of instruction for the first six years of a learner's education and the use of English thereafter. Fakeye and Soyinka, (2009) mention that children should be brought up using the mother tongue in order to adjust quickly to the school system.

With the objective of facilitating high levels of literacy and numeracy at the primary school level, the Policy on Education of (2004) declared that education was the right of all Nigerian children, and must be relevant to the child's environment. The popular Ife Six-Year Primary School Project in favour of mother tongue based teaching has helped to empirically establish the opinion of scholars on the importance mother tongue based instruction, for according to Fafunwa, Macaulay and Sokoya (1989), the experimental groups were better off than the

control groups in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. Also, mother tongue has also been found out and posited by scholars to be springboard for learning a second language. Scholars argue strongly that learners should not be instructed in a second language until they have acquired the basic academic competence in the first language, at the end of primary 6 in schools (Lindholm, 2001; Lindholm-Leary and Borsato, 2006). Findings have shown that continued development of a first language in bilingual education for minority language children, leads to the development of competency in second language (Cummins, 2000).

Abidogun, (2012) while emphasising the importance of the mother tongue as a springboard for the learning of a second language, argue that the instruction in the first language promotes the development of academic proficiency which can later be used to develop competency in the second language.

Literacy in the mother tongue establishes an intellectual platform for learning other languages. When learners are well educated in their home language during primary education, they transit easily to the second language learning due to their academic competence in the home language Ball, (2010). However, if learners are forced to switch abruptly from being educated in the home language to a second language, their acquisition and linguistic competence in the first language may be affected. Significantly, the learners' self-esteem and their enthusiasm may be dampened leading to a loss of interest in academic learning and increasing the dropout rate in schools Ball, (2010).

Kraft, (2003) opines that learners, who were taught for a long period in their first language and did most of their normal academic and cognitive instructions in that language, will have a greater opportunity to learn the second language. It should be noted that being educated in the first language develops literacy abilities in learners in that language. Therefore, these abilities lead to better academic achievements in the home language as well as concrete and rewarding learning and results in second language education (Lindholm-Leary and Borsato, (2006); Palmer, Chackelford, Miller and Leclere, (2007).

Teaching in a child's mother tongue, however, means that the learning of new concepts in the mother tongue must not be delayed until learners are well grounded in the second language. Hence, teachers and learners should be able to negotiate meanings together, and thus competency in the second language is gained through interaction rather than memorization and rote learning Gacheche, (2010). Learners who understand the language they are instructed in are more likely to engage meaningfully with content, question what they do not understand and even enjoy the challenge of new things. Learners need to be taught for a longer period for them to be able to comprehend well in a second language and able to perform rigorous academic tasks. However, requiring learners to transit quickly to education in a second or foreign language can be harmful to their literacy achievement and academic outcomes (Benson, 2004). Wigglesworth and Simpson, (2008) affirm that a learner's initial acquisition of language is vital to his learning how to think, hence when an education system imposes a foreign language on learners, disregarding their initial contact with language and pattern of processing new information, it inhibits their development of cognitive function.

Mother tongue education allows learners to express themselves, contribute to discussions and develop their intellectual capabilities as conversations are carried out in a familiar language in classroom. This assists learners to keep up with what is going on around them Benson, (2004).

Afolayan, (1999) affirms that maintaining first language literacy has been associated with better overall academic performance and mastery of English. Brock-Utne and Alidou, (2005) explain that mother tongue education promotes meaningful teaching of the foreign language in schools. Linguistic expertise acquired over a certain period in the first language can be transferred to the second language to aid development of such skills in the language. This has a positive effect on the linguistic growth and competence of the learners in a second language (Lanauze and Snow, 2004).

Cummins, (2006) asserts that children's home and cultural background can be used as a basis for formal learning in class. This experience must be used by the teacher to establish a long lasting linguistic comprehension in class and should not be treated with levity. It should be noted that the child as an entity, possesses the right to display his/her academic prowess within the classroom. Cummins, (2001) notes that rejecting the learners' based on the language that they speak or bring from home is to reject the learners as a whole. Therefore, teachers should try to bridge the gap between the learners' identities, which are related to their home language and the school tradition.

Lao's, (2004) study of English-Chinese bilingual preschoolers evaluates the significant contributions of parents' home language behaviour in enhancing preschool learners' first language development. She argues that mother tongue development cannot be attained by children without the influence and contributions from the parents. To encourage parents' to be involved in the learning and development of their children's mother tongue and literacy skills, she recommends a child friendly environment in the home and proper guidance from parents and their collaboration with schools; support for parents who need to improve their own oral language skills in their first language. Children's opportunities to excel in a social context are determined by the similarities and differences between home and school linguistic practices (Carrington and Luke, 2002).

Despite government statement on the use of mother tongue as a means of instruction, in recognition of its roles in quality education delivery, this researcher opines that the government is yet to be serious with it. This is due to many reasons among which are the inability of the government to write the curriculum that is to be implemented by teachers via mother tongue in mother tongue, failure of the government to develop and engage competent teachers of mother tongue, non-provision of textbooks, failure of the government to monitor the implementation process, perception and attitude of teacher and so on. To investigate the extent to which two of these factors (that is, awareness and attitude) influence its implementation, this study emanated. This researcher however selected private primary schools as case study because, as Makinde (2003) posits, it is a common practice in private primary schools to see teachers teach learners in English as a language of instruction. English is sometimes made compulsory by the owners of such private schools in order to meet the

existing class distinction being created by the older established schools. This study therefore investigates how aware the head teachers of such schools are on the mother tongue policy and their attitude towards its implementation.

Statement of the Problem

Yoruba language, like other indigenous languages has been facing a lot of challenges particularly as a medium of instruction. It should be noted that the implementation of Yoruba language as a medium of instruction is both demanding and expensive. It entails a lot of resources to produce teaching and learning materials and to train teachers. Currently, no concrete effort has been made by the Nigerian government to face the challenges of implementing the Yoruba language medium policy. According to researcher, the requirements for the implementation include linguistic analysis of the phonology and grammar of the language, devising a practical orthography, and preparing and testing of primers and readers as well as supplementary reading materials. At present, these have not been adequately provided.

However, the practicality and cost effectiveness of producing instructional materials and teachers in Yoruba language is questionable while some of these resources available at present are not developed to welcome new concepts, ideas, formulae, theory and scientific terms that have their origin in the western world.

Against this background therefore, the researcher seeks to study the head teachers' and proprietors' awareness of and attitude to Yoruba language as medium of instruction in selected private primary schools in Akinyele Local Government of Oyo State.

Research Questions

1. Are head teachers and proprietors aware of the educational Policy?
2. Are head teachers and proprietors aware of the language policy in National Policy on Education?
3. What is the attitude of Head teachers and proprietors to Yoruba as medium of instruction in lower primary education?
4. Are Yoruba language teachers employed in private schools?
5. Do Head teachers and proprietors provide instructional aids for the teaching of Yoruba language?

Methodology

Research Design: This study adopted a descriptive design of survey type, which involves the use of questionnaires for collection of data. This is because the variables studied have already been manifested and the researcher had no control over them.

Population of the Study: The population of the study consists of all head teachers/proprietors of private primary schools in Akinyele Local Government Area of Oyo State.

Sample and Sampling Techniques: Random sampling technique was adopted to select the sample which comprised fifty private primary schools in the study area. In each of the schools, all proprietors/headteachers were randomly selected to participate in the study, making a total of fifty participants in all.

Research Instruments: Two instruments tagged “Head teachers'/Proprietors' Awareness of the use of Yoruba Language as Medium of Instruction in Private Primary Schools" (HPAYMIPPS) and “Head teachers'/Proprietors' Attitude to the use of Yoruba Language as Medium of Instruction in Private Primary Schools" (HPAYMIPPS) were designed by the researcher. These questionnaires were used as instruments for data collection for this study. The instruments were divided into three parts: Section A, B and C. Section A deals with respondents' background. The item under this section sought information on personal data of respondents such as gender, name of school, among others. Section B and C contain statements based on the questions derived.

Validation of Instruments: The questionnaires were both face and content validated by experts in the fields of measurement and evaluation.

Method of Data Analysis: Data collected in the pupils' questionnaire were analyzed by finding the mean of the respondents to each item. Chi – square X^2 for each of the items was calculated by counting the number of responses to each item. The chi – square was calculated to know the level of significance of the opinions of respondents.

Results

Research Question 1: Are head teachers and proprietors aware of the educational policy?

Table 1: Showing Headteachers and Proprietors Awareness of Educational Policy

S/N	ITEMS	SD	D	A	SA	X	STD.D
1	I am aware of the National Policy on Education in Nigeria	1 2	2 4	26 52	21 42	3.340	0.6581
2	I know that there is a language policy in the National Policy on Education	- -	4 8	28 56	18 36	3.250	0.6074
3	I am aware of the National Policy on Education in Nigeria	1 2	1 2	29 58	19 38	3.320	0.6207
4	I am aware that the language of the immediate environment is Yoruba	1 2	2 4	29 58	18 36	3.280	0.6402
5	Majority of pupils in my school are from Yoruba environment	- -	2 4	32 64	16 32	3.280	0.5361
6	My school has Yoruba language teachers	1 2	2 4	32 64	15 30	3.200	0.6999
7	I am aware that Yoruba language should be on the school time table	- -	6 12	25 50	19 38	3.260	0.6643
8	I am aware that all subjects in primary 1 -3 should be taught in Yoruba except English language	1 2	27 54	18 36	4 8	2.500	0.6776
9	When the language of the immediate environment is used in teaching many pupils participate	1 2	6 12	34 68	9 18	3.020	0.6224
10	I am aware that values and beliefs of the environment are best taught in the language of the environment	- -	5 10	35 70	10 20	3.100	0.5440
Weighted Average = 3.16							

Table 1 shows that head teachers and proprietors are aware of the educational policy WA = 3.16. The detailed analysis is as follows: I am aware of the National Policy on Education in Nigeria mean = 3.34, I am aware of the National Policy on Education in Nigeria mean = 3.32, I am aware that the language of the immediate environment is Yoruba mean = 3.28, Majority of pupils in my school are from Yoruba environment mean = 3.28, I am aware that Yoruba language should be on the school time table mean = 3.26, I know that there is a language policy in the National Policy on Education mean = 3.25, I am aware that values and beliefs of the environment are best taught in the language of the environment mean = 3.10, When the language of the immediate environment is used in teaching many pupils participate mean = 3.02, I am aware that all subjects in primary 1-3 should be taught in Yoruba except English language mean = 2.50.

Research Question 2: What is the attitude of head teachers and proprietors to Yoruba as medium of instruction in lower primary education?

Table 2: Showing the Attitude of Head Teachers and Proprietors to Yoruba as Medium of Instruction in Lower Primary

S/N	ITEMS	SD	D	A	SA	X	STD. D
1	I am always happy when pupils speak Yoruba	2 4	8 16	27 54	13 26	3.020	0.7690
2	I support the use of Yoruba as a medium of instruction in lower primary school	-	10 20	27 54	13 26	3.060	0.6824
3	Yoruba should not be taught in primary school because it is an indigenous language	13 26	24 48	10 20	3 6	2.060	0.8430
4	Speakers of Yoruba language are not many hence, it should not be used to teach in lower primary schools	8 16	19 38	21 42	2 4	2.340	0.7981
5	There are not enough materials that will enhance the use of Yoruba as medium of instruction in primary education	2 4	14 28	25 50	9 18	2.820	0.7743
6	Concepts and registers in science and technology cannot be accommodated by Yoruba hence, it should not be used as a medium of instruction in primary schools	7 14	23 46	18 36	2 4	2.300	0.7627
7	Yoruba is on the time table in my school	- -	3 6	32 64	15 30	3.240	0.5555
8	The time for Yoruba should be replaced with English	5 10	8 16	28 56	9 18	2.820	0.8497
9	Qualified teachers of Yoruba should be employed in private schools to teach the subject	1 2	3 6	27 54	19 38	3.280	0.6713
10	Yoruba is the language of the immediate environment hence, it should be used to teach other subjects in primary schools	4 8	11 22	23 46	12 24	2.860	0.8809
Weighted Average = 2.78							

Table 2 shows that the attitude of head teacher and proprietors to Yoruba as medium of instruction in lower primary school is positive WA = 2.78. The detailed analysis is as follows : Qualified teachers of Yoruba should be employed in private schools to teach the subject mean = 3.28, Yoruba is on the time table in my school mean = 3.24, I support the use of Yoruba as a medium of instruction in lower primary school mean = 3.06, I am always happy when pupils speak Yoruba mean = 3.02, Yoruba is the language of the immediate environment hence, it should be used to teach other subjects in primary schools mean = 2.86, There are not enough materials that will enhance the use of Yoruba as medium of instruction in primary education mean = 2.82, The time for Yoruba should be replaced with English mean = 2.82, Speakers of Yoruba language are not many hence, it should not be used to teach in lower primary schools mean = 2.34, Concepts and registers in science and technology cannot be accommodated by Yoruba hence, it should not be used as a medium of instruction in primary schools mean = 2.30, Yoruba should not be taught in primary school because it is an indigenous language mean = 2.06.

Research Question 3: Are the headteachers and proprietors' awareness influenced by their educational qualification?

Table 3: Showing ANOVA on Influence of Educational Qualification on Head Teacher and Proprietors' Awareness

Qualification	N	Mean	Std.D	Df	F	Sig.	Remark
NCE	25	3.022	0.6302	6,43	0.990	0.444	Not significant
HND/PGDE	9	3.667	1.2222				
BA/BSC Ed	3	1.732	1.0000				
BED/Bsc	6	6.401	2.6130				
BA	4	1.258	0.6292				
MA/MED	3	2.000	1.1547				
Total	50						

Table 3 shows that head teachers and proprietors' educational qualification did not significantly influence their awareness $F_{6,43} = 0.99$; $p > 0.05$.

Research Question 4: Are head teachers and proprietors' attitude influenced by their educational qualification?

Table 4: Showing ANOVA on Influence of Educational Qualification on Head Teacher and Proprietors' Attitude

Qualification	N	Mean	Std.D	Df	F	Sig.	Remark
NCE	25	28.870	3.8766	6,43	0.752	0.611	Not significant
HND/PGDE	9	26.222	5.0194				
BA/BSC Ed	3	27.333	1.1547				
BED/Bsc	6	27.333	1.3663				
BA	4	27.750	1.7078				
MA/MED	3	26.000	3.4641				
Total	50						

Table 4 shows that head teachers and proprietors' educational qualification did not significantly influence their attitude $F_{6,43} = 0.75$; $p > 0.05$.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

Summarily, this study has revealed that:

1. Head teachers and proprietors are aware of the educational policy. The government stipulated the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction in lower primary classes FRN, 2004 but does not monitor its implementation.
2. The attitude of head teacher and proprietors to Yoruba as medium of instruction in lower primary school is positive. Cummins, 2000
3. Head teachers and proprietors' educational qualification did not significantly influence their awareness. Anderson 2011
4. Head teachers and proprietors' educational qualification did not significantly influence their attitude.

In conclusion, this study is important because it brought out the actual happenings in the class, thus letting us know the germane of Yoruba which is the mother tongue in this context and how the participant private primary school heads were able to use it as a medium of instruction. Although many challenges were identified but the study made us to know that school heads were on top of the situation by making sure that learners irrespective of their ethnic and social background were taught Yoruba effectively.

Learning through the mother tongue does not only preserve the cultural values of the people but also make learning permanent in the learners. It develops in the learners' readiness to learn and affords the learners the opportunity to transfer learning appropriately. It therefore strengthens the learners' identity and empowers them. The youths of today are the expected leaders of tomorrow hence they must be well groomed cognitively, socially morally and culturally; thus, education in mother tongue as highlighted in this study makes this achievable. The teacher as the facilitator of knowledge was examined through questionnaires and the results revealed that participant primary school heads experienced many challenges while using Yoruba as a medium of instruction in schools but despite these challenges, they were able to teach Yoruba effectively. Learners were also able to cope with learning of Yoruba despite their different ethnic backgrounds.

This study revealed opinions and information expressed by the fifty private primary school Headteachers and proprietors who participated in this study on their awareness and attitude towards the use of using Yoruba language as a medium of instruction in primary classes and the implication of this to learning. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made;

1. The production of relevant textbooks in indigenous languages for teaching in primary schools in Nigeria.
2. Training of indigenous language teachers need to be intensified and encouraged. Researchers can research the reasons for the dearth in the availability of indigenous language teachers in Nigeria and the world over and suggest ways of solving this problem. Those teachers that have already been employed need to attend seminars and workshops on the latest methodologies and instructional materials that can be used in teaching. Such pedagogical materials can be suggested by researchers to effectively teach Yoruba and any other subjects well in classes.
3. Research should be carried out on the need for the government to produce the policy documents promoting mother tongue in large quantity for teachers use. The current situation where teachers do not have copies of such an important document is not encouraging. Researchers can investigate the reasons why these documents were not available and inform the government on how the policy documents can be produced and made available.
4. There is no proper monitoring of the implementation of policies. The government therefore needs to establish a task team or committee that will ensure that policies are implemented accordingly.

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