

**ASSESSMENT OF THE USE OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES AND ENGLISH AS
MEDIUMS OF INSTRUCTION IN LOWER AND MIDDLE BASIC EDUCATION
CLASSROOMS OF KADUNA STATE NIGERIA**

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Abstract

It is noteworthy that mother tongues and the English language enjoy great recognition in Nigeria. They perform various functions in formal and informal contexts of multilingual Nigerian communities. Apart from being adopted as national and official languages, their functions have been expanded for the teaching and learning purposes in Nigerian basic education schools. Both mother tongues (national languages) and the English language have syllabuses at basic education levels such as lower basic, which includes primary one to three and middle basic which deals with primary four to six. There have been growing debates on the best language needed for teaching children in basic education for long. This was what led to the consensus that instructions in early basic education classrooms in especially multilingual contexts need to start in the language of the child since every human child has a language he/she comes in contact with before schooling. In line with this, this article is written to look into the factors and issues surrounding the use of mother tongue in early years of basic education and of course to the use of the English language in later years as languages of instructions. Both mother tongues and English have syllabuses designed to guide teachers on what to teach, the period of teaching, teaching objectives, contents of learning experiences and activities in lower and middle basic education. It is believed that both mother tongue and English language syllabuses are by their nature, expected to give the learner a gradual learning process which fosters progressive as well as comprehensive understanding of the aspects of both the native and the target language for effective instructions in basic education classrooms in Kaduna state, Nigeria. The paper recommends the employment of innovative teachers of mother tongue and English who have encyclopedic understanding of the complexities associated with the first and second language teaching and learning, use of harmonized syllabuses, good libraries, good textbooks and a variety of methods for effective teaching and learning.

Keywords: Assessment, Mother Tongue and English, mediums of instructions, Basic Education challenges and the way forward.

Introduction

Language is an instrument that facilitates and promotes societal coexistence. No one can water down the fact that people cannot exist without language. Using both the mother tongue and English language effectively from basic education level is an indication that language-policy provisions are practically implemented from basic education level. Good foundation in the use of mother tongue for instruction provides the ground for the English language

teaching among learners at middle basic education level for the development of literacy, reading and other language skills in the basic educational system through the mother tongue in lower basic education; primary 1 to 3.

A good language policy makes knowledge and skills accessible to the child, adaptable to his socio-cultural, socio-political and socio-economic environment and of course proper upbringing for the development of the human child mentally, physically, academically and

morally. After the development and introduction of a new language policy in education from the year 2013 in Nigeria, there is the need for assessing use of the mother tongue and English as mediums of instructions to identify if implementation of the provisions of language policy has provided the much needed literacy and reading skills to children in both mother tongue and English.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of carrying out this study were to:

- 1- Assess how language policy provisions are implemented through the use of mother tongue and English in Kaduna State Universal Basic Education schools:
- 2- Investigate if the needed atmosphere provided for helping teachers carry out instructions at the point of switch from mother tongue to English language medium of instruction in Kaduna State Universal Basic Education Schools:
- 3- Determine the practical challenges debilitating against the use of mother tongue and English language as mediums of instruction in Kaduna State Universal Basic Education Schools:

Research Questions for the Study

The provided answers to the following research questions:

- 1- What is the extent to which language policy provisions are implemented through the use of mother tongue in Kaduna State Universal Basic Education Schools?
- 2- What is atmosphere provided in helping teachers carry out instructions at the point of switch from mother tongue to English language medium of instruction in Kaduna state universal basic education schools?
- 3- What are practical challenges debilitating against the use of mother tongue and English as mediums of instruction in Kaduna State Universal Basic Education Schools?

Research Methodology

For carrying out this study, three hundred and eighty-two (382) teachers consisting both male and female were sampled from the population of 22,435 of primary school teachers in Kaduna state. About fifty percent of the teachers are specialists in child mother tongue(s) and other are those that specialize in English. The sample

of the study was drawn across three senatorial districts: Kaduna south, Kaduna central and Kaduna north senatorial districts from the year 2017, 2018, to the year 2019. The Four-point Likert scale research questionnaire was developed by the researchers. The results obtained were analyzed using the statistical instruments of mean and standard deviation. The research questionnaire was developed by the researchers and was validated by four experts in the field. The Cronbach Alpha was used in determining a reliability coefficient of 0.83 of the research questionnaire. Mean scores and standard deviation were used by the researcher to answer the research questions. For the conduct of this study, the discussions in this section provides answers to research question one, while responses of the teachers to the questionnaire provide answers to research question two. A number of practical challenges associated with switch from mother tongue to English were given as answers to research question three.

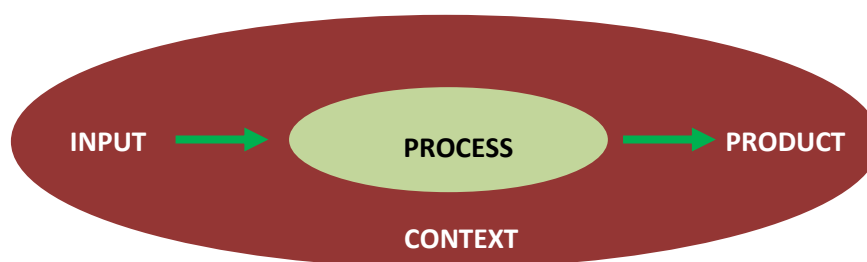
Theoretical Framework

In this research, the theoretical framework considered appropriate for the accomplishment of the objectives of the study is the Context Input Process Product (CIPP) initiated by Daniel Stufflebeam as revised by Mathew (2014). The Context Input Process Product (CIPP) approach is outstanding among the various theories used for the assessment of the public project, policies and programmes of various countries to assess their level of growth and decay with respects to the main objectives for which the public projects or policies are established. Rogers (2014) believes that the American scholar, Stufflebeam in 1966, invented the CIPP model. The major components of the theory are as follows:

- A. Evaluating the context in which the policy or project is executed. This includes considering the effect of other policies or projects (as evident in other countries' language policies for determining aspects of language policy implementation that could be adopted in Nigeria), and the budget specifically made for implementation in Nigeria);
- B. Evaluating the input into the project is by looking at the information (such as needed facilities for the language needs of the learner) the decisions made for the teaching of basic education children in their languages of origin;

C. Evaluating the product, that is the expected results of language-policy implementation project (such as developing the literacy and reading ability of the UBE pupils, accelerating their communicative competence and performance, understanding their culture and environment, as well as technical concepts in science-based subjects;

D. Utilizing the information gained from the context, input and product evaluation of the language-policy implementation project. The purpose of this is to determine what can be done to improve the success of the policy or project. Below is the graphic representation of the CIPP model.



Objectives of Universal Basic Education in Nigeria

As a way of demonstrating the intention of the federal and state governments of Nigeria for providing universal access to quality basic education in the country, the current edition of National Policy of Education published in 2013 cancels the six-year final examinations across the nations primary schools. The policy shows that children that have successfully graduated from primary schools will no longer take any final year examination before they are admitted into junior secondary schools across the federation. Muftau and Hazri (2015) posit that the major goals of the present UBE basic education in Nigeria are to:

- a- Inculcate reflective thinking in the mind of the Nigerian child;
- b- Make the child have the ability to pass relevant judgments;
- c- Provide the child the opportunities to acquire good communication skills;
- d- Increase productivity in the family and the larger society;
- e- Understand the role of the individual in relation to the pursuit of the national objectives, progress and development;
- f- Inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy in children and the ability to communicate effectively;

Bamgbose (1989) maintains that considering these lofty objectives that have been lined up in the UBE project, one fundamental issue that deserves consideration is the medium through which the Nigerian child can achieve these aims to make learning accessible, easy, productive, logical and practical. Anderson (2016) believes

that the language of instruction and communication must be considered to achieve those objectives. Egomwan (1991) believes that a policy is programme of action containing a series of interrelated decisions by a group of actors living in particular geographical location. In every society, including the advanced ones such those Europe and America, education has remained the major social structure for capacity building and development (Etuk, Ering and Ajake 2012:177-179). The Universal Basic Education is part of the Nigerian government’s policies that are initiated in order to improve the wellbeing of the citizenry and pave the way for sustainable development in this country.

Basic Requirements for Switch from MT to English Medium in UBE Schools

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2012), shows that the 9-year basic education curriculum for English from nursery to primary school level revolves around five cardinal language areas; reading, writing, listening and speaking, grammatical accuracy and literature. Scholars such as Adams (2016:34-45) believe that African countries with multilingual education policies will succeed in providing quality basic education to their children if they start instructions in mother tongue and switch later into English medium based on some fundamental considerations. Allan (2014), Anastasi (2013) and Bachman (2009), believe that language polices flourish when mother tongue education has to cover the part or whole of the period of basic education from year 1 to 3, 4 or 6 etc. depending on the needs of learners. Allan (2014), Buck (2017), Cameron (2010) and Muftahu and Hazri (2015) believe that the

switch, however, is not supposed to haphazardly.

Brown (2016), Bygate (2013) and Buck (2017) posit that textbooks that are supposed to be used during switch into English at upper primary, must be written in impeccable English. Carpenter (2012), Carrol (2015) and Davidson (2009) explain that parts of the factors required for switch from mother tongue policy to English is the provision of functional libraries for primary, junior and secondary schools. According to Davies (2008), the e-library is currently needed in African schools to instill the culture of reading and information sharing so that students could have access to information

even at home. Nitco (2017), (Davies, 2008) and Harris (2000). Davies, (2008) and Donald (2016) believe that curriculum is part of the educational programmes designed for the development of the human child in primary, junior and senior secondary school during switch from mother tongue to English will be undertaken.

Results from the Questionnaire Distributed to Teachers in Kaduna state Universal Basic Education Schools on the Use of Mother Tongue and English as Mediums of Instruction

Table 1. Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Number	Percent
Male Teachers	202	52.7
Female Teachers	180	47.3
Total	382	100.0

It can be posited that after the analysis of respondents' responses as regard their gender, it is clear that 202 of the respondents are male and this represents (52.7%) of the sample regarding the male while 180 of the respondents representing (47.3%) were females. This

analysis clearly shows that the majority of the respondents to the research questionnaire were males who aired their views on their perception of the switch from mother tongue to English medium of instruction.

Table 2. Years of Teaching Experience of Respondents

Qualification	Number ear	Percent
1-4 Years	7	1.8
4-9 Years	82	21.4
10-14 Years	73	19.1
15-19 Years	227	57.7
Total	382	100.0

Looking at the table above, it is clear that the findings regarding the years of teaching experience of respondents shows that 7(1.8%) of the respondents have been between 1-4 years, 82 (21.4%) of them have been between 4-9 years, 73 (19.1%) of the respondents have been between 10-14 years, while 227 (57.7%) of the

respondents have been between 15 -19 years in their teaching. This indicates that the majority of the respondents revealed that they have been between 15-19 years of teaching studies during the periods in which data for this research was obtained.

Responses of Primary School Teachers in Kaduna State Universal Basic Education Schools on the Use of Mother Tongue and English as Mediums of Instruction

S/No	Items	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN	STD
1	Most of the schools in the senatorial districts have enough teachers that can teach in mother tongue and English language	65	49	167	101	2.7906	1.02366
2	The state government has supplied needed instructional facilities for effective	78	59	177	68	2.6047	1.01344

	teaching through the mother tongue to lay the foundation for literacy in English						
3	The language of immediate community/environment (LIC) is used in the teaching of all subjects in primaries 1-3	70	73	151	88	2.6492	1.05118
4	Learners generally demonstrate keen interest in lessons and participate actively when taught in their language	115	43	151	73	2.4817	1.10756
5	There are copies of harmonized curriculum for teaching all subjects in universal basic education schools of the state	100	27	168	87	2.6283	1.10738
6	Skills of literacy and reading are taught and understood well via the mother tongue even in classes 4,5 and 6 of primary schools	87	49	146	100	2.6780	1.09568
7	Some literacy Training propagation programmes such as JOLLY PHONICS and RANA are not accessible to all teachers handling primary 1, 2 or three classes	90	63	169	60	2.5209	1.01864
8	Instructions in English are not properly understood by learners especially in middle basic education after switch from MT to English	116	94	102	63	2.2565	1.11405
9	The majority of the schools do not have libraries to enhance learning at basic education level.	76	44	163	93	2.6832	1.09481
10	Some of the schools are no longer having enough basic education teachers as a result of sacking of teachers in the state	38	30	198	112	3.0052	.89617
Cumulative mean						3.00	1.000

The results above show the perception of respondents on the use of the mother tongue and English in teaching and learning in basic education in Kaduna state where primaries 1 to 3 are taught in the MT or the language of the immediate community. The findings gathered from the study revealed the cumulative mean response on all the ten (10) items asked, which was 2.69. The cumulative mean of 2.69, was found to be higher than the decision/standard mean of 2.5000. The table shows the standard deviation of 1.000, which shows that respondents are fully convinced that the use of the mother tongue in lower basic education, use of effective books, harmonized scheme of work and curriculum as well as community support are great requirements for effective switch from mother tongue to English medium of instruction.

Study Conclusion

From the foregoing, it could be concluded that the results obtained in this article are based on the practical challenges in the process. It is evident that switch from mother tongue to English language medium and instruction has to be on meeting some criteria by the learners, teachers and the government as well. For example, it was found out that the majority of the schools in Kaduna state have teachers that speak the

mother tongues spoken by children in Kaduna state. It is hence recommended that the government should continue to supply needed facilities such as learners' textbooks, through the mother tongue and then the English language. From the findings, it was observed that learners demonstrate keen interest in lessons and participate when taught in their mother tongue. However, it was found that there are challenges with respect to lack of comfortability of learners in the English language due to their poor background in the language as well as the subject matter and teachers' linguistic incompetence. In light of the findings, the following recommendations are given:

Recommendations

In view of the findings of this article, the researchers recommend that:

- The state government, through the ministry of education, needs to ponder over the issues and problems raised in this study on the use of mother tongue and English languages mediums of instructions:
- The UBE teachers especially those in the study area will need to study the national policy on education and

- c. The host communities, where UBE schools are established need to be more committed by pondering over the issues and problems raised in this study on poor returns in mother tongue and English language policy implementation;
- d. The SUBEB office in the state need to need to look into the issues and problems raised in this study on the use of mother tongue and English language mediums of instructions for effective teaching and learning.

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