



Mother tongue (4) usage among children in the first three years of primary education in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council

Abbas Mohammed

Department of educational foundations and management, Kashim Ibrahim College of education Maiduguri; Email: abbaskirawa@gmail.com

Article History

Received: 04 January 2020

Reviewed: 05/January/2020 to 12/ February/2020

Accepted: 14 February 2020

Prepared: 16 February 2020

Published: March 2020

Citation

Abbas Mohammed. Mother tongue (4) usage among children in the first three years of primary education in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council. *Discovery*, 2020, 56(291), 162-167

Publication License



© The Author(s) 2020. Open Access. This article is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

General Note



Article is recommended to print as color digital version in recycled paper.

ABSTRACT

The research assessed the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction in primary schools in Maiduguri metropolitan Council of Borno State, with particular reference to five primary schools (G.R.A Primary School, Yerwa Practicing primary school, Kirikassama Primary School, Hausari Primary School and Bullumkutu Primary School). Questionnaires were distributed to staff of each of the schools who were sampled through random sampling making a total of twenty-five (25). On the whole, the educational, vocational, psychological and social needs of the learners and the importance of using mother tongue in teaching at the level of the first three (3) years of primary school education were assessed. Some recommendations were made by the researchers with the view of improving the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction in primary schools.

Keywords: primary schools, mother tongue, UNESCO, Education

1. INTRODUCTION

The background of this research is based on the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) declaration of 1963 that the best and most important medium of communication for teaching a child throughout his/her elementary level of education is his mother tongue. The National Policy on Education (2004) also states that the reason of primary education need to be to make certain that the satisfactory medium of instruction will principally be the mother tongue or language of the instantaneous community. To this effect, some states in the federation have already started using either the language of the immediate community or the mother tongue as a subject or medium of communication. Language is very important as stated in the National policy on Education, therefore it is necessary to consider some of the difficulties involved in providing the appropriate' educational background to the children in the early years. In some parts of the Borno State for instance, Kanuri was used as a medium of instruction for more than fifty years. This is clearly evident from the first readers in Kanuri known as "kitabukanuribe" books 1 to 5 which was last printed in the year 1965. Since the purpose of primary education is to provide a good foundation, there is need to give due consideration to how this foundation is laid so that, there would be harmony between the policy on education and the practice in the schools particularly with regards to the medium of instruction or communication.

According to experts on language and education at the UNESCO conference of 1952, language is the psychological system of meaningful signs that a child's mind works with automatically for the purpose of expression and understanding of sociological issues or concepts. It is a means of identification among members of the community to which they belong. Educationally, it is believed that the child learns more quickly through the mother tongue than through an unfamiliar linguistic medium. Language has a very complex nature and therefore its definition is rather difficult. Language, according to the CHAMBERS DICTIONARY is any human speech, the speech of a particular people's means of communication; therefore, it is clear that the local or the common society's language is accepted to teach the younger children at the early stage of primary education with their mother tongue. Language also," according to Nicolas Hamz (1999) in his book comparative education, is one of the key factors in learning". It appears that language is more important in the building of national character than any other factor. The situation would be quite different if a boy of six years old were to be transplanted in the same way. The boy's native tongue other than the language of his foster- parents would have his first impression of the world and of himself. Everything that affects him can be interpreted in his native tongue, instead of the language of his foster-parents which would remain foreign to him.

Language, according to Lewis (2001), is used, either spoken or written form of behavior, the utterance of words and response toward a person. He suggested that most children master the complexities of their mother tongue with little or no awareness of the systematic relations. Also, he analyses the process of mutual adjustment as an aspect of increasing communication between the child and the society in which he grows. Lewis continues that at first non-verbal communication gives birth to language which then becomes its most important medium. And that the interaction of a child with the society influences his growing language in school development. Carrol (2000) says people can think well when they have a food stock of well learned concepts and their names, which a second language may not necessarily offer during the early years of education. He sees no reasons why a child cannot lean two languages at the same time and that bilingualism does not retard mental development. There are a lot of arguments against bilingualism. In fact the term bilingualism has come to assume different meanings; some feel that to be bilingual is to learn two languages, from the beginning at the same time. Spolsky (2003), commenting on the place of learning a first language in education feels that the first language in education which a child learns is with the task of acquiring the skills and competencies that are needed for social life. Every child gains control of his environment. By the age of six a normal child is able to understand most of what is said to him and can make himself understood. Learning a first language takes place without formal teaching and its acquisition is natural. Spolsky (2003),he explains that when a six year old comes to schools, he has a result of a huge investment of time and effort learnt and mastered at least one variety of language, usually his mother tongue or the language of the community. He argues that new language at school may discourage the child's effort and reduce his chances of success.

Omojuwa (2002) suggested ways of improving bilingual education at the primary school level in the northern states of Nigeria. And the attempt made towards this was to identify and solve the problems of language planning occurring at various levels. The survey of language planning shows persistent conflicts and opposition between the home and school in the sense that the language of the home has little or no chance of performing any educational function because most of the languages perform only subsidiary educational functions. Gani (1981) considered the problems surrounding the use of Kanuri language as a medium of instruction in Borno State to include staffing which posed problems of method used by teachers using kanuri, opinions of headmasters and also the texts used in teaching He recommended among other things an intensive research to identify the prospects for using Kanuri as medium of instruction with the purpose of improving the present situation. He was of the opinion that children's poor performance in Kanuri and English could be due to poor classroom environment rather than exposure to two or more languages in their formative years. He also recommends research to find out the actual problems and possible solutions. Afolayan (2004) also

discussed the problem created by change over from vernacular to English. He concluded that there will be interference of the mother tongue at all levels most especially in phonetics. He felt it was necessary to train teachers in both vernacular and English as the mediums of instruction.

Statement of the Problem

The importance of using mother tongue as the language of instruction in the first three years of primary school education cannot be overemphasized. Yet many problems that may include vocational, personal or social needs of young learners deprive them from satisfying their aspirations in order to achieve some common ' goals and objectives of schools. Educational programmers are drawn to satisfy the special needs of the primary schools teachers and the learners as well. In achieving certain educational objectives, teachers need to diversify their methods of instruction. Recognition and involvement with others to face challenging circumstances would improve the level of achievement of the educational sector of this country. Thus, teachers need to recognize the language needs of their young learners and then involve the children more actively with language development in order to minimize their challenges of learning.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study were to:

Find out the process of using local language as a medium of instruction among primary school pupils.

Find out the number of local languages used in teaching in primary schools in Borno State.

Assess the impact of teacher's qualifications and their experiences in the use of local language as the medium of instruction.

Find out the textbooks and facilities used in teaching local languages in the primary schools.

2. METHODOLOGY

This provides a brief description of the research design, population and sample, data collection method, source of data collected and all activities or events in respect of data information and how it is gathered with a view to further provide a proper analysis on the understanding of the importance of the mother tongue in the first three years of primary education.

Design of the Study

The design of the study is descriptive research. It involves the collection of data by the use of questionnaire.

Population and Sample

The population of the study was primary school teachers who teach languages from class one to three. They were randomly selected from five (5) primary schools in the Maiduguri Metropolitan Council. The schools selected were: G.R.A Primary Schools, Yerwa Practicing Primary School, Kirikassama Primary School, Hausari Primary School and Bullumkutu Primary School. In each of the schools selected five teachers were randomly selected. The total number of sample all together was twenty-five (25) respondents.

Source of data collection

Two sources of data were used to gather information. These included primary and secondary source of data

Primary source of data- This included government agencies, educational agencies and newspapers.

Secondary source of data- This included library, text books and journals

Method of Data Analysis

The data analysis used table percentage for analyzing the data collected from the questionnaire.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The table 1 indicates that teachers in primary schools use local language as a medium of instruction although they have never had any training on the use of other languages as a medium of instruction. Some teachers use the common language as medium of instruction not because of their mastery of the language. This shows that only a few teachers had actually taken courses in other local languages.

Table 1 Teachers who use several languages as medium of instruction.

Yes	8	32
No	17	68

Table 2 the qualifications of teachers in primary schools.

Schools/Qualification	Grade II Certificate	N.C.E	B.Sc/BA.Ed	Master Degree
G.R.A Primary School	1	3	1	-
Kirikassama Primary School	-	2	3	-
Bullumkutu Primary School	2	3	-	-
Hausari Primary School	3	2	1	-
Yerwa Practicing Primary School	1	3	3	-

The table 2 shows the various shows the various qualifications of the teachers. That first row in the table represents the qualifications of teachers in G.R.A Primary School. It clearly shows that one teacher obtained grade II certificate, three (3) obtained National Certificate in Education, one obtained a Bachelor's Degree in Education. This clearly shows that majority of teachers in .G.R.A Primary School are Nigeria Certificate in Education holders. While in the second row, the table presents the qualifications of teachers in Kirikassama Primary School. It clearly shows that two teachers obtained the National Certificate in Education and three (3) teachers obtained a Bachelor's Degree in Education. This shows that majority of the teachers in Kirikassama are Bachelor's Degree holders. The data obtained in all schools indicated that the greatest numbers of teachers are N.C.E holders, and then followed by Bachelor's Degree in Education holders and lastly the grade II certificate holders.

Table 3 Teacher's years of experience with regards to using local languages as medium of instruction

Below 1 year	1-3 Years	4-6 Years	7-9 Years	10-13 Years	14-16 Years	17-19 Years	20 Years
2	4	6	3	3	2	3	2
8%	16%	24%	12%	12%	8%	12%	8%

The table 3 indicates that most of the teachers have not spent many years in teaching only about 24% of the teachers have 4-6 years of teaching experience. Thus they use local language as medium of instruction, while the majority falls between one to six years. It clearly indicates that most of the teachers started using mother tongue with the implementation of the universal basic education (UBE) and the national policy on education.

Table 4 The types of textbooks which teachers use in schools within their local language as a medium of instruction.

Class Level	Kanuri Textbooks	Hausa Textbooks	Other Languages Textbooks	English Textbooks
I	11	13	3	14
II	9	12	4	17
III	3	9	6	21
Total in Percentage	19%	27%	11%	43%

The table 4 indicates the types of textbooks that teachers use. These are very important in teaching the pupils as far as the materials are concerned. There are textbooks written in these local languages and also there are those written in English which are translated by the teachers to the pupils. It is simple enough for the teachers to teach them when using the local language to explain some subjects. While some schools do not have textbooks in the local language yet the language of instruction is the local language. It is safe to conclude that all those who use the local language textbooks are those that have Kanuri, Hausa and other-languages as subjects whereby the English language serve as the language of instruction.

4. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The results collected in this research from the various categories of teachers from schools use as a case a case study for this findings as sample accepted that the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction is very important and has an impact on the educational development of the children. The results also revealed that the teachers in primary schools use local language as a medium of instruction although they have never had any training on the use of other languages as a medium of instruction. Some teachers use the common language as medium of instruction not because they have been trained but because of their mastery of the language. This is clearly shows that teachers use mother tongue to teach just because they are fluent speakers. Facilities for; teaching local languages as a medium of instruction and subject are available but not all teachers use them since some do not have them in the school.

Qualification and experience befitting its usage, judging from experience of teachers who have undergone training as regards to mother tongue. It does not make them competence because they have not been trained to use mother tongue of the pupils. The types of text book that teachers use. These are very important in teaching the pupils as far as the materials concerned. There are text book written in these local languages and also there are those written in English which are translated by the teachers to the pupils. It is simple enough for the teachers to teach them when using the local languages to explain some subjects. While some schools do not have text books in the local language yet the language of instruction is the local language.

It is assumed that if local language as medium of instruction is used in the proper manner, and English as a subject is introduced accordingly, there will be no problem of adopting English at a later stage. The number of local language speaking children in the schools was investigated and it is discovered are Kanuri, as such the use of Kanuri in such schools was considered appropriate.

5. CONCLUSION

The study the importance of mother tongue as medium of instruction has revealed that there is need for adjustments In order to improve education at elementary level. The purpose of the research was to attempt an assessment of the effects of using local language as a medium of instruction on pupil's learning especially as it relates to the use of English at a later stage. It is assumed that if the local language is used as a medium of instruction in the proper manner, and English as a subject is introduced accordingly, there will be no problem of adopting English at a later stage in schooling. To this end certain issues were considered and the implications of the findings were outlined. Also, the qualifications of the teachers in terms of their experience of those who have undergone any form of training with regards to mother tongue was investigated. It does not make them competent because they have not been trained to use the mother tongue of the pupils.

Finally, following from the research conducted, it was clearly shown that teachers use mother tongue to teach mainly because they are fluent speakers. Facilities for using local language as a medium of instruction and subjects are available but not all teachers use them since some do not have them in the schools, as well as on their time tables. It is very important to have a local language as a subject when it is used as the medium of instruction. The vocabulary and the system of the pupils in learning bilingual language will be built.

Recommendations

Teachers should go for in- service training in languages and also in techniques of using local languages as a medium of instruction.

There should be provision for aids in the mother tongue to teach it as a subject. Textbooks should be provided in all fields of education in local languages, particularly as the lower primary school level. Strict measures should be taken to see that local languages are used as the medium, that is, in the real sense of it (practical use of mother tongue). The syllabus should be provided for schools and the local education authority should ensure that they provide the schemes of work for teachers on termly basis. English should be taught by qualified teachers as a subject at this level to prepare the pupils to start using English.

REFERENCE

1. Abba G (1981): Problem surrounding the use of Kanuri Language as a Medium of Instruction in primary Schools in Borno State. M.Ed Thesis University of Jos.
2. Afolayon A (2004): The changeover From Vernacular to English as a Medium of Instruction "Journal of the Nigeria English Studies Association". Volume III.
3. Bamboqse A (2000) the Mother Tongue Education: West African Experience Paris
4. Bull, W.E (1963) the use of Vernacular Languages in Education: The Report on UNESCO Meeting
5. Federal Republic of Nigeria: National Policy on Education. Federal Government Press 2004.

6. Lewis (2001) the Importance of the Mother Tongue as a Medium of Instruction In Primary School Education. U.S.A MacMillan Company Press.
7. Spoisky B (2003) The Language Education of Minority Children Selected Reading. Rowley Massachusetts U.S.A New Bury House Published.