

Consequence of Parental Involvement and Attitude towards Learning of Yoruba Language in Selected Private Secondary Schools in Oyo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated parental attitude towards the learning of Yoruba language in Private Secondary Schools in Oyo state. The study adopted descriptive design. Six local government areas were randomly selected from the thirty three in Oyo State. Questionnaire on Parent Language Preference were validated using Split half ($r=.85$). Three Research questions were answered, while one null hypothesis was tested. The results showed that attitude towards Yoruba language learning in private secondary schools is associated with the socio-economic deprived group. Also findings revealed that parental attitude to the learning of Yoruba language do not influence the learning of Yoruba language in private secondary schools. There was a significant influence of parent attitude towards their children learning of Yoruba Language in Private Secondary Schools in Oyo State. It was recommended that all private schools should adopt the Federal Government (FGN) National Language Policy for the use across the country. Lastly, Yoruba language and culture should be mandated to be used in all Private Schools in Oyo State.

Key words: Parental Involvement, Attitude towards Yoruba learning; Private Secondary Schools

Introduction

Yoruba is one of the indigenous languages in Nigeria spoken predominantly by the people in the South Western part of the country. Part of the aim of learning Yoruba language in Nigerian Schools is to instill Yoruba morals and traditional values into the learners who belong to younger generation (Adeosun and Ayodele, 2008).

It is often claimed that children learn quickly and effortlessly provided that formal instruction is carefully and appropriately presented or that informal context-based learning occurs in a supportive psychological atmosphere with sufficient motivation and opportunity (Edwards, 1994). In an increasingly diversified and multilingual world, with job changes and urban drifts, that involve moving to different parts of the country, more young children find themselves in an environment where more than one language is used. Consequently, children need to interact with not only people from their language groups but with others from different linguistic backgrounds. The National Policy on Education (FNG 1998, 2004) states that:

- The medium of instruction in the Primary Schools shall be the language of the immediate environment for the first three years. During this period, English shall be taught as a Subject.
- From the fourth year, English shall be progressively used as a medium of instruction and the language of immediate environment and French shall be taught as subject.

This policy as noted by Lawal (2005:12) “has been very difficult to implement because of the attitude of the educated class who will rather have their children taught in English Language right from the cradle”. In the area of education, English Language has come to assume a very important position in Nigeria. It is used as medium of instruction in many schools right from the first year of primary school and it is taught as a subject throughout the school. This is in spite of what the FNG (1998) prescribed that the mother-tongue (MT) be used as medium of instruction in the first three years of school while there is a transition to English medium at the fourth year of Primary School.

However, what obtains in Schools is very different as some Schools, especially Private Schools, use English as a medium of instruction all through with occasional explanation in the MT. Many factors have contributed to this situation. Parents and Pupils are satisfied with English as a medium of instruction; being a dominant language that they see 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 (2005:13) noted that “Parents out of ignorance insulate the Children from the mother tongue by providing only English Language facility for their children at home in order to induce the use of English Language thus depriving children of a basic source of education and imaginative development”. Nahuatl speakers in Mexico also are ashamed to speak their native language outside their homes because they believe they need to speak Spanish, the language of power, that will afford their children the opportunities for success in the main stream culture (Rolstad, 2001).

The concepts of empowerment and usefulness make the encouragement of the mother tongue meet with resistance where the children's mother-tongue is not the dominant language. In a Country where opportunities for improving one's life are minimal, keeping the road to empowerment is open by insisting on the education in the dominant language (official) which becomes the order of the day (McCarty, 2008: 42). Parental attitudes to the mother tongue therefore is negative. English language is preferred as their children's L1. Children are motivated from birth to speak English language. Children's motivation to learn a language increases as they find themselves more competent to accomplish school tasks in the language. This is where the attitudes of the parents to the mother tongue come in.

When two languages are present in the child's environment, at least one of them must be used to fulfill the affective functions. For children who develop simultaneous instant

bilingualism, the very situation of being confronted with two interchangeable languages, that is two labels for one concept, at a time when they are developing functional representation of language as a cognitive tool, may push them towards developing their analysed knowledge about language. It is important that children perceive their two languages as interchangeable, that is, they perceive that both languages can perform the same functions. Even though a child may have developed the necessary cognitive functions, he may still perceive that one of his languages is not suited to the function and will, therefore, not value it or use it for that purpose.

Statement of the Problem

It has been observed that parents frown at it whenever their children speak Yoruba language at home (Olorunsola, 2002;49). Some parents always shout at their children to speak in English Language. A situation where parents prefer English as their children's L1 calls for attention. Their negative attitudes to the mother tongue as their children L1 is erroneous. The consequence of the continued preference for English means the displacement and replacement of many Nigerian languages. This portends a great danger to the survival of the indigenous languages. Lawal (2005:14) highlighted this point when she noted that it is no exaggeration that the use of the mother-tongue is completely banned in some private schools. At the same time, some parents are proud to tell their friends 'my children speak only English Language' (Oshokoya, 2005;401). In some urban areas in Nigeria many young people cannot speak their mother-tongues. The unfortunate thing about the situation is that some parents feel that it is a positive sign that their children will acquire a good command of English Language to the detriment of their mother tongue. The adverse effect of this situation is that many of these youths may become culturally misplaced which in effect leads to serious social and educational problems (Akeredolu- Ale and Alimi, 2002). The same set of youths perform poorly in terminal examinations in English language as noted in

WAEC's Chief Examiner's Report (OlaOlorun et al 2013).

Objective of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to investigate the consequences of parental involvement and attitudes towards learning of Yoruba language in selected Private Secondary Schools in Oyo State. Specifically, it sought to determine:

- (1) The attitude of parents towards the learning of Yoruba Language in Private Secondary Schools.
- (2) The effects of parental attitude towards the learning of Yoruba Language in Private Secondary Schools.
- (3) If parental attitude towards the learning of Yoruba Language influence the learning of the Language in Private Secondary Schools.

Research questions

1. What are the attitudes of parents towards the learning of Yoruba language in private secondary schools?
2. What are the effects of parental attitude towards the learning of Yoruba language in private secondary schools?
3. Does parental attitude towards the learning of Yoruba language influences the learning of the language in private secondary school?

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the parents' attitudes towards their children learning of Yoruba language in schools.

Significance of the Study

The study comes at a time when speculations are rife that Yoruba language is becoming an endangered language. Therefore, the finding of this study will shed more light on how parents' actions or inactions affect children learning of Yoruba language.

The study also goes a long way to ascertain the practicality of National Language Policy on Education which stipulates that medium of instruction in the primary school shall be the language of the environment for the first three years during which English shall be taught as a subject; and from the fourth years English shall be progressively used as medium of instruction, while the language of the immediate environment shall be taught as subject.

The study, is of immense help to the Government and Policy Makers to understand the factors militating against the successful implementation of National Language Policy on Education.

Current Status of Indigenous Language

Towards the end of the twentieth century, researchers have begun to discover that some African Indigenous Languages are already going into extinction. This is happening while Foreign Languages such as French, English, and Arabic continue to flourish. The indigenous languages are being abandoned by their native speakers thereby relegating their own mother tongues to the background. Yoruba language has been identified as one of them. The rate at which this negative linguistics trend is moving was aptly captured by Adeniran (2015: 1) thus:

“Today, many native speakers of the Yoruba language take the continued survival of their language for granted and hardly give any thought to what fate might befall it in the future. This nonchalant, not to say negative, attitude is especially prevalent among the elite who no longer speak the mother tongue to their children. Rather, they speak only English, the ex-colonial official language because of the benefits that attach to the ability to speak the foreign language. Since the elite are the role models whose behaviour is always copied and imitated by the others, Yoruba native speakers of the lower social classes have also formed the habit of speaking English to their children. The situation described above is true of the behaviour

and attitude of Yoruba native speakers to their language in the Republic of Benin and Togo”.

It is in the light of this that Awobuluyi (2014:4) submits that any careful observer of developments within the contemporary Yoruba community is bound to be filled with grave fear for the future of its indigenous language. He equally noted that many Western educated Yoruba persons today seem to consider it a mark of sophistication for them to speak English Language where they should speak Yoruba, their native language. They speak only English Language to their children at home, and wish only English Language to be also spoken and to be used to teach other subjects at schools from the Kindergarten level to the University level. Awobuluyi noted further that the situation is being worsened by the practice in the government establishment in the Yoruba speaking states where all local and state government establishments adopt English as the official and preferred language. He observes that if the governor of a state or one of his high officials visits a traditional ruler in his palace, or market women in the market, the preferred language once again will be English Language (a language that members of the audience hardly comprehend) rather than Yoruba Language, with which both the speaker and his audience are much more comfortable.

While many scholars and writers have blame this negative trend on colonial mentality on the part of native speakers of Yoruba Language. Awobuluyi (2014:7) opined that the attitude appears rather to be borne of lack of contentment, a state of mind that makes people dump their own things, rather than refurbish them, and then start hankering after others.

Indigenous Language as a Medium of Instruction

The indigenous language which is the child's mother tongue is a very crucial language in the child's developmental stage of skill acquisition, language acquisition and educational attainment. Oluwole (2014)

advocated the use of indigenous language as the only means of passing instructions in Nigerian primary and secondary schools which actually corroborates the claim of Peter, Zanele and Zola (2005) that the local languages are the means of communication at the first 6 years in early grades of schooling in South Africa. Oluwole, being a Nigerian and home based Professor and the Director of the Centre for African Culture and Development (CECAFAD), stressed his points and charged the Federal Government of Nigeria to accord Yoruba language same courtesy as French and English languages that are made compulsory in our schools today. He furthered recommended that the Government should revisit the recommendations of Nigeria's former Minister for Education, Prof. Babs Fafunwa which stressed the need for Nigeria to adopt the use of indigenous languages as medium of instructions in schools.

While writing on the extent to which Yoruba language has been abandoned as a medium of instruction, Awobuluyi (2014) contends that if the negative attitude of government officials and many Western educated Yoruba persons towards the Yoruba language is to be blamed on plain ignorance, how is one to explain the same attitude to the language on the part of universities, which are supposed to be citadels of learning and seats of enlightenment? To be sure, Yoruba Language is these days routinely offered as a regular degree programme in all state-owned universities within the Yoruba speaking community. But very few, if any, of the private or faith based Universities within the same community offer the language at any level at all, let alone as a full-fledged degree programmes. Even, among the state-owned Universities today that offer degree programmes in Yoruba Language, only Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, and Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State, permit Yoruba to be used as a medium of instruction for the language beyond the first degree level. For all the other state-owned Universities that offer Yoruba Language beyond the first degree level, English is the only permitted language of instruction and discussion

for the Master's and the Doctorate. Papers written in Yoruba by lecturers other than those in Yoruba studies are routinely discountenanced for the purposes of promotion to different grades of Lectureship, regardless of the actual quality and content of such papers. Finally, Professors wishing to deliver their inaugural lectures in Yoruba are advised or obliged to shelve such an idea if they will not deliver them instead in English Language.

Parental Involvement in Learning

Children who are academically successful display positive attitudes to school and are well adjusted emotionally and socially (Jeynes, 2005). The academic success is due to the children's innate abilities and reflects the advantage of being in the socio economic level (Machen, Wilson and Notar 2005). Children who are economically advantaged receive enough stimulation at home thereby enhancing their academic achievement (Dearing et al., 2006; McWayne et al., 2004). Parents' high aspiration does have additional benefit over and above the advantages children enjoy from being capable and receiving adequate stimulation and resources. One study found that higher level of parental aspiration lowered the likelihood of academic failure during primary school by 48% compared with equally poor but low aspiring parents (Machen et al., 2005; Stelios et al., 2007; Zhao and Akiba, 2009). Skutnabb-Kangas and Dunbar, (2010) identified five dimension of parental involvement, these are:

- (i) **Non-participation** - Parents are not involved in their children's learning. These active non-participant parents may have decided not to be involved. They may either be satisfied with what the school is offering, or are too busy at work, or wants time away from their children. Some of the parents are passive simply because they lack confidence or may be unhappy with the form of partnership the school offers.
- (ii) **Support** - This dimension of parental involvement occurs only when parents are

invited to attend events, e.g. parents/teachers' meeting, contributing to developing school policies, or by providing money for learning resources. This is a form of direct involvement.

- (iii) **Participation** - Parents may wish to participate as helpers providing assistance on outings, running a toy library, supporting children's learning in the setting and providing indirect support at home that is, keeping informed about what happens to thier children at school, monitoring their academic progress, reading to them and providing intellectually stimulating activities for them at home and within the community.
- (iv) **Partnership** - This dimension of parental involvement is a wide scope coming inform of partnership with practitioners. As a result of equal access to information and records some parents may share in the diagnosis and assessment of their children, or involve in the selection of practitioners, or become practitioners.
- (v) **Control** - In this case, parents determine and implement decisions.

Methods

Research Design adopted for this study is descriptive design. Population of Study comprised of all private secondary schools in Oyo state .Three hundred parents from private secondary schools in Oyo state were the sampled from the population. Parents were drawn from six schools in six local governments in Oyo State. The local governments were randomly selected using the pick and drop balloting system to ensure that each senatorial district has equal and independent chance of being selected. All the six schools were private schools. Subjects were drawn from the high, the middle and the low social status. Levels of education and types of profession was used as indices of the social status of the parents. In all one hundred parents participated in the study

Research Instruments

The instrument that were used for data collection in this study is Parents' Language Preference Questionnaire (PLPQ). This is a 14-item questionnaire adapted from Coardy (2001). This instrument sought to know which language parents prefer their children to speak first and which one they encourage their children to use more. It also supplied parents' personal data. The adapted instrument were revalidated by experts in Language Education department at the

Federal College of Education (Special) Oyo. The Split-Half method of reliability using Spearman-Brown formular was used with reliability coefficient ($r = 0.85$). This instrument were administered to students' parents on Open Day and Parents' Forum days in the schools randomly selected in the local governments. These were collected immediately by the researcher. The study was carried out within a period of six months. The breakdown of the activities and their durations are as stated below.

Table 1: Research schedule

S/N	Activity	Duration	Date
1	Writing of Introduction, body of the work and research methodology	2 months	May – July, 2023
2	Validating the research instrument	2 months	July – September, 2023
3	Administration of the instrument and analysis of data	3 months	October – December, 2023
4	Report writing, typesetting, and binding	4 months	January – April, 2024
5.	Data analysis and report writing		April – May, 2024

Results

Research question 1: What are the attitudes of parents towards the learning of Yoruba language in private secondary schools?

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

S/N	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	I rate Yoruba language very low among other languages	3.00	.572
2	I discourage my children from Yoruba language at home	2.63	.538
3	I used Yoruba language frequently in solving home works	2.08	.627
4	I am ashamed of speaking Yoruba language	2.47	.689
5	I help my children in Yoruba language assignment	2.05	.780
	Weighted Mean	2.45	

The above table further revealed a weighted mean of 2.45 out of the maximum obtainable score of 4.00 which is lower than the standard mean of 2.5 which reveals the attitudes of parents towards the learning of Yoruba language in private secondary schools is low.

Research question 2: What are the effects of parental attitude towards the learning of Yoruba language in private secondary schools?

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

S/N	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
1.	Yoruba language is preferred to express inner-thoughts and emotion	3.29	.514
2.	Yoruba language helps in learning process	3.10	.842
3.	Yoruba language is associated to the socio-economically deprived group	2.14	.775
4.	Yoruba language is a stigmatized language when compare with English Language	2.40	.634
5.	Yoruba language denied been respected in the society	2.14	.782
	Weighted Mean	2.61	

The above table further revealed a weighted mean of 2.61 out of the maximum obtainable score of 4.00 which is slightly higher than the standard mean of 2.5. From the table, the effects of parental attitude towards the learning of Yoruba language in private secondary schools are that Yoruba language is associated to the socio- economically deprived group. Yoruba language is a stigmatized language when

compare with English Language and Yoruba language is denied been respected in the society. These are the effects that has means lower than the weighted mean of 2.61.

Research question 3: Does parental attitude towards the learning of Yoruba language influence the learning of the language in private secondary school?

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics

S/N	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
11	Yoruba language is rated minor in Nigerian contents	3.25	.818
12	Our study room contains Yoruba language textbooks	3.36	.877
13	The facilities provided at home stimulate with foreign books	3.34	.475
14	Teaching resources for Yoruba language are inadequate in schools	3.41	.746
15	English language is preferred to Yoruba language.	3.33	.668
	Weighted Mean	3.01	

The above table further revealed a weighted mean of 3.01 out of the maximum obtainable score of 4.00 which is higher than the standard mean of 2.5 which reveals that parental attitude towards the learning of Yoruba language do not influence the learning of the language in private secondary school.

Hypothesis:

There is no significant difference in parents' attitude towards their children learning of Yoruba language in schools. Chi-square of Parental Attitude on Learning of Yoruba Language

Table 4: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	37.187 ^a	150	.011
Likelihood Ratio	33.698	150	.028
Linear-by-Linear Association	16.969	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	300		

a. 28 cells (93.3%) have expected count less than 5. Minimum expected count is .03.

The table above shows that there significant level 0.000 is less than the p-value of 0.000; therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis that there is significant difference in parents' attitude towards their children learning of Yoruba language in schools

Discussion of Findings

The result shows that the effects of parental attitude towards the learning of Yoruba language in private secondary schools is associated to the socio-economically deprived group. This is in line with Oluwole (2014) that Yoruba language is a stigmatized language. When compared with English, Yoruba language is denied been respected in the society with the effect that it has mean lower than the weighted means of 2.61.

Also, the study revealed that the attitudes of parents towards the learning of Yoruba language in private secondary schools is low. This result also corroborated the findings of Awobuluyi (2014)) that contends that Yoruba language had been abandoned as a medium of instruction. It is to be pointed out that academic success is due to the children's innate abilities and this should reflects the advantage of using mother tongue at home to enhance the performance of students.

The study also revealed that parental attitude towards the learning of Yoruba language do not influence the learning of the language in private secondary schools and this is corroborated

by Awobuluyi (2014) that submits that any careful observer of developments within the contemporary Yoruba community is bound to be filled with grave fear for the future of this indigeneous language. He equally noted that many western educated Yoruba persons today seem to consider it a mark of sophistication for them to speak English language where they should speak Yoruba their native language. They speak only English language to their children at home and wish only English language to be also spoken and to be used to teach other subjects at school from the kindergarten level to the University level. Awobuluyi (2014) further noted that the situation is further worsened by the practice in secondary schools.

In conclusion, mother tongue (L1) oral proficiency refers to L1 learners' ability to speak their first language to ensure communicative objectives in real life settings. So parents should endeavor to encourage their children to use mother tongue both at home and in schools.

The gap that occur in the study of the consequences of parental involvement and attitudes towards learning of Yoruba language in selected private secondary has been filled by the findings that that parental attitudes towards learning of Yoruba Language do not influence the learning of the language in private secondary schools. This is the value that the study has added to knowledge.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Children should be brought up using the mother tongue in order to adjust quickly to the school system.

All private schools should adopt the Federal Government National Policy (FGN) National Language Policy for the use in all private schools across the country.

Yoruba Language should be made compulsory as a medium of instruction and communication in all primary and secondary schools in the state.

There must be proper orientation for all stakeholders, especially parents on the need to cultivate the habit of speaking Yoruba to their children at home.

Yoruba language and culture should be mandated to be used in all private schools in Oyo State.

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