

Full Length Research Paper

Mother tongue instruction and academic achievement of pupils in nursery schools

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The study was carried out to ascertain if mother tongue instruction will facilitate the learning of Social Studies and English language concepts among Nursery School children. The design was a pretest posttest control group design. The sample comprises of 249 Nursery School pupils from Nursery Schools in Ile-Ife. The pupils were grouped into three namely A, B and C. The groups were presented different learning packages. A pretest on selected concepts was administered on the students in the first week while teaching took place using English language and Yoruba for groups A and B respectively' in the second week, A posttest was administered on the students in the fourth week. The data collected were analyzed using inferential statistics. The result showed that the mother tongue instruction aided learning better than English Language as a medium of instruction. It was therefore concluded that teachers should be encouraged to make use of mother-tongue instruction while teaching in nursery classes.

Keywords: Mother tongue, Achievement, English language, concept, social studies concepts.

INTRODUCTION

Since the introduction of formal education by the colonial masters, English Language was introduced as a medium of instruction in our schools. Emphasis on the use of English language is still much felt in educational institutions in Nigeria as the various policies of education have classified the subject as a major discipline. 'The 1882 Education Ordinance for example capitalized on the use of English language as a medium of classroom interaction. Up till the present moment, it is essential to have at least a credit pass in English language at the school certificate level before a candidate could be admitted into any of the Nigerian Universities. Emphases are also laid on passing the subject before entering other tertiary institutions in the country. Also, the current National Policy on Education (NPE) indicates the importance of English language despite its preference for the Nigerian child's mother-tongue as the medium of instruction in nursery and the first three years of primary education.

It should however be noted that some educators frown at the position of English language as a compulsory subject in our schools. They argued in favour of the use

of mother tongue as a medium of communication and instruction in the classrooms. The National Policy on Education's provision for the use of local language to teach in the nurse and list three years of primary education in Nigeria is set to be implemented.

In line with the provision of mother-tongue instruction as a medium of instruction in nursery institutions, Fafunwa (1982) observed that if the Nigerian child is to be encouraged from the start to develop curiosity, initiative and manipulative ability. Spontaneous flexibility, manual dexterity, mechanical comprehension and the coordination of hand and eye. He/she should acquire these skills and attitudes through his mother tongue. Agun (1991).Fasanmi and Adesina (2003).Aladejana and Odejobi (1999) 'wrote that a child will learn faster and better if he is taught in his mother tongue at the early stage of his education. It was identified that the mother tongue instruction will help the children to acquire facts and information easily and quickly interpret information obtained properly and correctly acquire practical and manipulative skills easily and quickly and acquire and develop desirable attitudes towards people. In the same

Table I. Showing the Distribution of Pupils According to schools.

| Schools | Male | Female | Total |
|---------|------|--------|-------|
| A | 28 | 40 | 68 |
| B | 39 | 30 | 69 |
| C | 30 | 36 | 66 |
| D | 28 | 18 | 46 |
| Total | 125 | 124 | 249 |

Table 2.

| Group | N | Mean | S.D | df | Calculated t-value | Critical T-value |
|----------------------------|-----|-------|------|-----|--------------------|------------------|
| Mother Tongue (Group A) | 80 | 24.46 | 1.92 | | 15.45 | |
| English Language (Group B) | 104 | 18.24 | 3.19 | 182 | | |

vein, Olowokere (1991): Odejobi (1997) Afolayan: and Awoniyi (1982) argued in favour of mother tongue instruction while Dare (1981); Durojaiye (1982) and Macaulay (1998) supported the use of English language for teaching and instruction at the nursery schoollevel in Nigeria. Their arguments include the problem of multilingualism, nature of the locations of schools and the support shown by many parents for English language as a good measure of teaching their children.

This study is motivated by the following reasons:

1. The problem of low academic achievement of students which is traceable to their foundations in education and
2. Youths nowadays find it difficult to communicate orally and written from their vernaculars in—the country.

This study is therefore designed to examine if mother tongue instruction could facilitate the learning among children in nursery schools. In this case, the study examined academic performance in English Language and Social Studies using the mother tongue (Yoruba) as the subject and vernacular of observation. Social Studies and English language occupy important positions in the school curriculum in Nigeria. They are compulsory subjects Learners must offer and pass at the junior and Secondary school levels. Against this background the proper role of vernacular in proper understanding of the subject matters of school subject especially in nursery schools need to be considered. These paper therefore purposively addressed the following research hypotheses.

- a. There is no significant difference in the academic performance of Social Studies students taught with mother tongue instruction and those taught with English, Language.
- b. There is no significant difference in the academic performance of English language learners taught with

mother tongue instruction and those English taught with English language.

METHODOLOGY

The design for the study was the pretest-posttest control group design. The sample comprised of 249 Nursery school pupils from four Nursery schools in Ile-Ife. The pupils were between the ages of three and six years. The learners were randomized into three groups as shown in Tables below (Table 1).

Key pp+MI is the group that was given pre-test, and taught with mother instruction

PPEL is the group given pre-test, post test and taught with English Language

PP is the group given pre-test, post —test and not taught at all.

(Table 2): T-test Analysis showing the Comparison of Social Studies Pupils that with

Mother Tongue and English.

(Table 3) showed the comparison between social studies pupils taught with mother tongue and English Language. The mean of Mother tongue groups was 24.46 and that of the group taught with English Language was 18.24. The observed t-value was 15.45. The critical t-value is less than the calculated t-value the null hypothesis is rejected and so there is significant differences between the academic performances of the two groups of students. The mother tongue group is more favourable

(Table 3) showed the comparison between English language in a comprehension. The mean of English Language pupils taught with mother tongue and English

Table 3. t-test Analyses showing the Comparison of English Language pupils taught with Mother-Tongue and English Language

| Group | N | Mean | S.D | df | Calculated t-value | Critical T-value |
|----------------------------|-----|------|------|-----|--------------------|------------------|
| MotherTongue(GroupA) | 104 | 19.1 | 2.88 | 182 | 10.75 | 1.96 |
| English Language (Group B) | 80 | 23.1 | 2.49 | 182 | | |

Language group was 19.1 and that of the group taught with mother tongue

23.41. The observed r-value was 10.75 while the critical value of 1.96 was less than the calculated t-value. This means that there is a significant difference between the academic performance of students taught with English Language and those taught with mother tongue instruction. The findings are in line with Agun (1991) Fafunwa (1982). Awoniyi (1980): and Aladejana and Odejobi (1999).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

From the results gathered in this study, it was observed that, the groups of pupils taught with mother-tongue instruction performed academically better than the group taught with English language in both Social Studies and English Language To ensure that effort is geared towards making students enjoy classes: learn more effectively and retain better that they have learnt, the use of mother tongue instruction must be incorporated into the teaching of schools as emphasized by the National Policy of education in the country organized for teachers in this regard. Glossaries of concepts in the school subjects translated into Vernacular should be made available to teachers.

It is therefore concluded that the use of mother tongue instruction is a measure of effective teaching of nursery school pupils and so the means of instruction is the recommended for the teaching of school subject at the elementary level.

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