

Parents', Teachers' and Students' Beliefs about the Use and Study of Mother-tongue in the Secondary Schools in Akinyele Local Government Area, Oyo State, Nigeria

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received: March 04, 2019

Accepted: April 28, 2019

Published: April 30, 2019

Volume: 7 Issue: 2

Conflicts of interest: None

Funding: None

ABSTRACT

The study explored parents, teachers, and students' beliefs about the use and study of mother tongue (MT) in selected secondary schools in Akinyele Local Government Area, Oyo State, Nigeria. Descriptive survey design was adopted. Twelve public senior secondary schools were randomly selected. Purposive sampling technique was used to select at least 15 literate parents, 12 teachers from different subject areas, and 20 students from each school. Overall, 211 literate parents, 195 teachers and 237 SSII students participated. Three instruments used were: Parents' Questionnaire ($r=0.87$), Teachers' Questionnaire ($r=0.90$) and Students' Questionnaire ($r=0.87$). Data were analysed using frequency count, percentage, mean and standard deviation. Results show that parents, teachers and students have strong beliefs that using the MT to teach will facilitate the learning of English and other subjects and enhance participation in lessons. They also believe that studying the MT as a school subject would promote students' sense of identity and positive attitude towards the Nigerian culture. Students believe that the MT remains the best language to learn with. The study has shown that the participants have strong beliefs about the pedagogical and sociocultural relevance of the MT in education. There is a positive indication that the main stakeholders (parents, teachers and students) are ready to embrace the study of MT as a subject in the secondary school. It is therefore recommended that the governments should endeavour to invest in the development of the orthographies of the Nigerian languages to make them usable in education.

Key words: Parents, Teachers, and Students' Beliefs, Mother Tongue in Education, Nigerian Languages

INTRODUCTION

The term, mother-tongue-in-education is often associated with the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction in schools. Yet, there is a second aspect, which is often forgotten: studying it as a subject in school. While the former is mainly concerned with pedagogy, the latter relates more with cultural transmission. Although teaching through the mother tongue (MT) has been identified as having a lot of cognitive and academic benefits, studying it as a school subject enables students to consolidate their competence, performance and knowledge of the socio-cultural aspects of the language. Mother tongue for pedagogical purposes has gained more attention perhaps because of its identified roles in enhancing learning and making education accessible to the indigenous children who speak minority languages and are often disadvantaged.

UNESCO (1953) considers the mother tongue as a tool which every human being relies on for learning and for self-expression. It is also the basis of thought (Diaz & Perez, 2015). Since one of the fundamental principles of education is that learning should proceed from the known to the unknown, learners' prior knowledge is best expressed through the language they are more at home with. Cook (2001) notes that

according to some studies on cognitive processing, even advanced second language learners are less efficient at absorbing information from the second language L2 than from the first language (L1). Hence, the mother tongue remains relevant even when a second language has been learned. A synthesis of mother tongue based bi/multilingual education programmes around the world has shown dramatically increased academic achievement (Pinnock & Vijayakumar, 2009). Teaching through the mother tongue is also said to enhance the cognitive development of critical thinking skills and results in increased learning, access and equity, improved learning outcomes, lower overall costs and reduced chances of repetition and dropping out of school (United Nations, 2016: World Bank, 2005). It enables learners to have a strong sense of confidence, self-esteem, motivation, initiative as well as creativity (Benson, 2004; Njoroge & Gathigia, 2011) and could facilitate the learning of additional languages (Ball, 2010). These are possible because proficiency in the language of instruction enhances active participation in the learning process.

Studying the mother tongue, as a subject, enables students to better learn their native cultural heritage since cultures are preserved and transmitted through the language spoken by each

community. Education and culture are inseparable. According to Pajares (1992), education, whether formal or informal is the directed and purposeful learning which aims at bringing behaviour in line with cultural requirements. Obanya (2004) also equates education with the inter-generational transfer of a society's cultural heritage, and the indigenous language is the vehicle for such transmission. If the school fails to reinforce the learning of the mother tongue, students can be cut off from their culture and education can become counter-cultural.

In spite of the various positive effects of mother tongue in education, it has received minimal patronage in Nigeria while English, which is a second language, is the preferred medium of instruction at almost all levels of education. The MT is no longer welcomed even at the nursery and primary school levels, irrespective of the bi/multilingual method stated in the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2014; NPE, 2008). However, it must be noted that the Nigerian language policy has not encouraged the use and study of the mother tongue especially at the senior secondary level. For example, although studying one 'major' Nigerian language (Igbo, Yoruba or Hausa) used to be compulsory for all students at that level, including registering it in their final examination (West African Senior School Certificate Examination), recent editions of the NPE limited the study of Nigerian languages to only students in the humanities (NPE, 2008, 2014). Although both editions expanded the Nigerian languages to be studied beyond the so-called three major languages, the terms: 'any Nigerian language that has orthography and literature, etc.' (NPE, 2008, 19) and "any Nigerian language that has curriculum" (NPE 2014, p. 20), has not solved the problem since the government has not made significant effort at developing both the orthography or curriculum of more indigenous languages. Besides, students whose mother tongues have no orthography and literature may not be keen to study other indigenous languages.

Meanwhile, lack of proficiency in English language has remained an obstacle to successful education for many Nigerian students. Many of them are constantly experiencing both linguistic and academic failures, two factors that are sometimes difficult to differentiate. Their yearly mass failures in examinations, especially the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) and Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) are common knowledge. Students' rate of failure is not unrelated to the link between proficiency in the language of instruction and academic achievement as shown in Nade (2016) and Ozowuba (2018). Since English is the preferred language of instruction in Nigeria, students' failures have strong link with their poor command of English. With little or no recognition of the indigenous languages in Nigerian education and over-reliance on English language, it is either a student knows English or loses out in school – and by extension, in life opportunities which education is meant to prepare them for. The present reality is that many students are neither literate in English nor in their MT.

The negative attitude to the use and study of the mother tongue in schools could be due to certain language beliefs and assumptions. Nyarigoti and Ambiyo (2014) had expressed the need to address teachers', parents' and communities' attitudes and beliefs about MT instruction so that they act as supports

to the education system, rather than barriers. Language beliefs refer to the values held by members of a speech community toward language and language use (Burton, 2013). The language beliefs one holds may determine one's language choices as well as acceptance or rejection of MT in education. Although beliefs generally can be mere assumptions, they are nonetheless said to be hard to change or resist (Pajares, 1992).

Mother tongue in education has been identified as a controversial subject (Diaz & Perez, 2015) essentially due to certain language beliefs held by the society. People use such beliefs to justify their resistance to the use of MT in education, in spite of research evidence that have refuted most of them. For example, the indigenous languages are considered inferior to other world languages, as retrogressive, and having no place in the modern world (Bamgbose, 2011; Romaine, 2015). However, UNESCO (1953) stresses that there is nothing in the structure of any language which precludes it from becoming a vehicle of modern civilization. Similarly, (Benson, 2004) argues that all human languages are equally able to express their speakers' thoughts and can develop new terms and structures as needed. In Nigeria the successful outcome of the famous Ife 6-Year Primary Project (1970-1976) in which Yoruba was used to teach the children all the school subjects for six years is a proof that the indigenous languages are by no means inferior to English language.

The preference for English to the mother tongue as the medium of instruction could have some link with language cultures. For example, Ball (2010) makes reference to a common belief that education through the mother tongue could inhibit the learning of additional languages and may even impede academic success. Besides, since the use of mother tongue in education entails recognising more indigenous languages, developing instructional materials and textbooks in them, it is sometimes considered very expensive to implement. However, a cost-benefit analysis of MT-based education showed that it is cheaper than education in the second or majority language. A study carried out in Mali showed that although the cost of educating children in French-only programme is about 8% less per year than MT-based schooling, the total cost of educating a student through the 6-year primary cycle is about 27% more, essentially because of the difference in repetition and dropout rates (The World Bank, 2005). Also, research evidence shows that proficiency in the MT enhances the learning of additional languages due to learners' ability to transfer their linguistic and cognitive skills. This assertion is supported by the developmental interdependence hypothesis proposed by Cummins (1979). Added to the above is the belief that proficiency in English will bring economic benefits (Sallabank, 2010). Hence, people will prefer education through English than through the indigenous languages.

However, the rejection of students' MT in education has serious academic and sociocultural consequences. It denies students access to a linguistic foundation, a solid cultural base (Obanya, 2004) and hampers learning. It also retards development because it will be impossible for the young people to participate in the development of their communities if they cannot understand the native language through which their society's needs and aspirations are articulated and shared. Jagusah (2001) insists that the African child needs to under-

stand the African context very well if such a child is ever to contribute to moving such a context forward. Besides, as language endangerment is becoming a global threat to the survival of the indigenous languages, using the MT in education will enable them remain relevant and ensure their survival. As Chimhundu (1997) stated, it is through usage that language development occurs and that its technical scopes are extended.

To address the problems of language in education as well as identify the language preference of parents, teachers and students, series of studies have been carried out in the area of mother tongue in education. Positive disposition to the use of mother tongue in education was reported by Adesina and Okewole (2014) while divided opinions of teachers and parents were reported by Nyarigoti and Ambiyi (2014). However, Ezeokoli (1999) discovered that although English was the predominant language of instruction, teachers also relied on the MT for effective teaching of other subjects. Studies have equally shown a preference for the use of both English and the MT for instruction (Amadi, 2012; Egwuogu, 2011). However, a synthesis of research shows a negative attitude to the use of the MT for instruction (Khejeri, 2014; Kinyaduka & Kiwara, 2013; OlaOlorun, Ikonta, & Adeosun, 2013). Whereas previous studies explored teachers' and parents' attitude to and preference for language of instruction, the present study investigated the beliefs of parents, teachers and students' that inform the use and the need to study the mother tongue as a subject.

Statement of the Problem

There is no question about the numerous advantages of mother tongue in education. It holds the key to the survival of the world's cultural and linguistic diversity. Furthermore, it is the best medium children can learn. However, in Nigeria, there remains a general preference for English language in education at the expense of the mother tongues, even against the language policy provisions in the National Policy on Education (NPE). Meanwhile, the present state of education in the country in terms of access and quality is the least desirable as students continue to record mass failure in their final examinations. The declining performance of students in examinations and the resistance to the use of mother tongue in education by parents, teachers and students provoke some concerns. The negative disposition to the use of mother tongue could be associated with language beliefs, colonization and multiplicity of indigenous languages. Previous studies have concentrated mostly on the pedagogical aspects of the mother tongue in education while very few, (if any) have looked at it comprehensively by combining the pedagogical with the sociocultural aspects which is achieved through studying it as a school subject. Given this background, the study investigated parents', teachers' and students' beliefs about the use and study of the mother tongue in the secondary schools in Akinyele Local Government Area, Oyo State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What are the parents' beliefs about:
 - a. the use of the mother tongue in instruction in the senior secondary school?
 - b. studying the mother tongue as a subject in the senior secondary school?
2. What are the teachers' beliefs about:
 - a. the use of the mother tongue in instruction in the senior secondary school?
 - b. studying the mother tongue as a subject in the senior secondary school?
3. What are the students' beliefs about:
 - a. the use of the mother tongue in instruction in the senior secondary school?
 - b. studying the mother tongue as a subject in the senior secondary school?
4. To what extent are parents' and teachers' beliefs about:
 - a. the use of the mother tongue in instruction in the senior secondary school similar?
 - b. studying the mother tongue as a subject in the senior secondary school similar?

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the linguistic interdependence and the threshold level hypotheses proposed by Cummins (1976, 1979). The linguistic interdependency hypothesis was partly influenced by an earlier UNESCO report produced by Skutnabb-Kangas and Toukoma (1976) to determine the linguistic level and development of both the mother tongue (MT) and the second language (L2) of Finnish migrant children attending Swedish comprehensive school. Empirical evidence of the study showed that the extent to which the migrant children had developed their MT prior to contact with Swedish was strongly related to how well they learned Swedish, that is, their L2. Cummins (1976, 1979) therefore, posit that the level of L2 competence that a bilingual child attains is partially a function of the type of competence he/she has developed in L1 at the time when intensive exposure to L2 begins. Furthermore, when the child's first language is promoted, exposure to the L2 is likely to result in high level of linguistic competence in the target language (L2), without reducing her/his competence in the L1 (Cummins 1979).

The threshold level hypothesis is also a theoretical model for explaining the cognitive effects of bilingualism on bilingual children. Cummins (1979) proposes that there may be threshold levels of linguistic competence which a bilingual child must attain both in order to avoid cognitive deficits and reap cognitive benefits in full. Cummins (1979) believes that there are two threshold levels of bilingual competence: the lower and the higher. Attaining a lower level would suffice to avoid any negative cognitive effects whereas attaining a second, higher level might be necessary to lead to accelerated cognitive growth. Toukoma and Skutnabb-Kangas (1977) had argued that the basis for the possible attainment of the threshold level of L2 competence might depend on the level of competence attained in the mother tongue.

The two theories are relevant to the present study because in Nigerian, English, which is predominantly used for teaching and learning is an L2 for most students. Going by the two hypotheses, students need to be proficient in their MT in order to have a solid linguistic foundation for learning English language. Proficiency in the MT should therefore be considered an added advantage to Nigerian students. However, if students are to attain the higher threshold level, their MT should be used for in-

struction and taught as a school subject as these would increase their proficiency level. One of the commonest excuses for failing to use the MT in Nigerian education is due to the belief that it could impede students' learning of English language. Added to this is the belief that bilingualism could cause mental confusion (Benson, 2004), thus, in order to learn a second language, the L1 has to be subdued. The two ideas are therefore, misleading. Skutnabb-Kangas and Toukomaa, (1976:85) also observed that children with poor skills in their mother tongue are prevented from developing a strong and balanced national and cultural identity, which could lead to psychological, educational and social problems as well as forced cultural assimilation. In the present study, the emphases are on both the pedagogical and sociocultural relevance of the mother tongue in education.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the survey design. This design was considered appropriate for a study that explored the beliefs about the use and study of mother tongue in education and describe them. Twelve public senior secondary schools in Akinyele Local Government Area, Oyo State were purposively selected based on the willingness of the school principals, teachers and students to participate in the study and the literacy status of parents. From each school at least 15 literate parents, 12 teachers from different subject areas and 20 students were randomly selected. Overall, 211 literate parents, 195 teachers and 237 SSII students participated in the study.

Three research instruments were used: Questionnaire on Parents' Beliefs about the Use and Study of Mother Tongue in Education (QPBUSMTE), Questionnaire on Teachers' Beliefs about the Use and Study of Mother Tongue in Educa-

tion (QTBUSMTE) and Questionnaire on Students' Beliefs about the Use and Study of Mother Tongue in Education (QSBUSMTE). Each of the three instruments has Sections A (demographics) and B (further divided into the pedagogical and socio-cultural relevance of MT in education). The QPBUSMTE and QTBUSMTE are similar. The pedagogical relevance of the MT in the two instruments were adapted from Ramos (2001). Six out of the 12 items in Ramos (2001) were selected and rephrased to suit the present study. The QTBUSMTE as well as the second parts of QPBUSMTE and QTBUSMTE (14 and 13 items respectively) were developed by the researchers. The QTBUSMTE has 28 items comprising the pedagogical relevance (12 items) and the socio-cultural relevance (16 items) of the mother tongue. Items in the three instruments were of the modified Likert type with four options of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree respectively. Their content and face validity were assessed by four experts in test and measurement in the Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan and trial-tested on 40 parents (r = 0.87), 51 teachers (r = 0.897) and 49 students (r = 0.87).The QPBUSMTE was administered on 211 literate parents, QTBUSMTE on 195 teachers and QSBUSMTE on 237 students. The data collected were analysed using frequency count, percentage, mean and standard deviation.

RESULTS

1a) Research Question: What are Parents' beliefs about The Use of Mother Tongue in Education?

As shown in Table 1, parents believe that students who are literate in the MT will more easily learn English (87.2%),

Table 1. Parents beliefs about the use of mother tongue in instruction in the Senior Secondary School (arranged in descending order by mean)

S/n	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD
1	Students who can read and write in their mother tongue will more easily learn English than those who cannot	84 39.8%	100 47.4%	24 11.4%	3 1.4%	3.56	0.711
2	Students would do better in school if they are taught in their mother tongue	61 29.0%	105 50.0%	40 19.0%	4 1.9%	3.06	0.746
3	Students are more confident when allowed to ask questions in the mother tongue	59 28.4%	100 48.1%	40 19.2%	9 4.3%	3.01	0.808
4	Using the mother tongue for instruction will enable students to interpret information obtained more adequately	53 25.5%	109 52.4%	41 19.7%	5 2.4%	3.01	0.742
5	It is very important for students to be literate in their mother tongue	57 27.7%	93 45.1%	45 21.8%	11 5.3%	2.95	0.843
6	Teaching in the mother tongue will allow students to develop practical skills easily	41 20.0%	115 56.1%	39 19.0%	10 4.9%	2.91	0.762
7	Classroom participation will be enhanced if students are allowed to use their mother tongue	35 16.7%	123 58.9%	42 20.1%	9 4.3%	2.88	0.727
8	Students will learn concepts better when taught in the mother tongue than in English	50 23.9%	90 43.1%	61 29.2%	8 3.8%	2.87	0.819
9	Students who speak their mother tongue often may not pass their examination due to interference	16 7.6%	50 23.7%	105 49.8%	40 19%	2.80	0.833
10	Using the mother tongue to teach students will lead to poor academic performance	25 12.1%	46 22.3%	100 48.5%	35 17.0%	2.70	0.892

(Contd...)

Table 1. (Continued)

S/n	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD
11	All secondary schools should teach school subjects in the students' mother tongue	41 19.4%	75 35.5%	72 34.1%	23 10.9%	2.64	0.918
12	Teaching core subjects in the mother tongue will result in poor mastery of English	25 12.0%	62 29.7%	90 43.1%	32 15.3%	2.62	0.886
13	I will not be happy if my child is taught in the mother tongue instead of in English	31 15.0%	71 34.5%	82 39.8%	22 10.7%	2.46	0.876
14	Mother tongue should not be used for teaching because technical and scientific concepts cannot be easily expressed in it	46 21.9%	76 36.2%	63 30.0%	25 11.9%	2.32	0.948
15	It is better for students to learn all the subjects in English than in their mother tongue	38 18.4%	92 44.7%	56 27.2%	20 9.7%	2.28	0.877
16	Students will learn English better if they stop speaking their mother tongue in school	49 23.6%	74 35.6%	65 31.3%	20 9.6%	2.27	0.930

Weighted mean=2.77

that students would do better in school if taught in their MT (79%) and that teaching through the MT will enable them to interpret information obtained more adequately (77.9%). Also, 76.5% of the parents believe that students are more confident when allowed to ask questions in the MT and 72.8% believe that literacy in the MT is very important for students. Similarly, 76.1% of them believe that teaching in the MT will enhance the development of practical skills; 75.6% holds that using the MT will increase classroom participation while 67% believe that students will learn concepts better when taught in the MT than in English. Most parents do not support the opinion that speaking the MT could lead to examination failure or poor academic success (68.8% and 65.5% respectively disagreed). Similarly, 58.3% of the parents did not agree that teaching core subjects in the MT will result in poor mastery of English while 58.1% believe that the MT should not be used for teaching because technical and scientific concepts cannot be easily expressed in it. Other results are as shown on Table 1. The overall weighted mean is 2.77 out of the maximum obtainable mean score of 5.00; this is higher than the standard mean of 2.5. This indicates that parents have strong and positive beliefs about the use of mother tongue for instruction in the senior secondary school.

1b) Research Question: What are Parents' beliefs about Studying the Mother Tongue as a Subject in the Senior Secondary School?

Results in Table 2 show the following beliefs of parents: Teaching the MT will make students to acquire and develop positive attitudes towards Nigerian culture and values (91.3%); To preserve the cultural heritage, the MT should be taught as a compulsory subject at the secondary level of education 87.9%); Teaching the MT will facilitate the development of the Nigerian languages (80.6%); teaching the MT will give students a sense of identity (81.5%) and that parents will be happy if their children studies the MT in school (80.7%).The results

further indicate that the beliefs parents hold about studying the MT in school include: The MT will die if students stop learning them in school (66.7%); Teachers should encourage students to speak and learn their MT in school (67.2%); Students should register the MT in the WAS-SCE to improve their mastery of the language (67.7%) and that parents should encourage their children to speak the MT at home (64.9%). The view that since English is a world language, it should be the sole language students are to learn in school was accepted by only 34.1% just as only 42.2% hold that students should not learn their MTs because they have little economic values. Similarly, that it is impossible to translate science textbooks into the MT was accepted by 53.5%. With a weighted mean of 2.89, the results indicate that parents have strong beliefs about studying the MT as a subject in the senior secondary school for their sociocultural values.

2a) Research Question: What are the Teachers' beliefs about the Use of the Mother Tongue in Instruction in the Senior Secondary School?

Table 3 indicates the following: that students who can read and write in their MT will more easily learn English than those who cannot (89.7%); that students would do better in school if they are taught in their MT (88%); that teaching with the MT will enable students to interpret information obtained more adequately (89.5%) and that students are more confident when allowed to ask questions in the MT (92.2%). Also 87.4% believe that students learn concepts better when taught in the MT than in English whereas 87.5% support the ideas that classroom participation will be enhanced if students are allowed to use their MT. That teaching in the MT will allow students to develop practical skills easily was supported by 83.4% while 82.7% believe that it is very important for students to be literate in their MT. Table 3 further revealed that most teachers are not in support of the views that students who speak their MT often may not pass their

Table 2. Parents' beliefs about studying the mother tongue as a subject in the senior secondary school (arranged in descending order by Mean)

S/n	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD
1	Teaching the mother tongue will make students to acquire and develop positive attitudes towards Nigerian culture and values	87 41.8%	103 49.5%	16 7.7%	2 1.0%	3.32	0.657
2	To preserve the cultural heritage, the mother tongue should be taught as a compulsory subject at the secondary level of education	74 35.7%	108 52.2%	21 10.1%	4 1.9%	3.22	0.701
3	Teaching the mother tongue will facilitate the development of the Nigerian languages	64 31.1%	102 49.5%	37 18.0%	3 1.5%	3.10	0.735
4	Teaching the mother tongue will give students a sense of identity	59 28.8%	108 52.7%	36 17.6%	2 1.0%	3.09	0.705
5	I will be happy if my child studies his/her mother tongue in school	66 31.9%	101 48.8%	28 13.5%	12 5.8%	3.07	0.828
6	The indigenous languages will die if students stop learning them in school	59 28.5%	79 38.2%	53 25.6%	16 7.7%	2.87	0.916
7	Teachers should encourage students to speak and learn their mother tongue in school	42 20.3%	97 46.9%	55 26.6%	13 6.3%	2.81	0.829
8	I would like my child to register his/her mother tongue in the WASSCE so as to improve his/her mastery of the language	45 22.1%	93 45.6%	48 23.5%	18 8.8%	2.81	0.881
9	Since students learn their mother tongue at home, there is no need promoting it school	18 8.7%	49 23.6%	96 46.2%	45 21.6%	2.81	0.875
10	Parents should not be speaking English to their children at home but rather encourage them to speak the mother tongue	46 22.1%	89 42.8%	54 26.0%	19 9.1%	2.79	0.895
11	Since English is spoken in many parts of the world, it should be the only language students should learn in school	25 12.0%	46 22.1%	88 42.3%	49 23.6%	2.77	0.944
12	Students who study in English may not learn the cultural relevance of their mother tongues	36 17.6%	84 41.0%	72 35.1%	13 6.3%	2.70	0.832
13	The mother tongue has little economic value, so students should not spend their time learning it at school	18 8.7%	69 33.5%	78 37.9%	41 19.9%	2.69	0.890
14	It is impossible to translate science textbooks into the mother tongue	33 16.2%	76 37.3%	69 33.8%	26 12.7%	2.43	0.910

Weighted mean=2.89

examination due to interference (32.8%), teaching with the MT will lead to poor academic performance (23.5%); the MT should not be used for teaching because technical and scientific concepts cannot be easily expressed in it (39.6%) and students will learn English better if they stop speaking their MT in school (41.3%). Other results are as stated in Table 3. The weighted mean is 2.94, also indicating that teachers have strong positive beliefs about the use of MT for instruction.

2b) Research Question: What are the Teachers' beliefs about Studying the Mother Tongue as a Subject in the Senior Secondary School?

As shown in Table 4, most teachers believe that: the MT should be made a compulsory subject in order to preserve the Nigerian cultural heritage (92.2%), that it is important for students to register either their MT or a Nigerian language in the WASSCE so as to improve their mastery of the language (89%) and that the MT will die if students stop learning it in school (70.7%). Also most

teachers believe that teaching the MT: will give students a sense of identity (90.6%), facilitate the development of the Nigerian languages (90.6%) and enable students acquire and develop positive attitudes towards Nigerian culture and values (89.4%). Teachers also support the view that: parents should not be speaking English to their children at home but rather encourage them to speak the MT (73.3%) and teachers should encourage students to speak and learn their MT in school (77.9%). Only few teachers believe that: since most students learn their MT at home, there is no need promoting it in school (18.63%); since English is spoken in many parts of the world, it should be the only language students should learn in school (21.1%) and the MT has little economic value, so students should not learn it in school (21.7%). An average number of teachers believe that it is impossible to translate science textbooks into the MT (44.9%). Other results are as shown on Table 4. The weighted mean is 3.03; thus teachers have strong beliefs about studying the MT as a subject in the senior secondary school.

Table 3. Teachers' beliefs about the use of the mother tongue in instruction in the senior secondary school (arranged in descending order by mean)

S/n	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD
1	Students who can read and write in their mother tongue will more easily learn English than those who cannot	89 48.1%	77 41.6%	13 7.0%	6 3.2%	3.35	0.751
2	Students would do better in school if they are taught in their mother tongue	81 44.0%	81 44.0%	18 9.8%	4 2.2%	3.30	0.734
3	Students who speak their mother tongue often may not pass their examination due to interference	18 9.8%	42 23.0%	94 51.4%	29 15.8%	2.73	0.845
4	Students are more confident when allowed to ask questions in the mother tongue	65 35.9%	97 53.6%	16 8.8%	3 1.7%	3.24	0.678
5	Using the mother tongue for instruction will enable students to interpret information obtained more adequately	58 32.4%	107 59.8%	12 6.7%	2 1.1%	3.24	0.619
6	Students learn concepts better when taught in the mother tongue than in English	70 38.5%	89 48.9%	17 9.3%	6 3.3%	3.23	0.750
6	Students learn concepts better when taught in the mother tongue than in English	70 38.5%	89 48.9%	17 9.3%	6 3.3%	3.23	0.750
7	Classroom participation will be enhanced if students are allowed to use their mother tongue	64 34.8%	97 52.7%	22 12.0%	1 0.5%	3.22	0.667
8	Teaching in the mother tongue will allow students to develop practical skills easily	46 25.6%	104 57.8%	28 15.6%	2 1.1%	3.08	0.672
9	It is very important for students to be literate in their mother tongue	54 29.2%	99 53.5%	23 12.4%	9 4.9%	3.07	0.781
10	Using the mother tongue to teach students will lead to poor academic performance	11 6.0%	32 17.5%	86 47.0%	54 29.5%	3.00	0.845
11	All secondary schools should teach school subjects in the students' mother tongue	31 17.2%	82 45.6%	54 30.0%	13 7.2%	2.73	0.831
12	Students will learn English better if they stop speaking their mother tongue in school	24 13.0%	52 28.3%	73 39.7%	35 19.0%	2.65	0.935
13	It is better for students to learn all the subjects in English than in their mother tongue	27 14.9%	39 21.5%	90 49.7%	25 13.8%	2.62	0.902
14	Teaching core subjects in the mother tongue will result in poor mastery of English	24 13.2%	52 28.6%	82 45.1%	24 13.2%	2.58	0.880
15	Mother tongue should not be used for teaching because technical and scientific concepts cannot be easily expressed in it	26 14.1%	47 25.5%	92 50.0%	19 10.3%	2.57	0.860
16	Parents will not be happy if their children are taught in the mother tongue instead of in English	28 15.6%	61 33.9%	71 39.4%	20 11.1%	2.46	0.887

Weighted mean=2.94

3a) Research Question: What are the Students' beliefs about the Use of the Mother Tongue in Instruction in the Senior Secondary School?

As shown on Table 5, students believe that: the MT is the best language they can learn with (88.5%); they think first in the MT and translate into English (75.2%); if they can read and write in their MT, learning to do the same in English will be easier (67.8%) and their participation in classroom activities would increase if lessons are taught in their MT (60.6%). However, 60.2% of them believe that they will learn English better if they stop speaking their MT in school while 66.7% believe that science subjects cannot be learned in the MT because the MT is not fully developed. Fewer students believe that: studying Yoruba or another Nigerian language in the university will prevent them from getting good jobs after school (16.1%), if they speak their MT often, they would not pass examinations

(29.9%) and speaking the MT can lead to confusion when writing English (35.6%). With a weighted mean of 2.75, students have fairly-strong beliefs about the pedagogical relevance of the MT.

3b) Research Question: What are the Students' beliefs about Studying the Mother Tongue as a Subject in the Senior Secondary School?

Students' beliefs as shown on Table 6 are that: they should be proud of speaking their MTs because the languages have great values(92.3%); it is a thing of pride to read and write in their MT (89.3%) and that it will be a great thing to learn many Nigerian languages they can communicate with many people (91.9%). Most students also believe that the MT: enables students to identify themselves (85.8%) is the best medium through which they can learn their cultures (90.25%)

Table 4. Teachers' beliefs about studying the mother tongue as a subject in the senior secondary school (arranged in descending order by Mean)

S/n	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD
1	To preserve the cultural heritage, the mother tongue should be taught as a compulsory subject at the secondary level of education	79 43.9%	87 48.3%	13 7.2%	1 0.6%	3.36	0.640
2	Teaching the mother tongue will make students to acquire and develop positive attitudes towards Nigerian culture and values	75 41.9%	85 47.5%	16 8.9%	3 1.7%	3.30	0.700
3	It is important for all students to register their mother tongue or a Nigerian language in the WASSCE so as to improve his/her mastery of the language	72 39.8%	89 49.2%	17 9.4%	3 1.7%	3.27	0.698
4	Teaching the mother tongue will give students a sense of identity	52 28.9%	111 61.7%	15 8.3%	2 1.1%	3.18	0.621
5	Teaching in the mother tongue will facilitate the development of the Nigerian languages	54 29.8%	109 60.2%	14 7.7%	4 2.2%	3.18	0.660
6	Since English is spoken in many parts of the world, it should be the only language students should learn in school	11 6.1%	27 15.0%	83 46.1%	59 32.8%	3.06	0.850
7	The mother tongue has little economic value, so students should not spend their time learning it at school	16 8.9%	23 12.8%	85 47.2%	56 31.1%	3.01	0.894
8	The mother tongue will die if students stop learning them in school	59 32.6%	69 38.1%	42 23.2%	11 6.1%	2.97	0.897
9	Since most students learn their mother tongue at home, there is no need promoting it school	11 6.0%	23 12.6%	113 62.1%	35 19.2%	2.95	0.749
10	Parents should not be speaking English to their children at home but rather encourage them to speak the mother tongue	44 24.6%	87 48.6%	41 22.9%	7 3.9%	2.94	0.794
11	Teachers should encourage students to speak and learn their mother tongue in school	35 19.3%	106 58.6%	34 18.8%	6 3.3%	2.94	0.716
12	Students who study in English may not learn the cultural relevance of their mother tongues	32 18.0%	72 40.4%	65 36.5%	9 5.1%	2.71	0.818
13	It is impossible to translate science textbooks into the mother tongue	23 13.1%	56 31.8%	73 41.5%	24 13.6%	2.56	0.886

Weighted mean=3.03

Table 5. Students' beliefs about the use of the mother tongue in instruction in the senior secondary school (arranged in descending order by Mean)

S/n	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD
1	The mother tongue is the best language I can learn with	91 38.7%	117 49.8%	20 8.5%	7 3.0%	3.24	0.731
2	If I study Yoruba or another Nigerian language in the university, I will not get a good job after school	17 7.2%	21 8.9%	124 52.8%	73 31.1%	3.08	0.829
3	I think first in my mother tongue and translate into English	62 26.5%	114 48.7%	40 17.1%	18 7.7%	2.94	0.862
4	If I can read and write in my mother tongue, it will help me to read and write better in English	66 28.3%	92 39.5%	58 24.9%	17 7.3%	2.89	0.903
5	If I speak my mother tongue often, I will not pass my examinations	21 9.0%	49 20.9%	102 43.6%	62 26.5%	2.88	0.906
6	Speaking English and my mother tongue can lead to confusion when writing	24 10.3%	59 25.3%	94 40.3%	56 24.0%	2.78	0.928
7	If lessons are taught in the mother tongue, I will participate more in classroom activities	60 25.4%	83 35.2%	69 29.2%	24 10.2%	2.76	0.948
8	I can learn any school subject in my mother tongue	45 19.1%	95 40.3%	76 32.2%	20 8.5%	2.70	0.874
9	If most textbooks are written in the mother tongue, learning will be easier	51 21.8%	81 34.6%	73 31.2%	29 12.4%	2.66	0.955

(Contd...)

Table 5. (Continued)

S/n	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD
10	More school subjects should be taught in the mother tongue so that I can learn better	49 21.1%	79 34.1%	75 32.3%	29 12.5%	2.64	0.953
11	I believe that I will learn English better if I stop speaking my mother tongue in school	57 24.2%	85 36.0%	66 28.0%	28 11.9%	2.28	0.961
12	Science subjects cannot be learned in the mother tongue because the mother tongue is not fully developed	57 24.4%	99 42.3%	56 23.9%	22 9.4%	2.18	0.910

Weighted mean=2.75

Table 6: Students' beliefs about studying the mother tongue as a subject in the senior secondary school (arranged in descending order by Mean)

S/n	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD
1.	I believe that I should be proud of speaking my mother tongue because it has great values	111 48.1%	102 44.2%	16 6.9%	2 0.9%	3.39	0.657
2.	It is a thing of pride for me to be able to read and write in my mother tongue	114 48.7%	95 40.6%	20 8.5%	5 2.1%	3.36	0.729
3.	It is important for students to speak their mother tongues so that they will not forget their cultures	111 47.8%	99 42.7%	15 6.5%	7 3.0%	3.35	0.736
4.	It will be a great thing to learn many Nigerian languages so that I can communicate with many people	108 46.2%	107 45.7%	11 4.7%	8 3.4%	3.35	0.727
5.	I believe that the mother tongue is the best medium for me to learn my culture	101 43.2%	110 47.0%	18 7.7%	5 2.1%	3.31	0.706
6.	The mother tongue should be a compulsory subject for all students so that we can learn more Nigerian language just as we learn English	105 44.9%	92 39.3%	27 11.5%	10 4.3%	3.25	0.823
7.	Studying the mother tongue in school is a sure way of preserving my culture	90 39.1%	111 48.3%	26 11.3%	3 1.3%	3.25	0.704
8.	I believe that my mother tongue enables me to identify myself	83 35.5%	116 49.6%	25 10.7%	10 4.3%	3.16	0.780
9.	I prefer European languages such French and German to Nigerian languages	23 9.9%	26 11.2%	100 24.9%	84 36.1%	3.05	0.932
10.	I believe that my mother tongue unites me with my extended family	48 20.8%	130 56.3%	40 17.3%	13 5.6%	2.92	0.776
11.	If we stop learning our mother tongues in school, the Nigerian languages will die	69 29.5%	88 37.6%	54 23.1%	23 9.8%	2.87	0.951
12.	I believe that the mother tongue should be made compulsory in the WASSCE to increase its prestige	64 27.2%	81 34.5%	66 28.1%	24 10.2%	2.79	0.959
13.	The mother tongue is not as important as order school subjects, so there is no need studying it	29 12.4%	54 23.1%	109 46.6%	42 17.9%	2.70	0.906
14.	I think it will be nice to study the mother tongue in the university	41 17.6%	91 39.1%	83 35.6%	18 7.7%	2.67	0.856
15.	It is not important to speak the mother tongues because English can easily replace it	42 18.1%	78 33.6%	81 34.9%	31 13.4%	2.44	0.938
16.	Whether I speak my mother tongue or not does not really matter, so far I can speak English	66 28.4%	98 42.2%	49 21.1%	19 8.2%	2.09	0.905

Weighted mean=3.00

thus, speaking it will make them not to forget their cultures (90.5%) and studying it will help to preserve those cultures (87.4%). Only 39% of the students preferred European languages such as French and German to Nigerian languages.

Further details of the results are as shown in Table 6. The weighted mean is 3.00, indicating that students have strong positive beliefs about the sociocultural relevance of studying the MT as a subject.

3c) Research Question: To What Extent are the Parents' and Teachers' beliefs about the Use and Study of the Mother Tongue in the Senior Secondary School Similar?

The weighted mean of parents' beliefs about the pedagogical values of the MT (Table 1) is 2.77 whereas that of teachers (Table 3) is 2.94. Also, the weighted mean of parents' beliefs about the sociocultural relevance of the MT (Table 2) is 2.89 while that of the teachers (Table 4) is 3.03. These results indicate that although parents and teachers have strong beliefs about both the use and study of the MT, teachers' beliefs are stronger on both sides. For the individual items, results show that the percentage of the parents and teachers that either agreed or disagreed with each of them fall within close ranges, with the teachers' beliefs also slightly stronger. This implies that they hold similar beliefs about the use and study of the MT in school. It could also imply that their beliefs tend to be influenced by each other's, since they are active collaborators in education. However, since beliefs are acquired through experience, it is not surprising that teachers have slightly stronger beliefs than parents. As experienced professionals in education, teachers are more likely to have deeper and better insights into the role of mother tongue in education.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Parents, Teachers and Students' beliefs about the Use of the Mother Tongue in Education

The findings have shown that parents, teachers and students hold strong beliefs about the pedagogical relevance of mother tongue in education. They believe that teaching through the MT could enhance students' learning, classroom participation, feeling of self-confidence, overall academic achievement as well as learning of English as an L₂. Most of them did not subscribe to the view that speaking the mother tongue could negatively affect students' academic performance. Students believe that the MT should be studied as a subject to preserve the cultural heritage.

Besides, while most teachers prefer that students be taught all subjects in the MT, most parents think otherwise. Despite the high rating of the MT by parents, it is surprising that many of them still preferred that students learn all the subjects in English rather than in their MT. This corroborates the findings of Kinyaduka and Kiwara (2013) who reported that both parents and teachers appreciate the advantages of MT in education, yet, preferred English as the language of instruction. This preference may be because most indigenous languages in Nigeria are not yet fully developed to become vehicles of modern education. Hence, parents and teachers may not have much confidence in their efficacy. Besides, the policy makers and government lack enough political will to enforce the use of the MT in education or convince people of its advantages. This is coupled with the fact that English is predominantly used in key sectors of the society such as politics, judiciary and higher education. The belief that English is the language of modernisation and the government's eagerness to develop might be one of the reasons for overreliance on English.

The mother tongue has been neglected for too long in Nigerian education. Even with present awareness on its impor-

tance, most Nigerians are in a hurry to embrace modernity as their counterparts in developed countries especially in the areas of science and technology. Thus, they have no patience to wait for the indigenous languages to develop like English which has existed since the colonial times and is spoken in many parts of the world. However, it is also possible that parents would prefer a bilingual education in which both English and the indigenous languages are used in schools, a claim already reported in Igboanusi (2008) and Amadi (2012).

The Extent of Similarity between the Parents And Teachers' beliefs about the Use of the Mother Tongue in Instruction in the Senior Secondary School

The result of the study shows that the weighted mean of parents' beliefs about the use of the mother tongue in instruction in the senior secondary is 2.77, while that of teachers is 2.94. This indicates that firstly, both parents and teachers have strong beliefs about the use of mother tongue in instruction. Secondly, their beliefs are similar, given the proximity of the two means. A one to one corresponding comparison of parents' and teachers' responses to each item in their questionnaires equally reveals the same proximity between their percentages and mean scores. However, as shown in the weighted mean, teachers have a slightly higher value than the parents. These similarities are indications that since beliefs are social constructs, parents and teachers have common beliefs about mother tongue in education. It could also be an indication that their beliefs tend to be influenced by each other's, since they often share their opinions about what they consider as the best language options for students. However, since beliefs are acquired through experience, it is not surprising that teachers have slightly stronger beliefs about using the mother tongue for instruction; they ought to be better informed on the pedagogical values of the mother tongue than parents. In that vein, their higher mean score in that regard should be expected.

Parents, Teachers' and Students' beliefs about Studying the Mother Tongue as a Subject in the Senior Secondary School

The results further revealed that passing on the sociocultural values in the MT to students are of great interest to the respondents. Hence, most of them want the MT to be taught as a school subject. They believe that teaching the MT will give students a sense of identity, make them have positive attitudes towards the Nigerian culture and values, facilitate the development of the indigenous languages and also help to transmit and preserve Nigerian cultural values. Thus, in spite of the predominance of English language in the globalised world, they still cherish the MT. It is important that most of the respondents are aware that neglecting the indigenous languages in schools could threaten their survival. This awareness may be another factor for their positive dispositions to the study of the MT as a school subject. However, the result gives an indication that parents and teachers are not so convinced about the possibility of translating science textbooks into the MT. Current language policy supports teaching with the MT till Primary three only. This may be negatively pro-

jecting the indigenous languages as incapable of expressing technical and scientific terms which gets more complex at the senior secondary level of education.

The Similarities between the Parents' and Teachers' beliefs about Studying the Mother Tongue as a Subject in the Senior Secondary School

The findings of this study further revealed that the weighted mean of parents' beliefs about studying the mother tongue as a school subject is 2.89; that of the teachers is 3.03. This indicates that both teachers and parents hold and share related beliefs about the subject matter under consideration. Their beliefs, when considered on one to one relationship show very close proximities between the percentage scores, means and standard deviations. However, just like in the results of the pedagogical relevance of the mother tongue, teachers have stronger beliefs about the prospect of studying the mother tongue as a subject than parents. It is very important and commendable that teachers hold such strong beliefs since they have a great role to play in convincing student, parents and the society in general about the need to promote the mother tongue in education. For example, in the study by Cephe and Yalcin (2015), it was reported that teachers' beliefs and practices can exert an impact on learner beliefs and learner beliefs tend to approximate to teacher beliefs during the intensive English instruction. The same thing may be applicable to parents.

IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

The study has implications for the government and other stakeholders in education. The government through its language policy should foster and promote the teaching of the mother tongue in educational institutions. It should assign more roles to the MT in the society to serve as motivation for its study. Parents, especially the enlightened ones, should take active part in the advocacy for mother tongue in education. Students on their own part should take pride in speaking and studying their mother tongues.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study has shown that parents, teachers and students have strong positive beliefs about the pedagogical and sociocultural relevance of the mother tongue in education. There is a positive indication that the main stakeholders (parents, teachers and students) are ready to embrace the study of mother tongue as a subject in the secondary school. The study further revealed that studying the MT in education is a sure way of transmitting and preserving the people's cultural heritage.

It is therefore recommended that the MT should be adopted as a medium of instruction in the secondary school, since it is believed that students would learn better through it. Governments at levels should endeavour to invest in the development of the orthographies of the Nigerian languages to make them usable in education. The Government should make it mandatory for students to register and pass one of the mother tongues in the Senior School Certificate Examination.

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