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TeachingEnglish

The Abuja regional Hornby School: language lessons from Africa

Edited by Hamish McIlwraith

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The papers in this collection are the product of two British Council-managed Hornby Schools that took place in January 2014 and January 2015 on British Council premises in Abuja. The first was led by Dr Eddie Williams, former Professor of Linguistics at Bangor University. The second was led by me. Hornby Schools are run with the support of the AS Hornby Educational Trust, UK. The trust was established in 1961 by AS Hornby, popularly known for the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. The schools are recognised as one of the most prestigious activities in the field of English language teaching. Each year these schools have enabled teachers to develop their expertise and upgrade their English teaching skills.

Participants on the first school were invited to attend the second event. The majority came from Nigeria, but others were from Rwanda and Ethiopia. Most were senior teacher trainers and inspectors at state or national levels. There were also researchers and education specialists from donor-funded projects such as UNICEF and the Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria, which is funded by the UK Department for International Development.

The schools had a similar aim: to help course members share and discuss different approaches used by teachers to deal with expectations of an 'official' use of English as a language of instruction in situations where teachers may be working with textbooks in an unfamiliar language, have low levels of English, poor literacy rates and a default bilingual delivery including the use of pidgins.

The participants were asked to conduct small-scale research projects to look at aspects of English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in their localities and states in relation to national language-in-education policy. They approached their task from a variety of perspectives. In Ethiopia, Aderajew Alemnew, Habtamu Woldeyohannes and Wondimu Gaga Gashe looked at code-switching in English and science lessons. Timothy Afolami Adebayo took a slightly different approach. He investigated code-switching and code-mixing as strategies to improve numeracy in primary 1 pupils in Kwara State. Other researchers concentrated on specific features of the curriculum in relation to the use of English, mother tongues or the language of the immediate environment (LIE). Caleb Ademola Anota and Amos Onyeke, for example, looked at the linguistic challenges of teaching national values and ethics in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Justina C Anyadiegwu looked at how activating learners' background knowledge might improve reading comprehension.

However, most researchers explored different attitudes towards languages including English. Justina, in her second paper, looked at attitudes towards English as a medium of instruction (EMI) among parents, which was also investigated by Yakubu Muhammad Anas and Abbas Muhammed Liman; Justina collected her data from schools in South East Nigeria while Yakubu and Abbas focused on Kano, North West Nigeria. Others, such as Timothy and co-author Awolola Christiana Oyebola, considered the influences of mother tongues on the learning of English in Kwara State. In contrast, Claudien Nzitabakuze described the specific context of the effectiveness of a Rwanda Education Board school-based mentoring programme on teachers' fluency in English at primary and lower secondary levels.

Some researchers looked at EMI from a more critical perspective. Nuhu S Baba conducted research into teachers' willingness to use LIE in classrooms in Jigawa State, and Mairama Bukar Dikwa and Karim Bukar Dikwa presented a case to suggest that the use of English in the classroom may be a cause of poor teaching rather than an aid to it.

Together, these papers reflect the lively debates about language and education that are going on in ministries of education, in schools and between teachers and parents across West Africa. I hope you enjoy reading them.

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The use of code-switching in teaching science and English: a comparative analysis with reference to two junior secondary schools in Addis Ababa

Aderajew Alemnew, Habtamu Woldeyohannes and Wondimu Gaga Gashe

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Introduction

Language is learned through use, first in the home, family and social community, and then in the social context of the classroom and school (Pinnell and Jagger, 2003; Freebody, 2003; both cited in Ambika, 2011: 4). The competency with which one is able to communicate is dependent upon one's ability to use the language or languages available to both the speaker and interlocutor. It is clear that to communicate effectively, the speaker may need to switch to a code that gives them a more comprehensive way of expressing their knowledge (since the main purpose of language is for effective communication). In a situation where more than one language is in use in a community, usage becomes even more intriguing, as it gives people more chances to switch between languages in a bid to get their meaning across.

When used effectively, language enables the learner to be fully engaged in what is taught. However, the language context of the classroom situation in Ethiopia, most of the time, requires that the teacher needs to navigate between two codes, i.e. students' first (L1) and second (L2) languages. As English is not widely used as a means of communication in the wider community and limited in school campuses, code-switching seems to be a necessity rather than an option. Moreover, as prescribed by the Ministry of Education, English was deemed to be used as a medium of instruction right from Grade 7 (FDRE Ministry of Education, 1994).[1] Therefore, code-switching commonly occurs in the Ethiopian classroom, and it is used for a variety of purposes.

Multilingualism is the hallmark of Africa, and Ethiopia is no exception. This is because Ethiopia is the home of many nations and nationalities living together in peace, using more than 80 languages across the country. Among these, Amharic is used as the lingua franca of the country and is the working language of the federal government (FDRE, 1995). In such a context where diverse ethnicities exercise diverse culture and traditions, it would be very difficult to find a monolingual person. A great majority of citizens speak at least two languages.

The education policy of Ethiopia states that Amharic, by virtue of its being the official language, and its large number of users as their mother tongue and second language, should be given as a compulsory subject right from primary grade in all nations and nationalities in addition to the vernacular languages they use as a medium of instruction. Moreover, the policy stipulates that English should be used as a medium of instruction for all content subjects from Grades 5 to 7. In line with the policy, the new syllabus also requires both English language and science teachers to use English, in classes where it is stipulated to be used as medium of instruction. It gives little or no room for code-switching in the classroom (FDRE Ministry of Education, 1994).

Yet, despite there being nothing enshrined in the policy document as to whether or not code-switching is permissible during classroom instructions, teachers seem to have tacit permission to use it in their classroom instructions. In fact, at various times throughout the history of education, there has been an incessant debate emerging from various curriculum experts on the issue of language learning. Earlier, a group of proponents had emerged with a notion of 'the natural language learning principles which provided the foundation for what came to be known as the Direct Method' (Richards and Rogers, 1986: 9). Proponents of this approach claim that classroom instruction should be conducted exclusively in the target language. They never accept the use of students' L1 in a foreign language classroom, as they believe that using it hinders their learning the target language. Later, a very different view emerged claiming that students learn better with a language they have good command of.

1 This is subject to regional variation. In the linguistically diverse region of the SNNPR, for instance, English begins from Grade 5.

The existence of two such extreme views prompted us to seek a better understanding of the actual classroom situation with regard to code-switching, and to find out when and why teachers use code-switching when interacting with their students during English language and science lessons. We wanted to know whether there is more code-switching in English language or science classes and how L1 might function as a communicative tool to facilitate learning in the L2 classroom. With this in mind, the purpose of this research was to investigate when and why teachers use code-switching between L1 and L2 and in some cases two L2s, in the context of English officially being the medium of instruction.

Purpose and research questions

Code-switching is a term that refers to a person who has mastered two or more languages and therefore is able to switch between the languages while speaking. The purpose of this study was, therefore, to find out whether teachers use code-switching more in physics or in English language classes. We also analysed the extent of code-switching made by the teachers and investigated the various purposes for the teachers to code-switch between L1 and L2 in their classroom instructions. Against this background, we formulated the following basic questions:

1. Do science and English language teachers use code-switching in their classroom instruction?
2. If they do, which subject teachers switch code more?
3. What functions of code-switching do they use in their classroom instructions?
4. What are the specific purposes for which teachers tend to switch code?

Limits of the study

The specific focus of this research was to examine the extent of teachers' use of code-switching and the particular code-switching functions they use in second cycle primary school English language and science classrooms. We observed teachers who are currently teaching English language and science lessons at schools of second cycle primary level. So, the study is limited exclusively to examining teachers' code-switching instances made when L2 is the medium of classroom instruction. This research, therefore, does not include instances of code-switching made by students.

Definition of important terms used in this text (adapted from Gumperz, 1982: 74–82)

- **Code-switching**: a change of the communication code from one language to another.
- **Reiteration**: the repetition of a message from one code to another, either literally or in somewhat modified form.
- **Objectivisation and personalisation**: talk 'about' action and talk 'as' action; the degree of speaker involvement in, or distance from, a message, whether a statement reflects personal opinion or knowledge, whether it refers to specific instances or has the authority of generally known facts.
- **Message qualifications**: making ideas crystal-clear to the interlocutor.
- **Addressee specification**: the directing of a message to one or more addresses.
- **Interjection**: an interjection is to encourage or incite learners to finish incomplete ideas.
- **Situational code-switching**: results from a change in topic, setting or participants, usually used for classroom management and making instructions clear.

Methodology

This work attempts to investigate the extent of teachers' use of code-switching and identifying the particular code-switching functions they use in English language and science classrooms. To this end, we used a blend of qualitative and quantitative research methodology. We used a descriptive survey method to explore the extent to which code-switching is used.

Sources of data

The target population of the research were Grade 8 English language and science teachers working in three second cycle primary schools, namely Kola Diba Primary School, in Amhara National Regional State, Dejazmach Wondirad Primary School, in Addis Ababa, and Adare Primary School in Hawassa, SNNPR. The reason for selecting this particular grade was that it is the last rung in the ladder where students make the necessary English language competence and academic grounding for the next higher level, i.e. secondary education.

Selection of schools

Three second cycle primary schools from three regional states were included in the study. They were Kola Diba, Dejazmach Wondirad and Adare second cycle primary schools. These schools were selected using a purposive sampling technique based on two factors: a high number of teachers as confirmed from their respective administration education offices, and proximity. The number of teachers allotted and the number of sections where students are assigned in these three schools is comparatively greater than the other government schools in the surroundings. Furthermore, there is no significant difference in terms of standard, or teachers' qualifications. The teachers requested to participate in the study were teaching their specific subjects in higher grades of second cycle primary level, mainly Grade 8, with a teaching qualification at a diploma level in their respective subjects.

Selection of participants

Four English language teachers, two of whom were from Kola Diba Primary School and one from each of the remaining two sites, were selected as major sources of data. Similarly, four science teachers, two of whom were from Kola Diba Primary School and one from each of the remaining schools, were selected from research sites. In addition, to increase data reliability, two students from each section (a total of 16 students) were selected using simple random sampling techniques for a focus group discussion to be used as a supplementary source of information. All the teachers included in the study have teaching experience ranging from five to ten years in second cycle primary grades.

Data collection instruments

To obtain enough and reliable data from the participants of the study we used three types of data collection instruments: non-participant classroom observation, intensive one-to-one interviews with teachers and focus group discussions with students. Our long experience in teaching at primary and secondary schools and the review of related literature served as the basis for the preparation of all the items of the instruments.

We carried out one full-class-time (40 minutes) classroom observation on each of the four English language and four science teachers. We used both closed-ended and open-ended observation checklists adapted from Gumperz's (1982) semantic model of conversational code-switching. Prior to the data collection, consensus was reached with the teachers on video recording their discourses during the observations, resulting in a total of 320 minutes of video-recorded material from the selected research sites (four English lessons and four science lessons). We transcribed the discourse of the teachers' lessons verbatim, with extra care given to incorporate paralinguistic features. During the analysis, we focused on the most frequently used code-switching functions in both subjects.

We used focus group discussions with the selected students to understand the context of code-switching instances, i.e. to procure reliable information regarding why teachers code-switch at every single spot in their classroom instruction and to crosscheck the data obtained from classroom observation and teachers' one-to-one interviews. To this end, we used leading questions to initiate discussions after each classroom observation was conducted.

We conducted intensive one-to-one interviews with participating teachers as a post-observation means of verifying the data obtained during observation. In a bid to procure adequate data, and to minimise the possible discrepancy of understanding between the observer and participating teachers on the events that had been displayed in the classroom instructions during observation, the teachers were made to view the video scripts of their own performance.

Results and discussion

This section presents the results obtained on code-switching used by English language and science teachers in their Grade 8 classroom instructions. The data transcribed from the video record of teachers' discourses is organised under two tables. Table 1.1 shows the frequency of code-switching instances distributed in each of the lessons observed. Table 1.2 reveals the frequency of Gumperz's (1982) particular functions of code-switching instances used by the individual teachers in their discourses.

Table 1.1: Frequency of teachers' code-switching instances in English language and science lessons

Lesson	Topic	Frequency of code-switching instances	%	Total	%
English 1	Modal auxiliaries	14	8.86%	46	29.11%
English 2	Relative clauses	13	8.23%		
English 3	Reading for specific information and gist	12	7.59%		
English 4	Present perfect tense	7	4.43%		
Science 1	Pressure	27	17.09%	112	70.89%
Science 2	Pressure	36	22.78%		
Science 3	Measuring velocity	28	17.72%		
Science 4	SI and non-SI units	21	13.29%		
Total		**158**	**100%**	**158**	**100%**

As shown in Table 1.1, there were 158 code-switching instances obtained from the observed eight lessons. These were all at sentence level and above. The highest code-switching instances were made by science teachers, n=112 (70.89 per cent); the frequency of code-switching made by the four English language teachers was n=46, which accounts for only 29.11 per cent of the entire sample.

This data shows that all teachers in both subjects commonly apply code-switching during their classroom instructions. However, there is a big disparity in the frequency of code-switching between science and English language teachers. As can be seen, the frequency of code-switching made by science teachers was more than double the frequency made by English language teachers; the frequency of code-switching made by Science Teacher 2 alone (n=36 or 22.78 per cent) was slightly less than the sum of instances made by English Language Teachers 1, 2 and 3.

It seems reasonable here to ask why this huge difference in the frequency of code-switching instances occurred between the English and science teachers. As the data collected from the transcription of the audio record shows, and reaffirmed by the data obtained from detailed one-to-one interview sessions with the teachers themselves, all four science lessons were predominantly teacher-fronted, content-based lessons. As the teachers stated during their interviews, the topics 'pressure' and 'SI and non-SI units' were content-laden and so the main lesson objective was to transmit content knowledge to the students.

In contrast, the English lessons were more teacher-facilitated classroom instructions. The topic for English Language Teacher 1, for example, required students to construct their own statements of slogans using modals, such as 'should', 'must' and 'ought to'. This teacher was facilitating the lesson by asking different questions and building on their responses. She motivated students to recall the various slogans mentioned in a reading text used the previous lesson on how the modal auxiliaries were used. English Language Teachers 2, 3 and 4 used the same teaching approach.

Table 1.2: Frequency of code-switching functions in English and physics lessons

Functions of code-switching	Frequency of code-switches													
	English lessons						Physics lessons						Total	%
	E1	E2	E3	E4	Sub-total	%	Ph 1	Ph 2	Ph 3	Ph 4	Sub-total	%		
Reiteration	3	3	4	3	13	8.23%	9	11	8	8	36	22.78%	49	31.01%
Message qualification	5	4	6	2	17	10.76%	10	12	10	11	43	27.22%	60	37.97%
Interjection	4	3	-	-	7	4.43%	5	4	3	-	12	7.59%	19	12.03%
Quotation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Personalisation and objectivisation	2	3	2	2	9	5.70%	2	6	6	2	16	10.13%	25	15.82%
Addressee specification	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	0.63%	1	0.63%
Situational code-switching	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	1	-	4	2.53%	4	2.53%
Total	**14**	**13**	**12**	**7**	**46**	**29.11%**	**27**	**36**	**28**	**21**	**112**	**70.89%**	**158**	**100%**

As shown in Table 1.2, the most frequently used code-switching functions were message qualification (n=60, 37.97 per cent), reiteration (n=49, 31.01 per cent), and personalisation and objectivisation (n=25, 15.82 per cent) respectively. As stated under the description of Table 1.1, the lessons conducted by English language teachers were more language-focused, while the lessons conducted by the science teachers were almost exclusively content-based instructions. In this part, therefore, results are presented under two headings: A) teacher-fronted content lessons, and B) teacher-facilitated lessons. There is also analysis of the most frequently used code-switching functions made by each teacher. It is important to note that, often, two or more code-switching functions co-occur in one string of discourse. Therefore, such co-occurring functions are analysed together, while single-occurring code-switching functions are analysed in isolation.

A) Teacher-fronted content lessons

As the transcripts of teachers' discourse confirm and the results obtained from teachers' one-to-one interviews reaffirm, the primary objective of the science teachers in their lessons was to transmit content knowledge with detailed clarification of basic concepts to the students, such as the concepts of pressure, force and area, the relationship of pressure with force and area, and the effect of force and area in a given body. As the lessons were predominantly content-focused, it would be a necessity rather than a choice to apply a teacher-fronted strategy. In these teacher-fronted content lessons, much of the time was taken up by the teacher's discourse, providing input to the students, such as explaining key points using different examples, elaborating and clarifying terms like distance, speed, velocity and SI units, and simplifying expressions related to the point under discussion.

Reiteration and translation

This reiteration–translation code-switching function was the one that was, in fact, frequently used by all the teachers observed in their discourse. This part discusses typical examples taken from the science teachers' discourse.

Science Teacher 1

Example 1

T: Exactly. Good! አሁን ደግሞ ወደ ኤርያ እንምጣና ኤርያ ስንል ምን ማለታችን ነው? Now, let's come to area. Uh... what do we mean by area? What is area? ኤርያ ምንድን ነው? What do we mean by area? ኤርያ ስንልስ ምን ማለታችን ነው ? *[reiteration + topic change]*

S1: Area means a region that is bounded by a curve.

Example 2

T: Exactly! Very good. የእነዚህ ተጽእኖ ምን ይመስላችኋል? What about its effect? ... ተጽእኖው ምንድን ነው? *[single reiteration]*

As shown in Examples 1 and 2, the teacher presented his questions first in Amharic then switched to English in almost word-for-word translation. He finally paused, in both cases, by repeating what he said earlier in students' L1. His English utterances were sandwiched between two lengthy Amharic sentences. What does this imply? The use of double reiteration to get his message across in Amharic suggests that he was very concerned with the students' understanding of the subject matter rather than the language of instruction. In these two examples, we can also see that whenever Science Teacher 1 shifts from one section to another, he usually prefers using Amharic to English.

Science Teacher 2

Example 3

T: Q. No. 2. What is an area?

S: Area is a region boundary.

T: Very good! An area is all form of surface whether they are regular or irregular shape have line that bounds them. ማንኛውንም ሬጉላርም ሆነ ኢሬጉላር ቦታ ሊይዝ የሚችል ነገር በሙሉ ምን ብለን ... እንጠራዋለን ... ኤርያ ብለን እንጠራዋለን:: *[reiteration]*

Example 4

T: Let's come to the concept of pressure now. አሁን ደግሞ ወደ ግፊት ጽንሠሃሳብ እንምጣ *[reiteration + topic change]* What is pressure? ግፊት ማለት ምን ማለት ነው? እሽ! *[single reiteration]*

Examples 3 and 4 also show the excerpts from Science Teacher 2's discourse. He used the same code-switching function in both cases, i.e. reiteration with translation but with a different pattern. What makes this teacher different was that he presented each of the questions first in English and reiterated them in Amharic.

Message qualification and reiteration

Science Teacher 1

Science Teacher 1 started his lesson by asking students what they were taught the previous session. One student immediately raised his hand and reminded the teacher that they had been given some problems to do as homework. This time the teacher suggested that students specifically mention the question that was difficult and require his help. Then, another student said that question number 4 was not clear for him and read out the question himself as: 'Athlete Meseret runs 10 m/sec.; how long will take her to cover the distance from A, B, C, and D?' The teacher began by explaining what was given and what was required from the question given. After this, he moved to demonstrating the steps by doing the calculation himself. The teacher gave his explanation in English interspersing Amharic phrases, words and discourse markers here and there. The teacher's oscillation in code-switching functions, i.e. from a short reiteration to interjection and then to message qualification, is shown in Example 5.

Example 5

S1: */Claims:/*Question no. 4 is not clear */and reads out the statement:/*Athlete Meseret runs 10 m/sec. How long will it take her to cover the distance A, B, C and D?

T: */Interrupts the student and says:/*Distance is already given. ልብ በሉ ዲስታንስ ተሰጥቷችኋል አይደል እንዴ? Mind that distance is already given, isn't it? *[message qualification]*

Ss: Yes */in unison/*

T: አሁን እንድትፈልጉ የተጠየቃችሁት ማንን ነው ታይምን ነው፤ ጥያቄው የሚላችሁ አትሌቷ የተሰጠውን ርቀት ለመፈጸም ምን ያህል ጊዜ ይወስድባታል ነው፤ ጥያቄውን you are required to find time. The question says how much time does it take the athlete to finish the required distance? *[message qualification]*

T: How much is given for distance A? አንደኛው A ስንት ነው? *[interjection]*

Ss: One meter! */in chorus/*

T: So, you are asked about what...time! OK...so that...having the formula of solution እንበላት እዚች ላይ እና ስሌቱን እንስራ Let's write 'solution' here and do the calculation *[message qualification]/He writes the word, solution, and says:/* OK, velocity is equal to distance over time.

In Example 5, Science Teacher 1 was about to do calculations on the board to work out how long it will take the athlete to cover the different distances mentioned. As the lesson was given previously, the teacher seemed confident that they would have enough input on the point under discussion. This example shows the teacher's repeated use of a mark of interjection such as 'የእንደኛው A ስንት ነው የተሰጠን? What was the value of A given? ሁለተኛው የተሰጠን ምንድን ነው? What was given for B?' This time the students were actively telling him the exact answer at a word or phrase level. These phrases were coded as interjections for the reason that the teacher used them as a signal for the students to fill. This teacher used this function because he wanted to maintain the attention of his students on the lesson.

He again tried to qualify his message by using qualifying phrases that specifically direct students' attention towards the intended point. These include:

T1 እንበለው ለምሳሌ ይሽን ፤ በ A የተሰጣችሁትን ማለት ነው... For example, let's say this one T1; I mean the value given for A/ T2 እንበል ደግሞ በ 'B'ማለት ነው፤ የተሰጠን ምንድን ነው .....አሁን ፎርሙላውን መጠቀም ነው/ Again, let's say T2; I mean the value given for B. what was given for B? What we do next is applying the formula.

These utterances were used as a form of message qualification because such Amharic expressions are usually used when speakers need to convey specific messages to interlocutors. This particular teacher's concern was to make students crystal-clear about how to apply the formula (v=s/t) to calculate the given problem.

Example 6

T: Before we talk about pressure, we need to know the concept of force and area, right? ወደ ፕሬዠር በቀጥታ ከመግባታችን በፊት የፎርስንና የኤርያን ጽንሰ ሃሳብ በደንብ መረዳት ይገባናል: *[reiteration]* OK! First, what do we mean by force ... ፎርስ ስንል ምን ማለታችን ነው? *[reiteration with message specification]*

S1: Force is a pull or a push exerted on a body.

T: Exactly. Good. ኤርያስ ምንድን ነው? ... What do we mean by area? ኤርያ ስንል ምን ማለታችንነው? *[multiple reiteration + topic change]*

S2: Area means a region that is bounded by a curve.

T: Exactly! Very good. What about their effect? ... ተጽእኖው ምንድን ነው? *[single reiteration]* What is the effect of force and area on a given body? ኢፌክቱ ምንድን ነው? ኢፌክቱ ምንድን ነው? የፎርስ ተፅኖ ... በአንድ አካል ላይ ምንድን ነው ያልነው ካስታወሳችሁ! *[reiteration + message qualification]*

In Example 6, Science Teacher 1 started the new lesson in English by informing students that they needed to know two other important points, 'force' and 'area', before passing straight into 'pressure'. He reiterated this again in Amharic in a modified form rather than in a literal manner so as to help students understand how the steps in the lesson were going to occur. He then immediately turned to explain the question he wanted to pose in the form of message qualification, prompting students to allocate/pinpoint their attention on perceiving the essence of the question: ፎርስ ስንል ምን ማለታችን ነው? [What do we mean by force?] This prompt might have helped students (especially Student 2) to give a more complete answer. This teacher also tried to encourage the class in a form of message qualification to give a comprehensive answer supplementing what Student 1 said. Following this, he posed the next question that is defining the term 'area', first in English and literally translated it in Amharic and reiterated the same utterance in English. After reflecting on the individual students' answers, he moved on, asking the third question about the effects of force and area on a given body. He did this first in English, reiterating it with a single translation in Amharic, and repeated the same in English. Then, he swiftly turned into qualifying the message in Amharic. Finally, he paused in a manner akin to reiteration, translating the English version in Amharic.

When we closely observe the pattern of the codes switched by Science Teacher 1, we find that he always seems to start his discourse in English and goes to Amharic to provide detailed explanation and clarification on the content and qualify his message so that students are crystal-clear on how to do the experiment. He went on moving back and forth from reiteration to message qualification. However, he concluded this particular section in English by retelling all that he told students in English earlier.

Here, the question 'what does this pattern of code-switching imply?' is worth raising. It is a question that was presented to this particular teacher during his one-to-one interview session. He replied, as he was viewing his own discourse on the video record, that the reason that he starts presenting one idea first in English and then elaborates in some detail in the students' L1 was because his primary objective was to get students to understand the content of the subject matter. He also clarified his reason for using English at the beginning and the end of a particular point in his discourse: it was simply to observe the education policy that stipulates English to be a medium of instruction in science lessons.

Science Teacher 2

Example 7

T: What do you call this effect, the effect of force divided by area (F/A)? የሚገኘውን ውጤት ምን ብለንእንጠራዋለን? *[reiteration + interjection + message specification]*

Ss: */in unison/* Pressure!

T: Exactly! Force over area is pressure.

S: ፎርስ ሲጨምር ኤርያ ይጨምራል? [Are force and area directly proportional?]

T: አይ! አይደለም። ምክንያቱም ምናለ መሰለህ? ኤርያው ትንሽ ከሆነ፤ ልብ በሉ ትንሽ ወይም ደግሞ ጠባብ ከሆነ ነው ያልኩት [Mind what I say, when the area is small or narrow, force exertion will increase.] ፕሬዠሩ ምን ያደርጋል.. እየጨመረ ይሄዳል ማለት ነው፤ ...ፕሬዠሩ ይጨምራል ...OK! [when the area is small, force exertion increases] *[personalisation and objectivisation]*

T: *Continues...* ነገር ግን ኤርያ ደግሞ ሰፊ ከሆነ... ፕሬዠሩ ምን ይሆናል? [What'd happen to pressure if the area is wide?] *[interjection]*

Ss: Decrease! */in chorus/*

T: Pressure decreases. ግፊት እየቀነሰ ይሄዳል ማለት ነው፡ ስለዚህ ከዚህ አንፃር መለየት እንችላለን። [You need to perceive the concept from this angle] *[reiteration with message qualification]*

In Example 7, this teacher first presented his message in English and then reiterated the question with a single literal translation in Amharic. His switch at this point was in a form of making an interjection with a sense of hesitation either to allow students to process the idea or decide what to say next or to give students time to see their reaction. This time they told him the term 'pressure' loudly in unison. Reasonably it was a signal for students to react because the teacher's verbal reinforcement immediately after the students' response 'Exactly! force over area is pressure' is clear evidence of this particular code-switching function he used.

Again, as a student asked him partially in English and partially in Amharic: 'ፎርስ ሲጨምር ኤርያ ይጨምራል? [Is it as force increases so does area?], are they directly proportional?' The teacher replied with a quick retort: 'አይ አይደለም!' [No, they are not] and continued his explanation using more Amharic with little English. This instance was coded as objectivisation for the reason that the teacher gave his statement with an air of objectively factual knowledge. The teacher then passed to clarify the concept by using qualifying phrases such as 'ልብ በሉ ኤርያው ትንሽ ከሆነ ወይም ደግሞ ጠባብ ከሆነ ነው ያልኩት፤ በዚህ ጊዜ ግፊት ይጨምራል፤ ኤርያው ሰፊ ከሆነ ደግሞ ግፊት ይቀንሳል ማለት ነው' [Mind that I said when the area is narrow, not wide. This time force exertion will increase; but when the area is wide, force exertion will decrease.] Using these guiding phrases, he managed to qualify the message he wanted to clarify.

Example 8

T: Do you know the meaning of 'hoof'? Hoof means a hard part of the foot of some animals. የእንስሳት ሾህና ማለት ነው፤ hoof ማለት ሸኮና ማለት ነው፤ መረገጫው ማለት ነው። Does an elephant have small or large hoof? *[reiteration + message qualification]*

Ss: Large! */in unison/*

T: Exactly! It is very large! An elephant is a very big and huge animal. */Teacher continues explaining the nature of an elephant/* What'd happen to the elephant if it had a hoof as small as a goat? ዝሆኑ እንዳለ የፍየሉን እግር ቢይዝ ኖሮ ምን ይሆን ነበር ነው ሚላችሁ፤ ገባችሁ ? እስኪ ምን ሊሆን እንደሚችል ንገሩኝ? *[reiteration + message qualification]*

In Example 8, the teacher posed a rhetorical question and continued to define the term 'hoof' first in English and reiterated his own definition with a word-for-word translation in Amharic. Then, he continued clarifying the example in a form of message qualification using only Amharic without interspersing any English term at all. This teacher told the story of an elephant's hoof to explain the students how the size of an area affects the exertion of pressure on a given body. He told the students this exclusively in Amharic.

Science Teacher 3

Example 9

T: Today we are going to discuss a new topic: 'SI units and Non-SI units'. As we discussed last time, pressure is equal to force over area. What is the unit of pressure? ግፊትን የምንለካበት አሃድ ምንድን ነው? What is the unit of pressure? *[reiteration + interjection]*

Ss: Pascal */in chorus/*

T: What is the unit of force? It is Newton. At the same time, there are other non-SI units. Normally, የግፊት ትክክለኛው አለማቀፋዊ መለኪያ አሃድ newton metre square ወይም pascal ብለን ስንጠራው ነገር ግን ከነዚህ ተጨማሪ የሆኑ አሀዶች አሉ። ለምሳሌ area ብንወስድ *[reiteration and message qualification]* ... የ area አሀድ ምንድን ነው ተባብለናል? Anyone? ...እህ! ...ማነው የሚመልስልኝ? Who can answer? *[Interjection]*

Ss: metre square */in chorus/*

T: Exactly! Metre square! ይህ እንተርናሽናሉ ነው፤ SI unit ነው። Non-SI unit ምንድን ነው? *[message qualification]* Non-SI unit ... ? */with an inviting gesture for students to answer/*

Example 10

T: እነዚህንና የመሳሰሉትን መጥቀስ እንደምንችለው በተመሳሳይ ከፓስካል ውጭ የሆኑትን ለመጥቀስ ያህል ባር፣ሚሊባር ፣ ቶር ወዘተ የመሳሰሉትን ልንጠቅስ እንችላለን። እነዚህ ሁሉ... non-SI ዩኒቶች ሲሆኑ ፕሬዠርርሊሆኑ ይችላሉ።*[multiple reiteration]* We can similarly mention other units which are out of pascal, such as bar, milibar, torr, etc. All these are non-SI units are at the same time pressure.

In Examples 9 and 10, the strategy or steps used by Science Teacher 3 was a little bit different from the first two who had been presenting the lesson little by little before they kicked off the new lesson, 'pressure'. This teacher, however, plunged himself and the students into a deep sea at once. He started posing his question first in English and subsequently translated the sentence in Amharic with a single literal reiteration, or to be more precise, in a form of word-for-word translation. He then continued his explanation in English, interspersing Amharic words and phrases in many spots of the discourse in a form of message qualification to help students identify the difference between SI and Non-SI units.

He again reiterated his point on the different standard units, as he calls them SI units by translating it in Amharic (ፓስካል ብለን እንጠራዋለን /we call it pascal/). He kept on qualifying his message about the different types of non-SI units by making comparison with the SI units using a combination of reiteration and message qualification alternately. In this extract, the teacher concluded his discourse with exclusive use of Amharic qualifying his message on the various kinds of SI units, which he subsumed under the term pascal, and non-SI units which he labelled as 'pressure'.

Science teachers' use of more message qualification than even reiteration implies that they were not concerned with mere translation of phrases or sentences for the sake of code-switching. Instead, they were more concerned with imparting the content by clarifying concepts in detail, by navigating from one code to another for students to have a clear picture of the subject matter.

Observing the most frequently used code-switching functions of the four science teachers, it is possible to discern that they were fixated with reiteration and message qualification. The pattern of alternation of code-switching functions used by these teachers was similar in that they started with reiteration, ranging from a short literal translation of words or phrases to longer stretches of utterances, followed by message qualification. This pattern of alternation, presenting the message first in English and elaborating it in Amharic, seemed to have been effective for these teachers, for they have been observed while repeatedly using it throughout their lessons.

In these content-based lessons, four of the science teachers were providing input to their students in the form of extensive explanation of concepts by switching to Amharic for reiteration (ranging from single to multiple translations) and message qualification. These two functions of code-switching, as depicted in Example 1 and 2, were found to co-occur. Considering the proportion of the languages used by these teachers, the discourse transcript shows that both the science teachers used the two languages with almost equal balance in their lessons. By using both English and Amharic in a balanced way, they managed to encode a double-layered message:

- it is very important that we need to know the concept of force and area first before we go to pressure
- what is the effect of force on a given body, etc.?

This follows the findings of Zheng (2009), who states that a message is clarified and emphasised when it is delivered in both languages, i.e. reiteration which was most frequently used by these teachers throughout their discourse. Frequent message qualification was also found by Choi and Kuipers (2003) in their study of science students. The pattern of the language switch was generally one-way, from English to Amharic. They start every string of concept first in English for a short time, then give their input with detailed explanations in Amharic and conclude their message in English, which suggests that the target language for teaching science is English. In circumstances where the students' proficiency in English might not be adequate for them to understand the complex subject matter, such as 'pressure' and 'the effect of force and area on a given body' in this particular case, teachers' use of code-switching into Amharic would be a more pertinent strategy to construct the information in a form that would be more comprehensible to the students.

B) Teacher-facilitated English lessons

In contrast to the teacher-fronted content lessons of science teachers, English language teachers were inclined to facilitate their lessons by asking the students a series of questions and building on their responses. The frequency of code-switching instances made by these teachers, as compared with what was registered in science teachers, was minimal, with a rate of 43 instances. This section is an analysis of the most frequently used code-switching functions that occurred despite the teachers' attempt to comply with English-only instructions.

Reiteration with translation

English Language Teacher 1

Example 11

T: OK. After you have finished Grade 10 what do you like to be? What do you like to be? ... What is your future plan after you finish Grade 10? አስረኛ ክፍል ከጨረሳችሁ በኋላ ምን መሆን ነው የምትፈልጉት ነው የምላችሁ? *[reiteration, literal translation]*

S1: I like to study medicine.

S2: I like to be a teacher.

T: OK, can you tell me some slogans that you know before? OK. እስኪ በአማርኛ ስሎጋን ማለት መፈክር ነው ብላችሁኛል፡ አይደል እንዴ? ካሁንበፊት ሰምታችኋቸው የምታውቁ መፈክሮች ካሉ ንገሩኝ? You told me what the word 'slogan' mean in Amharic, didn't you? Can you tell me other slogans that you heard before? *[single reiteration]*

S1: 'Stop early marriage!'

English Language Teacher 1 began her lesson by asking students some general comprehension questions from a reading passage that was read before on the topic: 'technical and vocational education and training'. After students answered the questions by referring back to the reading text, she posed an unexpected question related to their future ambition. She tried several times to simplify her English to get students to understand the question. Her attempts were met with silence. As a last resort, she reiterated the question with a single translation into Amharic. This time she was successful and students responded with active participation.

She used single reiteration in Example 11, but this literal translation of the message had made a difference to the students' participation. The mood of the classroom situation was drastically transformed from a dead silence to a more lively and interactive one. In a classroom context where students are generally passive because of a lack of understanding of the question as in the case of this teacher, such literal translation of the message can rekindle their interest to actively participate in the lesson. That is why many students raised their hands to say what they would like to be as they finished Grade 10 and told her different slogans they knew immediately after the teacher's translation of the questions.

Example 12

T: Now these all have the same meaning expressed with different modal auxiliaries. ሁሉም አንድ ናቸው፤ አንድ አይነት ትርጉም ነው ያላቸው፤ በተለያየ መነገድ አንድን ሃሳብ መግለጽ እንደምንችል ለማሳየት ነው፤እና ...Now, you're going to make statements of slogans in your own words. ሌላ መፈክሮችን የሚገልጹ ዐረፍተ ነገሮችን በራሳችሁ ቃላት ቀጥላችሁ ትሰራላችሁ፤ *[reiteration]*

Example 12 shows that English Language Teacher 1, after activating the students' background knowledge by entertaining their answers on the various slogans they know before, generalised all that they had said first in English as 'These all have the same meaning expressed in different ways using different modal auxiliaries, right?' She then immediately reiterated the same statement in Amharic with a single literal translation. This was followed by the teacher giving instructions about what students were going to do next as a follow-up activity. This time the teacher used the same code-switching function with the same pattern as shown in the first two lines of Example 12. She delivered the instruction first in English then translated it into Amharic. Her use of reiteration here, sentence-after-sentence translation, was more for clarifying instructions for students to do the task rather than for ensuring content understanding as they had already practised it before.

Nevertheless, her attempt to make students clear on the instruction was not successful because it was so general. She said: 'Let me give you class work. Make statements of slogans in your own words'. However, students were not

clear as to how many statements of slogans they were supposed to construct. Not only this, it was evident from the observation that many students were confused whether it was a group or individual task. When she was following each group to observe the students' progress, she found that many of them were not on the right track. This time she perceived that students did not understand the instruction. This lack of clarity made the teacher clarify it further, which resulted in extended use of code-switching.

English Language Teacher 2

Example 13

T: */Reading an excerpt of a text/* Dr Aklilu discovered a remedy for bilharziasis, right! What does it mean 'remedy'?

Ss: */silence/*

T: A remedy is a treatment to cure a disease. ለአንድ በሽታ የሚያድን ፍቱን መድሃኒት ማለትነው *[reiteration]* very good. The berries of endod have been used as laundry soap by Ethiopians for centuries. What does 'century' mean? እህ! Century ማለት ምን ማለትነው? አንድ መቶ አመት አንድ ሴንቸሪ ይባላል፤ It means a period of 100 years. *[reiteration]*

English Language Teacher 2 was teaching some vocabulary extracted from the reading text. He first tried to explain their meaning in simple English, but as he observed that several students were confused, he directly translated the new words into Amharic. We observed that English language teachers usually consider translation of words in the students' L1 as time-saving and a shortcut to get their message across.

Message qualification

English Language Teacher 1

Example 14

S3: We must educate children to educate a nation.

S4: We ought to educate children to educate a nation.

T: Now these all have the same meaning. ሁሉም አንድ ናቸው፤ አንድ አይነት ትርጉም ነው ያላቸው፤ ጻናትን ካስተማርን ህብረተሰቡን አስተማርን ማለት ነው መልዕክታቸው፤ It's possible to express the same idea using different modal auxiliaries. *[reiteration and message qualification]*

After students finished constructing their own statements of slogans, they were made to read out aloud to the class. As they use different modals for the same statement, she explained the meaning behind each and the possibility of using different modals to mean the same thing. Her purpose here was to stress the possibility of using various modals with no significant difference in meaning. Moreover, she frequently switched codes to give clear instruction for students in a manner showing her authority on the kind of statements they were supposed to construct.

English Language Teacher 2

Example 15

T: After this, we will go to the next point. It's a writing lesson: Writing a summary. We have learned about how bilharzia is transmitted! What the causes are and the prevention from the reading passage. When you write a paragraph, just you have to keep what ...? ... the sequence. ቢላሃርዚያ በሽታ ምንድን ነው፤ እንዴት እንደሚከሰት፤ የት እንደሚገኝ፤ በሽታውን እንዴት እንደምንከለከለው ፤ መድሃኒቱ ምን እንደሆነ ሁሉ በግልፅ ተረድታችኋል አይደል እንዴ? First of all, you have to start with writing what bilharzia is; you have to describe bilharzia: 'Bilharzia is a kind of disease....' After you describe it, you will continue to the next one, that is, 'what causes the disease and how it spreads' እንዴት ይይዘናል ወይም ምክንያቱ ምንድን ነው፡ የበሽታው አምጭው፤ ከዚያ በኋላስ እንዴት ይሰራጫል።*[reiteration and message qualification]*

This teacher was giving instruction on how to write a summary paragraph from a reading text, taught previously, in their own words. He was concerned that students follow the appropriate procedure in writing a summary. He specifically told them how to condense an idea by telling them the steps to follow first in Amharic, in a form of qualifying his message reiterating the necessary points again and again, and then repeat the same concept in English. He paused and then repeated the salient points in Amharic. This teacher's extended use of students' L1 at this point implies that he was much concerned about the organisation of a summary in writing task. Indeed, he was successful in this regard, as most students were actively involved and had a clear understanding of how to do the task.

English Language Teacher 3

Example 16

T: *[after he wrote the title of the reading text: Students' Code of Conduct, he asked]:* What do we mean by 'students' code of conduct'? Code of conduct ስንል ምን ማለታችን ነው? ሊነግረኝ የሚችል ማን ነው? *[reiteration + interjection]*

Ss: */dead silence/*

T: As a student there are different activities that you are expected to do in the school. አንድ ተማሪ በትምህርት ቤት ውስጥ ሲማር ሊፈጽማቸው የሚገቡ ተግባራት አሉ፤ These are obligations, you know, that every student must do. *[message qualification]* ለምሳሌ መምህራንን ማክበር፤ሳያረፍዱ የትምህርት ሰዓት አክብሮ መገኘት፤ የክፍልና የቤት ስራዎችን መስራት፤ የትምህርት ቤት ቁሳቁሶችንመጠበቅና መንከባከብ፤ ወዘተ ናቸው አይደል እንዴ? among students' code of conduct, for example, respecting teachers, to be punctual for class; doing class works and home works; keeping and protecting classroom materials, etc. All these are included in the students' code of conduct. *[reiteration + message qualification]*

Ss: አዎ! ትክክል ነው [yes, that's correct!]

T: So what's students' code of conduct now?

Ss: */some say randomly/* rule; */others say/* principles!

T: You're correct! Students' code of conduct means rules or principles of a school.

The lesson of this particular teacher was reading. He was acting as a facilitator rather than regarding himself as a source of knowledge. In this case, he started the lesson by asking a series of questions that demanded students use the skills of scanning and skimming to find out specific information and gist of a text. He made in his entire discourse only 12 code-switching instances, among which some six instances were message qualification and reiteration respectively. The first question he raised to the class was: 'What do we mean by "students' code of conduct"? Do you have any idea?' He raised this question first in English and reiterated it in single translation in Amharic with a tone of interjection to motivate students to react. This time there were no students who dared to say a word. Again the teacher started explaining the point by telling them some basic duties they should do at school first in Amharic, in a form of message qualification, and reiterated the same message again in English. After he gave them some instances of school code, he posed his question to the class again. This time a drastic change was shown in the students' reaction and responded him in chorus by saying 'rules... principles'. The teacher was successful at this point for he was able to manage students to guess the meaning of the term: 'students' code of conduct'.

Example 17
T: what's the general idea of paragraph 2? የምንባቡ ሁለተኛ ዓንቀጽ አጠቃላይ ሃሳብ ምንይመስላችኋል? *[reiteration + interjection]* What's the main idea of this paragraph? እስኪ ሁለተኛውን ዓንቀጽ ብቻ በፍጥነት አንብቡና ዋናውን ፍሬ ሃሳብ ንገሩኝ፤ አንዳንድ የማታውቋቸው ቃላትእንኳ ቱዋቸውና ስለምን እንደሚያወራ ብቻ ለመረዳት ሞክሩ፤ *[message qualification]* Please, read only paragraph 2 quickly and try to get the general idea. If you find new words that you don't know their meaning, don't worry. Just try to know what it is all about.

The second question English Language Teacher 3 raised was the general idea of paragraph 2. As English Language Teacher 3 did in Example 16, he addressed the question first in English and reiterated with a single translation in a form of interjection in Amharic. He then told them in detail, qualifying his message about what students should do to get the gist of the paragraph first in Amharic, and then posing this section of his discourse in English. This teacher did not tell them the answer directly, rather he guided them in how to get the answer themselves. He used message qualification this time to make instruction clear to students.

English Language Teacher 4
Example 18
T: */Teacher writes three sentences on the board.* 1. I have finished my work. 2. They have sold their car. 3. Taye has got a new job. *And then he asks/* How are these sentences similar? Have a look at the arrangement of words in each sentence. እስኪ እነዚህን ዓረፍተነገሮች ልብ ብላችሁ ተመልከቱና የሚያመሳስላቸውን ንገሩኝ? ማለቴ በእያንዳንዱ ዓረፍተነገር ያሉ ቃላት አደራደር ተመሳሳይነታቸው የት ላይ ነው? *[reiteration and message qualification]*

S1: has/have comes before verb three *[to mean the past participle form of the verb]*

T: Excellent! You're quite right. This is the form of a present perfect tense. Now, let's see the uses of present perfect tense with examples. One use of this tense is to describe an action/event completed in the past but has some effect for the present action/effect. አንድ ቀደም ሲል የተፈጸመ ድርጊት ወይም ትዕይንት አሁን ከምንነጋገርበት ጉዳይ ጋር ተያያዥነት ካለው ቀደም ሲል የተፈጸመውን ድርጊት ወይም ትዕይንት በዚህ እንገልጸዋለን:: በመጀመሪያ አንድ የአማርኛ ዓረፍተ ነገር ለምሳሌ እንውሰድና እንይ፤ Let's see this use of present perfect tense by taking one Amharic sentence as example. *[reiteration and message qualification]*

As can be seen in Example 18, this teacher started his lesson by giving the three sentences in present perfect tense form. He let students produce as many similar sentences of their own as possible. Then he asked them to identify their similarities in form first in English using a single sentence, and he explained the question with some detail in a form of message qualification in Amharic. Most students raised their hands to answer. Again, when he started explaining the use of this particular tense, he first told them with one string of sentence in English, but he reiterated the concept in some detail in a form of message qualification in Amharic. He also pressed this concept by providing them examples of Amharic sentences. This teacher used Amharic intensively as a comparison to help students better understand the syntactic and semantic features of English.

Other than clarifying instructions, grammatical structures and translating difficult words, English language teachers code-switched for other purposes as well. They were observed while switching between English and Amharic on occasions when their feelings were exposed, for example when they were irritated or annoyed by students' lack of interest in their learning or misbehaviour in the classroom. As stated by Muysken (2000) and Gardner-Chloros (1991), one of the purposes for which teachers switch codes is to maintain classroom management. The fact that classroom management is, or should be, one of the major purposes for teachers to switch code has been observed in all the English language teachers in the study, even if with few instances.

As observed from the teachers' instruction, confirmed in their interviews and students' focus group discussions, both the teachers and students were willing to use code-switching in the classroom for various purposes because, say the teachers, 'It's a helpful instrument even to learn English better by making comparisons with their mother tongue and, above all, to better understand subject matter contents'. The teachers did not consider code-switching to be an option to be used at their discretion, but that it should be acknowledged as a principal part of instruction, which is an inevitable or conscious choice made by the teacher when the students do not understand the message that was intended to convey during class.

Another purpose that contributed to the teachers' code-switching was when they needed to teach grammar lessons and deal with difficult words. English Language Teachers 1 and 2 in particular showed an awareness regarding how switching between English and Amharic might affect the students' attention. In this way, teachers adjusted the social distance to the students in the classroom. As confirmed from the observations, teachers tended, on the one hand, to bring the class together when using Amharic, e.g. to address less verbal or less active students. By contrast, they used English when they needed to show that they preferred the formal/target language over the informal, i.e. Amharic.

Conclusion

The results of this study appear to confirm that code-switching is a readily available and frequently applied strategy in the process of both English language and physics classroom instructions. Second, our findings confirm that there is a big margin between the two subject teachers in the frequency of code-switching instances they use, with science teachers exceeding English language teachers by more than double. Despite this, the pattern of most frequently used code-switching functions were the same in both subjects, i.e. message qualification, reiteration, and personalisation and objectivisation (with lessening proportions) respectively. However, the purposes for using these code-switching strategies were different from subject to subject.

English language teachers used code-switching for translating difficult words, phrases and paragraphs from English to Amharic. They also used only Amharic in an extended form when they believed that a certain language structure or point of grammar would be too difficult for the students to understand. They switched codes frequently when they wanted to make instructions of activities clear to the students and to catch their attention or when they saw students lose their focus. Their use of code-switching was beneficial in the L2 classroom in facilitating students' interaction and encouraging their participation in the classroom.

All the science teachers used code-switching more than English language teachers. The reason for this was that their lessons were more content-laden and the primary concern of these teachers was to make sure their students understood the concept of the subject matter in detail rather than to convey language elements. These teachers also used code-switching to make processes of experiments clear to students and to encourage their participation.

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2

An evaluation of code-mixing and switching strategies on the efficacy of primary 1 pupils in numeracy in Kwara State

Timothy Afolami Adebayo

2

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Introduction

Wardhaugh (1986) claims that multilingualism is a common phenomenon in most countries of the world today. According to him, it is a normal part of daily living that people speak several languages: one or more at home, school, work, in the village or in the city. In many language and communication situations, constituent parts of one language can be found with the constituents of another. This can occur in a number of linguistic phenomena, such as code-mixing, code-switching and calquing (the 'borrowing' of words between languages), but code-switching and mixing are the two linguistic phenomena that are the most prevalent and common codes of interaction among bilingual speakers.

Many scholars have attempted to define these two linguistic phenomena, including Atoye (1994), Belly (1976) and Amuda (1989). Hymes (1974) defines code-switching as 'a common term for alternative use of two or more language varieties of a language or even speech types'. According to Bokamba (1989), code-switching is the mixing of words, phrases and sentences from two distinct grammatical sub-systems across sentence boundaries within the same speech event. This is in contrast with code-mixing, which Bokamba defines as the embedding of various words, phrases and clauses in a co-operative activity where the participants, in order to infer what is intended, must reconcile what they hear with what they understand. For Annamalai (1989: 48), *switching* is normally done for the duration of a unit of discourse, but *mixing* is normally done with full sentences from another language with its grammar.

Naturally, additional language elements added in its spoken form plays an important role in teaching and learning. The language of instruction, which is the language used in the classroom, can, at times, pose difficulties for learners, and the use of English as a medium of instruction in schools (EMI) constitutes great barriers to effective learning. However, Nigeria's National Policy on Education (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2004) requires each school child, especially at the junior secondary school level, to study one of the three major indigenous languages as a second language in addition to their mother tongue. (It is important to note, however, that school children may not actually study their mother tongues, but must study an indigenous language for wider communication in primary school.) Such children, having acquired an indigenous language already as their first language or mother tongue, would have satisfied Section 1 Paragraph 8 of the National Policy on Education (4th Edition, 2004) which states that: 'In addition to appreciating the importance of language in the educational process, and as a mean of preserving the people culture, the government consider it to be in the interest of national unity that each child should be encouraged to learn one of the three indigenous major language other than his own mother tongue'; the government considers the three major languages in Nigeria to be Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba.

Awobuluyi (1992), on the other hand, is of the opinion that children in this example would only have satisfied the letter, but not spirit or intention of the National Policy with regards to language provision. According to Awobuluyi, the intention of the provision, which, in turn, is derived from a need for national unity, would require each school child in the country to be able to communicate in a major indigenous language and some major culture zone in the country other than their own. That being the case, a child who has studied a major indigenous language as their first language has only been exposed to their own major cultured zone, and must therefore study another major indigenous language as their second language in order to fulfil the real mind of the language provision in question.

Teaching and learning context

Education is more effective if learners are fluent in the medium of instruction, but inadequate proficiency in the medium of instruction is an obstacle. According to UNESCO (Ouane and Glanz, 2010), Africa is the only continent where the majority of children start school using a foreign language, and has between 1,000 and 2,500 different languages. In Nigeria there are some 500 languages and 250 ethnic groups. Nevertheless, English is seen as being a unifying language in Nigeria.

Williams (2014) suggests that the weaknesses in schooling are due to the dominance of English and the unintended consequences of an over-ambitious policy. He asserts that these weaknesses can only be remedied over time by greater reliance on African languages. In addition, according to Simon Kapwepwe, one-time Vice President of Zambia, said in 1969 that children should not be taught through English at the start of their education because it is the surest way of imparting an inferiority complex in the children and society. He suggested that it is 'poisonous and the surest way of killing African personality and African culture'.[2] It is no wonder that Williams says that effective education, though necessary, is not sufficient to create sustainable development. The appropriate language is not the entire answer to effective education, just as effective education or economic factors are not the entire answer to development; it depends on policy implementation (Williams, 2011).

Several scholars and language experts across the globe have investigated the causes, functions, characteristics and effects of code-switching and mixing. However, these studies are silent on the implications such phenomena have on language acquisition right from childhood. It is this area that this study focuses on and seeks to know the implication of code-switching, especially at the childhood stage.

It was in this context that this study was conducted. The purpose was to assess the use of code-mixing and switching on the efficacy of primary 1 pupils, in lessons based around numeracy, in two schools in Kwara State. The languages spoken by teachers in both schools are English, Yoruba, Baruteen, Hausa and Nupe languages, but most of the teachers use English and Yoruba as the language of instruction in the class. It is important to note that different languages are used for different purposes, such as discipline of pupils. In such cases, teachers use the pupil's mother tongue; using any other language could be meaningless to them.

Yoruba seems to be predominant as a language of instruction for discipline and social interaction in these schools. Other languages, such as Hausa, Baruteen or Nupe, could not be used as mediums of instruction, discipline or for social interaction because only a handful of teachers are fluent in them. Teachers (both male and female) would be advised to adopt English for social interaction in the schools and to use the mother tongue at the beginning of elementary level. No other language could be viable for both instructional and discipline except Yoruba.

Teachers in the schools do not appear to have been officially trained to teach at primary level. Only one of the ten teachers completing a questionnaire stated that they had obtained the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) in primary education studies. This, by implication, suggests that teachers in these schools are not specialists in early childhood care and primary education studies and therefore are not competent to handle pupils appropriately as expected. Individuals will tend to switch to the dominant language because of the imposition of one language as the norm of languages use in most bilingual communities.

Before children reach school age, many of them are monolingual and Yoruba is the only language of communication. Only private schools use English. However, both English and Yoruba starts to co-exist in the speech repertoire of the average child and, as a result, children start to become bilingual right from primary school. But at primary school level, the grammar of the first language will not have been grasped thoroughly and the child would naturally want to express themselves using all the linguistics resources at their disposal. Therefore, it is likely that the process of 'grammatical coalescence' of Yoruba and English would have begun at this level. This, in effect, makes code-switching and code-mixing manifest in the child's linguistic performance right from an early age (Ayeomoni, 2006: 93).

English is offered as a compulsory subject. It is the language of instruction and the use of its rival language (Yoruba) as 'vernacular' is forbidden to all students. Thus, English may well eventually replace Yoruba as a dominant language (op. cit.).

Research design

I selected two primary schools from the Irepodun Local Government Area in Kwara State.

1. At Saint Andrew Primary School, Oro, I observed the class teacher using code-mixing when teaching numeracy at both pre- and post-test stages.
2. At the Muslim Community Primary School, Iludun-Oro I observed a class teacher using code-switching while teaching numeracy at pre- and post-test stages.

I designed a questionnaire and administered a test (see Appendix 2.1) for five randomly selected teachers in both schools. There is no correlation between the questionnaire

2 Serpell, R (1978) 'Some developments in Zambia since 1971', in Ohannessian, S and Kashoki, ME (eds) (1978) *Language in Zambia*. London: International African Institute, 424–447, cited in William, E (2011) 'Language policy, politics and development in Africa', in Coleman, H (ed) *Dreams and Realities: Developing Countries and the English Language*. London: British Council, 46.

given to teachers and the test administered for primary 1 pupils in numeracy. The same two sets of students were exposed to code-mixing and switching respectively in these schools to test their cognitive intelligence. Simple percentages were used to correlate the differences in public performance.

Findings and implications

After the post-test the research revealed the academic performance of pupils in the two schools. The analysis is given below.

Table 2.1: Code-mixing analysis of scores in numeracy at school A: Saint Andrew Local Government Education Authority Primary School, Oro, Irepodun Local Government Area of Kwara State

Results	30–39	40–49	50–59	60+	Total
Pre-test	5	15	18	17	55
Post-test	2	3	11	29	45

Pupils' performance at the post-test stage is very impressive: 64 per cent of the pupils scored above 60 in the post-test as against 31 per cent during pre-test. From this analysis one could empirically conclude that pupils at this level of education can understand lessons better with the use of a code-mixing strategy. One of the reasons for this could be because the teacher adopted the mixing of words, phrases and sentences by embedding various linguistic units such as affixes, words, phrases and clauses in a co-operative activity with the pupils in order to infer what they understood.

Table 2.2: Code-switching analysis of scores in numeracy at School B: Muslim Community Local Government Education Authority Primary School, Iludun-Oro in Irepodun Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria

Results	30–39	40–49	50–59	60+	Total
Pre-test	7	6	12	3	28
Post-test	9	13	4	2	28

These results show that 46 per cent of pupils scored below 50 during pre-test, while 79 per cent scored below 50 marks in post-test examination. In effect, the child is bilingual at this stage, which could be harmful to pupils because the grammar of languages may not be thoroughly grasped by them.

Conclusion and recommendations

Code-mixing is an inevitable phenomenon of day-to-day language use, including in school. As has been the case in Ghana, primary school teachers are bilingual, having a minimum of both their mother tongue and English, through which they acquired their teachers' certificate and in which the major part of their teaching is carried out (Ure, 1979). The majority of the textbooks used in schools are written in English, but code-mixing will help guarantee the survival of mother tongues in the face of a powerful official language in multilingual communities. In addition, as Ayeomoni (2006) points out, code-mixing and code-switching will positively influence the educational attainment of individuals if they are used appropriately. Both phenomena have advantages as well as negative characteristics, with appropriate training, English language teachers could be shown how not to let these negative aspects adversely affect the language-acquisition process of a child.

Overall, the results of this study suggest that both code-mixing and code-switching are strategies to use at primary level, but it seems highly likely that at primary 1 of basic education only code-mixing should be used.

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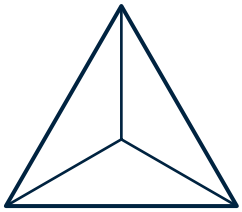
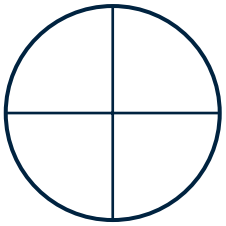
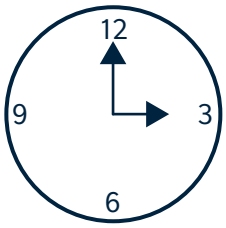
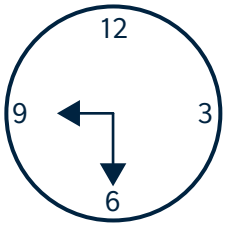
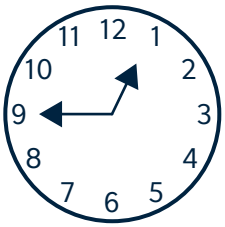
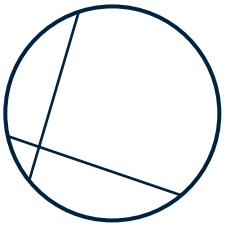
Appendix 2.1 Aptitude test based on Nigeria Education Research and Development Council (NERDC) curriculum

Items	Percentage of students giving correct response	Percentage of students not attempting item	Percentage of students giving an incorrect response
Item 1 Shade ¾ of this shape 			
Item 2 Shade ⅓ of this second shape 			
Item 3 Shade ¼ of this shape 			
Item 4 What is the time? 			
Item 5 What is the time? 			

Items	Percentage of students giving correct response	Percentage of students not attempting item	Percentage of students giving an incorrect response
Item 6 Write < or > in the box 81 ☐ 69			
Item 7 Write < or > in the box $\frac{1}{2}$ ☐ $\frac{5}{6}$			
Item 8 What is the area? 2 5			
Item 9 Say the time given on the clock 			
Item 10 What is this? 			

3

Linguistic challenges affecting the use of English in teaching national values and ethics in selected primary schools in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT)

Caleb Ademola Anota and Amos Onyeke

3

Linguistic challenges affecting the use of English in teaching national values and ethics in selected primary schools in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT)

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Background

The purpose of this study was to examine the linguistic challenges facing the use of English in teaching national values and ethics at basic levels 1–3 in Federal Capital Territory (FCT) primary schools. English is Nigeria's official language. It is also the language of instruction in the classroom. However, the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2011) states that in a 'monolithic environment', the language of the immediate community should be adopted as the medium of instruction in the classroom at basic levels 1–3 (the first three years in primary school) with the English language taught as a subject.

This stipulation in the policy could easily apply in localities where an indigenous language is the dominant language. Nigeria is made up of 36 states and the FCT. States in the North East, North West and North Central zones speak Hausa as the predominant language. Six states in the South West zone speak Yoruba while five in the South East zone speak Igbo as predominant languages respectively. Other states and the FCT do not enjoy the dominance of an indigenous language and are therefore regarded as being multilingual in nature.

Abuja, the FCT, is cosmopolitan and multilingual. It is awash with people of different ethnic nationalities from the over 200 ethnic groups in the country. The absence of a predominant indigenous language in the FCT means Abuja does not fit the NPE's description of a 'monolithic environment'. It also means that the language of classroom instruction, by the provisions of the NPE, would be English while indigenous languages would be taught as subjects.

A closer look at the language policy at the primary school level, as spelt out in the NPE, does not suggest or recommend any, or combination of, indigenous language for communities like the FCT that are not monolithic in nature. The conclusion would therefore tend towards the predominant use of English as the medium of instruction at basic levels 1–3 in such communities, while pupils in the monolithic environment are taught in the indigenous language.

This creates room for different instruction media and attendant challenges for different pupils at the same level of primary education in the same country as they prepare for the transition to basic 4–6. In addition, among the primary schools used as our sample (both private and public), we did not come across any that emphasises an indigenous language as the medium of instruction. It was also clear from interviews that parents in the FCT would hardly enrol their wards in a primary school where the sole medium of instruction at basic level is an indigenous language. We did not find textbooks in civic education (the subject that teaches national values and ethics) that were written in any of the indigenous languages in the schools sampled.

The Nigerian Constitution (2011) spells out national ethics in Chapter II under Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy. Article 23 states: 'The national ethics shall be Discipline, Integrity, Dignity of Labour, Social Justice, Religious Tolerance, Self-reliance and Patriotism'. The subject through which knowledge of the Nigerian Constitution and its provisions are imparted is civic education. According to Godswill Obloma, in the preface to the school textbook series *Civic Education for Primary Schools* (Olagunju et al 2010: iv):

> *Civic Education is one of the newly developed subjects in the 9 year Basic Education curriculum. The subject was derived from Social Studies and Citizenship Education to meet the needs of the Nigerian children to be fully aware of their position as citizens, avail them the instruments for recognizing their rights and responsibilities and ultimately equipping them towards becoming better and patriotic citizens.*

To achieve this objective, civic education is taught as a subject from basic levels 1 to 6. Each level introduces new concepts and builds on the previous to achieve stated objectives. Primary 1–6 civic education textbooks *(basic Civic Education for Primary Schools)* are full of persons and objects depicting the particular concept being introduced.

Teachers interviewed told us of the challenges they face with the pictures in creating a comprehensive representation of the concept being taught at a particular lesson. However, they agreed that their task at this age and level of the pupils is to create an impression in the minds of the pupils of the act, habit, behaviour or occasion that suggests the concept rather than an attempt at knowledge of national ethics. Knowledge of the individual abstract concepts, they believe, would come as the pupils make progress in school. A closer look at the civic education textbooks for basic 1–3 also indicate instructions for group activity, role play and dramatisation. Pupil participation in teacher-led activities and pupil-initiated teamwork are encouraged.

The challenge here is to determine which language is suitable for teaching civic education concepts and national values at this level. The NPE prescribes the dominant language in monolingual communities. In the FCT, however, the dominant language is English. There is no other language in the immediate community that is as widely spoken and accepted as English. It is the dominant official language used in teaching all subjects in all schools from the basic 1–6 classes. Pupils who come from homes where English is not commonly used face the initial difficulty of learning to adjust to the language of the classroom. But because teaching and learning are done through play and learning and picture modes, pupils are able to get along in forming impressions of the concepts targeted.

Another factor that aids understanding of national values at this level is that some of the targeted behaviours are encouraged in the home. For instance, discipline, punctuality, orderliness, neatness and respect for elders are emphasised and observed at home. The combined effect of play, picture and the home could help the basic 1–3 pupil form the impression of an acceptable behaviour, but the language to give expression to his understanding would also remain at the level of play and picture.

We saw that the schools vary in the degree of emphasis in the use of English in the classroom. Responses from teachers in the private (non-government-owned) schools indicate that most private schools do not allow the use of local languages to teach or explain concepts. In such schools, English is used throughout. In contrast, in the local education authority (government-owned) primary schools, we observed that teachers use local languages to explain terms which they consider difficult for pupils to understand. We also noted that no teacher sampled believed that all pupils in a class had uniform capability or capacity to understand any particular Nigerian language. Many of the teachers in our survey described how they use a similar strategy when pupils in the classrooms do not understand something because the pupil in question does not have sufficient language; they call on the pupils who are fluent in the language to interpret for their classmates while demonstrating what was meant through play, picture and dance.

In the LEA schools, we observed that in those situated in the heart of the city, the Central area, teachers do not use any language other than English. In contrast, those teachers located in the suburbs reported using Hausa or Gbagyi to complement and supplement what is taught in English. Teacher proficiency in a language plays a crucial role in determining which language is used in the class; teachers who are proficient in English report hardly any problems in using it to teach even at basic level.

Research questions

We wanted to know the answers to a range of language-related questions with regard to the teaching of national values and ethics in the FCT. Part of this involved gathering information on the general profiles of teachers: their qualifications, levels of proficiency in English and the reasons why certain languages are used at particular times during lessons. Our main questions were as follows:

1. What is the minimum teacher qualification in the FCT schools?
2. What is the minimum proficiency level for teachers of the English language in the FCT schools?
3. Which language is most frequently used as the medium of instruction in the classroom?
4. Which is the preferred language of interaction among the pupils in the FCT primary schools?
5. What is the predominant indigenous language among the pupils in FCT primary schools?
6. Do teachers in FCT primary schools code-switch, and code-switch while teaching civic education concepts?
7. Which method is most preferred by teachers in teaching civic education concepts?
8. Which indigenous language is taught as subject in the FCT primary schools?

Methodology

We adopted a survey research methodology. We administered questionnaires of 20 items (see Appendix 3.1) to 120 teachers in selected private and public schools in the FCT. The six schools, two each of which were public, private and faith-based, were located in two area councils in the FCT and were randomly selected for the purpose of the research.

The questionnaires were collected and responses analysed and ranked using simple percentages to determine the opinions of the teachers on the issues indicated in the research questions. Structured questions were also drafted and administered during two focus group discussion sessions with teachers and school managers who did not respond to the questionnaire. The opinions highlighted and conclusions drawn mirrored the results obtained from the simple percentages computed and conclusions arrived at from the focus group discussions.

The focus group discussion sessions, held in two public schools, had in attendance school supervisors who joined the teachers in expressing their opinions because they admitted that the language of classroom instruction was important to school, family and the government in the achievement of education's set objectives. Responses to questions posed at the group discussion sessions were quickly summarised in writing and read out to ensure it reflected the opinion of the majority in the group.

Challenges and limitations

Owing to time factors, this research is limited to six selected schools in two area councils in the FCT. The research is descriptive and used simple percentages to draw conclusions. The focus at this stage was to identify the opinions of teachers and stakeholders on the linguistic challenges they face in the classroom in teaching national values and ethics. Data obtained from the questionnaire were not subjected to any further or more complex statistical tests or analysis. Questionnaires were used in the schools only for teachers. School managers and some teachers participated in the oral interview and group discussion. There were 25 participants in the first group discussion and 31 in the second. There were more respondents from the government-owned (public) schools than the private schools.

Results and observations

We found out that the minimum teaching qualification in the FCT primary schools is the National Certificate in Education (NCE) and that there are graduate teachers in the public and private primary schools, some of whom have registered for or are undergoing postgraduate studies in the universities. Both the private and public schools employ graduate and NCE teachers, and before employment, all teachers in both categories of schools go through a session of oral and written interviews and screening. There is no baseline language proficiency test for teachers in the public schools. (The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) is not used in the appointment or placement of teachers.) The interview processes in the private schools is more rigorous in that they include aptitude and what are referred to as 'endurance' tests. Few indigenous Nigerian language speaking teachers are employed in the schools in the FCT despite there being more indigenous (Hausa) language speakers among the teachers and pupils in the schools located in the FCT suburbs than those in the city centre.

So, while there is a minimum proficiency level for teachers' ability to speak, read and write in the English language, supported by a qualifying certificate obtained from a college of education (for instance an NCE or university degree), and all teachers speak and write English, they do so at different levels of competence. All schools use English as the medium of instruction in the classroom, but code-switching is used in cases where the concepts being taught are difficult and so the teacher switches to the language that the majority of pupils understand. When the teacher code-switches in an indigenous language, he calls on pupils who understand what he has said to explain to those who do not. There are more instances of teachers who code-switch between English and an indigenous language in the government schools as compared to private schools.

We came to the conclusion that no classroom in any of the schools we sampled was 'monolithic' in nature and that no school had pupils of similar socio-economic background. In terms of language, in each of the schools sampled, there are pupils whose first language is English, but there are more cases of pupils with minimal understanding of English in the government-owned schools than the private schools. Not all pupils in basic 1–3 classes understand sentences in English; all of them, however, understand isolated words. Interestingly, the authorities in the schools do not compel teachers to use a particular indigenous language to aid pupils' comprehension.

Civic education lessons are timetabled for lessons once or twice a week in most schools. The subject textbooks examined in the schools are written in English. As a result, teachers experience considerable challenge in teaching civics in classes where pupils' understanding of the English language is low. The most common method teachers adopt in teaching values at basic level is the use of pictures and role play, but teachers observed that pictures describing an activity or behaviour are prone to different interpretations by different pupils and are weak at eliciting desired behaviours in school-age children. It is mainly for this reason that teachers suggested that concepts of values and ethics are better taught in the mother tongue. (They themselves feel more comfortable with the mother tongue than English in teaching civic education.)

The teachers told us that they consider concepts such as *patriotism, discipline* and *honesty* to be abstract in nature and require more precise and skilful use of language to define or describe appropriately. In view of this, they suggest that teachers trained in the three major Nigerian languages (Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba) to be employed as teachers in civic education classes in the primary schools in the FCT. Their knowledge of these major indigenous languages would be a useful resource when there is need to explain a particular concept in the language that most pupils would understand.

Summary and conclusions

Our findings from the research suggest that there is no monolithic classroom in the FCT schools. The language that is common and understood by the vast majority of pupils is English, which is spoken at varying levels of competence by both teachers and pupils. The teaching of national values and ethics in English can be challenging for some teachers owing to observed low levels of understanding of the language at basic 1–3 and the competition for space on the school timetable between civic education and the other school subjects.

The NPE requirement that the indigenous language of the immediate community be adopted as the medium of instruction in basic 1–3 in a monolithic environment does not apply in the FCT. This has made it obligatory for all pupils to be taught in English no matter their age, background or previous knowledge. As a result, teachers in the FCT schools often have to use pictures, drama and role play in order to teach pupils specific actions, habits or behaviours as set out in the national ethics requirements. This is despite such approaches being open to different interpretations by pupils depending on their backgrounds and experiences.

It is clear that national values and ethics, as enshrined in the Nigerian Constitution, are held in high esteem and are understood as being vital as having a place on the curriculum in order that all citizens can know them and use the same to judge their own and other people's behaviour. However, the concepts in coursebooks (which are also in English) are abstract and complex. Therefore, we recommend that instead of these being taught to basic 1–3 learners in a language that the child is just beginning to learn, they should be taught at the senior basic classes when pupils would have acquired more speaking skills. This would reduce a reliance on pictures, dramatisation and role play, which risk distorting meanings of key concepts and are subject to diverse interpretations.

In addition, there is a need for the Federal Capital Territory Administration to introduce the CEFR standard in assessing teachers' competences. Teachers need a reasonably high level of linguistic competence to be able to adequately simplify the concepts of values and ethics. To this end, only teachers whose level of competence is at the equivalence of the CEFR B1 level should be allowed to teach civic education as a subject.

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Appendix 3.1 Survey questionnaire

Section A: personal data

1. Surname	
2. Other names	
3. Qualification	
4. School	
5. Area council	
6. Class	
7. Age of pupils	
8. No. of pupils in class	
9. No. of teachers in class	
10. No. of subjects	

Section B: research questions

1. All pupils in my class understand my lesson in the English language only

a. Yes		b. No	

2. Not all pupils in my class can understand my lessons in the English language

a. Yes		b. No	

3. Many times, I do explain concepts using a mixture of English and other Nigerian languages

a. Yes		b. No	

4. The Nigerian languages spoken by children in my class are

a. Hausa		b. Igbo	
c. Yoruba		d. any other	

5. The Nigerian language I speak fluently is

a. Hausa		b. Igbo	
c. Yoruba		d. any other	

6. The Nigerian language spoken by most pupils in my class is

a. Hausa		b. Igbo	
c. Yoruba		d. any other	

7. The dominant Nigerian language is spoken by_____of the class

a. less than half		b. about half	
c. more than half			

8. The language I use for instruction in the classroom most of the time is

a. English		b. Hausa	
c. Igbo		d. Yoruba	
e. any other			

9. Which language do pupils prefer for instruction most of the time?

a. English		b. Hausa	
c. Igbo		d. Yoruba	
e. any other			

10. Which Nigerian language do pupils prefer in personal interaction most of the time?

a. English		b. Hausa	
c. Igbo		d. Yoruba	
e. any other			

11. When there is need to explain any civic education concept in Nigerian languages, I use

a. English		b. Hausa	
c. Igbo		d. Yoruba	
e. any other			

12. How often do you find yourself using a mixture of English and Nigerian language in class teaching?

a. daily		b. very often	
c. often		d. sometimes	
e. not at all			

13. Civic education concepts/words are better taught in

a. English		b. Hausa	
c. Igbo		d. Yoruba	
e. mother tongue			

14. Which of the following do you find most helpful when teaching pupils at this age level?

a. role play		b. drama	
c. picture			

15. Which teaching method do you find most unhelpful when teaching civic education concepts?

a. lecture method		b. group activity	
c. role play			

16. Which aspect of national ethics/values do you find most exciting to pupils?

a. discipline	
b. patriotism	
c. dignity of labour	
d. religious tolerance	
e. none	

17. Which language is better used in teaching civic education in the class?

a. the language the teacher understands	
b. the language the pupils understand	
c. the language of the immediate community	
d. the National Language	

18. Teaching national ethics/values would not be challenging if the class teacher

a. writes English very well	
b. speaks English very well	
c. understands interaction and can mix freely with pupils	
d. can maintain class discipline	
e. is vast in knowledge	

19. Teaching national ethics/values would not be challenging if the pupils

a. are few	
b. are many	
c. understand English language well	
d. have knowledge of one Nigerian language well	
e. have knowledge of ethics/values from home	

20. To teach national ethics/values the teacher needs to be

a. creative	
b. enterprising	
c. pro-active	
d. imaginary	
e. retro-active	

4

The effectiveness of activating learners' background knowledge on reading comprehension in Anambra State

Dr Justina C Anyadiegwu

4

The effectiveness of activating learners' background knowledge on reading comprehension in Anambra State

Dr Justina C Anyadiegwu

Background

English has assumed the status of a second language in Nigeria; it is the medium of instruction and assessment of performance in Nigerian schools. Its role for effective teaching and learning is fundamental. It becomes even more critical in classes where it is used as a medium of instruction owing to poor mastery of the language, especially on the part of the learners, which affects the learning process. The notion that learners comprehend a text or understand the teacher once the vocabulary and grammar are not beyond their level is not altogether true; learners construct meaning, linking old ideas to new ones during any learning process. They extract information from text (if written) and from the teacher's language as well as from their background knowledge, and match them together to make meaning. Reading comprehension, therefore, is a complex cognitive skill in which the learner constructs meaning by using all the available resources from both the text and previous knowledge. These resources assist learners in using lexis and syntax, retrieving meanings from their mental lexicon, making inferences and employing schemata (Alderson, 2000). According to Fukkink (2005) and Yazdanpanah (2007), the correct implementation of these resources can help learners in the successful comprehension of texts.

Statement of the problem

It could be argued that Nigeria has no language policy, as there is no document designated as such. What could be termed Nigeria's language policy is deduced from the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999: 10) and the National Policy on Education (2004: 16). These documents have categorised the different stages at which the indigenous language and the English language would be used for instruction. The National Policy on Education, for instance states that, 'for early childhood/ pre-primary education, government shall ensure that the medium of instruction is **principally** [emphasis added] the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community'. At the primary school level, the same document states that the medium of instruction shall be the language of the immediate environment for the first three years during which time English shall be taught as a subject. Subsequently, English shall progressively be used as the medium of instruction.

There is a problem when, in some cases, the language of the immediate environment may not be the language of the teacher. Ironically, textbooks meant for pupils in this category are written in English and, from experience, the choice of words in most cases is somewhat above the level of these pupils. There is also the problem of poor mastery of the English language of the class teacher. The reality is that what goes on in the classroom in terms of teaching and learning is far from being effective. In conditions like this, teachers need to be helped with strategies that engender effective teaching and learning in primary schools in Nigeria. In this research, therefore, I wanted to examine the effectiveness of activating prior knowledge as a strategy in helping teachers in difficult English as a medium of instruction classes in Nigeria cope with teaching and learning, especially in reading comprehension classes.

Research questions

The following research questions guided this study.

1. To what extent does activating prior knowledge aid comprehension of reading passages in the class?
2. To what extent does activating prior knowledge aid fluency in reading passages in the class?

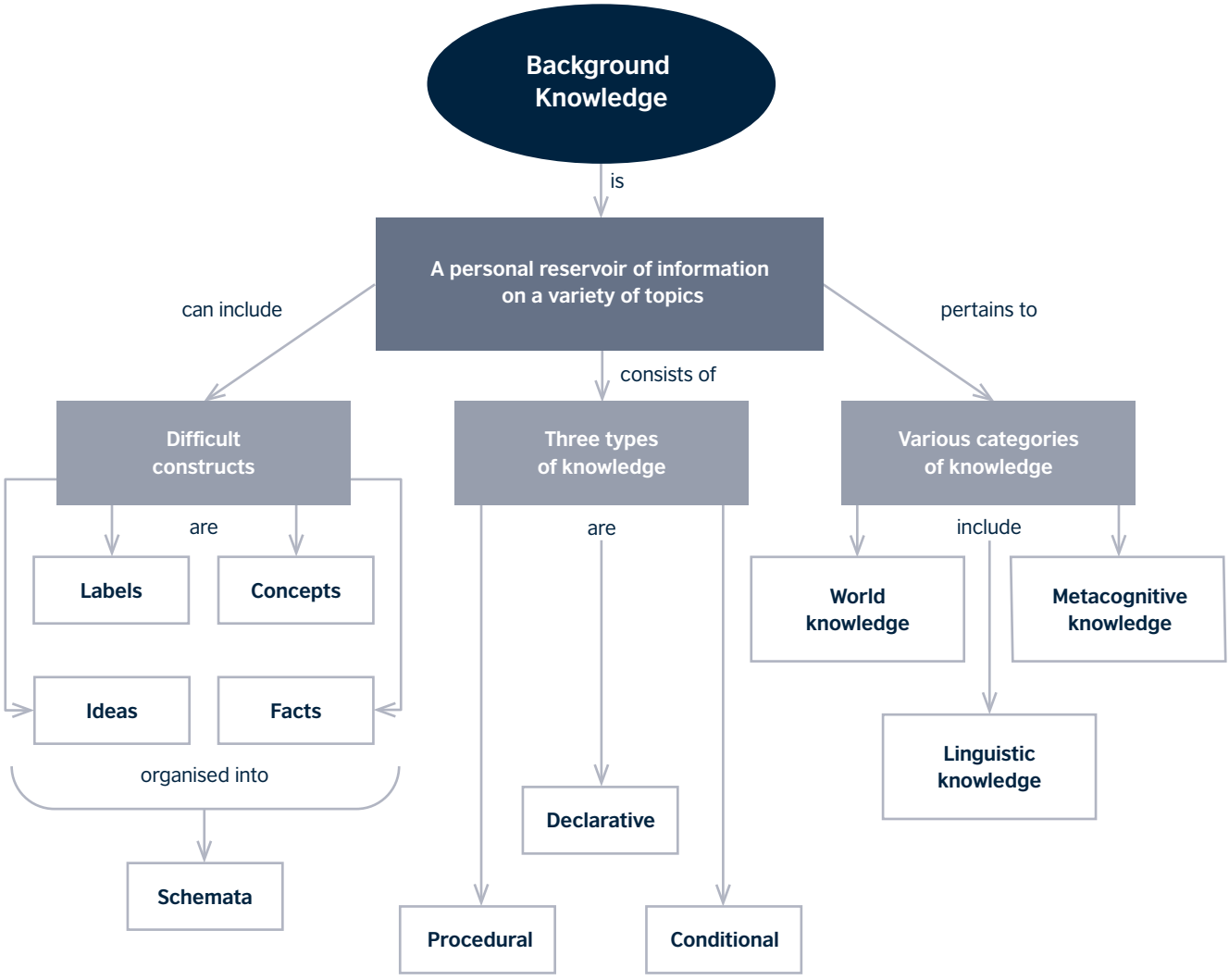
My intention was to find out the answer to this question: 'If background knowledge aids understanding of concepts, how can the teacher integrate or activate it as a strategy for reading comprehension lessons, and how effective is the strategy?' The foundation to this study was the theories of constructivism and the schema theory. In the following text, I offer an overview of the different ways of activating background knowledge and, finally, determine how effective activation of background knowledge is in teaching reading in the context of Anambra State. My intention was to see if the results were similar (or not) to other contexts where this research has been carried.

The focus of the study was activating learners' prior knowledge in English reading comprehension lessons in lower primary schools. The results and conclusions are intended to provide much-needed help for teachers in the very difficult conditions where English is the medium of instruction, as is the case in many parts of Nigeria. In addition, the results should provide insight for Nigeria's policy makers, curriculum planners, course developers and textbook writers in the discharge of their duties.

Conceptual and theoretical framework

Stevens defines background knowledge quite simply as 'what one already knows about a subject' (1980: 151). Biemans and Simons' definition of background knowledge is slightly more complex: 'background knowledge is all knowledge learners have when entering a learning environment that is potentially relevant for acquiring new knowledge' (1996: 6). Prior knowledge is therefore the whole of a person's knowledge, including explicit and tacit knowledge, metacognitive and conceptual knowledge. Strangman and Hall (2005) suggest that prior knowledge and background knowledge are themselves parent terms for many more specific knowledge dimensions such as conceptual knowledge and metacognitive knowledge. According to them, subject matter knowledge, strategy knowledge, personal knowledge and self-knowledge are all specialised forms of prior knowledge or background knowledge. Therefore, they used these two terms interchangeably and also in this research, the two terms will also be used interchangeably.

The diagram below illustrates what background knowledge embodies:



Source: Kamhi, AG and Catts, HW (1999) *Language and reading disabilities.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon, in Ehren, BJ and Gildroy, PG Background Knowledge Online Academy: University of Kansas, Center for Research on Learning.

According to Lipson (1982: 244), at the time of recall, people use their background knowledge to reconstruct information. In order to connect, learners must use prior knowledge along with data given by and information inferred from the text. He asserts that a learner who brings prior knowledge can make inferences required to construct meaning from the text with less effort than one with weak prior knowledge. Prior knowledge can help students make inferences, direct or focus attention to more important things and provide plans for recall. Students who lack prior knowledge are likely to have a difficult time throughout their school careers. Students with high prior knowledge will recall information in a more coherent manner, will make more knowledge-based inferences, and will have an idea of which ideas are important and which are not (Stahl, Hare, Chou, Sinatra, and Gregory, 1991; Anderson and Pearson, 1984). Taft and Leslie (1985: 177), with regards to reading comprehension, warned that 'children should not be expected to comprehend materials where the major concepts therein are unknown even when the concepts are explicitly defined in the text'. Therefore, relevance of the text to the level of the students is paramount. Moreover, a good teacher should strive towards activating learners' prior knowledge for maximum understanding of ideas in a lesson.

Strategies for activating/ building prior knowledge

Spires and Donley (1998: 257) have found out that prior knowledge activation is stimulated not simply by domain-specific knowledge but by the combination of personal and domain-specific knowledge. By personal domain, they mean the informal knowledge that is picked up along the way. Expanding on this, Warsnak (2006: 11), states that specific domain knowledge is knowledge that is specific to the topic and usually received formally. She further states that activating prior knowledge, or schema, is the first of other strategies that are keys to effective reading comprehension. These strategies, according to her, help students become metacognitive.

Many researchers have suggested some strategies that could be adopted by the teacher in reading comprehension class. Graves, Cooke and Laberge (1983) and Strangman and Hall (2005) recommend that direct instruction on background knowledge can significantly improve students' comprehension of relevant reading material. Such direct instruction according to them could come in the form of previewing, where students are presented with introductory material before they read specific texts. Other strategies include brainstorming (see Peeck et al., 1982; Carr et al., 1996; Smith et al., 1983), use of visual organisers and real-life experiences.

Theoretically speaking, this study is hinged on constructivism and the schema theory. constructivism is a theory of learning founded on the premise that, by reflecting on our experiences, we construct our own understanding of the world we live in. Each of us generates our own 'rules' and 'mental models' which we use to make sense of our experiences.[3] Constructivism's central idea is that human learning is *constructed*, that learners build new knowledge upon the foundation of previous learning. This view of learning sharply contrasts with one in which learning is the passive transmission of information from one individual to another, a view in which reception, not construction, is the key (Hoover, 1996). Hoover believes that two important notions orbit around the simple idea of constructed knowledge. The first is that learners construct new understandings using what they already know. According to him, there is no *tabula rasa* on which new knowledge is etched. Rather, learners come to learning situations with knowledge gained from previous experience, and that prior knowledge influences what new or modified knowledge they will construct from new learning experiences. The second notion, according to Hoover, is that learning is active rather than passive. Learners confront their understanding in the light of what they encounter in the new learning situation. If what learners encounter is inconsistent with their current understanding, their understanding can change to accommodate new experience. Learners remain active throughout this process: they apply current understanding, note relevant elements in new learning experiences, judge the consistency of prior and emerging knowledge, and, based on that judgement, they can modify knowledge (*ibid.*).

Related to constructivism is the schema theory. Schema is the cognitive construct which allows for the organisation of information in long-term memory. According to Cook (1989: 69), 'the mind stimulated by key words or phrases in the text or by context activates knowledge of schema'. This covers the knowledge of the world, from everyday knowledge to specialised knowledge, knowledge of language structures and knowledge of texts and forms they take in terms of genre and organisation. In addition to allowing us to organise information economically, schemas also allow us to predict the continuation of both spoken and written discourse (Wallace, 1992: 33). Schema theory is based on the belief that 'every act of comprehension involves one's knowledge of the world as well' (Anderson et al. in Carrell and Eisterhold, 1983: 73). Thus, readers develop a coherent interpretation of text through the interactive process of combining textual information with the information a reader brings to a text.

3 See: www.funderstanding.com/theory/constructivism/

Studies have proven that cultural background of readers influences their comprehension of texts (Swaffer, 1988; Brantmeier, 2003; Chou, 2011). Swaffer (1988: 126) mentions that schema knowledge can be more influential in reading comprehension than word knowledge, and she claims that topic familiarity facilitates 'language recognition', recall of concepts and 'inferential reasoning'. Brantmeier (2003) adds that topic familiarity can be an exceedingly significant factor in affecting L2 comprehension, as it enhances the reconstruction of the main idea. In other words, comprehension of a reading text involves extracting information from the written message and the reader's schemata and matching them together. In the same fashion, Chou stresses the importance of vocabulary knowledge to reading comprehension, as it has similar function to that background knowledge in helping students in decoding.

Methodology

Nigeria runs a 9–3–4 system of education. Through this system, the government provides nine years of basic education for every child. This breaks down as the nine years would yield three years of lower primary education, three years of upper primary education and three years of junior secondary education. The target population for this study was all the primary 3 pupils of government-owned primary schools of the 2013/2014 academic session. The class selected for the study were chosen because they were in the transitional class, being the last class for the lower primary in transit to the upper primary. As such, it was assumed that the pupils had been exposed to and had learned basic reading skills.

For the purposes of this study, government-owned primary schools were used. Primary schools in the state are divided into four education zones: Anambra North, Anambra South, Anambra East and Anambra West. Consequently, stratified rational sampling of schools within a zone was used to select four schools in each zone. Therefore, a total of 16 schools were used as sample for this study.

Anambra has 21 local government areas. Primary schools are monitored, controlled and supervised directly by the local government authorities under the Anambra State Universal Basic Education Board (ASUBEB). There are 1,043 primary schools in the state with a total of 319,150 pupils (ASUBEB, Awka; Schools by Population, Class and Local Government Area, 2014). These schools are distributed in 21 local government areas. Three types of primary schools exist: government-owned primary schools, mission primary schools (owned and run by Catholic and Anglican churches) and private primary schools (owned and run by individuals and groups aside from government and the afore-mentioned churches). Mission schools and private schools are attended mostly by the middle and upper classes, who can afford the school fees, while government-owned schools are attended by the lower class. These schools are distributed in both the rural and urban areas.

This experimental research was carried out in 16 lower primary, government-owned schools in the four education zones where the standard is low in terms of availability of human and material resources, as well in supervision and monitoring of school activities. I split a class into two, using one as the control group and the other as the experimental group. This was to ensure homogeneity in the subjects in a particular school. I administered a performance achievement test I had developed at the end of each teaching session to the control and experimental groups and correlated the data.

The experimental groups were all asked to read a passage after activating their prior knowledge with the use of pictures related to the title (pupils were asked to note down things that they knew or thought about the picture). Matching words to their definitions activity was also used as another means of activating their prior knowledge on the topic. The control groups were asked to read the same passage without activating their prior knowledge. After the lesson, respondents were selected randomly and asked to read out a text (an adaptation of excerpts from an authentic material), to determine the extent of fluency between the experimental and control groups. Thereafter, all the pupils answered the questions that followed the passage. Data from the control and experimental groups were compared and analysed using simple percentages.

Presentation of data and discussion of findings

The study was carried out with a total of 500 pupils of primary 3 classes. A total of 250 pupils were used as the control group, while 250 pupils were used as the experimental group. Five question items were administered to the respondents at the end of the lesson. Below are the results from the performance achievement tests.

Table 4.1: Result of the performance achievement test of the experimental groups

Scores	0–0.5	1–1.5	2–2.5	3–3.5	4–4.5	5
Number of pupils	0	17	20	33	57	123
%	0%	6.8%	8%	13.2%	22.8%	49.2%

Table 4.2: Result of the performance achievement test of the control groups

Scores	0–0.5	1–1.5	2–2.5	3–3.5	4–4.5	5
Number of pupils	11	59	93	42	28	17
%	4.4%	23.6%	37.2%	16.8%	11.2%	6.8%

Table 4.3: Correlation of the results of the performance achievement test of both the experimental and control groups

Scores	0–0.5	1–1.5	2–2.5	3–3.5	4–4.5	5
Experimental group	0%	6.8%	8%	13.2%	22.8%	49.2%
Control group	4.4%	23.6%	37.2%	16.8%	11.2%	6.8%

The tables above show that pupils from the experimental groups who had their prior knowledge activated scored better than those of the control groups: 123 pupils, representing 49.2 per cent of the sample, scored five marks from the experimental group while only 17 pupils, representing 6.8 per cent of the sample, scored five marks in the control group. No pupil from the experimental group scored zero, while 11 pupils, representing 4.4 per cent of the group, scored zero in the control group. If one takes three marks and above as a pass mark, then it would mean that out of the 500 pupils used in this study, 213 (42.6 per cent) passed the achievement test from the experimental group while 87 (17.4 per cent) passed from the control group.

The findings show that learners comprehend texts better when their prior knowledge on the topic is activated. This is in line with the findings of Peeck et al. (1982), Smith et al. (1983), Anderson and Pearson (1984) and Spires and Donley (1998). These researchers have demonstrated that activating relevant prior knowledge by expressing in some form what one already knows about a topic can be very effective in the learning process.

This study also shows that pupils in the experimental group exhibited more fluency in reading the text than those in the control group. Those in the experimental group encountered key vocabulary in one of the activities for activating prior knowledge given for this study (matching words to their definitions), which was not featured for those in the control group. Therefore, activating prior knowledge not only aids the comprehension of texts, but also aids fluency.

Conclusions and recommendations

This study was carried out to determine the extent to which activating learners' prior knowledge aids in comprehending reading texts in lower primary schools. The findings show that pupils from the experimental group whose prior knowledge was activated understood the given text and performed better than those of the control group, as is evident in their performances in the achievement activity given.

Based on the findings, the following is recommended for teachers in that they should:

- strive to activate learners' prior knowledge before teaching any topic
- explore the different strategies for activating prior knowledge and apply relevant ones in the teaching/learning process
- provide direct and systematic instruction in phonological awareness as a prerequisite to reading instruction so that learners can have early success with phonics or other code-breaking instruction
- expose learners to a wide range of reading materials early enough for the acquisition of information/experience that could serve as background knowledge in subsequent reading.

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Appendix 4.1 Lesson plan: rail transportation (experimental group)

Outcomes	Learners can explain key words associated with rail transportation
	Learners can demonstrate understanding of passage by answering given questions
	Learners can work in pairs
Learning skill	Learners can work individually and in pairs
Group profile	Average of 30 learners per class (boys and girls)
Time	40 minutes
Materials	Chalk, chalkboard, word-definition cut-outs, pictures of a train and a toddlers' walking roller, pupils' copies of the reading passage, cardboard chart, blank paper and pencil or pen
Class	Primary 3
Assumptions	Learners are familiar with road transportation

Stage	Aim	Procedure	Materials	Interaction	Time
Warmer	To activate prior knowledge	T tells Ls to write down three things they know about a train. Elicits some from Ls	Learner notebooks, pictures of a train	Pair work	5 min
Outcomes	Clarify aims of lesson	T shows three outcomes on cardboard chart and discusses with Ls	Cardboard chart	Teacher–learner	2 min
Vocabulary input	Prepare for reading text	T gives out word-definition cut-outs. Ls match words to their definition	Cut-outs	Pair work	5 min
Reading activity	Read for gist	T gives Ls the passage to read	Copies of the passage to be read	Individual reading	8 min
Reading activity	Read for fluency	T appoints Ls to read aloud	Copies of the passage to be read	Individual reading	10 min
Reading activity	Read for specific information	T gives learners LPA and asks Ls to read the text and answer the questions. Teacher shows answers later on cardboard chart	Copies of the passage to be read	Pair work, T–Ls	10 min

Appendix 4.2 Lesson plan: rail transportation (control group)

Outcomes	Learners can explain key words associated with rail transportation
	Learners can demonstrate understanding of passage by answering given questions
	Learners can work in pairs
Learning skill	Learners can work individually and in pairs
Group profile	Average of 30 learners per class (boys and girls)
Time	30 minutes
Materials	Chalk, chalkboard, pupils' copies of the reading passage, cardboard chart, blank paper and pencil or pen
Class	Primary 3
Assumptions	Learners are familiar with road transportation

Stage	Aim	Procedure	Materials	Interaction	Time
Outcomes	Clarify aims of lesson	T shows three outcomes on cardboard chart and discusses with Ls	Cardboard chart	Teacher–learner	2 min
Reading activity	Read for gist	T gives Ls the passage to read	Copies of the passage to be read	Individual reading	8 min
Reading activity	Read for fluency	T appoints Ls to read aloud	Copies of the passage to be read	Individual reading	10 min
Reading activity	Read for specific information	T gives LPA and asks Ls to read the text and answer the questions. Teacher shows answers later on cardboard chart	Copies of the passage to be read	Pair work, T–Ls	10 min

Appendix 4.3 Learners' performance activity (LPA)/ performance activities (for experimental group)

Comprehension passage

Rail transport

Activity 1

Take a look at the pictures and write down five things about the picture.

Activity 2

Match the words to their meaning.

	Words	Meanings
1.	Rail tracks	The power unit of a train
2.	Steel	Metal bars that make a way for trains
3.	Carriages and wagon	Metal produced from iron
4.	Locomotive	A long heavy connected wagons used for transportation
5.	Train	Things that carry goods and people on a railway

Rail transport is the means of conveying passengers and goods by way of wheeled vehicles running on **rail tracks**. This is not the same for road transport where vehicles merely run on a prepared surface. Rail vehicles are guided in the direction they go by the tracks they run on. Tracks are made of **steel rails** fixed on **ties** and **ballast**, on which the rolling stock moves. Trains move faster than cars and the **carriages and wagons** can be coupled into longer trains. The **railway company** is in charge of transporting people from one train station to another. Power is provided by train locomotives either through electricity or they produce their own power usually by diesel.

Railway is capable of carrying many passengers and goods at a time unlike buses and cars. Railways are a safe land transportation system when compared with other forms of transportation.

Activity 3

Choose from the words in the box below to complete the following:

car	rail	transport	rail tracks	diesel	carriages
wagons	locomotive	railway station			

1. A train moves on _____.
2. The means of conveying passengers and goods on wheeled vehicles running on tracks is known as _____.
3. A train moves faster than _____.
4. Trains use power from electricity or from _____.
5. A long train has many _____ and _____.

Structured interview

1. The passage is (easy/difficult/very difficult) for me to understand.
2. Say (two/three/four) things about a train.

Appendix 4.4 Learners' performance activity (LPA)/performance activities (for control group)

Comprehension passage

Rail transportation

Rail transport is the means of conveying passengers and goods by way of wheeled vehicles running on **rail tracks**. This is not the same for road transport where vehicles merely run on a prepared surface. Rail vehicles are guided in the direction they go by the tracks they run on. Tracks are made of **steel rails** fixed on **ties** and **ballast**, on which the rolling stock moves. Trains move faster than cars and the **carriages and wagons** can be coupled into longer trains. The **railway company** is in charge of transporting people from one train station to another. Power is provided by train locomotives either through electricity or they produce their own power usually by diesel.

Railway is capable of carrying many passengers and goods at a time unlike buses and cars. Railways are a safe land transportation system when compared with other forms of transportation.

Questions

car	rail	transport	rail tracks	diesel	carriages
wagons	locomotive	railway station			

Choose from the words in the box below to complete the following:

1. A train moves on _____.
2. The means of conveying passengers and goods on wheeled vehicles running on tracks is known as _____.
3. A train moves faster than _____.
4. Trains use power from electricity or from _____.
5. A long train has many _____ and _____.

Structured interview

1. The passage is (easy/difficult/very difficult) for me to understand.
2. Say (two/three/four) things about a train.

5

Assessing the attitude of pupils, teachers and parents towards the English as a medium of instruction policy in primary schools in South East Nigeria

Dr Justina C Anyadiegwu

5

Assessing the attitude of pupils, teachers and parents towards the English as a medium of instruction policy in primary schools in South East Nigeria

Dr Justina C Anyadiegwu

Introduction

Nigeria is a multilingual nation. However, the major languages spoken are Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, being the languages of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. Nigeria has no document that can be termed a language policy document; language policy is derived from the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999: 10) and the National Policy on Education (2004). In the Constitution, English is enshrined as the official language and a lingua franca of some sort in many spheres of national affairs, being a second language to many. The National Policy on Education (2004: 16) stipulates that English is the medium of instruction (EMI) except for the lower primary levels (primary 1–3) where the mother tongue (MT) or the language of the immediate environment[4] is expressly stated as the medium of instruction. Ironically, textbooks meant for this category of learners are written in English.

The implementation of the medium of instruction policy has become anything but uniform. In the northern part of the country, for example, English is equated to the language of Christianity. This grossly affects the use of the language in terms of acceptability and use. The general picture is that Hausa, a lingua franca for the north, is at times used even through secondary to tertiary level, as teachers are not proficient in English. In the south, the west and the east, there is a relatively higher acceptability of English. However again, implementation of the medium of instruction policy is not uniform. Elite schools, as well as schools located in the urban areas, use EMI at all grades and levels. For the elites, English is the language of class distinction and, for the majority of others in the urban areas, English is the only language that guarantees mutual intelligibility, given the composition of learners and even teachers from numerous linguistic backgrounds. There have been instances where parents and guardians have withdrawn their children or wards from school simply because English is not used as the medium of instruction in such schools. In rural areas, teachers are found code-switching both at sentence and clause levels, constrained by the fact that content and concepts to be conveyed are written and expressed in English in the class text. Sometimes, these concepts may not have equivalents in the local language.

Premised on the above realities, this study was designed to find out the attitudes of pupils, parents and teachers on EMI policy in primary schools in the south-eastern part of the country, where Igbo is predominantly spoken.

Conceptual and theoretical framework: attitude

Attitude is linked with state of mind and behaviour. It is our thinking, feeling, manner, position or disposition, orientation and tendency about an object or subject – something noticed in every area of our lives. Many definitions of attitude have been put forward by different researchers. Following Allport (1935), Fiske, Gilbert and Lindzey (2010: 356) agree that it is a mental and neural state of readiness, organised through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's responses to all objects and situations with which it is related. They also see attitudes as evaluative judgements that integrate and summarise cognitive and affective reactions. Attitude, therefore, is our disposition to act or react in a particular way towards a particular subject/object based on certain experience, perception or knowledge. Attitude is said to have three components: cognitive, affective and behavioural. The cognitive component of attitude, according to them, refers to the beliefs, thoughts and attributes that we would associate with an object; the affective component refers to feelings or emotions linked to an attitude object such as fear, hatred or sympathy; while the behavioural component of attitudes refer to past behaviours or experiences regarding an attitude object (Maio and Haddock, 2010: 25–26). This is seen in our tendency to act. Emphasis

4 This is subject to regional variation. In the linguistically diverse region of the SNNPR, for instance, English begins from Grade 5.

is on the tendency to act, not the actual acting, as what we intend and what we do may be quite different (Williams, n.d.).

Assessing and measuring attitude is not an easy task. People are often unwilling to provide responses perceived as socially undesirable and therefore tend to report what they think their attitudes should be rather than what they know them to be. Moreover, since attitudes have both implicit and explicit dimensions, it becomes difficult to measure, as the implicit may not always reflect the exact attitude of the person. This is in the sense that attitudes can be faked. Another problem of measuring attitude is in the degree, level, extent or frequency of the attitude. The subject may not be aware of the extent to which they hold a particular attitude, and thus report otherwise. All these become a problem of measuring attitudes indirectly.

English as a medium of instruction

English is spoken in almost all the parts of the world. It is no longer the exclusive preserve of Britain. It is now spoken natively by over a quarter of a billion people and a second language by many millions more (Roberts, 2007). English has become an international lingua franca as a result of globalisation. This has engendered a fear of the English language as a 'killer' language. It was in the same perspective that the English language was termed a 'cultural nerve gas' invading non-English cultures (Crystal, 2000). Hence, attitudes towards EMI vary from country to country.

However, some scholars see English as an international language for cross-cultural communication and thus a positive development (Coleman, 2006, Kachru, 1992: 67). In their view, the language creates new opportunities for locals to have a better understanding of their indigenous cultures and history as well as their position and relation with the world, thus engendering internationalisation. Others are of the opinion that with English taking up such an important position in many educational systems around the world, it has become one of the most powerful means of inclusion into, or exclusion from further education, employment, or social positions (Pennycook, 2001: 81). Dearden (2014: 3–6) reported issues regarding the EMI practice globally, including the lack of EMI-qualified teachers and teaching resources, questions as to which subjects are to be taught through English medium, the age at which EMI starts, the lack of a standard level of English for EMI teachers, the role of the teacher, and the role of language centres and professional development.

Theories

The following section deals with theories of attitude and learning that have relevance to this study, specifically Katz' (1960) functionalist theory and Festinger's (1962) cognitive dissonance theory. Katz posited that attitudes are determined by the functions they serve in four categories: utilitarian, value-expressive, ego-defensive and knowledge. In relation to language, the utilitarian function, according to him, is the benefit users derive from using a language. If the gain is greater, then there is a positive attitude to the language. Value-expressive, on the other hand, is the satisfaction individuals derive from expressing attitudes appropriate to their personal values, such as self-expression, self-development and self-realisation. Ego-defensive is the security users derive from current or future threat which use or disuse of a language poses to them. Knowledge is the ability to understand the world clearly through use of a language.

Festinger's cognitive dissonance has some bearing on this study. The theory suggests that we have an inner drive to hold all our attitudes and beliefs in harmony and avoid disharmony (or dissonance). The theory according to him is based on the following propositions:

- relationships among two cognitions can either be consonant, dissonant or irrelevant
- cognitive dissonance is a noxious state which produces unpleasant physical arousal
- individuals will attempt to reduce or eliminate dissonance and will try to avoid things that increase dissonance
- cognitive dissonance can be reduced or eliminated only by adding new cognitions, or changing existing ones.

In relation to learning, Atherton (2013) quoting Neighbour (1992) makes the generation of appropriate dissonance into a major feature of teaching by showing how to drive this kind of intellectual wedge between learners' current beliefs and 'reality'. According to him:

> *if someone is called upon to learn something which contradicts what they already think they know – particularly if they are committed to that prior knowledge – they are likely to resist the new learning. And counter-intuitively, perhaps – if learning something has been difficult, uncomfortable, or even humiliating enough, people are less likely to concede that the content of what has been learned is useless, pointless or valueless.* (Atherton, 2013)

Some learning theories relate to and stress attitude formation. *Classical conditioning* describes the seeming reality that through repeated association, a particular positive or negative disposition or response will occur as exemplified by Pavlov's experiments with dogs.

Instrumental or operant conditioning suggests that behaviours or attitudes that are followed by positive consequences are reinforced and are therefore more likely to be repeated than behaviours and attitudes that are followed by negative consequences. *Observational learning underscores the role of observation in learning.* Children watch the behaviour of people around them and imitate what they see. If a child hears her parents express negative opinions about the English language, for example, she may repeat that opinion in class the next day. Whether she continues to repeat that opinion depends on the responses of her classmates and teacher. Therefore, observations determine the responses we learn, but reinforcement determines the responses we express (Williams, n.d.).

Empirical studies

Many studies have been conducted to explore attitudes towards learning EFL in general and EMI in particular. Abidin, Pour-Mohammadi and Alzwari (2012) investigated Libyan secondary school students' attitudes towards learning English in terms of the behavioural, cognitive and emotional aspects using 180 participants in three study years from three specialisations of basic sciences, life sciences, and social sciences. Findings from the study showed a negative attitude to the English language by the subjects. Bosco and Anna (2008) studied the attitudes of students and teachers from a secondary school in Hong Kong towards English as medium of instruction (EMI) in Hong Kong. Subjects were drawn from a local Chinese as medium of instruction (CMI) secondary school whose English proficiencies were not very high. Findings revealed a positive attitude to EMI, especially by teachers because of its functional value.

Zare-ee and Gholami (2013) conducted research on a group of 60 Iranian university professors in central Iran who preferred EMI. Findings indicated that the most commonly cited reasons for the Iranian university professors' preference for EMI were a) the status of English as the international language of science and technology, b) the loss of meaning and content through the use of translated scientific content, c) the better understanding of internationally published books and articles, and d) the potential to share scientific and technological achievements with the world.

These two researchers also reported a small-scale survey done by Kiliçkaya (2008) on the attitudes of the instructors of non-language subjects towards the use of English as a medium of instruction in Turkish universities, where Turkish is the native language of the great majority of the students. The sample of this study consisted of 100 instructors at the universities in Ankara. The results showed that Turkish instructors were more favourable to the idea of adopting Turkish as an instructional medium rather than English. They agreed that instruction in Turkish could promote better student learning.

Research questions

The following questions guided my research:

1. What attitudes do pupils have towards the use of English as a medium of instruction?
2. What attitudes do teachers have towards the use of English as a medium of instruction?
3. What attitudes do parents have towards the use of English as a medium of instruction?
4. What implications may be deduced from the respondents' collective attitudes towards English?
5. What implications may be deduced from the respondents' collective attitudes towards classroom achievement?

Methodology

The participants for this study comprised 60 subjects: 20 pupils, 20 parents and 20 teachers in Anambra State selected through stratified rationale sampling. The participants are homogeneous to the extent that Igbo is their mother tongue. The design of this study is quantitative in nature, i.e. descriptive and inferential. Thus, an adopted and adapted questionnaire on attitudes towards English as a medium of instruction was used as a data-gathering instrument. The items were adapted from the attitude questionnaire test used by Bosco and Anna (2008) in researching the attitude of students to EMI in Hong Kong. Simple percentages were used in analysing data.

Two research assistants, teachers in primary schools, were used in administering and collecting the questionnaire. During administration, they were required to explain the questionnaire items to the participants and to fill in the responses where applicable. Respondents were asked to signify the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the items of the questionnaire. A draft version of the questionnaire was prepared and piloted among five pupils, five parents and five teachers who were not among the participants for the study. This was to help ascertain the reliability of the items. In addition, to ensure the validity of the questionnaire items, the questionnaire was given to two specialists, a psychologist and an expert in teaching ESL, chosen from the teaching staff of Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe, Anambra State, Nigeria. Their comments were incorporated in the final draft of the questionnaire thereafter.

Data presentation

A. Pupils

Table 5.1a: Knowledge of English by parents

Both	One of them	None of them
15	4	1
75%	20%	5%

Table 5.1b: Preference for medium of instruction

Igbo	English	Both
2	12	6
10%	60%	30%

Table 5.1c: Reason(s) for preference

It is my mother tongue	2	10%
I want to learn that language very much	2	20%
It is easier to understand	7	35%
It is superior to use that language	1	5%
It is the official language	9	45%
It helps me understand lessons better	6	30%

Table 5.1d: Other perceptions

Items	Yes	%	No	%
English is more important	15	75%	5	25%
It is easier for me to understand the lessons in my mother tongue	20	100%	0	0%
I understand lessons better when the teacher uses English and Igbo	15	75%	5	25%
Using English in non-English subjects helps me learn English	11	55%	9	45%
Learning English can help me get a better job	20	100%	0	0%
Learning English can help me attain a better social status	20	100%	0	0%
English culture is superior to Igbo culture	18	90%	2	10%

B. Teachers

Table 5.2a: Preference for medium of instruction

Igbo	English	Both
4	2	14
20%	10%	70%

Table 5.2b: Reason(s) for preference

Items	Yes	%	No	%
It is my mother tongue	17	85%	3	15%
It is the mother tongue of most pupils	16	80%	4	20%
It helps my pupils learn that language	12	60%	8	40%
It aids understanding for my pupils	12	60%	8	40%
It is superior to use that language	0	0%	20	100%
It is the official language	15	75%	5	25%

Table 5.2c: Other perceptions

Items	Yes	%	No	%
English is more important	11	55%	9	45%
It is easier for me to teach lessons in my mother tongue	15	75%	5	25%
It is easier for me to use both languages in lessons	17	85%	3	15%
It is better to teach using English as a medium of instruction	11	55%	9	45%
Using English in non-English subjects helps students learn English	12	60%	8	40%
It is difficult for students to use English to learn non-English subjects	11	55%	9	45%
Learning English can help students get a better job	17	85%	3	15%
Learning English can help students attain a better social status	17	85%	3	15%

C. Parents

Table 5.3a: Knowledge of English

Yes	No
20	0
100%	0%

Table 5.3b: Preference for medium of instruction

Igbo	English	Both
11	2	7
55%	10%	35%

Table 5.3c: Reason(s) for preference

It is my mother tongue	6	30%
I want to learn that language very much	11	55%
It is easier to understand	3	15%
It is superior to use that language	0	0%
It is the official language	12	60%
It helps me understand lessons better	11	55%

Table 5.3d: Other perceptions

Items	Yes	%	No	%
English is more important	13	65%	7	35%
It is easier for children to understand lessons in my mother tongue	15	75%	5	25%
Using English in non-English subjects helps in learning English	15	75%	5	25%
Learning English can help learners get a better job	19	95%	1	5%
Learning English can help learners attain a better social status	20	100%	0	0%
English culture is superior to Igbo culture	0	0%	20	100%

A summary of the tables above shows that 60 per cent of the pupils prefer English as the medium of instruction. Ranking high among the reasons for their preference is the fact that English is the official language (45 per cent), followed by the fact that English is easier to understand. They also see English as more important than Igbo, see English culture as having a superior culture and believe English would help them get a better job and acquire a better social status. However, all of the pupils say that it is easier to understand lessons in Igbo; 75 per cent say that they understand lessons better when the teacher uses English and Igbo (through code-mixing and switching) in a lesson and 55 per cent believe that using English in non-English subjects helps them learn English.

For the teachers, ten per cent of them prefer to use EMI while 70 per cent prefer code-mixing and switching the medium of instruction. Ranking high among their reasons for the preference is the fact the language (Igbo) being the pupils' MT as well as *their* MT (80 per cent respectively) helps them learn by aiding understanding. Three-quarters (75 per cent) also see the importance of English as the official language. In essence, they prefer using both languages in the class because Igbo is the mother tongue of the pupils and the teacher, while English is the official language of the country. However, none of them believes that English culture is superior to Igbo culture. Over half (55 per cent) of them see English as more important, 85 per cent believe English can help pupils get better jobs and acquire better status. Over half (55 per cent) believe it is better to teach using EMI, 75 per cent of them responded that it is easier for them to teach in Igbo while 85 per cent responded that it is easier for them to teach using both languages. Three-fifths (60 per cent) responded that using English to teach non-English subjects helps pupils learn English and 55 per cent feel using English makes non-English subjects difficult for students.

For the parents, 100 per cent of them know English and 55 per cent of them prefer English as a medium of instruction. Ranking highest among the reasons for the preference is the fact that English is the official language (60 per cent), followed by the facts that they want their children to learn the chosen language and that it helps them understand lessons better (both 55 per cent). Nearly two-thirds (65 per cent) of them see English as more important though none of them see English as superior to Igbo. Most of the parents believe English can help learners get a better job (95 per cent) and acquire a better social status (100 per cent), while 75 per cent believe using English to teach non-English subjects will help learners learn English. However, 75 per cent of them responded that it is easier for children to understand lessons in the mother tongue.

From the data, it is evident that both Igbo and English play critical and crucial roles in the lives of participants. Specifically in the teaching–learning process, both languages are seen as important: Igbo aids understanding more, being the mother tongue, while English serves certain utilitarian values, being the official language, and is in no way superior to the Igbo language. Another revealing fact from the data is that using English to teach non-English subjects helps in learning English, though this makes the lesson difficult for learners. It could be argued that the findings from this study show a positive attitude to EMI. This is in line with the findings of Bosco and Anna (2008) and Zare-ee and Gholami (2013).

Conclusions and recommendations

This study investigated the attitudes of pupils, teachers and parents on EMI. Findings show that English and Igbo play complementary roles both in the teaching–learning process and in the lives of participants. Consequently, none of them is seen as superior. Based on the findings from this research, I make the following recommendations:

1. That the medium of instruction at the lower basic level be code-mixed/switched as against the policy of the mother tongue and/or language of the immediate environment used as the medium of instruction. This is in the context where texts and materials at this level are written and developed in English, whereas the medium of instruction is stipulated to be in the mother tongue. A good way to reconcile this anomaly is by the mediating factor, the teacher, to code-mix and switch languages in lessons. In addition, the idea of introducing EMI from the upper basic level onwards is rather abrupt as concepts for this class do not reflect the elementary language knowledge of pupils only recently encountering the language. Code-mixing and switching allows for a smoother transition to EMI.
2. Since using English to teach non-English subjects helps in learning English, but makes the subject difficult, a model of teaching that caters for the language and content needs of a lesson should be adopted. Consequently, a content and language integrated learning (CLIL) model could be adopted, and glossaries extensively used, as all of the participant teachers teach all the subjects in their class. The Nigerian government should, as a matter of policy, embark on massive training of primary school teachers in the use of CLIL as well a subsequent adoption of CLIL model for teaching in primary schools.

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Appendix 5.1 Survey instruments

Questionnaire on medium of instruction for pupils

Dear Respondent,

This questionnaire is intended to find out your opinion on the English medium of instruction in primary schools in Nigeria. Your candid opinion is solicited.

Name of school: _____

Class:_____

1. Do your parents know English?

a. Yes, both of them do.	
b. Yes, one of them does.	
c. No, neither of them.	

2. As a medium of instruction, which language do you prefer in your school?

a. Igbo	
b. English	
c. Both	

3. Why do you prefer the language you chose in Q.2? (You may choose more than one option here.)

a. It is my mother tongue.	
b. I want to learn that language very much.	
c. It is easier to understand.	
d. It is superior to use that language.	
e. It is the official language.	
f. It helps me understand lessons better.	

Items	Yes	No
English is more important		
It is easier for me to understand the lessons in my mother tongue		
I understand lessons better when the teacher uses English and Igbo		
Using English in non-English subjects helps me learn English		
Learning English can help me get a better job		
Learning English can help me attain a better social status		
English culture is superior to Igbo culture		

Questionnaire on medium of instruction for teachers

Dear Respondent,

This questionnaire is intended to find out your opinion on the English medium of instruction in primary schools in Nigeria. Your candid opinion is solicited.

Name of school: _____

Teaching subject(s):_____

1. As a medium of instruction, which language do you prefer in your school?

a. Igbo	
b. English	
c. Both	

2. Why do you prefer the language you chose in Q.2? (You may choose more than one here.)

a. It is my mother tongue.	
b. It is the mother tongue of most pupils.	
c. It helps my pupils learn that language.	
d. It aids understanding for my pupils.	
e. It is superior to use that language.	
f. It is the official language.	

Items	Yes	No
English is more important		
It is easier for me to teach lessons in my mother tongue		
It is easier for me to use both languages in lessons		
It is better to teach using English as a medium of instruction		
Using English in non-English subjects helps students learn English		
It is difficult for students to use English to learn non-English subjects		
Learning English can help students get a better job		
Learning English can help students attain a better social status		

Questionnaire on medium of instruction for parents

Dear Respondent,

This questionnaire is intended to find out your opinion on the English medium of instruction in primary schools in Nigeria. Your candid opinion is solicited.

1. Do you know English?

a. Yes		b. No	

2. As a medium of instruction, which language do you prefer in your children's school?

a. Igbo	
b. English	
c. Both	

3. Why do you prefer the language you chose in Q.2? (You may choose more than one option here.)

a. It is my mother tongue.	
b. I want my children to learn that language very much.	
c. It is easier to understand.	
d. It is superior to use that language.	
e. It is the official language.	
f. It helps children understand lessons better.	

Items	Yes	No
English is more important		
It is easier for children to understand lessons in my mother tongue		
Using English in non-English subjects helps in learning English		
Learning English can help learners get a better job		
Learning English can help learners attain a better social status		
English culture is superior to Igbo culture		

6

Attitudes towards English as a medium of instruction among parents, teachers and pupils in primary schools in Kano

Yakubu Muhammad Anas and Abbas Muhammed Liman

6

Attitudes towards English as a medium of instruction among parents, teachers and pupils in primary schools in Kano

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Introduction

English was introduced to Nigeria in the early 19th century by the British colonial administration. Although it is a foreign language to Nigeria in the sense that it is not an indigenous language, it is widely used as a second language. Because of the colonial legacy in matters relating to languages in education, most African countries which were once colonised are often faced with difficult choices when it comes to the languages taught and learned and the languages used for instruction at the various levels and sectors in the educational system. Ever since its introduction, it has survived many decades to date assuming a more vital status. It is the main language of education and administration in Nigeria and has gained recognition as the national language since independence. The major role played by English can be seen in education, government, business, commerce, mass communication and most of internal and external communication and above all it has a key place in democracy and political activities. The quality of spoken and written English in Nigeria and particularly the Hausa-dominated Northern Nigeria is widely assumed to have been deteriorating. Parents, teachers, pupils and the general public have raised questions over the deteriorating quality of instruction and poor performance of students in transition and certification examinations.

In addition to its dominance in its colonies around the world, the spread of English has become more visible as a result of socio-economic and political events making it gain recognition and eventually becoming a global lingua franca: a language used for communication among people with different first and second languages. International diplomacy, business, commerce, education, mass communication, science and technology have all made English the most widely spoken language across the globe in the 21st century. It is today a common language of inter-communal and inter-tribal communication across Nigeria.

The current position of English

It is through language that successive generations benefit from the experiences of those before them. Each generation shares, disputes, resolves and refines its experience through language. However, in order for language to serve its functions effectively, its users must be competent in and familiar and comfortable with it (Khejeri, 2014). The importance of English, both as a medium of instruction (EMI) and as a subject across the entire curriculum, has been emphasised and given attention by the language education policy in a great many education systems (Cantoni, 2007). The language of education is crucial to learners' academic success. As a result, nations whose native languages are not the languages of education have developed language policies to solve communication problems in their school systems. Most multilingual nations have adopted bilingual education systems that recognise the child's native language and a second language, which in most cases is the official language of the nation (Owu-Ewie and Eshun, 2015).

English is mainly used today for the transmission of information, accelerating its spread and making it the international language of knowledge and information, which are recognised as being the tools of political and economic power of this age (Aduwa-Ogiegbaen, and Iyamu, 2006). It is therefore not surprising that English is becoming more and more integrated into the field of education all over the world. This overwhelming spread of English has pushed many countries to review their language of education policies from two perspectives: the use of English as a medium of instruction and the teaching of English. The latter is becoming more prevalent amongst adult and non-formal education programmes in Nigeria while the former is more common in the school system especially at the post-secondary school (through practice) and from middle basic level (through policy). The use of English as a medium of instruction is growing despite the advent of a new school of thought advocating education-in-mother-tongue as a means of political restructuring after independence. However, English remains the most preferred language of instruction today because of its high status internationally (Kinyaduka and Kiwara, 2013).

Context

Language is the vehicle of social interaction and is needed for effective function in the work place, social interaction, and indeed, for functional literacy. As Gray (1969), suggests, 'a person is only functionally literate when he has acquired the knowledge and skills in reading and writing which will enable him to engage effectively in all those activities in which literacy is normally assumed in his culture of group'. The underlying cause of the language in education in Africa and particularly in West Africa is that the language of learning and teaching in most cases is either English or French, both of which are foreign to the continent. For this reason the continued use of these languages as a medium of instruction has come to be regarded by some as 'linguistic imperialism' (Ngidi, 2007).

Despite the importance of English in Nigeria, the performance of students in English language and English medium based subjects over the years has been dropping, with media reports showing that performance of students in spoken, written and reading in English has not been encouraging. Many academicians and educationist have been outspoken and attributed the low performance standards in English language and English medium subjects to government negligence and a failure to provide the necessary support.

One common question raised is the attitudes and interest of parents, teachers and the pupils towards the use of English particularly in primary schools in Kano State where largely Hausa is widely used as medium of instruction in almost all public schools. This is contrary to the national policy of education which states that 'mother tongue or language of the immediate environment should be the language of instruction in pre-primary and lower primary 1–3 while English is to be taught as a subject' and that 'from Primary 4 onwards English should be the medium of instruction and will also be taught as a subject' (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). One critical issue is the position of English as a requirement for admission into tertiary level and in fact it is becoming an extra requirement for graduate academic courses (master's degree and PhD) in some Nigerian universities.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the attitudes of parents, teachers and pupils of primary schools on the use of EMI in primary schools and to describe and discuss the underlying reasons for their perceptions. It will also determine their position and acceptance of English as a second language in the society. Another key question in the study was to determine whether the teachers are comfortable with EMI in their pedagogical process and how this influences learning achievement according to pupils and parents across the sample population.

Research questions

The study was designed to find answers to the following questions:

1. What is the position of teachers, pupils and parents on the use of English as a medium of instruction in the primary schools?
2. What is the relationship in the perceptions of teachers, parents and pupils in the use of EMI in the primary schools and their value concept of English as a second language?
3. Does EMI affect better learning achievement among the pupils?
4. What is the position of parents, teachers and pupils on the importance of English in social stratification in Kano and Nigeria as a whole?
5. What success or challenges are there with the use of EMI in the primary schools?

In Nigeria, English has been the official language and the language of instruction since independence and has been the language of political and economic activities for decades. Speaking English has been part of social and political recognition among Nigeria's elites. The Nigerian policy on education, on the other hand, states that pupils in lower basic (P1–3) will be taught in the local language (LL) or language of the immediate environment (LIE) while English will be taught as a subject. In middle basic (P4–6) pupils will be taught in English with English also offered as a subject. This ambition is seemingly unachievable for many reasons, best known to the teachers and school administrators, which have resulted in a derailment from the national policy.

Speaking English is one of the most important reasons that encourages many parents, who can afford it, to get their children admitted into private and semi-private primary and pre-primary schools in Kano and Nigeria as a whole. Understanding the opinion of stakeholders on the use of English may be an opportunity for stakeholders to make appropriate decisions as to how EMI may be effectively used so as to improve the quality of teaching and learning in Nigerian primary schools.

Methodology

The research was qualitative in nature. We have approached this subject area through a quantitative and qualitative data-gathering exercise in order to describe and explain the attitudes of the respondents on the use of EMI in primary schools. We focused on parents, teachers and pupils in the schools in Kano State. We engaged 11 primary schools in and around the Kano metropolitan area to enable us to do an in-depth investigation. A total of 190 pupils, 53 teachers and 28 parents took part in the study. We used a survey with 20 statements for our respondents to rate and conducted interviews with a small sample of teachers and parents.

Results and discussion

Characteristics of respondents

The pupils' ages ranged between nine and 12 across primary 3–6. There were 27 children aged between nine and ten in primary 3–4 and 98 pupils aged between ten and 11 years old in primary 4–5. There were 65 pupils aged between 11 and 12 in primary 5–6, roughly equally split with 33 pupils in primary 5 and 32 from primary 6. Of the total 190 pupils, 87 were girls and 103 were boys.

There was a total of 53 teachers, of which 19 were 18–25 years old, 27 were 26–40 years old, five were 40–50 years old and two were over 50. There were no Arabist teachers (i.e. those who do not attend formal Islamic studies, but hired to teach Arabic in primary schools), 13 had a Secondary School Certificate of Education (SSCE) and 27 had a National Certificate of Education (NCE), which is the federal government stipulated minimum qualification for teaching in primary school. There were 13 university graduates and one postgraduate holder. There were 35 female and 18 male teachers among the respondents.

There was a total of 27 parents who took part in the study. Four were aged 18–25, 13 were aged 26–40, eight aged 40–50 and two who were over 50. Five of the parents had no formal education, seven were secondary school leavers, nine were undergraduates (that is having an ordinary diploma and NCE), four were graduates and three postgraduates. There were 17 male parents and 11 female.

Questionnaire results

We presented our respondents with a total of 20 statements which we had designed in order to elicit their views on EMI and on the possible use of Hausa in class. We were also interested to know their opinions on whether, for example, English might be perceived as conferring a greater status on a user (possibly enabling them to get a better job in the future) and whether the use of one or another language might affect cultural perceptions. We were also interested in finding out our respondents' perceptions as to how English may help or hinder a child's creativity.

The results to each of these questions are described overleaf.

Table 6.1: Teaching in English will improve pupils' performance

Respondents	Agree	%	Disagree	%	I don't know	%	Total	%
Pupils	160	84.2%	11	5.8%	19	10%	190	100%
Teachers	43	81.1%	7	13.2%	3	5.7%	53	100%
Parents	20	71.4%	4	14.3%	4	14.3%	28	100%
Total	223	82.3%	22	8.1%	26	9.6%	271	100%

The responses showed that 84.2 per cent of pupils, 81.1 per cent of teachers and 71.4 per cent of parents agreed that teaching in English will improve the performance of pupils in the primary schools, while 5.8 per cent of pupils, 13.2 per cent of teachers and 14.3 per cent of parents disagreed. Ten per cent of pupils, 5.7 per cent of teachers and 14.3 per cent of parents were unsure and opted for 'I don't know'. Of the total population of 271 respondents, 82.3 per cent agreed, 8.1 per cent disagreed while 9.6 per cent were uncertain.

Table 6.2: Teaching in English will make pupils happy

Respondents	Agree	%	Disagree	%	I don't know	%	Total	%
Pupils	163	85.8%	7	3.7%	20	10.5%	190	100%
Teachers	44	83%	6	11.3%	3	5.7%	53	100%
Parents	23	82.1%	4	14.3%	1	3.6%	28	100%
Total	230	84.9%	17	6.2%	24	8.9%	271	100%

Responses on the relationship between EMI and pupils' happiness showed that 85.8 per cent of the pupils, 83 per cent of teachers and 82.1 per cent of parents agreed that teaching in English will make pupils happy, while 3.7 per cent of pupils, 11.3 per cent of teachers and 14.3 per cent of parents disagreed. Of those who were unsure, 10.5 per cent of pupils, 5.7 per cent of teachers and 3.6 per cent of parents were unsure. Out of the whole population 84.9 per cent agreed, 6.2 per cent disagreed and 8.9 per cent did not know whether EMI will make pupils happy.

Table 6.3: Teaching in English will make parents happy

Respondents	Agree	%	Disagree	%	I don't know	%	Total	%
Pupils	169	88.9%	11	5.8%	10	5.3%	190	100%
Teachers	46	86.8%	5	9.4%	2	3.8%	53	100%
Parents	24	85.7%	3	10.7%	1	3.6%	28	100%
Total	239	88.2%	19	7%	13	4.8%	271	100%

Responses on the relationship between EMI and parents' happiness demonstrated that with our sample 88.9 per cent of pupils, 86.8 per cent of teachers and 85.7 per cent of parents agreed that teaching in English will make parents happy. Almost six per cent (5.8 per cent) of pupils, 9.4 per cent of teachers and 10.7 per cent of parents disagreed, while 5.3 per cent of pupils, 3.8 per cent of teachers and 3.6 per cent of parents were unsure.

Table 6.4: Use of English in the school will increase pupils' ability to speak better English

Respondents	Agree	%	Disagree	%	I don't know	%	Total	%
Pupils	158	83.2%	12	6.3%	20	10.5%	190	100%
Teachers	43	81.1%	3	5.7%	7	13.2%	53	100%
Parents	27	96.4%	1	3.6%	0	0%	28	100%
Total	228	84.1%	16	5.9%	27	10%	271	100%

Over four-fifths of pupils (83.2 per cent) and teachers (81.1 per cent) agreed that use of English in the school will increase pupils' ability to speak English better, but almost all of the parents (96.4 per cent) thought that this was the case. Few pupils (6.3 per cent), teachers (5.7 per cent) and parents (3.6 per cent) of parents disagreed. None of the parents opted for 'I don't know', whereas 10.5 per cent of pupils and 13.2 per cent of teachers did so. Of the total sample, 84.1 per cent agreed with this statement, 5.9 per cent disagreed and ten per cent did not have a view.

Table 6.5: Teaching in English will change the culture of the pupils

Respondents	Agree	%	Disagree	%	I don't know	%	Total	%
Pupils	10	5.3%	170	89.4%	10	5.3%	190	100%
Teachers	5	9.4%	43	81.1%	5	9.4%	53	100%
Parents	2	7.1%	26	92.9%	0	0%	28	100%
Total	17	6.3%	239	88.2%	15	5.5%	271	100%

Few of our sample agreed with this statement: 5.3 per cent of pupils, 9.4 per cent of teachers and 7.1 per cent of parents thought that teaching in English will change the culture of pupils, while overwhelmingly 89.4 per cent of pupils, 81.1 per cent of teachers and 92.9 per cent of parents disagreed. Only a few had no strong views on this: 5.3 per cent of pupils, 9.4 per cent of teachers and none of the parents opted for 'I don't know'. So, overall, 6.3 per cent of respondents agreed, 88.2 per cent disagree and 5.5 per cent did not commit to a view.

Table 6.6: Teaching in English will help the children to speak like the native English

Respondents	Agree	%	Disagree	%	I don't know	%	Total	%
Pupils	158	83.2%	22	11.6%	10	5.2%	190	100%
Teachers	33	62.3%	20	37.7%	0	0%	53	100%
Parents	23	82.1%	5	17.9%	0	0%	28	100%
Total	214	79%	47	17.3%	10	3.7%	271	100%

The majority of pupils (83.2 per cent), teachers (62.3 per cent) and parents (82.1 per cent) agreed that teaching in English will help children speak like the native English natives, but while only 11.6 per cent of pupils disagreed, almost a fifth of parents (17.9 per cent) and nearly two-fifths of teachers (37.7 per cent) disagreed. A few pupils (5.2 per cent) opted for 'I don't know', but none of the teachers and parents did so. Overall, 79 per cent of the respondents agreed with this statement, 17.3 per cent disagreed and 3.7 per cent had no strong views.

Table 6.7: Pupils will be happier to learn in English than in Hausa

Respondents	Agree	%	Disagree	%	I don't know	%	Total	%
Pupils	120	63.1%	30	15.8%	29	15.3%	179	94.2%
Teachers	19	35.8%	21	39.6%	13	24.5%	53	100%
Parents	15	53.6%	9	32.1%	4	14.3%	28	100%
Total	154	56.8%	60	22.1%	46	17%	260	95.9%

A significant number of pupils (63.1 per cent) and parents (53.6 per cent) agreed that pupils will be happier to learn through EMI rather than in Hausa, with fewer teachers being convinced of this (35.8 per cent). Nevertheless, 15.8 per cent of pupils, 39.6 per cent of teachers and 32.1 per cent of parents disagreed. Of the total sample, 56.8 per cent agreed, 22.1 per cent disagreed and 17 per cent 'did not know'.

Table 6.8: All schools should give up teaching in Hausa if we want our education to be better

Respondents	Agree	%	Disagree	%	I don't know	%	Total	%
Pupils	140	73.7%	39	20.5%	10	5.3%	189	99.5%
Teachers	43	81.1%	9	17%	1	1.9%	53	100%
Parents	18	64.3%	9	32.1%	1	3.6%	28	100%
Total	201	74.2%	57	21%	12	4.4%	270	99.6%

The vast majority of pupils (73.7 per cent), teachers (81.1 per cent) and parents (64.3 per cent) agreed that all schools should give up teaching in Hausa in order to make the education better. Yet just over one-fifth (20.6 per cent) of pupils, 17 per cent of teachers and 32.1 per cent of parents disagreed. Far fewer pupils (5.3 per cent), and parents (3.6 per cent) disagreed and almost no teachers (1.9 per cent) agreed with this statement. In total, 74.2 per cent of the respondents agreed, 21 per cent disagreed and 4.4 per cent do not share a view.

Table 6.9: Teachers that work in schools that promote speaking better English have more recognition in our society

Respondents	Agree	%	Disagree	%	I don't know	%	Total	%
Pupils	165	86.8%	25	13.2%	0	0%	190	100%
Teachers	46	86.8%	7	13.2%	0	0%	53	100%
Parents	24	85.7%	1	3.6%	3	10.7%	28	100%
Total	235	86.7%	33	12.2%	3	1.1%	271	100%

There was broad agreement with this statement across all of the population samples. Approaching nine-tenths of pupils, teachers (both 86.8 per cent) and parents (85.7 per cent) felt that schools that promote speaking better English have more recognition in the society. In contrast, 13.2 per cent of pupils and teachers disagreed and only 3.6 per cent of parents were negative about this statement; 10.7 per cent of parents opted for 'I don't know'. Overall, 86.7 per cent of the respondents agreed, 12.2 per cent disagreed and 1.1 per cent did not know, or share, their views.

Table 6.10: If teachers with better English are teaching science and mathematics, academic achievement will be higher

Respondents	Agree	%	Disagree	%	I don't know	%	Total	%
Pupils	169	88.9%	21	11.1%	0	0%	190	100%
Teachers	44	83%	9	17%	0	0%	53	100%
Parents	22	78.6%	2	7.1%	3	10.7%	27	96.4%
Total	235	86.7%	32	11.8%	3	1.1%	270	99.6%

Most of the pupils (88.9 per cent), teachers (83 per cent) and parents (78.6 per cent) agreed that if teachers with better English could teach science and mathematics there will be higher academic achievement in schools. Just over one-tenth (11.1 per cent) of pupils, 17 per cent of teachers and 7.1 per cent of parents disagreed. Only 10.7 per cent of parents opted for 'I don't know'. In total, 86.7 per cent of the respondents agreed, 11.8 per cent disagreed and 1.1 per cent 'did not know'.

Table 6.11: Pupils benefit more in English medium classes than Hausa because many words cannot be understood in Hausa

Respondents	Agree	%	Disagree	%	I don't know	%	Total	%
Pupils	119	62.6%	56	29.5%	12	6.3%	187	98.4%
Teachers	27	50.9%	23	43.4%	3	5.7%	53	100%
Parents	22	78.6%	2	7.1%	3	10.7%	27	96.4%
Total	168	62%	81	29.9%	18	6.6%	267	98.5%

Lower numbers of pupils (62.6 per cent) and teachers (50.9 per cent) agreed that pupils benefit more in English-medium classes than Hausa-medium because many English words cannot be understood in Hausa. However, proportionately many more parents (78.6 per cent) agreed with this view. Correspondingly, 29.5 per cent of pupils, 43.4 per cent of teachers and 7.1 per cent of parents disagreed, while 6.3 per cent of pupils, 5.7 per cent of teachers and 10.7 per cent of parents opted for 'I don't know'. Over three-fifths (62 per cent) of respondents agreed with this statement, 29.9 per cent disagreed and 6.6 per cent did not know how to answer or judge this statement.

Table 6.12: Teaching in English is only good for the English studies and not other subjects

Respondents	Agree	%	Disagree	%	I don't know	%	Total	%
Pupils	59	31.1%	114	60%	7	3.7%	180	94.8%
Teachers	32	60.4%	14	26.4%	7	13.2%	53	100%
Parents	19	67.9%	7	25%	0	0%	26	92.9%
Total	110	40.6%	135	49.8%	14	5.2%	259	95.6%

Interestingly, 31.1 per cent of pupils, 60.4 per cent of teachers and 67.9 per cent of parents agreed that teaching in English is only good for the English studies and not other subjects, while 60 per cent of pupils, 26.4 per cent of teachers and 25 per cent of parents disagreed. Only a handful of pupils (3.7 per cent) were unable to say whether they agreed or disagreed, with a more significant number (13.2 per cent) of teachers, but none of the parents opted for 'I don't know'. In total, nearly half (49.8 per cent) disagreed with this statement, 40.6 per cent agreed and a further 5.2 per cent were unable to agree or disagree.

Table 6.13: Learning in English will enable pupils to meet and relate to people of other cultures because English is now an international language

Respondents	Agree	%	Disagree	%	I don't know	%	Total	%
Pupils	153	80.5%	33	17.4%	3	1.6%	189	99.5%
Teachers	22	41.5%	30	56.6%	1	1.9%	53	100%
Parents	16	57.1%	8	28.6%	4	14.3%	28	100%
Total	191	70.5%	71	26.2%	8	3%	270	99.7%

Just over four-fifths (80.5 per cent) of pupils, 41.5 per cent of teachers and 57.1 per cent of parents agreed with this statement, with 17.4 per cent of pupils, 56.6 per cent of teachers and 28.6 per cent of parents disagreeing. A few pupils (1.6 per cent) and teachers (1.9 per cent) did not know how to answer, nor did 14.3 per cent of parents. Overall, 70.5 per cent of the sample agreed, 26.2 per cent disagreed and three per cent did not know.

Table 6.14: Teaching in English does not result in corrupting religious belief

Respondents	Agree	%	Disagree	%	I don't know	%	Total	%
Pupils	174	91.6%	3	1.6%	13	6.8%	190	100%
Teachers	44	83%	1	1.9%	8	15.1%	53	100%
Parents	24	85.7%	1	3.6%	3	10.7%	28	100%
Total	242	89.3%	5	1.8%	24	8.9%	271	100%

Very high numbers of pupils (91.6 per cent), teachers (83 per cent) and parents (85.7 per cent) agreed that teaching in English will not result in corrupting religious belief, but 1.6 per cent of pupils, 1.9 per cent of teachers and 3.6 per cent of parents had the opposite view. Nearly one-sixth (15.9 per cent) of teachers, 10.7 per cent of parents and only 6.8 per cent of pupils were unsure of this, but overall 89.3 per cent of the population agreed, 1.8 per cent disagree and 8.9 per cent did not know.

Table 6.15: Teaching in English is necessary if pupils are to succeed in junior and senior secondary transition exams

Respondents	Agree	%	Disagree	%	I don't know	%	Total	%
Pupils	167	87.9%	13	6.8%	10	5.3%	190	100%
Teachers	42	79.2%	9	17%	2	3.8%	53	100%
Parents	22	78.6%	6	21.4%	0	0%	28	100%
Total	231	85.3%	28	10.3%	12	4.4%	271	100%

The majority of pupils (87.9 per cent), teachers (79.2 per cent) and parents (78.6 per cent) agreed with this statement, with correspondingly smaller proportions of our sample disagreeing (6.8 per cent, 17 per cent and 21.4 per cent respectively). Very few 'did not know': only 5.3 per cent of pupils, 3.8 per cent of teachers and none of the parents chose this option. Overall, 85.3 per cent of the sample agreed, 10.3 per cent disagreed and 4.4 per cent did not have a view.

Table 6.16: Teaching in English will make all levels of education in Nigeria better

Respondents	Agree	%	Disagree	%	I don't know	%	Total	%
Pupils	45	23.7%	116	61%	29	15.3%	190	100%
Teachers	48	90.5%	2	3.8%	3	5.7%	53	100%
Parents	24	85.7%	3	10.7%	0	0%	27	96.4%
Total	117	43.2%	121	44.6%	32	11.8%	270	99.6%

Somewhat surprisingly, only 23.7 per cent of pupils agreed with this statement, which was in contrast to the 90.5 per cent of teachers and 85.7 per cent of parents who agreed that teaching in English medium will improve the quality of Nigerian education at all levels. This was reflected in the proportions of those who disagreed: 61 per cent of pupils, 3.8 per cent of teachers and 5.7 per cent of parents disagreed. However, while 15.3 per cent of pupils said that they 'did not know' the answer to this question, only 5.7 per cent of teachers and none of the parents chose this option. There was a roughly even split between those who agreed (43.2 per cent) and disagreed (44.6 per cent) with this statement, with a further 11.8 per cent who said that they 'did not know'.

Table: 6.17: English as a medium of instruction hinders creativity of children at primary school level

Respondents	Agree	%	Disagree	%	I don't know	%	Total	%
Pupils	174	91.6%	13	6.8%	3	1.6%	190	100%
Teachers	13	24.5%	28	52.8%	12	22.6%	53	100%
Parents	6	21.4%	17	60.7%	4	14.3%	27	96.4%
Total	193	71.2%	58	21.4%	19	7%	270	99.6%

In contrast to statement 16, the vast majority of pupils (91.6 per cent) agreed with the suggestion that EMI hinders creativity, but fewer teachers (24.5 per cent) and parents (21.4 per cent) agreed. Over half of teachers (52.8 per cent) and 60.7 per cent of parents disagreed, but only 6.8 per cent of pupils. Very few pupils and parents (1.6 per cent and 14.3 per cent respectively) had no view, but 22 per cent of teachers opted for 'I don't know'. Over two-thirds (71.2 per cent) agreed with this statement while 21.4 per cent disagreed and seven per cent 'did not know'.

Table 6.18: Good use of English will help children get a better job in future

Respondents	Agree	%	Disagree	%	I don't know	%	Total	%
Pupils	164	86.3%	22	11.6%	4	2.1%	190	100%
Teachers	46	86.8%	7	13.2%	0	0%	53	100%
Parents	18	64.3%	5	17.9%	4	14.3%	27	96.5%
Total	228	84.1%	34	12.5%	8	3%	270	99.6%

Both pupils (86.3 per cent) and teachers (86.8 per cent) overwhelmingly agreed with this statement in contrast to fewer parents (64.3 per cent), while 11.6 per cent of pupils, 13.2 per cent of teachers and 17.9 per cent of parents disagreed. Only 2.1 per cent of pupils, none of the teachers and 14.3 per cent of parents opted for 'I don't know'. Nevertheless, 84.1 per cent of the respondents agreed, 12.5 per cent disagreed and only three per cent were undecided.

Table 6.19: Learning English will help pupils pass exams like WAEC and NECO very well

Respondents	Agree	%	Disagree	%	I don't know	%	Total	%
Pupils	179	94.2%	10	5.3%	0	0%	189	99.5%
Teachers	38	71.7%	6	11.3%	9	17%	53	100%
Parents	21	75%	7	25%	0	0%	28	100%
Total	238	87.8%	23	8.5%	9	3.3%	270	99.6%

Almost all of the pupils (94.2 per cent) agreed with this statement while slightly fewer teachers (71.7 per cent) and parents (75 per cent) agreed that learning English will help pupils pass examinations from bodies such as the West African Education Council (WAEC) and National Examinations Council (NECO). However, while 5.3 per cent of pupils and 11.3 per cent of teachers disagreed, 25 per cent of parents disagreed. None of the pupils, 17 per cent of teachers and none of the parents opted for 'I don't know'. In total, 87.8 per cent of the sample agreed, 8.5 per cent disagree and 3.3 per cent did not have a view.

Table 6.20: English medium is necessary for future admission into higher education

Respondents	Agree	%	Disagree	%	I don't know	%	Total	%
Pupils	169	88.9%	11	5.8%	10	5.3%	190	100%
Teachers	50	94.3%	0	0%	3	5.7%	53	100%
Parents	27	96.4%	1	3.6%	0	0%	28	100%
Total	246	90.8%	12	4.4%	13	4.8%	271	100%

All of the groups in our sample were very clear that they agreed with this statement: 88.9 per cent of pupils, 94.3 per cent of teachers and 96.4 per cent of parents agreed. Only 5.8 per cent of pupils, none of the teachers and 3.6 per cent of parents disagreed. Similarly small numbers opted for 'I don't know': 5.3 per cent of pupils, 5.7 per cent of teachers and none of the parents chose this option. The overwhelming majority (90.8 per cent) of the sample agreed, 4.4 per cent disagreed and 4.8 per cent did not know.

Interview responses

We asked our small sample of parents and teachers with questions relating to two key issues: using Hausa as the language of instruction, and whether EMI restricts pupils' creativity. Their responses can be summarised as follows.

In response to our questions relating to the use of Hausa as a medium of instruction in our primary schools, we were told that societies whose populations speak Chinese, Arabic and Japanese use these languages effectively in teaching and administration; labels and pamphlets on products from these countries are written in their language and are accepted worldwide. There may be some challenges interpreting some scientific terms into Hausa, but unless Hausa is accepted as the national language this may not be possible. Our sample suggested that if we teach our children with their mother tongue they would be more 'comfortable' because they would understand what is being taught. Since people in other countries where, for example, Arabic, Hebrew, Italian and Chinese are used, our sample told us that we in Nigeria can also do this and, if so, both teachers and pupils will perform and learn better.

Responses to our questionnaire raised concerns over children's creativity if taught through EMI. Our interviewees told us that since children cannot understand English they may not be able to see what the teacher is teaching within their level of understanding, therefore they cannot be creative. It is easier, they suggested, to think in our mother tongue and within our own culture than thinking in another person's language and culture.

Discussion

The result of this survey showed that all groups of respondents are in favour of EMI in primary schools in Kano, and generally agree that better English is associated with higher learning achievement at all levels and will lead to more recognition in society. Parents, teachers and pupils are all happy with teachers teaching in English. Better English is associated with performance in transition and certification examinations in Nigeria. The teaching of science and mathematics is also expected to improve if teachers with better English will be teaching the subjects. It is also important for getting admission into higher institutions and getting a better job in the future. The respondents also agree that even though Hausa is the dominant language in the state, making Hausa the medium of instruction may limit national integration, and issues related to interpretation of terms may be a challenge. EMI is seen as important in social stratification, since schools that encourage the use of English have more parents seeking admission for their children in the state.

Conclusion

English as a medium of instruction is what the Nigerian policy on education stipulates from middle basic, i.e. primary 4 up to university. However, in Kano there seem to be some challenges, as in public primary schools the policy is not fully complied with. Teachers teach mostly in Hausa at all levels and, in some model schools, children in lower basic are being taught in English. The findings of this survey revealed that the attitude of parents, teachers and pupils towards EMI is positive, but teachers may need more support to effectively teach in English. Since EMI is indispensable in the Nigerian education system, it should be given a higher-priority profile at all levels. Parents, teachers and pupils are generally happy with effective use of English and all have associated better English with a better future. We conclude that EMI is favoured in Kano primary schools, but certain challenges are preventing its effective use and compliance with national policy. Views gathered during interviews suggest that while some parents favour the use of Hausa as a medium of instruction in primary schools, others are sceptical. This is based on the contrasting views of Nigeria being multilingual, but also that English is seen as a catalyst for effective communication among the multi-ethnic and multilingual communities in Nigeria. There are concerns that EMI may be a factor in restricting the creativity of children, since they seem likely to learn better and think better in their mother tongue.

Recommendations

Even though English language, mathematics and science are very important subjects in Nigeria they are largely taught in local languages, which contradicts the national policy. Where EMI *is* used, the quality of the language (of teachers and pupils) does not favour achieving the expected learning outcomes. On the basis of these conclusions, the following recommendations are made.

1. Stakeholders in the Nigerian education system need to develop better strategies to improve the quality of teaching in English through strategies that may include building the capacity of teachers on the use of English as well as pedagogical skills that may enable them to teach effectively in accordance with the national policy.
2. Government should build the capacity of leaders of the education sector, such as school support officers, head teachers and quality assurance units, in order to support the effective teaching and use of English in accordance with the national policy on language of instruction in primary schools.
3. Non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations, parent–teacher associations and policy makers need to work together to design effective strategies to support schools towards effective use and teaching of English.

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7

Mother tongue influences on the learning of English in primary schools: a case study of selected schools in Irepodun and Ilorin South local government areas in Kwara State

Timothy Afolami Adebayo and Awolola Christiana Oyebola

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Introduction

A mother tongue is one's native language or parents' language. It is the language first learned by a child and passed from one generation to the next. A person's mother tongue has links to notions of 'self' and of identity and culture. This in turn has resonance and, potentially, implications in bilingual contexts. A person who finds themselves in a foreign environment will, as a means of social survival, aim to acquire competence in the language(s) used in that environment. This is very important if the individual is to communicate with their fellow human beings in that social context.

The terms 'first language' (otherwise known as L1) and 'mother tongue' are used here in the technical sense. In other words, a first language not only means 'first' in the sequential sense of the term, but also has other meanings. The first language, or mother tongue, as defined by Afolayan in Alabi, Adebiyi and Olatayo (2008) is the only language of a monolingual person that is acquired naturally in their native environment and which meets all their linguistic needs. The mother tongue can also be defined as the language in which a bilingual or multilingual person conducts their everyday activities in which they have the greatest intuitive knowledge. It is the first language of a bilingual or multilingual person. In Nigeria, Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo are mother tongues for the Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo cultural groups. It is the language that fully identifies the person's native culture as a bilingual or multilingual person. Yoruba, for example, could be used in expressing the world views, culture and tradition of the Yoruba people.

In Nigeria, the use of languages has developed as a result of educational demand; students are taught in the mother tongue or language of the immediate environment in the first three years in school, after which they receive lessons in English up to Higher Level. Language 'distance', i.e. how similar the first language may be to the second, would appear to have some effect on the amount of 'transfer' (the use of semantic or syntactic structures from the second language without the need to actively switch to that language) and therefore on the extent to which transfer can support or hinder learning. Where languages have less common ground, more information about word meanings and uses has to be acquired from scratch. This may be the case with English, which has long been considered one of the most popular communication means among people speaking different mother tongues. English is a subject as well as a medium of instruction, especially from upper primary school. It is the only subject that has comfortably found a prestigious place on the Nigeria school curriculum from pre-primary to tertiary levels.

In countries that are multilingual nations like Nigeria, it would be difficult to adopt a single indigenous language because Nigeria's language context is complex even though, as the government appreciates, a monolingual environment would help as a means of promoting social interaction, national cohesion and preserving cultures. Many indigenous languages are in use alongside English, which has been adopted as the official language of the country. The Nation Policy on Education (NPE) of 1977, which was revised in 1981, 1998 and 2004, states clearly that at primary level, the teaching of the vernacular should be pursued prior to the teaching of English. This vernacular was perceived by many Nigerians, educational planners and administrators to mean the three main languages of Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. Hence, little effort was made for the teaching and learning of these languages across the various levels of education in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, at the pre-primary and primary stages of education, the medium of instruction should principally be the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community in addition to English. To this end, the government will develop the orthographies of many Nigerian languages and produce textbooks in Nigerian languages (Federal Ministry of Education, 2004). For the purposes of this research, we refer to the indigenous language as the mother tongue and English as the second language (L2).

Given this linguistically diverse situation, English has been adopted as the language of government, the judiciary, the administration of education, legislature, commerce, journalism and most formal gatherings in Nigeria. The main objective of language teaching is that by the end of the period of learning, learners should be able to communicate in that language effectively. In addition, as pointed out by Susan Halliwell (1992: 3):

> *the teacher should not forget that young children do not come to the language classroom empty-handed; they bring with them an already well-established set of instincts, skills and characteristics which will help them to learn another language. It is important to note that mother tongue seems to be preferable because children:*
>
> - *are already very good at interpreting meaning without necessarily understanding the individual words;*
> - *already have great skill in using limited language creatively;*
> - *frequently learn indirectly rather than directly;*
> - *take great pleasure in finding and creating fun in what they do;*
> - *have already imagination;*
> - *above all, take delight in talking*

Research approach

The Merriam-Webster definition of language is: 'the system of words or signs that people use to express thoughts and feelings to each other'.[5] As language is the vehicle of human communication in the world, Nigeria is not exempt. It can be affected by a number of factors including the technological context or medium, culture and government policy. However, despite government policy, a thorough examination of selected primary schools in Kwara State reveals a combination of the mother tongue and English in the teaching and learning process. Most private schools do not have a clearly defined timetable policy in respect of teaching and learning the mother tongue, but do with regard to different types of indigenous languages in relation to the NPE. As a result, a common perception among parents is that use of the mother tongue is adversely affecting the learning of English in our primary schools.

With this in mind, we developed the following research question for this study:

A. What are the effects of the mother tongue on English in Nigerian primary schools?

B. What are the factors that are responsible for such challenges?

C. To what extent are the teachers and pupils in primary schools exposed to both languages?

D. What are the perceived benefits of the use of the mother tongue on the learning of English in Nigerian primary schools?

Purpose of study

This research was aimed at assessing the influence of using the mother tongue on the second language, English, in Kwara State, but we hope that it will be of great importance to the educational sector in Nigeria as a whole. It will enlighten educational planners and administrations on the need for the use of the mother tongue and English particularly in terms of reducing what could be viewed as the 'inferiority' complex of many pupils in classrooms with regard to using English.

5 See: www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/language

Methodology

A sample of 72 teachers was randomly selected from four primary schools in Kwara State for the study. The sample varied according to the population of each school. We designed and administered a questionnaire to collect the data for the study. The results are given in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1: Perceived benefits of the mother tongue on English language learning and use in Nigerian primary schools

Statements	Agree	%	Disagree	%
It helps students express their feelings	65	90.28%	7	9.72%
It arrests the falling of educational standards	56	77.78%	16	22.22%
It makes teaching and learning easier and interesting	68	94.44%	4	5.56%
It indicates the spirit of togetherness and belonging on the part of pupils	57	79.17%	15	20.83%
It promotes social interaction and preserving culture	61	84.72%	11	15.28%
It unites the diverse people of the region and reduces the rise in ethnic tension in the country	49	68.06%	23	31.94%
Average		**82.41%**		**17.59%**

Discussion

Teachers believe that the mother tongue arrests falling standards of education (77.78 per cent), helps students express their feelings freely (90.28 per cent) and makes teaching and learning easier and more interesting (94.44 per cent). In addition, they feel that the mother tongue promotes social interaction and preserves culture (84.72 per cent) and inculcates a spirit of togetherness and sense of belonging among pupils (79.17 per cent) and reduces rising in ethnic tension in the country (68.06 per cent).

This study suggests factors responsible for the positive use of the mother tongue on the learning of English. These include social and environmental feelings, linguistic factors, and social and environmental factors. We also found that parental factors contribute a lot because parents allow them to speak their mother tongue at home. This finding chimes with Bamgbose (1971), who concluded that teaching and explaining to a student in their own mother tongue will help them to understand better at the fastest possible rate.

Implications of the mother tongue for teaching

As outlined by Michael Swan, it seems clear that 'the more aware learners are of the similarities and differences between the pupils' mother tongue and the target language, the easier they will find it to adopt effective learning and production strategies. Informed teaching can help students to be realistic about the nature and limits of cross-linguistic correspondences and to become more attentive to important categories in the second language that have no Mother-Tongue counterpart' (Swan, 1997). Swan goes on to suggest (in common with Meara [1993]) that 'learners need to realise that formulaic multi-word items cannot usually be literally translated; teaching may train them to identify such items. The mother-tongue can influence the way second language vocabulary is learned, the way it is recalled for use and the way learners compensate for lack of knowledge by attempting to construct complex lexical items.' His conclusions are the same as ours in that: 'Recall and use of learned material – including mother-tongue lexis – can be interfered with by knowledge of another language. Little is known at present about the storage and retrieval mechanisms involved' (*ibid.*).

Mother tongue and translation in English language teaching

These results have led us to agree with Kavaliauskienė, who states that: 'The state of the art teaching of languages is based on the communicative method which emphasises teaching English through English. However, the idea of abandoning the native is too stressful to many learners, who need a sense of security in the experience of learning a foreign language' (Kavaliauskienė, 2009: 1). She refers to Ross (2000), who suggests that 'it is important to note that mother-tongue is a resource for promotion of language learning. Translation develops three qualities essential to all language learning: accuracy; clarity; flexibility.' (Ross, 2000: 61, in Kavaliauskienė, 2009: 2). On this basis, she concludes (and we concur) that the use of the mother tongue and translation can serve as a tool for improving language skills (*ibid.*).

Conclusion and recommendations

Having discussed most of the influence of using the mother tongue on the learning of English, we make the following recommendations so as to ensure the success of the uses of both the mother tongue and English as mediums of instruction in Nigerian primary schools.

1. Educational planners should re-plan our education programme in a very careful fashion to take account of our divergent culture and enforce the use of the mother tongue in teaching at primary school level.
2. Parents and teachers should encourage their sons and daughters to make use of both the mother tongue and English when communicating even outside the school system.
3. All schools should be well equipped with language laboratories, and facilities should be updated for effective teaching and learning.
4. The government should revisit the National Policy on Education (NPE).
5. Competent and professional teachers who are conversant with the theories of language and their practical application should be employed as language teachers in our schools.
6. Training and re-training of teachers, especially language teachers, should be a priority of the government at all levels of our educational system.

We would like to place great emphasis on all these recommendations in order to arrest the falling standard of education, of which many educationists complain. If these recommendations are put into practice we are confident that this will result in a crop of students in Nigeria who have mastery of both their mother tongue and of English.

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8

A longitudinal study of the impact of the English mentoring programme on Rwandan primary and lower secondary school teachers' fluency in English

Claudien Nzitabakuze

8

A longitudinal study of the impact of the English mentoring programme on Rwandan primary and lower secondary school teachers' fluency in English

Claudien Nzitabakuze

Introduction

Within a constitutional framework of trilingualism, a revised Rwandan language-in-education policy to use English as the medium of instruction was adopted in October 2008 in primary, secondary and tertiary education levels. Policy implementation began in 2009. The policy was revised in February 2011 so as to reinstate Kinyarwanda as the medium of instruction from primary 1 to primary 3. English remains the medium of instruction from primary 4 onwards. As a result, since 2009 the Teacher Service Commission (TSC) in collaboration with the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) embarked on building the English language capacity of all primary and secondary school teachers by organising and conducting two rounds of face-to-face English language training for teachers.

This face-to-face training was mainly based on general English. However, it helped lay a foundation for teachers to develop proficiency in English language. After assessing the two rounds of face-to-face English language training for teachers, the Teacher Development and Management Department of the Rwanda Education Board decided that in order to build on this platform created so far, there was a need to ensure that knowledge acquired during those two periods of face-to-face trainings are consolidated, and that teachers are supported in their classrooms as they carry on with their daily teaching activities.

Scope of the School-Based Mentoring Programme

The School-Based Mentoring Programme (SBMP) is country-wide and decentralised up to the school level. Thus, at least one school-based mentor can cover two schools. The aim is that all teachers (for both primary and lower secondary school) who are not yet proficient in the use of English as a medium of instruction have a nearby resource person. So far, all the teachers from schools with lower English language proficiency levels are to be mentored through this programme.

It was assumed that the SBMP would have the following objectives:

- since this mentoring would be school-based, teachers who were not yet confident in using English as the medium of instruction would have a chance of having a resource person near them all the time, unlike in the previous face-to-face approach, which used to last for two months (sometimes less)
- to support teachers at the school level in increasing their confidence and fluency in the English language
- to assist teachers at the school level in developing learner-centred classroom strategies and materials
- to help the school community be conversant with the English language.

Methodology

In the Rwandan context, school-based mentors involve groups of teachers who teach different subjects, or (and perhaps more helpfully) of teachers teaching the same subject.

Broadly, meetings for mentors/trainers and mentees/trainees provide a place to:

- discuss and find help with preparing for teaching (including language issues)
- share experiences and learn from these discussions
- work together on language learning materials and activities
- find support and gain confidence.

Target group (mentees)

The SBMP targets all primary and lower secondary school teachers who are not proficient in English and all other teachers that the school principal may assess and find in need of such help. Nationally, 1,000 trained school-based mentors were deployed at a ratio of one mentor for every two schools (primary and lower secondary

schools). The two schools can be a combination of primary and lower secondary schools, primary and primary or lower secondary and lower secondary, depending on their proximity to each other (maximum 5 kilometres) and school-based mentors are deployed in the neediest schools.

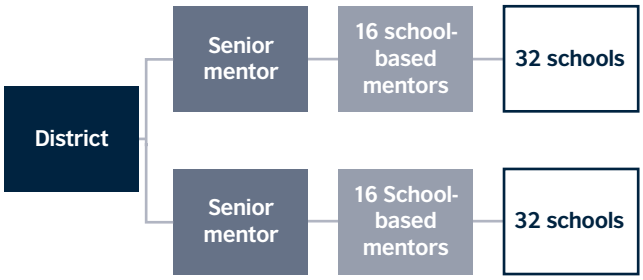
In order to provide technical/pedagogical training and support to the school-based mentors, the Rwanda Education Board placed two senior mentors in every district. This means that each senior mentor supports an average of 16 school-based mentors who are selected on the basis of their qualifications (bachelor's degree) and demonstrated competency in pedagogy. While their English language skills may not be superior to those of the school-based mentors whom they support, they should be more experienced and competent in pedagogy. They are required to have four years and above teaching experience and strong command of teaching methodology.

Senior mentors ensure that school-based mentors in their district have adequate training and resources to support teachers. Senior mentors have the following duties:

- convene continuing professional development (CPD) sessions for the school-based mentors in their district
- visit and support each school-based mentor on a regular basis
- attend CPD events convened by the Rwanda Education Board to receive training and materials to be passed on to the school-based mentors
- provide work plans and monitoring reports to the district education officer and Teacher Development and Management Department.

School-based mentors and senior mentors are recruited and deployed following the model in Figure 8.1.

Figure 8.1: School-based mentor and senior mentor recruitment and deployment model



Source: School-based Mentor Strategic Plan, 2012–2017

Continuous professional development for senior mentors and teachers

The SBMP is the core of CPD for teachers. School-based mentors spend two and a half days in each of their two assigned schools, mentoring teachers individually (classroom observation and feedback, helping in preparation of lessons and informal conversations) and in groups (training sessions, debates, etc). In addition to mentoring teachers on an individual basis, school-based mentors are expected to conduct two CPD sessions per month for the teachers in their two schools, rotating the venue between the schools.

School-based mentors undergo two weeks of initial training by senior mentors, at which they are to be given print materials for distribution to teachers and video-based instructional modules to use with teachers in group CPD sessions. School-based mentors also receive two weeks of follow-up training each year. Senior mentors have to organise once every two weeks with their school-based mentors to reinforce their skills as mentors, monitor progress in assigned schools and encourage sharing, networking and joint problem solving. Senior mentors also conduct a monthly site visit to each school-based mentor to monitor progress and provide the school-based mentor with on-the-job training and support. Senior mentors are given two weeks of initial training by the Teacher Development and Management Department and development partners and two weeks of follow-up training each year.

Supervision and monitoring of the school-based programme

Though head teachers are the school-based mentors' immediate supervisors, sector education officers, district education officers, inspectors and the Rwanda Education Board are expected to conduct regular monitoring of the school-based mentors' work in all districts. Also, each of the 15 employees at the Rwanda Education Board/ Teacher Development and Management Department were allocated two districts as a focal point. The focal point is expected to arrange field visits in their respective districts a few weeks after the start of each term in order to monitor the progress of mentoring and other SBMP-related issues in the assigned district(s).

The supervision period may range from five to ten days to enable focal points to visit nearly all schools in the district. The focal points, after their field visits, are then required to produce reports for further action. These reports help to inform decision making to improve progress. The Rwanda Education Board, through the two departments (Education Quality and Standards Department, and Teacher Development and Management Department), makes a daily follow-up on mentoring in addition to ensuring academic quality. Focal points also handle phone calls and emails from districts about the SBMP.

Background to English diagnostic testing In Rwanda

English in the modern world is not just a language. It is how the world does business; it is how the world shares ideas. In short, it is how the world communicates. We should see learning English not as learning a language, but as *learning a global communication skill*. The Rwandan government recognises this and, through policies such as Rwanda Vision 2020, seeks to improve opportunities for the next generation of Rwandans by improving the English language levels of all Rwandan children. For this to happen, the English language levels of Rwandan teachers must improve.

As part of the Rwanda Education Board strategy to improve the English language levels of all Rwandan teachers, all teachers in the SBMP took a diagnostic test in English in February 2014. This test resulted in teachers being given a working level of English and setting a target level to reach by the end of the academic year. In October 2014 a progress test was administered to measure improvement after a series of training programmes by school-based mentors.

The reasons for this testing were twofold. First, it was the largest ever survey of Rwandan teachers' English language ability and as such it would provide vital information to the Rwanda Education Board about training needs and the development of a long-term blended approach to English language learning. Second, it gave school-based mentors detailed information about how to help individual teachers improve their levels of English. A school-based mentor can only help a teacher if they know the true level of the teacher's English and what areas need to improve. If we know the level of English proficiency that the teacher is starting from, we can set realistic targets for that teacher to reach and also provide the training that they need.

The diagnostic tests are based on the Rwandan English Proficiency Standards for teachers (REPS). This system has been developed by the Rwanda Education Board in conjunction with the Education Development Centre's Language, Literacy and Learning initiative, with the support of USAID. The REPS are linked to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) standards, which are the globally recognised levels of language ability.

Table 8.1: REPS levels versus CEFR levels

Broad levels	REPS levels	CEFR levels	
Basic user	1	Low A1	Beginner
	1+	High A1	Elementary
	2	Low A2	Pre-intermediate
	2+	High A2	Pre-intermediate
Independent user	3	Low B1	Intermediate
	3+	High B1	Intermediate
	4	Low B2	Upper-intermediate
	4+	High B2	Upper-intermediate
Advanced user	(5)	C1 and C2	Advanced

In February 2014, all teachers took the Basic User Diagnostic Test and were given a working level of REPS 1, 1+, 2, 2+ and above 2+. This was because studies of Rwandan teachers' English levels showed that the majority of teachers, at the time of the test, were basic users and this was where the most improvement was to be made. Teachers whose level was 'above 2+' would take the Independent User Diagnostic Test in the second term.

Teachers were given a paper-based test which was designed to find out their ability in listening, reading, and writing along with their knowledge of the mechanics of the language (grammar and vocabulary). They were also given a short, individual speaking test with their school-based mentor. The school-based mentor used these tests along with their knowledge of individual teachers to determine a working level of English and set a target level.

Statement of the research problem

The SBMP has made significant progress in attempting to improve Rwandan teachers' proficiency and confidence in the use of English. Face-to-face training, classroom observation feedback and informal conversations that school-based mentors conduct with teachers help them to get familiar with various terminologies that could not be used or pronounced in proper English before the SBMP came into existence.

However, this study suggests that teachers still have constraints in gaining the required knowledge and skills from school-based mentors to enable them to use English as a medium of instruction. The administered diagnostic and progress tests aim to motivate school-based mentors and teachers to work towards set targets for all teachers to be proficient in English. Considering the current momentum in striving to be at the same pace with the set targets, there is doubt that this objective will have been totally achieved at the closure of the programme.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of English language SBMP on Rwandan primary and lower secondary school teachers' fluency in English. The objectives were:

1. to identify levels of teachers' proficiency in English language and the implications for teachers' performance
2. to determine the progress made by teachers in acquiring/using English language after taking a diagnostic test and receiving appropriate training
3. to identify strategies to be adopted in a bid to address challenges related to teachers' use of English as a medium of instruction.

Research design

This was a longitudinal study, following the same sample over time and making repeated observations. With longitudinal surveys, the same group of people (i.e. a cohort) is interviewed at regular intervals, enabling researchers to track changes over time and to relate them to variables that might explain why the changes occur. Longitudinal research designs describe patterns of change and help establish the direction and magnitude of causal relationships. Measurements are taken on each variable over two or more distinct time periods. This allows the researcher to measure change in variables over time. It is a type of observational study and is sometimes referred to as a panel study. The present study consists of tracking changes that must have happened between February and October 2014 through a meticulous analysis of the tests administered to teachers in both periods.

I investigated improvement of teachers' performance in English language by comparing the February 2014 diagnostic test results and those of September 2014. The purpose of the comparison was to verify whether the number of teachers in 1, 1+, 2 and 2+ has increased or decreased. This would help me to know whether there was any or no progress of teachers' proficiency in acquiring/using English as a medium of instruction.

Research findings

The present analysis of the impact of the SBMP on teachers' English proficiency has been possible through comparison of both the February 2014 diagnostic test and October 2014 progress test results. The analysis has been drawn from Table 8.2, which summarises total results of both tests according to the REPS/CEFR levels.

Table 8.2: Diagnostic and progress test results (February and October 2014)

Diagnostic test (February 2014)					
REPS	**1**	**1+**	**2**	**2+**	**IND**
	7,750	8,303	4,015	1,146	229
%	36%	39%	19%	5%	1%
CEFR	**A1**		**A2**		**B1**
%	75%		24%		1%
Results of progress testing 1 (October 2014)					
REPS	**1**	**1+**	**2**	**2+**	**IND**
	597	3,236	7,252	8,896	2,035
%	3%	15%	33%	40%	9%
CEFR	**A1**		**A2**		**B1**
%	18%		73%		9%

Source: diagnostic and progress test results

In the February 2014 diagnostic test, 36 per cent of teachers were at level 1, and in the October 2014 progress test only three per cent remained at this lower level, proving that the SBMP made a lot of effort to ensure teachers at lower levels should at least move to a higher level (1+), though they were still in the same range of the CEFR levels (A1).

Similar to teachers at 1, those at 1+ were also uplifted to 2, which corresponds to CEFR level A2. Thus, while 39 per cent of teachers were at 1+ in the diagnostic test, only 15 per cent were still at that level during the October 2014 progress test.

The massive progress in 1 and 1+ proves that the SBMP has been having more impact at these lower levels. This resulted from the fact that after the diagnostic test results were published, greater focus was dedicated to teachers who were found in the lower levels (1 and 1+) by producing training materials for these levels, and administering a series of holiday training sessions in collaboration with the British Council in Rwanda.

Tremendous progress was also made at levels 2 and 2+, which correspond to A2 in the CEFR. To illustrate this progress, the percentages increased as opposed to the lower levels in which percentages went down. This is obvious because the number of teachers at the good proficiency level should increase, while that of teachers at lower levels should decrease to mark progress. Similarly, while in the diagnostic test, 19 per cent of teachers were at level 2; this became 33 per cent in the progress test. Similarly for 2+, the progress test showed that 40 per cent of teachers were at level 2 as opposed to five per cent from the diagnostic test.

In terms of the level of independent users (IND), which corresponds to B1 and upwards in the CEFR, while there were only one per cent of teachers at this level in the diagnostic test, there were nine per cent in the progress test. What is encouraging in levels 2, 2+ and IND, is that, although teachers at these levels were not given as sufficient training as their colleagues in 1 and 1+ to boost their English proficiency, they made plenty of effort to move from lower levels to upper levels.

It is worthwhile to note that the diagnostic test concentrated more on what the teachers did *not* know so that appropriate interventions could take place. If a teacher was considered to be borderline, e.g. REPS 1/1+, then given the motivational aspect of the testing, that teacher would be considered to be level 1 to increase the chance of improving before the next test. (Borderline cases were given a target level 2 above their diagnostic score.) That is why teachers in 2, 2+ and IND, though no specific training and/or materials were given to them, could strive to learn more, and of course seek school-based mentors' support if need be, for them to pass prospective progress tests.

Despite this, the teachers at the B1 level could learn independently, notably through increased reading activities. The overall results of both diagnostic and progress tests show a massive shift from REPS 1/1+ (CEFR A1) to REPS 2/2+ (CEFR A2), and the key findings show that:

- 88 per cent of teachers tested demonstrated measurable improvement in their level of English
- 73 per cent of teachers scored at REPS 2 and 2+, which is the equivalent of a CEFR A2 level compared with 30 per cent at this level in February 2014.

Table 8.3 shows that there was notable progress in English language, whereby 2,314 teachers moved from 1 to 1+, 4,195 teachers moved from 1+ to 2, 4,101 teachers moved from 2 to 2+ and 1,526 teachers moved from 2+ into the Independent users. However, the first two columns show that there are 305 teachers who moved down instead of progressing and 2,941 teachers who could not make any progress. This is a very big number considering the crucial need of English as a medium of instruction by practising teachers. This might bring about a significant hindrance to teaching/learning in particular, and the quality of education in general.

Table 8.3: Progress made according to diagnostic and progress tests

Level/ Class	Down	No change	1–1+	1+–2	2–2+	2+	Up more than 1	Total
P1–P3	111	1,110	1,749	2,129	921	154	4,866	11,040
P4–P6	92	922	368	1,183	1,761	575	3,888	8,789
Total primary	**203**	**2,032**	**2,117**	**3,312**	**2,682**	**729**	**8,754**	**19,829**
S1–S3	79	673	151	699	1,021	533	1,948	5,104
S4–S6	23	236	46	184	398	264	716	1,867
Total Secondary	**102**	**909**	**197**	**883**	**1,419**	**797**	**2,664**	**6,971**
Total: all teachers	305	2,941	2,314	4,195	4,101	1,526	11,418	26,800

Conclusion

Progress testing has provided a working model that measures impact and performance of the SBMP and it has proved that, despite few exceptions, a good number of teachers moved from a lower level to a higher one and are motivated to aim high, climbing the ladder of set targets. However, the Rwanda Education Board should have in place appropriate training modules on the CEFR levels to help teachers learn English by setting targets corresponding to those levels. After having those training modules in place, systematic training should follow either in a cascade model (through senior mentors and mentors) or a traditional model to make sure teachers are trained in their respective levels of proficiency, are tested and certified at each attained level.

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Appendix 8.1 Relationship between the REPS levels and CEFR levels

CEFR	Broad indicators		REPS level
A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.	Low	1
		High	1+
A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.	Low	2
		High	2+
B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise while travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.	Low	3
		High	3+
B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.	Low	4
		High	4+
C1 C2	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.		5

9

An analysis of teacher willingness to use the language of the immediate environment at lower basic 3 in Jigawa State

Nuhu S Baba

9

An analysis of teacher willingness to use the language of the immediate environment at lower basic 3 in Jigawa State

Nuhu S Baba

Introduction

It is a known fact the English language is not native to Nigeria. Nigeria, a multilingual nation, was colonised by the British; English became the language of inter-tribal communication and for all activities in the country. Foremost among these is the use of English as the medium of instruction (EMI) at all levels of education. The problem faced by Nigerians is the difficulty of reconciling the linguistic features of a mother tongue with a totally new and foreign one, which is worsened by the need to learn the new language in all of its forms simultaneously (listening, speaking, reading and writing) upon entry to school. Consequently, English language learning causes problems. The word 'problem' is used not only to indicate 'difficulty', but also in the sense of what needs to be done in the process of maximising teaching, learning and effective use of the language.

Today, the practice of English teaching has become tolerant of letting all the languages (English and the language of the immediate environment [LIE]) exist side by side as one of the strategies to motivate and encourage the teaching and learning of English in schools. The current status of language teaching policy is found in the National Policy on Education (1977, revised 1981) which contains several policy declarations on English and LIE as stated:

> *Government will see to it that the language of instruction in the primary school is initially the mother tongue of the language of the immediate community and, at a later stage, English language.* (National Policy on Education, 1981, Section 4)

The main features of this policy are that (i) lower primary (primary 1–3) is taught in all subjects in LIE, (ii) English language assumes the position of an ordinary subject on the timetable at this level, and (iii) English becomes the medium of instruction in all subjects from primary 4 up to senior secondary school and tertiary institutions.

Description of the study

This study focuses on teachers' willingness to use LIE in teaching English language in primary 3 classrooms. In this process the aim is unravel the rationales of using code-mixing and code-switching between English language and LIE as tools or strategies for improving learning achievement at this level. For the purposes of this text, code-mixing is 'the embedding of various linguistic units such as affixes (bound morphemes), words (unbound morphemes), phrases, and clauses from a co-operative activity where the participants, in order to infer what is intended, must reconcile what they hear with what they understand' (Bokama, 1989 in Ayeomoni, 2006: 91) and code-switching is, 'the mixing of words, phrases and sentences from two distinct grammatical (sub) systems across sentence boundaries within the same speech event' (*ibid.*).

This study was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the status of teacher preparation before lesson delivery?
2. What language of instruction did the teachers use during lesson observations (LIE/EMI)?
3. What is the extent or frequency of teachers' use of code-mixing and code-switching during their English language lessons?
4. To what degree does the teachers' use of code-mixing and code-switching in classrooms promote better learning outcomes?
5. Based on the sample, do teachers possess the requisite teaching experience at the lower basic classes in their schools?
6. Are teachers aware of the language policy of using LIE at primary 1–3 levels of basic education?
7. Do teachers use any sort of dictionary or textbooks as instructional materials in language teaching?
8. What is the frequency of teachers' use of code-mixing and code-switching in teaching vocabulary and sentences?

9. How do teachers rate the effectiveness or potency of using code-mixing and code-switching in teaching learners at lower basic levels?
10. What strategies do teachers use in order to enhance vocabulary development and continuous writing using English language and/or LIE in teaching?
11. Do teachers of primary 1–3 use code-mixing and code-switching in teaching other subjects apart from LIE and English at lower basic levels?
12. What are the views of teachers on the extension of using code-switching and code-mixing in teaching in middle, upper and senior secondary school levels?

The results are potentially significant in the following ways through:

- empowering teachers to formally accept the use of LIE in order to make English language learning simple and effective
- enhancing teachers' language teaching strategies using code-mixing and code-switching in the classrooms
- allowing teachers to acquire the necessary classroom skills and techniques that will enhance simple exercises in translations from English to LIE and vice versa as means of ensuring learners' smooth transition in the process of departing from the use of LIE at lower basic level[6] to a much greater use of English or EMI at higher levels (i.e. middle and upper as well as in secondary and tertiary levels
- enabling educational administrators and planners (especially at the basic education level) will be more aware of the challenges of English language teaching and learning
- encouraging administrators and planners to make adequate provision for more effective English language teaching and learning.

Methodology

I conducted this qualitative–quantitative study in Dutse Local Government Education Authority (LGEA) of Jigawa State, Nigeria. The LIE is Hausa, even though Fulfulde exists and is used in a few nomadic primary schools in the LGEA and in many parts of the state. I focused on the rate or frequency of use of LIE in primary 3 of the lower basic education level language classroom as well as investigating whether one language or a mixture of two languages has an impact in transferring knowledge and skills through classroom interaction between teacher and learners.

The procedures and steps used to gather data are described below.

Sampling techniques

The randomly selected five primary schools are listed in Table 9.1.

Table 9.1: Schools used for the study

S/N	School	LGEA
1.	Fagoji Primary School	Dutse
2.	Kuho 744 Primary School	Dutse
3.	Dr Nuhu Muhd Sunusi Primary School	Dutse
4.	Danmasara Primary School	Dutse
5.	Dutse Capital School	Dutse

The respondents selected for the investigation were placed into one of two categories.

Classroom teachers: two teachers from each school (ten in total) were selected for the study. These were English language teachers teaching primary 3 in addition to handling other classes in the school. I observed the teachers for one period in language teaching at primary 3 (see Appendix 9.1) The teachers also responded to a survey after the lesson (see Appendix 9.2).

Head teachers: the head teachers of all the schools were also involved in the study. They were not required to teach but completed questionnaires. There were five head teachers in the sample, making a total of 15 respondents. The head teachers were included because their wealth of classroom experience would further enrich the data since they are still teaching as well as mentoring their teachers. The rationale was to tap their experiences of teaching lower basic classes, which some still practise, so as to get their input in their use of LIE in teaching.

Before launching this study, I wrote to the Executive Chairman of the State Universal Basic Education Board in Jigawa State. They instructed the Education Secretary of Dutse LGEA to note and assist where possible. I then wrote to the five head teachers of the primary schools in May 2014, informing them of the visit. They were instructed to select two of their basic 3 language teachers to prepare one language lesson each.

They were told that they were free select their topics, and how to teach them, as long as they were within the learners' contents/syllabus topic, but that they would be supervised by the researcher. In addition to the official letters, I sent some instructional materials to the schools in order to supplement what they may have had.

6 Basic education level: often referred to as the first three years of primary education. Other referents to the same level are: basic 1–3, lower basic 1–3, primary 1–3, class 1–3, etc. Others basic education levels are: middle basic (primary 4–6) and upper basic (JSS 1–3).

Characteristics of respondents

Table 9.2 is a summary of the respondents by qualification. It shows that the teachers involved in this study possess the minimum teaching qualifications at the primary school level. It is observed that those holding diploma certificates have obtained advanced diploma in education certificates in addition to their diploma certificates.

Table 9.2: Characteristics of respondents by qualification

S/N	Qualification	Teachers	Head teachers	Total
1.	Graduates	1	1	2
2.	NCE	7	3	10
3.	Diploma	2	1	3
4.	Others	0	0	0
	Total	**10**	**5**	**15**

There were two female and eight male teachers. The data in Table 9.3 shows that all respondents have at least two years' teaching experience, which is good enough to be competent to handle lower basic level learners.

Table 9.3: Characteristics of respondents by years of teaching experience

S/N	Teaching Experience	Teachers	Head teachers	Total
1.	2–5 years	3	0	3
2.	6–9 years	5	1	6
3.	10–12 years	2	0	2
4.	13 and above	0	4	4
	Total	**10**	**5**	**15**

I used two instruments for the study. The observation instrument (Appendix 9.1) consists of components looking at the teachers' preparation, as it affects their manner of lesson planning in preparation for lesson delivery, and teaching procedures focusing on the uses of code-mixing and code-switching in the lesson. The impact of learning in terms of the effects of teaching strategies and frequency of LIE usage is assessed. I collated the data from the observations on the basis of obtaining mean scores of the two teachers in each school and then calculated the overall total mean scores for each of the items in the lesson observation form.

The eight-item questionnaires (Appendix 9.2) were designed to obtain the respondents' opinions on key issues surrounding LIE teaching and learning at the basic education levels. I compiled and summarised the results by total scores and percentages for both teachers and head teachers. The findings are discussed in sequence below.

Results

Teachers' preparations

Item 1: notes of lesson on the topic. The data shows that the observed teachers were adequately prepared to deliver their lessons. The steps in their notes were also good for the learners. A casual scrutiny of previous lessons delivered shows no significant difference with the ones written for the specific purpose of this study.

Item 2: statement of objectives. It was observed that the teachers' lesson notes and statements of objectives were good. The ways and manners of lesson notes were evidenced by good procedural steps documented in the notes.

Item 3: instructional materials. The preparation and use of instructional materials was at a 'fair' level, since it was observed that most teachers either had inappropriate and ready-made instructional materials, or that their use was weak and inappropriate for the learners.

Item 4: planned activities for learners. Teachers' scored 'fair' in their use of activities for learners during lessons. This was mainly due to the fact that teachers taught using more of a lecture method of presentation rather than a participatory strategy as the lesson progressed.

Teaching procedures

Item 5: frequency of code-mixing. The teachers 'sometimes' used code-mixing during the development of the lesson. The amount of code-mixing seemed to depend on an unspoken demand by learners in order to understand some words or concepts used by the teachers in English, with the result that there was some 70 per cent LIE usage to 30 per cent English usage. The words or concepts that appear during teaching are mostly explained or defined by code-switching in LIE rather than in English.

However, I noted that one school (Capital School, Dutse) had very little learner demand for the use of code-switching while teaching. The teachers in this school used English almost 95 per cent of the time when teaching. The reason behind this is that the school functions as a semi-private school with most of the learners either lacking the skills of LIE or that they have an educational background to the extent that the teachers very rarely had to revert to code-switching.

Item 6: frequency of code-switching. Most of the teachers used code-switching in a proportion of 60 per cent LIE usage to 40 per cent English usage. This means that the teachers spent more time using LIE than English during lesson delivery. However, as an exception to the general data, Capital School teachers did not use code-switching during lessons.

Impact on learning

Item 7: learners understand the lesson because of code-mixing and code-switching processes during lessons. Item 7 shows that learners' participation in lessons by using code-mixing and code-switching is rated as 'good'. This suggests that learners participate during lessons, though at a minimal level due to the limited access given by their teachers. This confirms that teachers employ code-mixing and code-switching in promoting the learners' language acquisition process at this level.

Item 8: code-mixing promotes learners' understanding of various words or concepts. The learners' understanding of various words or concepts in English is 'good' as a result of teachers' use of code-switching during teaching. The impact of learning achievement by learners, when it comes to teaching using code-switching to enhance learning of clauses and sentences between English and LIE, is rated as 'fair'.

Item 9: code-switching promotes understanding of various clauses/sentences during the lesson. This is given a 'fair' rating because, while the complex sentences and clauses used by the teachers to illustrate the use of the language may have been appropriate for the classroom, they were not necessarily useful to application outside the classroom for day-to-day communicative purposes.

Item 10: learners ask frequent questions, especially after all necessary explanations. The data shows that learners do not frequently ask questions either in LIE or in English during lessons, which is why I gave this a 'poor' rating. This was not entirely surprising since teachers did not provide avenues for learners' questions or discussions during lessons.

Questionnaire results

The current language policy is that LIE should be used at the lower basic education levels. However, as can be seen from Table 9.4, the majority (80 per cent) were not aware of this policy, and it became clear why all the classroom teachers observed chose to teach in English, though this could be regarded as breaching the rules or policies.

In addition, as can be seen from Table 9.5, none of the respondents had ever used any type of dictionary or English textbooks to teach at the lower basic level.

Table 9.4: Teachers' knowledge of LIE used at lower basic levels

Question	Options		Responses				Totals	
			HTs	%	Ts	%	All	%
To your understanding, what is the language of instruction expected of you to use in primary 3?	(a)	LIE	3	60%	0	0%	3	20%
	(b)	EMI	2	40%	10	100%	12	80%
Totals			**5**	**100%**	**10**	**100%**	**15**	**100%**

Table 9.5: Use of dictionary in language teaching

Question	Options		Responses				Totals	
			HTs	%	Ts	%	All	%
Do you as a teacher ever use any dictionary (e.g. Kamus/English language dictionary) and textbooks in language teaching in primary 1–3?	(a)	Yes	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
	(b)	No	5	100%	10	100%	15	100%
Totals			**5**	**100%**	**10**	**100%**	**15**	**100%**

Table 9.6 shows the opinion of the respondents regarding the frequency of using code-mixing and code-switching in the language classroom. The majority (70 per cent) indicated that they frequently employ this strategy during their lessons. In addition, the majority (80 per cent) reported using code-switching 'very often' while teaching in English, though it is often simply used to translate the teacher's lesson. One-fifth stated that they 'sometimes' use this strategy. This data could mean that teachers often do so at 80 per cent of their teaching at this level, while others, who sparingly use this skill, do so at the rate of 20 per cent of their teaching time. Few (20 per cent) stated that they 'sometimes' use the strategy, and none of the respondents said that they 'never' employ using code-mixing and code-switching in their lessons.

Table 9.6: Frequency of teachers' use of code-switching and code-mixing in language teaching

Question	Options		Responses				Totals	
			HTs	%	Ts	%	All	%
How often do you use code-switching and code-mixing to translate some unknown English words/clauses/sentences into LIE and/or vice versa in primary 1–3?	(a)	Very often	5	100%	7	70%	12	80%
	(b)	Sometimes	0	0%	3	30%	3	20%
	(c)	Never	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Totals			**5**	**100%**	**10**	**100%**	**15**	**100%**

The implication of this is that most of the teachers may end up with interpretative teaching, which would not encourage higher learning outcomes, especially when it comes to the actual topic at hand. It is important to note here that teachers are not fully aware of using code-mixing and code-switching as teaching strategies except through this study.

Table 9.7 shows that the majority (86.7 per cent) of the respondents indicated that code-mixing and code-switching are 'very effective', while few (13.3 per cent) felt that that they are 'fairly effective' and none indicated that they are 'not effective' at all. This suggests that teachers are aware of the potential impact of such strategies.

Table 9.7: Views of the effectiveness of code-switching and code-mixing in language teaching

Question	Options		Responses				Totals	
			HTs	%	Ts	%	All	%
How effective do you view your use of code-switching and code-mixing in your lessons primary 1–3 levels?	(a)	Very effective	5	100%	8	80%	13	86.7%
	(b)	Fairly effective	0	0%	2	2%	2	13.3%
	(c)	Not effective	0	0%	0	0%	0	0.0%
Totals			**5**	**100%**	**10**	**100%**	**15**	**100%**

In item 6 on the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to indicate which basic strategy they were using in order to help learners have good stock of vocabulary items and continuous writing skills. The results are in Table 9.8.

Table 9.8: Strategies in vocabulary development in language teaching

Question	Options		Responses				Totals	
			HTs	%	Ts	%	All	%
Which of the following ways do you encourage learners to build English language vocabulary/ continuous writing in sentences and paragraphs into LIE and/or EMI in primary 1–3?	(a)	Listing/writing words and their meanings	0	0%	2	20%	2	13.3%
	(b)	Allocating time to do oral activities in class	0	0%	2	20%	2	13.3%
	(c)	Instructing them to study on their own	2	40%	2	20%	4	26.7%
	(d)	None of the above	3	60%	4	40%	7	46.7%
Totals			**5**	**100%**	**10**	**100%**	**15**	**100%**

Of the four options of responses as shown in Table 9.8, the majority (46.7 per cent) are not using any strategy at all. This implies that very few or no attempts are made by the teachers in order to improve learners' levels of proficiency (not even through group work) in the two languages, whichever one is used to support the other (LIE or English). However, 26.7 per cent of the respondents stated that they instruct the learners to develop vocabulary building on their own. Here again, this clearly shows deficiency in helping learners to perform very well in language learning by using the code-mixing and code-switching strategies of language learning. On the other hand, equal numbers of responses (13.3 per cent each) showed attempts towards improving learners' vocabulary development in language teaching (LIE or English) by either the teachers listing or writing some words and their meanings to learners, or allocating specific times to oral activities during lessons. It should be noted that either of these two strategies are likely to improve learning achievements.

It is common practice in most parts of Nigeria to see classroom teachers being assigned to teach a number of subjects in a school. Based on this fact, we observed that most of the teachers in the study area teach two or more subjects at various levels to a number of classes. The respondents were asked whether they use code-mixing and code-switching in the subjects they are teaching apart from language. Table 9.9 reveals that all of the respondents use code-mixing and code-switching while teaching other subjects.

Table 9.9: Teachers' use of code-switching and code-mixing in other subjects

Question	Options		Responses				Totals	
			HTs	%	Ts	%	All	%
Do you use code-mixing and code-switching when teaching subjects other than language (LIE or English language) in Primary 1–3?	(a)	Yes	5	100%	10	100%	15	100%
	(b)	No	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Totals			**5**	**100%**	**10**	**100%**	**15**	**100%**

It is a national policy to use English in teaching all subjects from primary 4–6 up to junior secondary and senior secondary levels. It is expected that teachers refrain from dependence on using code-mixing and code-switching at these levels. In this respect the opinions of the respondents were sought as to how frequently teachers should employ the use of code-switching and code-mixing in classroom teaching. The data in Table 9.10 shows that the majority of respondents (66.7 per cent) are of the opinion that the use of code-switching and code-mixing should be less than that at primary 1–3 levels. Some of the respondents suggested that the frequency should be the same as at primary 1–3 levels. None of the respondents subscribed to the need to increase the frequency above that at primary 1–3 levels.

Table 9.10: Using code-mixing and code-switching in middle and upper basic levels in language teaching

Question	Options		Responses				Totals	
			HTs	%	Ts	%	All	%
What do you think should be the frequency of using code-mixing and code-switching in English language teaching at the middle (primary 4–6) and upper basic education (JS 1–3) levels?	(a)	More frequent than at primary 1–3	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
	(b)	The same as in primary 1–3	2	40%	3	30%	5	33.3%
	(c)	Less than at primary 1–3	3	60%	7	70%	10	66.7%
Totals			**5**	**100%**	**10**	**100%**	**15**	**100%**

All the respondents agreed that the use of code-mixing and code-switching should continue above the lower basic level of education. The majority of respondents were of the view that in as much as code-mixing and code-switching should continue to other levels, the frequency should be considerably reduced. This could be interpreted to mean that learners would need more instruction in the language of instruction (English). However, this could result in poor learning achievement up to the senior school levels.

Conclusion and recommendations

Based on the findings, I draw the following conclusions. Teachers adequately employ the use of LIE exhibited in code-mixing and code-switching usage in English language teaching. However, the teachers are not fully conscious that they are using code-mixing and code-switching as formal strategies in language teaching among bilingual learners. The usage of LIE as a teaching strategy in the language classroom was found to be effective in enhancing high levels of learning outcomes. However, teachers fail to further reinforce language learning by encouraging learners to develop good English skills through the provision of relevant classroom and out-of-class activities, especially in translations of vocabulary and sentence constructions in the two languages, which could greatly ease English language difficulties at higher stages of learning.

Therefore, I make the following recommendations:

1. language teachers should employ the use of appropriate language dictionaries and textbooks in most of their daily lessons at basic 3 levels
2. English language teachers should be trained by State Universal Basic Education Board in acquiring the skills and strategies of using LIE, which should involve the use of code-mixing and code-switching for effective lesson delivery at all basic education levels
3. language teachers should continue to use LIE in English lessons only in order to enhance understanding of concepts and sentences in the lessons rather than as mere interpretations or translations of the topic of discourse; learners always pay more attention to the usage of LIE rather than learning of English
4. teachers should increase the levels of participation by learners in their language lessons so as to develop independent thinking capabilities among learners
5. teachers should make specific provision for learners to write vocabulary and sentences in English and LIE both in and out of the classroom in order to enhance better learning
6. teachers should ensure that students work in groups and use other strategies that enhance the practical use of language in the classroom
7. the frequency of usage of LIE in teaching English language at middle basic and higher levels should be drastically reduced so as to pave the way for more activities in English in order for learners to become more proficient in the language and for supporting learning in other subjects.

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Appendix 9.1 Lesson observation instrument

School: _____ Date: _____

Name of teacher: _____ Qualification(s): _____

Subject taught: _____ Class observed: _____

No. of learners: _____

Language of instruction used (English language/LIE)

Topic: _____

S/N	Assessment characteristics	Rating			Remark
		1	2	3	
Teacher's preparation					
1	Notes of lesson on topic				
2	Statement of objectives				
3	Instructional materials				
4	Planned activities for learners				
Teaching procedures					
5	Frequency of code-mixing				
6	Frequency of code-switching				
Impact on learning					
7	Learners understand the lesson because of CM and CS processes during lesson				
8	CM promotes learners' understanding of various words/concepts used in class				
9	CS promotes understanding of various clauses/sentences during lesson				
10	Learners ask frequent questions especially after all necessary explanations				
	KEY: Items 1–4 (1–1.4 = Good; 1.6–2 = Fair; 3 = Poor) Items 5–6 (1–1.4 = Always; 1.6–2 = Sometimes; 3 = Never) Items 7–10 (1–1.4 = Good; 1.6–2.4 = Fair; 3 = Poor)				
	Researcher:			Date:	

Appendix 9.2 Basic school teachers' and head teachers' questionnaire

This questionnaire is for classroom teachers at the basic education level in Jigawa State. It is for a study on the use of LIE in teaching lower basic education levels and its effect on effective teaching/learning. You are expected to please respond to these questions/statements based on your classroom experience and practice at this level.

School: _____ LEA: _____

Name of teacher: _____ Qualification(s): _____

Rank/status: _____ Subject(s) taught: _____

Teaching load: _____ Date: _____

(The following are statements accompanied by options for you to choose and mark which you think is most appropriate and/or your best answer)

S/N	Question/statement	Responses (and answers)		
		Options		ANS
1	For how many years have you ever taught primary 1–3?	(a)	2–5	
		(b)	6–9	
		(c)	10–12	
		(d)	13 and above	
2	To your understanding, what is the language of instruction expected of you to use in primary 3?	(a)	LIE	
		(b)	EMI	
3	Do you as a teacher ever use any dictionary (e.g. Kamus/ English language dictionary) in language teaching in primary 1–3?	(a)	Yes	
		(b)	No	
4	How often do you use CS and CM to translate some unknown English language vocabulary/continuous writing in sentences and paragraphs into LIE and/or vice versa in primary 1–3?	(a)	Very often	
		(b)	Sometimes	
		(c)	Never	
5	How effective do you view your use of CS and CM in your lessons in primary 1–3 levels?	(a)	Very effective	
		(b)	Fairly effective	
		(c)	Not effective	
6	Which of the following ways do you encourage learners to build English language vocabulary/continuous writing in sentences and paragraphs into LIE and/or EMI in primary 1–3?	(a)	Listing/writing words and their meanings	
		(b)	Allocating time to do oral activities in class	
		(c)	Instructing them to study on their own	
		(d)	None of the above	

S/N	Question/statement	Responses (and answers)		
		Options		ANS
7	Do you use CM and CS when teaching subjects other than language (LIE or English Language) in primary 1–3?	(a)	Yes	
		(b)	No	
8	What do you think should be the frequency of using CM and CS in English language teaching at the middle (primary 4–6) and upper basic education (JS 1–3) levels?	(a)	More frequent than at Primary 1–3	
		(b)	The same as in Primary 1–3	
		(c)	Less than at Primary 1–3	

Abbreviations
CS – code-switching
CM – code-mixing
LIE – language of the immediate environment
EMI – English as a medium of instruction
Kamus – Hausa dictionary

Appendix 9.3 Summary of ratings of lessons observed

S/N	Assessment characteristics	Schools	Dr Nuhu Muhd Sunusi Primary School	Dutse Capital School	Fagoji Primary School	Danmasara Primary School	Kuho 744 Primary School	All schools
		Teachers	2 Ts _ χ score	2 Ts _ χ score	2 Ts _ χ score	2 Ts _ χ score	2 Ts _ χ score	_ χ score (10 Ts)
Teacher's preparation								
1	Notes of lesson on topic		1	1	1	1	1	1
2	Statement of objectives		1	1	1	1	1	1
3	Instructional materials		1	1	2	2	2	1.6
4	Planned activities for learners		2	1	2	2	1	1.6
Teaching procedures								
5	Frequency of code-mixing		1	2	1	1	1	1.2
6	Frequency of code-switching		1	3	1	1	1	1.4
Impact on learning								
7	Learners understand the lesson because of CM and CS processes during lesson		2	1	2	1	1	1.4
8	CM promotes learners' understanding of various words/concepts used in class		1	3	1	1	1	1.4
9	CS promotes understanding of various clauses/sentences during lesson		1	3	2	3	2	2.2
10	Learners ask frequent questions on the topic during lessons		3	3	3	3	3	3.0

Key:
Items 1–4 (1–1.4 = Good; 1.6–2 = Fair; 3 = Poor)
Items 5–6 (1.4 = Always; 1.6–2 = Sometimes; 3 = Never)
Items 7–10 (1–1.4 = Good; 1.6–2.4 = Fair; 3 = Poor)

10

The use of English as a cause of poor teaching and learning quality in three government schools in Maiduguri, Borno State

Mairama Bukar Dikwa and Karim Bukar Dikwa

10

The use of English as a cause of poor teaching and learning quality in three government schools in Maiduguri, Borno State

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to consider the deterioration of the teaching of English as the language of instruction, which has prevailed in Nigeria over the past few years, and to explore the extent to which recent advances in applied linguistics can help teachers improve the quality of their teaching delivery. As a remedy, we propose a model of teaching approach in which 'the language is presented in such way as to reveal its character as communication' (Allen and Widdowson, 1987: 125).

For quite some time now, it has been a common complaint among parents, educationists, students and employers that the level of English among a large majority of students in many places in Nigeria is rapidly dropping. In an attempt to find a solution to the problem, various initiatives have been introduced by the government, international development partners and private agencies through pre- and in-service programmes (including workshops and refresher courses for teachers, and symposia). Different political regimes have struggled to provide changes and support structures to ensure that quality teaching is delivered. There has been little progress made despite the use of time and resources, and money spent in purchasing textbooks for students and teaching materials for teachers.

In Maiduguri, learning in English presents serious problems for students, particularly for indigenes of Borno State who have already acquired at least two languages of wider communication: a tribal language and Hausa. In addition, one of the most destabilising difficulties is the use of English as a means for leaning and for acquiring oral and aural skills. As they begin to face studies at higher level (which in Nigeria is at a secondary or tertiary institution) their stock of vocabulary is inadequate for their needs. For instance, if we consider the overall students' results in English in oral and aural comprehension and production at the West African Examination Council (WAEC) and the National Examinations Council (NECO), it appears that the use of English as the medium of instruction constitutes one of the major factors determining the quality of learning achievement.

In many instances students' poor learning outcomes are accounted for by low levels of language proficiency. However, in our view a further factor is teachers' competence. A large number of teachers neglect the recommended language teaching method: the communicative approach. This suggests that in the current situation, considering the role and function that English plays in Nigeria, any attempt to improve learning quality delivery needs to start from the teacher trainer. Despite the many recommendations from various recent experts in linguistics and the teaching profession, it is not infrequent to see English language teachers place more emphasis on the mastery of languages structures and neglect language use. They tend to assess learners' learning outcomes in terms of their ability to manipulate word definitions outside their context. As a result, the learners' mental lexicon is filled up with passive language units which cannot easily be connected to real communication.

During language classes, students, are made to learn by rote a list of selected lexical items and structures. A large number of teachers consider the learners' mental lexicon as the foundation for learners' real use of the language (see Chomsky, 1965). Students' poor results at the end-of-year examination show that this sort of practice has little validity. This seems to be in tune with Harris's statement: '[the] arbitrary conglomeration of sentences is indeed of no interest, except as a check of grammatical description' (Harris, 1952: 357).

Current pedagogical approaches proscribe teaching a language in a vacuum. In the course of our teaching careers, several instances have shown us that teaching strings of syntactic structures or lexical units in isolation does not provide necessary conditions for the mastery of communication skills. That is why, even after some years of learning, learners' voluminous mental lexicon proves to be deficient when the need arises, not because of its size, but because learners did not master ways of converting the stored words into functional competence in natural communication. For this reason, there is a need to move language teaching towards functional performance. This is also suggested in Widdowson (1987): '...we need materials which will effect the transfer from grammatical competence to what has been called communicative competence'.

Background to the study

Since the advent of English in Africa, scholars and linguists have endeavoured to determine and evaluate how it is perceived and used by African speakers – all of whom have another language as a mother tongue or first language. From the day Nigeria became politically independent, English was adopted as the only official language. Being faced with a large diversity of indigenous languages, the dream of Nigerians was to promote national unity through a neutral language that could help reduce rivalry among ethnic groups. Several former African colonies, including Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola, Cameroon and Gabon, chose this same route. The variety of languages and cultural wealth constitute a historical heritage of the Nigerian people, but the scope of their influence used to be limited by the size of the language areas. In most cases, regional languages serve as 'metalects' or link languages among people from different ethno-linguistic backgrounds. These languages are referred to as languages of wider communication. In the case of Nigeria, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba enjoy the status of languages of wider communication, being at the same time regional lingua francas in the north, the south and south-east, and the western part of Nigeria. For some time now, because of the mobility of citizens, English (in whatever form) plays the role of link language among Nigerians from any region of the country. Currently, English provides better opportunities to access modern forms of education and better professional careers. It remains the language of government or federal administration. However, the situation in which English serves Nigeria is somewhat ambiguous. Although it is the country's official language, a large number of Nigerians do not use it because they do not understand it.

In the case of Nigeria and Borno State in particular, a Kanuri child acquires English almost always after they have acquired Kanuri (as their mother tongue), Hausa (which is the regional language), and the country's official language, English, which in many cases can be acquired in two forms: the standard form and other forms (including pidgin and broken).

Several studies (e.g. Dikwa, 1996) reveal that most English language teachers in Borno State complain that their students' interest in learning English is very narrow, that they are hard to motivate and that most of them study English not necessarily to speak or use it appropriately, but rather to pass their exams. On the part of the students themselves, the general position is that, 'English classes are generally boring and the teachers too demanding. Moreover, English is very difficult to learn. No matter the number of years of study, when engaged in a conversation with an English native speaker from Great Britain or America, one's knowledge of English turns to be remarkably limited' (see Dikwa, 2003: 2). These views suggest that students have the will to learn English, but they are not motivated as they get discouraged by the classroom context or setting and by subsequent practical or communication experiences outside learning institutions.

In most cases, several factors may be responsible for boredom in the language class, such as class disruptions, the rigidity of the teaching system, the structure of the language syllabus, the lack or scarcity of relevant coursebooks and teaching materials, and the lack or scarcity of professionally competent or qualified teachers, many of whom may be poorly motivated. It is clear that students, especially at the initial stage, are in one way or the other motivated to learn English, but the school context 'kills' their enthusiasm along with their interest.

Clearly, successful learning is to a large extent dependent on motivation (Cofer and Appley, 1964). And, given that English is only one of the foreign languages studied in learning institutions in Nigeria, it is therefore possible that teachers may not find it easy to sustain students' motivation to learn it or even to get encouraging results from teaching it.

What this suggests is that students' interest in learning English will continue to decrease, unless teachers' attitudes changes. It follows that this change in teachers' attitudes needs to be accompanied by changes in teaching techniques and methods, changes in teaching strategies and changes in the conception and the structure of the content of syllabuses, learning materials and textbooks. We suggest that teachers should try to apply appropriate techniques and strategies to stimulate students' interest by adapting available material (and any other means at their disposal) towards communicative ends.

Approaches and strategies used among language teachers

Since the 19th century, numerous language teaching approaches using different strategies have been proposed, but as far as Borno State is concerned, the recommended teaching approaches can be characterised as follows: conversation, reading, simulation, learning through experience, ludic activities, demonstration, exposition and debates. But to what extent do teachers make use of these strategies? In an attempt to get a tentative answer, we decided to conduct an investigation in three government schools (labelled School A [69 students], School B [74 students] and School C [58 students]). With the permission of the respective schools' authorities, we created a questionnaire which we administered to English language teachers in order for us to determine trends among them. Their answers enabled us to establish a link between students' poor level in English and their teachers' pedagogical habits.

There were four sections. The first gathered information including the teachers' level of education, their number of years of experience, their state of origin and their marital status. The second section allowed us to gather a picture of the teachers' linguistic profiles (including the number of languages spoken, their most used language, and their level of mastery of the languages that they speak). The third section enabled us to map the teachers' style of teaching (based on answers to the question 'How do you teach?'), and their level of their satisfaction. An open question 'How can students' level of English be improved?' comprised the final section, intending to elicit possible solutions from our respondents. Teachers of other languages (French, Hausa and Kanuri) were also involved in this data-gathering exercise, but this paper deals exclusively with English language teachers.

Table 10.1: Schools' level in English

Schools	Score		Remarks			
	Oral exposition in Hausa/10	Oral exposition in English/10	Level of Hausa		Level of English	
			Above average	Below average	Above average	Below average
A	9	2	+	-	-	+
B	9.5	2.5	+	-	-	+
C	9	1	+	-	-	+

Presentation and analysis of responses

Day one

The analysis of our respondents' answers led to a meeting which we organised at a time convenient to the teachers. The objective was to consider 'what' and 'how' English language teachers teach English. We delivered an overview of the official programme, along with some observations on its structure, content and applicability in the context of Borno State. For want of time, this paper does not put much emphasis on these observations since our main concern was the teachers' teaching methods and to work out ways in which learners can rapidly acquire adequate functional competence in English.

Six very co-operative teachers of English participated: four female and two male. We met them at their respective places of work on different days. Three days were devoted to each school. The results are therefore presented accordingly.

The information provided by our participants shows that they were all Nigeria Certificate of Education (NCE) holders, which is an A level-equivalent course for secondary school leavers. Just over four-fifths (83.3 per cent) originated from Borno, and were above 30 years old. One-third (33.3 per cent) were single. The remaining participants were married with an average of two children. At the time, 83.3 per cent had been in the teaching profession for more than five years. As for the number of languages spoken, all our respondents could speak at least three languages including English, and all of them had good command of Hausa, the regional lingua franca. In terms of the level of language mastery, each of them indicated that their native language was the most mastered, followed by the regional lingua franca, Hausa. English came third.

There was a general consensus and agreement regarding the statements 'The amount of vocabulary and grammatical rules known by a student shows how much he/she knows a language', 'The use of a dialogue is the best way learners can achieve excellent learning results' and 'The objective of the learning of conjugation is the mastery of paradigms of verbal inflections' despite these being far from recent innovations in the language teaching field; a learner knows a language from the moment they can convert their knowledge into communicative competence. Moreover, other effective techniques can help achieve better language learning results. Among the recommended teaching strategies, all our participants claimed that they mostly made use of 'dialogues' and 'reading passages' as a basis for vocabulary acquisition by their students. However, Harris et al. (2010) suggest that there is evidence that older children benefit more from explicit information than younger ones (see also Dickinson, 1984), possibly reflecting the greater metalinguistic abilities of older children. If book reading dissolves into an extended vocabulary lesson, the highly explicit teaching that results in the greatest gains in short-term intervention with older children could paradoxically have a long-term impact on children's enjoyment and the teacher's use of books to deepen comprehension.

Just over four-fifths (83 per cent) of our participants make use of 'conversation', and 33 per cent make use of 'simulation'. Traditionally, the teaching of English aims to develop four types of skills: oral comprehension, written comprehension, oral expression and written expression. The development of these skills is generally achieved with strategies that have been mentioned above, but it seems quite clear that, despite the warnings, many teachers still think of language teaching in terms of words and sentences. Some teachers teach a set of words and sentences as almost self-contained units, neglecting the teaching of how sentences are used in connected speech. Our teachers' general habits consist of teaching words and sentences that are usually presented in a dialogue and in a reading passage. Learners try to remember them by means of practice drills and exercises. They assume that this stock of vocabulary serves as the basis on which the actual use of the language is built. However, students' poor results in West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and National Examinations Council (NECO) examinations seems to provide evidence that this is not a valid approach. Good reading, for instance, is supposed to involve understanding how language operates in communication (Widdowson, 1987), but, looking at the overall final-year results at primary, secondary and tertiary levels, it seems that students do not master and use appropriate language during their years of learning English. This is reflected in teachers' views of learners' achievements: only 16.6 per cent of the teachers claimed to be 'fairly' satisfied with their students' progress and results. This, in turn, reflects complaints among parents and educators that led to the framing of the topic of this paper.

The way forward

Our respondents collectively suggested ways in which the situation can be improved. This included:

1. experimenting with new teaching approaches
2. simplifying the national syllabus
3. increasing English teaching periods
4. offering incentives to teachers and learners in order to boost their attitude towards the teaching and learning of English respectively
5. enhancing teachers' capacity building
6. reducing teachers' teaching load by recruiting more of the 'right' teachers
7. reconsidering teachers' deployment and utilisation.

Based on these suggestions, we decided to propose a teaching approach in response to our participants' first suggestion. This language teaching approach marries language and proficiency by carefully studying the way lessons from the crib are capable of influencing our teaching practice. The aim is to enhance vocabulary and grammar acquisition in a language class. The approach draws on six well-tested principles of lexical, grammatical and proficiency development (see Harris et al., 2010: 9) which, for some time now, have been prevalent in the field of language learning. After examining each, and reviewing the empirical support for these principles, we argue that lessons from the crib and toddler class can also be applicable or adapted to a higher level of language learning from primary to tertiary levels in order to spark a good command of English. We subscribe to Harris et al.'s. (2010) statement in relation to children's vocabulary learning, 'conversation and playful learning' flows from language learning principles 'to improve vocabulary development for all children'. These principles are important for the language teaching approach we propose in that they capitalise on learners' interests and experience. As a result, they invite their transfer throughout the education system. The principles cited by Harris et al. are:

Principle 1: The most frequently heard words are faster learned by learners.

Principle 2: Interest towards or in things or events determines learners' successful learning outcome (see also Golinkoff and Hirsh-Pasek, 2003).

Principle 3: Interactive situations favour fast vocabulary acquisition.

Principle 4: Learning words outside their meaningful contexts of use yield insignificant learning results.

Principle 5: Exposure to a new word in a variety of contexts of use help learners to gain deeper and more advanced understanding of its meaning.

Principle 6: The learning of vocabulary and that of grammar are interwoven: one is learned through the other (see also Dixon and Marchman, 2007; Vasilyeva, Huttenlocher and Waterfall, 2006).

Day two

Since we did not have a picture of our research schools' levels in English, day two in each school was devoted entirely to activities that allowed us to focus on the students. The main activity was a pilot test which gave us an insight into students' overall levels in English. At the time of our investigation all classes were dominated by Kanuri native speakers largely due to the fact that the schools were located in a Kanuri-speaking environment.

The pilot test

Our pilot test involved oral and aural abilities. The first task of the teachers was to prepare their students, some days before, in relation to our visit. The day we arrived after some administrative protocols, students were divided into smaller groups of six students. These smaller groups were in turn divided into two larger groups each in different halls. We prepared and distributed a copy of an excerpt from a comic strip to each student. Before the respective school teachers could explain in English and in Hausa the task, students were already engaged and were discussing the images and the text. The teachers were accompanied by us into each hall where we gave them instructions.

Students were told to look at and study the images, make hypotheses about them, try to understand the story and tell it to the other, larger sub-group after half an hour. Then, a volunteer representative from the larger sub-group 'A' was to go to the other hall and tell the story to sub-group 'B' in Hausa. In turn a member of sub-group 'B' was to go to the other hall and tell the story to sub-group 'A' in English. Presenters were not allowed to read, but had the possibility to hold and to glance at the images while talking. The teachers and the researchers made sure that each smaller sub-group participated in the exercise.

Before going to school, we and the teachers had prepared a joint model text in Hausa and in English in order to assess the quality and validity of students' productions. We noted that the combination of narrative translation in English and in Hausa allowed us spark the learners' interest. We observed that oral texts produced in Hausa were richer in detail than those in English. Some students, when espousing in English, could not make more than two sentences without switching to Hausa. In fact, it would not be untrue to say that the oral text of a large majority of students was code-mixed: Hausa–English–Kanuri. The few oral texts that were in relatively good English were produced by non-indigene children, particularly those from south Nigeria. This can be explained by the fact that most of these children have been exposed to English (in whatever variety), which is their home language.

From School A, the oral exposition in Hausa by sub-group A was rated 9/10, while sub-group B scored 3/10 in their presentation in English. From School B, the oral exposition in Hausa by sub-group A scored 9/10, while sub-group B was given 2.5/10 for their oral exposition in English. From School C, the oral exposition in Hausa by sub-group A was rated 9.5/10, while sub-group B was rated 1.5/10 for their presentation in English.

These results clearly show the level of the students' deficiency in English, and suggest that the general complaint of the decline in the level of English among students is correct. Students express themselves more comfortably in their mother tongue than in a foreign language. It is often the case that their ideas get truncated when using a foreign language as compared to what they understand through their mother tongue. It seems reasonable to suggest that English as a medium of instruction in Borno has a serious problem if students in JSS 3 still find it difficult to use English as a means of communication. This might explain the high failure rates among students in WAEC and NECO English exams over many years. Can this be attributable to a lack of enough practice? Or is it because in the previous years they received ineffective teaching? At the moment, it would probably be right to answer 'yes' to both questions; it causes harm to students' prospects because they are learning in a language that they do not understand. But a way out can be suggested through two approaches: improving language teaching and learning conditions (including teachers' capacity building and more effective teaching and learning materials), and providing learning by means of a local language. The first approach seems to chime with our participants' suggestions which they made on day one. The second approach supports Brock-Utne's (2011) hope for African children to receive instruction in a local language in future. The future will reveal how much the development of our society is dependent on each approach.

Conclusion

In this study it was assumed that the use of English as a language of instruction is the main source of poor learning quality and delivery and poor learning achievement in many learning institutions in Borno State. Answers from our participants during our preparatory meeting suggest this assumption is valid. However, considering the current major roles and functions English language fulfils in Nigeria, it would be an aberration to shift, without preparation, from the use of English to that of a local language as a medium for learning. Nevertheless, we maintain that the key solution to the problem of students' low level in English is in the change of mentality and pedagogic habits of teachers. Students' deficiency in terms of their ability to use English as a medium for learning/or acquiring skills or as a communication tool will persist unless teaching approaches favour development of learners' communicative competences. The learning objectives of any language lesson are to provide learners with linguistic material to enable them to communicate in a variety of contexts. However, the difficulty is for the teacher to find an adequate and effective strategy or technique that may favour the acquisition of functional language abilities by learners so that they can use the language adequately in various situations. But how can we work out ways in which learners can quickly acquire communicative competences? In this paper we have proposed a route towards one effective solution.

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Appendix 10.1 Questionnaire

Section 1: General Information

- Name (Optional):
- School
- Nationality
- State of origin
- Age
- Number of years of experience
- Place of residence (for the past five years)
- Level of education

Section 2: Linguistic Profile

- Number of language(s) spoken (by order of mastery):
- Language(s) used most:

Section 3: How Do You Teach?

- The amount of vocabulary and verbs known by the learner shows how much a learner knows a language
- Use of a dialogue is the best way for learners to achieve better learning results
- The objective of the learning of conjugation is the mastery of paradigms of verbal inflections
- You are _____with learners' English language learning results

a. Very satisfied		b. Satisfied	
c. Fairly satisfied		d. Not satisfied	

Section 4: Open End Questions

If you are not satisfied with learners' English language learning results, how can the situation be improved? Please make some suggestions.

Appendix 10.2 Model lesson based on the communicative approach

Therapeutic treatment of students' difficulties: proposed approach

Lesson Outline

1. Mobilisation/Warming
2. Comprehension:
   - Global comprehension
   - Detailed comprehension
3. Systematisation (language appropriation through repetition, imitation and reinforcement)
4. Text reconstitution
5. Production/Practice/re-use
6. Role play.

Institution:

Date:

Topic: A Murder

Class: JSS 3

Grammatical Objectives: At the end of the lesson, learners will be able to derive some verbs from certain nouns and vice versa; learners will also be able to use adequately the present continuous tense/the present tense of indicative mood and the past perfect tense of indicative mood.

Functional Objective: At the end of the lesson, learners will be able to describe a situation or to narrate an ongoing event.

Act of Speech: To narrate an event/To describe a situation

Teaching Aids: A copy of an excerpt from a teaching material

Duration of the Lesson: 90 minutes

Pre-Condition: Mastery of conjugation of English verbs in present tense, present progressive and past perfect tense of indicative mood

Preamble: Here are some images. They are describing or telling us an event

The Lesson

Part One

I. Introduction/mobilisation/warm-up

First of all, the teacher should create a friendly atmosphere in the class, then find a leading thread towards the topic of the day based on learners' individual experience. For example:

Teacher: What happens if you pour hot boiling water on a morning blooming fine rose flower? – Expected answer: The flower dies.

Teacher: What can cause someone's death?
Expected answers: Sickness, poison, etc.

This is the sensitisation stage, which can last about one minute.

Part Two

Stages	Expected answers from learners	Remarks	Duration
2. Comprehension of the text	**A MURDER/A MAN KILLS HIS WIFE**		
2.1 Global comprehension The teacher distributes the excerpt to students and asks them to observe the images, understand the story, make hypotheses, and propose a title.		To the entire class: individual responses	1 minute
2.2 Detailed comprehension ■ What is happening? Let us start from picture 1. ■ What are they doing? ■ What is the time of day? ■ What tells us that it is evening? ■ How does the man look? ■ Why is the man furious? ■ So, what happens then? Let us consider picture number 2. ■ What is the man doing to the woman? ■ What happens to the man? Look at picture number 3. ■ What happens to the woman's body? ■ What is the police inspector doing? ■ Why is the police inspector talking to the neighbour?	■ A man and his wife are at home. ■ They are watching television. ■ In the evening. ■ The man is wearing pyjamas, and the woman is wearing a night dress. ■ The man looks irritated. ■ His attention is focused on what is being shown on television, but the woman keeps on disturbing or distracting him. ■ The man is so furious that he loses his temper. ■ He is pressing the woman's throat with his hands. He is strangling his wife to death. ■ The police have come and arrested the man and put handcuffs on him. ■ The woman's body is being carried away by two medical workers. ■ The police inspector is talking to the neighbour after introducing himself. He wants to get more information suggesting that the investigation has started.	Interactive: teacher–students	12 minutes
3. Systematisation: language appropriation Selective repetition: the teacher repeats the above questioning section (part 1.1). In the process, the teacher must: a. write on the board all correct answers from students b. get repeated each correct answer from students by students, with a view to reinforcing the learning of the new notions and fixing to their memory. Learners learn vocabulary through grammar and vice versa (Dixon and Marchman, 2007); the next stage is assigning a title to each picture. This is in tune with principle 6. Because, generally, people learn better when information is presented in integrated contexts rather than as a set of isolated facts (Bartlett, 1932; Tulving, 1968; Neisser, 1967; Bruner, 1972; Bransford and Johnson, 1972). Then, get extracted verbs contained in the titles.	Paradigm of possible titles for picture number 1: **Provocation; Nervous tension; Disturbance.** Paradigm of titles for picture number 2: **Strangling; Murder.** Paradigm of titles for picture number 3: **Arrest; Evacuation of the body; Investigation.** Paradigm of verbs from the title of picture number 1: **To provoke; To get on the nerves; To disturb.** Paradigm of verbs from the title of picture number 2: **To strangle; To kill; To murder.** Paradigm of verbs from the title of picture number 3: **To arrest; To evacuate; To investigate.**	Selective repetition	12 minutes
4. Reconstitution of the reading passage Answers from students written on the board by the teacher form a reading passage (part 2.1) which the teacher may ask students to read, one after the other, after giving his own model of reading. Students will imitate his way of reading.		The entire class	10 minutes

Stages	Expected answers from learners	Remarks	Duration
5. Production **Language (use) practice:** One after the other, students will be interpreting the images//narrating the story without the written text in front of other students. A shared narration can be beneficial to the expressive skills of learners (Mol, Bus, De Jong and Smeets, 2008). Learners are given opportunity to discern lexical or grammatical units' range of application and nuances of its meaning, so that they can be able to use them generatively in new contexts (Golinkoff, Mervis and Hirsh-pasek, 1994; Maguire et al., 2008).		The entire class	8 minutes
6. Role play The next exercise may consist in grouping students into smaller groups and getting them create a dialogue based on the pictures.		In smaller groups	

The lesson presented above is based on communicative principles. Throughout the lesson, learners are involved in an interaction between them and the teacher, while the teacher stands as a guide. The learning process suggested in the lesson is appropriate for several reasons. It is:

- based on repetition and recycling
- organisational and constructive (i.e. inductive and deductive)
- showing gradation of content from the vocabulary to the grammatical notions
- adapted to the learners' environment and life experience – linked to domestic violence and murder.

The learning tasks and activities consisted of a lot of speaking practices and exercises for group work, including simulation, topics for controlled, guided and free composition, and role play.

Moreover, our model lesson deals with functional grammar, more specifically the conjugation of verbs in order to perform a social function, to narrate or to describe an ongoing event. The purpose is to relate linguistic socio-cultural notions with learning and teaching. When dealing with the pictures, the emphasis is on sentence formation using verbs conjugated in the present tense, the present continuous tense and the past perfect tense of indicative mood, which entails contextual vocabulary manipulation. As can be seen, the conjugation of verbs is functionally used, i.e. learned through a situation. The constants of the language (i.e. verbs conjugated in the present tense, the present continuous tense and past perfect tense of indicative mood) to be learned are observable in their context of use, recurrent and re-useable throughout the document so as to show clearly how it functions. The teacher's questions lead learners to gradually perceive and conceptualise paradigms of notions to be understood (inflections), and attempt to formulate answers which, sometimes, are reformulated by the teacher for collective use. The mechanisms of conjugation of the verbs to be used are integrated within a (con-)text, conceptualised, formulated and manipulated by the learners through cognitive effort (i.e. identification, hypothesis and formulation).

Developing students' good command of a second or foreign language is a lengthy process (Harris et al, *ibid*.). Like infants or toddlers, adults face a number of tasks that are prerequisite to learning vocabulary: segmentation and storing the sounds that comprise the words from the speech stream (Saffran, Werker and Werner, 2006). To do this, infants utilise statistical cues between syllables (Saffran, Aslin and Newport, 1996; Aslin, Saffran and Newport, 1998) and the use of highly frequent and familiar words (Bortfeld et al., 2005). By the time they begin to listen to a story, they can re-tell the same story in their own way, even though they do not know or understand the meaning of some words. Learners at higher level (such as primary and secondary school) undergo analogous processes in vocabulary building and proficiency development. Little by little, when situations occur, they begin to invest into practical situations frequently heard word structure patterns, and some new words with uncertain meaning which they have stored in their mental lexicon. This is in tune with findings in language learning researches that 'it is easier to store frequently heard word forms than to produce them' (Harris, Golinkoff and Hirsh-Pasek, 2010: 50). What matters at a higher level is the exposure of the learner to more words, sentence patterns or complex language in a variety of contexts throughout the school year in order to quickly improve their syntactic comprehension. This is supported by an experimental study that employed books to foster syntactic development (Vasilyeva, Huttenlocher and Waterfall, 2006).

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