

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AS MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION IN NIGERIAN PRIVATE SCHOOLS AS PERCEIVED BY TEACHERS AND PARENTS

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Abstract

This study investigated the teachers' and parents' reasons for their perceived preference for the use of English language as medium of instruction in Nigerian private schools. Two research questions and one null hypothesis guided the study based on its specific objectives. The descriptive survey research design was used, with a total number of 82 participants (50 teachers; 32 parents). The teachers were purposively selected, while random sampling technique was used to select the parents. Data were collected through two self-designed validated and reliable instruments namely "Perceptions of Teachers about Preferring English as Medium of Instruction Scale (PTPEMIS)" and "Perceptions of Parents about Preferring English as Medium of Instruction Scale (PPPEMIS)". Results showed that majority of the participants in the study have positive preference for the use of English as medium of instruction as confirmed by the grand mean of 3.04 and 3.17 for the teachers and the parents respectively. Also, there was significant difference in parents' and teachers' perceptions ($t = .312$; $p < .05$; $df = 80$). The mean score of parents (Mean = 28.53; SD = 2.65) is greater than that of teachers (Mean = 24.65; SD = 2.54). Parents and teachers are positively disposed to using English as medium of instruction, though, their perceptions still differ. It was therefore recommended among others that governments at all levels should see to the effective implementation of nation's NPE that have to do with the use of English at the upper levels appropriately and to the letter.

Résumé

Cette étude a été entreprise pour déterminer les raisons pour lesquelles les enseignants et les parents ont une préférence pour la langue anglaise comme médium d'instruction. Deux questions de recherche et une hypothèse ont guidé l'étude basée sur des objectifs spécifiques. La technique descriptive de recherche a été utilisée avec un nombre total de 82 participants (50 enseignants ; 32 parents). Les enseignants sont sélectionnés par objectif, tandis que la technique de sélection par échantillonnage est utilisée pour sélectionner les parents. Les données sont collectées avec deux instruments fiables et testés que sont "Echelle de Perceptions des enseignants à propos de leur préférence à l'anglais comme médium d'instructions (PTPEMIS)" et "Echelle Perceptions des parents à propos de leur préférence à l'anglais comme médium d'instruction (PPPEMIS)". Les résultats ont montré que la majorité des participants à l'étude, ont une préférence positive à l'usage de l'anglais comme médium d'instruction et ceci est confirmé par une grande moyenne entre 3.04 et 3.17 pour les enseignants et les parents respectivement. Aussi, il y a eu une différence significative entre la perception des enseignants et des parents ($t = .312$; $p < .05$; $df = 80$). Le score moyen des parents (Moyenne = 28.53 ; SD = 2.65) est supérieur à celui des enseignants (Moyenne = 24.65 ; SD = 2.54). Les parents et les enseignants sont positivement disposés à utiliser la langue anglaise comme médium d'instruction, cependant, leurs perceptions sont encore différentes. Il est alors recommandé parmi d'autres, que les gouvernements à tous les niveaux prennent des dispositions pour l'application effective du programme National de l'Education (NPE) du pays, qui recommande l'usage approprié de la langue anglaise au niveau supérieurs et pour les lettres.

Mots clés : parties prenantes, perceptions, anglais, médium, instruction.

Introduction

Generally, policies on Medium-of-Instruction (Mol) usage are usually hotly debated, especially in countries where the society speaks multiple languages either as a consequence of historical factors such as colonisation, war, multi-ethnic nation-building or perhaps, due to more recent globalising forces like immigration and the spread of Anglo-American cultural influences. According to Eleuthera (nd), a common educational dilemma in multilingual African countries is what to choose as the language of instruction. In the absence of an ethnically neutral lingua franca, any choice will be seen to favour certain ethno-linguistic groups at the expense of all others.

In Nigeria, the Federal Government (2014:7) recognised the importance of Language when it declared in the National Policy on Education (NPE) that: "Government appreciates the importance of language as a means of promoting social interaction and national cohesion; and preserving cultures. Thus, every child shall learn the language of immediate environment.....". The implication here is that learning the language of one's immediate environment is compulsory in Nigerian schools, especially at the lower level. In fact, the medium of instruction in the primary school shall be the language of immediate environment for the first three years, during which, English shall be taught as a subject (NPE, 2014: 12). However, from primary four upward, English is to be the medium of instruction. This was based on the 1977 (Revised in 1981, 1998, 2004, 2013 and 2014 respectively) policy document which provided that English is the medium of instruction from grade four upwards.

According to Tilahun (2015), there is research to suggest that educating students in their first language (also known as Mother Tongue Education, MTE) results in improved educational outcomes on the basis that it supports sound-meaning or meaning-symbol correspondence, facilitates understanding of new concepts and strengthens affective measures such as self-esteem, identity, motivation and creativity. However, the researchers contended that this policy statement is more peculiar to the early childhood and the junior primary school (Class 1-3). As from senior primary school (Class 4 and above) to senior secondary school, English Language is not only being used as medium

of instruction, but also taught as a subject. In fact, English is increasingly being used in universities and secondary schools as the medium of instruction (EMI) for academic subjects including Science, Mathematics, Geography and Medicine.

In many contexts around the world, however, many students may not have the opportunity to attend school where their own mother tongue is the language of instruction. Rather, a regional, national, or colonial language which many of the learners may have very limited knowledge of or ability to use as the case may be becomes the medium of instruction. By implication, the academic language that is needed for education is not developed in the learners' first language. Teachers instructing students in learning English as another language often face with a variety of common and student-specific problems. For instance, teaching students in the English language involves building a student's reading and speaking vocabulary and understanding of written and spoken English language. English has however become the world-wide *lingua franca*, a language used for communication between people whose first languages differ (Holmes, 1997; Islam, 2015). This being the case, could be the reason why English is fast becoming more and more integrated into the field of education all over the world. In view of this, there is the need to examine the perceptions of some stakeholders regarding the rationale for their preference for English language as medium of instruction in Nigerian context.

Statement of the Problem

In Nigeria, there is a policy statement in the National policy on education that the language of the immediate environment shall be the medium of instruction, especially in pre-primary and primary schools. However, observations in private schools in Nigeria show that the implementation of this policy statement is undermined seriously. Instead, English language is used contrary to this policy provision. It appears this policy violation has adverse effects on the rich culture of the Nigerian society. Pupils now find it difficult to express themselves in their own local languages. This, experts believe could affect the soundness of the students in English language since they are not well

grounded in their local language. This study therefore investigated teachers' and parents' reasons for their perceived preference for English as medium of instruction in Nigerian private schools in Delta State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of teachers and parents concerning the reasons for preferring English as medium of instruction in Nigerian private schools. The specific objectives however, are:

- i. To find out the parents' reasons for their perceived preference for English as medium of instruction in Nigerian private schools.
- ii. To investigate the teachers' reasons for their perceived preference for English as medium of instruction in Nigerian private schools.
- iii. To determine the significant difference in parents' and teachers' reasons for their perceived preference for English as medium of instruction in Nigerian private schools.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised and answered to guide the attainment of the first-two specific objectives:

- i. What are the parents' reasons for their perceived preference for English as medium of instruction in Nigerian private schools?
- ii. What are the teachers' reasons for their perceived preference for English as medium of instruction in Nigerian private schools?

Null Hypothesis

To further achieve the third specific objective, one null hypothesis was postulated and tested at .05 significant level:

- i. There is no significant difference in parents' and teachers' reasons for their perceived preference for English as medium of instruction in Nigerian private schools.

English as Medium of Instruction in Nigeria: The Historical Perspective

Nigeria, like many African countries, boasts of a wealth of indigenous languages. At last count, over 400 languages are being spoken in this country of 150 million people, covering about 356,669 square miles, bordering the Gulf of Guinea in West Africa. Nigeria is a multilingual country comprises different races, which occupied geographically, a complicated landscape from its historic-cultural, political, economic and educational developments. She is an example of a multilingual, pluralistic and heterogeneous African state with a history of British colonization.

Danladi (2013) remarked that historically, an assimilation of culture emerged wherein English became the language of education as it was the Nigeria's official language. The pull toward English is motivated by the ideology of internationalization, reflecting the dual needs for an inter-ethnic and the international language of superiority. In fact, the gained language policy on the educational ordinance of 1882 made English the language of instructions in school.

The 18th Century slave trade along the West Coast of Africa is believed to have led to the initial contact with the Europeans' ways of life, including their language. This led to the emergence of Missionaries and the British colonial masters. The invasion of the European colonial masters and slave trade activities along the West Coast of Africa in the 18th Century is believed to have paved the way for their tradition, language, and culture, some of which is obvious till today (Awobuluyi, 1966). Omolewa (as cited in Awobuluyi, 1979) however remarked that that "English language came into Nigeria before the advent of the Missionaries in the country. The "Coastal English" spoken then

according to him, was highly adulterated. It was a transactional and functional kind of English used by traders along the coast of Nigeria. Another noticeable type of English that was being spoken then according to Amandi (2008) was the “Patua English” (Pidgin or broken English) which appears to be a more adaptable English variant as a quick and easy means of communication.

It could be recalled that Western education which was introduced into the country by Christian missionaries with the coming of the British who were English speaking missionaries in large numbers to the Southern part of Nigeria around 1840s brought up the question of a language to adopt for communication between the indigenous population and the guests. After the introduction and acceptance of the formal system of education, the entirety of it was left in the hands of the missionaries who started teaching children and adults who cared to learn English language. By 1882, English language has become well-spoken by the Nigerian elites and their children especially in public places. This culminated into the adoption, acceptance, and implementation of English Language not only as the main medium of instruction, but also as the language for general communication. Thus, the education ordinances and codes of 1882, 1896, 1918 and 1926 that were enacted, recognised English language as the “Official Language”.

Regrettably, the adoption, acceptance, and implementation of English Language not only as the main medium of instruction, but also as the language for general communication led to the rejection and relegation of the vernacular (local) languages to the background. The attitudes of the native themselves to their own local language did not help matters. In fact, pupils are even being disciplined for using them. This resulted into what Baldeh (as cited in Amandi, 2008) described as “a progressively waning enthusiasm for the local language”.

Some Studies on English as Medium of Instruction

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A review of some studies that had been carried out in this area was discussed in this section. For instance, in Turkey, Aksu and Akarsu (2015) investigated the perceptions of 311 teachers in all of the 24 Anatolian High schools in 22 provinces. The result of this study showed that majority of Mathematics and Science teachers use English to teach contents quite often but not a lot. Also, result revealed that most of teachers had learnt English during their university years. Also, Mirici, Arslan, Hoşgörür, and Aydın (2000) in their survey conducted in 44 provinces of Turkey, among a total of 1780 school Principals, Directors, Teachers, Students and Parents, the overall tendency was in disfavour of English language as medium of instruction in Anatolian high schools for all target groups.

Another experimental design study carried out by Zorlu (2011) in a vocational school in Northern Germany is worth mentioning. This study compared the academic achievement in cognitive areas and retention of the newly-acquired knowledge of the control group consisting of 12 Turkish and 16 German students who received instruction in German with that of the test group who received instruction of a technology subject supplemented with instruction in the native language. Both groups were instructed in German by a bilingual Turkish teacher. Findings, among others, showed that Turkish students in the test group exhibited higher levels of achievement than the Germans when tested on the retention of knowledge of the newly-required skills. The researcher attributed the recorded difference to the dual-medium instructional mode or to the treatment given to Turkish students.

In the report of a survey conducted by Secondary Education General Directorate in 1997, Milli (2007) reported that 64.42% of parents and 56.23% of teachers did not favour Foreign Language-Medium Instruction (FMLI) in Mathematics and Science courses, and only 2.28% of them stated FMLI as a reason for sending their children to these schools. A vast majority of teachers believe in the negative effects of instruction in a foreign language, and that, reversion to Turkish would increase students' achievement in these courses.

Also, in a study exploring the problems of foreign language-medium in secondary schools, Erdem (2010) investigated the perceptions of students and teachers in connection with problems and effectiveness of the instruction of Mathematics and Science subjects. A total of 125 teachers and 43 students participated in the study. Findings showed that most of the teachers cannot use foreign language as the major instructional mode because of student pressure and difficulty of instructing in a foreign language, while the majority of students would support increasing hours of English instruction as a separate subject instead of instruction through a foreign language.

Finally, Adetunji (2011) investigated the role of English in teaching Engineering and Architecture contents at University of Lagos as perceived by 33 instructors via a questionnaire. The study focused on the attitudes of instructors toward use of English in classrooms and how and to what extent they use English for instruction that teach content mainly through English. She found out that all the participants believed learning English is essential for students to read professional materials.

From the studies reviewed, there are conflicting findings with some in favour and some against the use of English as medium of instruction. This then motivated the researchers to venture into this investigation within Nigerian context, especially at the lower level of education that has been dominated by private individuals.

Methodology

This section presents the description of the procedure adopted in carrying out this study. This was done under the following sub-headings: research design, sample and sampling technique, instrumentation and method of data analysis.

Design of the Study

This study used the descriptive survey research design. This design is appropriate for the study of this nature because the researchers used questionnaire to collect data from a large study population with a view to describing the existing situation.

Population of the Study

All private secondary schools in Delta South Senatorial District constitute the school population. There were 84 registered private schools as at the time of conducting this study. Also, all English Language teachers, whose population was 78, were the participants in the study.

Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

A total number of 25 private schools were randomly selected as the sample size for the schools. As regards the participants, two English Language teachers were purposively selected from each of the sampled schools. This gave a total of 50 teachers as participants. Purposive sampling technique was used for the participants because only English Language teachers are qualified to take part in the study. Also, 32 randomly selected parents took part in the study. Thus, this gave a total number of 82 participants.

Research Instrument

The researchers used two self-constructed close-ended validated and reliable questionnaires titled “**Perceptions of Teachers about Preferring English as Medium of Instruction Scale (PTPEMIS)**” and “**Perceptions of Parents about Preferring English as Medium of Instruction Scale (PPPEMIS)**” as the instruments for data collection. Each of them was divided into two Sections: Section A presented the bio-data of the respondents while Section B contains items related to the perceptions of the selected stakeholders. The respondents were expected to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree to each of the items. Scoring was done, using modified four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Strongly Disagree (SD), and Disagree (D) with weights of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The scorings were reversed for negative items for the purpose of analysis.

Validity of Research Instrument

To assess the validity of the instruments, draft copies of the questionnaires were given to some experts and senior Colleagues. The essence of this process was to ensure that the research instrument adjudged to be valid, thus, measured what it was designed to measure. After some of the items were reframed, they all attested that the questionnaire was good for the purpose they were meant to serve.

Reliability of the Test Scores

The survey questionnaire was piloted in another separate school, using 20 Yoruba Language teachers and 15 parents. Both the school and the Yoruba language teachers were not part of the main study. The internal consistency estimates of reliability, that is, coefficient alpha was computed for individual scales in each instruments on the SPSS Programme. The obtained Cronbach alpha values for the two questionnaires are .78 and .85 for PTPEMIS and PPPEMIS respectively.

Procedure for Instrument Administration

A total number of 60 copies of questionnaire was distributed to the English Language teachers. However, 50 copies that were completely filled were used for the study. As regards the parents, the School Principals were used as the research assistants. They administered the questionnaires on the parents when the each parent brought their wards. Only 32 completely filled questionnaires were used for the study.

Methods of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistical tool of mean scores and standard deviation was used to answer the two research questions. The cut-off point is 2.5. Thus, any item with mean score above 2.5 was considered to be a reason, while any item with mean score below 2.5 was considered not a reason. The only formulated null hypothesis was analysed through independent t-test. This hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Findings and Discussion

Findings generated from the analysis of the collected data are as presented with its subsequent discussions.

- i. **Research Question:** What are the parents' reasons for their perceived preference for English as medium of instruction in Nigerian private schools?

Table 1:

Teachers' Reasons for Perceived Preference for EMOI

SN	Items	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	It is difficult to find words to express key education concepts in the mother tongue in some school subjects such as the words in chemistry and physics	3.63	.701	Reason
2	I do not have direct translation in for such terms as speed, acceleration, power, x-axis, y-axis, etc in the mother tongue.	2.84	.555	Reason
3	English discourages the production of Nigerian local words in the areas of Science and Technology.	2.37	.104	Not a Reason
4	If the students have a firmer background in English, their success in science and math subjects will increase.	3.69	.800	Reason
5	English contributes to students' cognitive development than mother tongue.	2.43	.203	Not a Reason
6	It is easy to build student's reading and speaking vocabulary through the use of English language.	2.62	.411	Reason
7	Knowing, understanding and speaking English is a mark of prestige in society.	3.73	.815	Reason
	Grand Mean	3.04	.512	

Using mean score and standard deviation to determine the perceptions of English Language teachers as regards reasons for their perceived preference for the use of English as medium of instruction in private schools, Table 1 showed the results of the analysis of perceptions of English Language teachers with respect to some of the reasons identified in the literature. As a rule, a mean value of 2.5 was used as the test mean (that is, the cut-off point). Any item with a mean of 2.5 and above was considered

to be a serious a reason for preference for the use of English as medium of instruction in private schools by majority of the teachers. Result therefore showed that based on the set rule, item numbers 1, 2, 4, 6, and 7 were supported by the teachers as reasons for their preference for the use of English as medium of instruction in private schools, while the remaining two items 3 and 5 with mean score below 2.5 were considered not as reasons for preference for the use of English as medium of instruction in private schools by majority of the teachers. A look at the grand mean score (3.04) showed that almost all the items given are serious reasons among the teachers that participated in the study for their preference for the use of English as medium of instruction in private schools.

- ii. **Research Question 2:** What are the parents' reasons for their perceived preference for English as medium of instruction in Nigerian private schools?

Table 2:

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Parents' Reasons for Perceived Preference for EMOI

SN	Reasons for Using English as MoI	X	SD	Decision
1	English has become an international language.	3.69	.732	Reason
2	If the students have a firmer background in English, their success in Science and Mathematics subjects will increase.	2.43	.203	Not a Reason
3	EMoI does not result in cultural corruption.	2.40	.187	Not a Reason
4	I want my child to learn English at a very good level because EMI is necessary at tertiary education level.	3.73	.815	Reason
5	Knowing, understanding and speaking English is a mark of prestige in society.	2.43	.203	Not a Reason
6	I believe the knowledge of English will bring advantages to my child in the future.	3.63	.701	Reason
7	I believe everyone needs to learn English in our country.	3.85	.822	Reason
	Grand Mean	3.17	.523	

Using mean score and standard deviation to determine the perceptions of parents concerning reasons for their perceived preference for the use of English as medium of instruction in private schools, Table 2 showed the results of their perceptions with respect to some of the reasons identified in the literature. The decision rule is that a mean value of 2.5 is the test mean (that is, the cut-off point). Any item with a mean of 2.5 and above was therefore considered to be a serious a reason for preference for the use of English as medium of instruction in private schools by majority of the parents. Result therefore showed that based on the set rule, item numbers 1, 4, 6, and 7 were supported by the parents as reasons for their preference for the use of English as medium of instruction in private schools, while the remaining three items 2, 3, and 5 with mean score below 2.5 were considered not as reasons for preference for the use of English as medium of instruction in private schools by majority of the parents. A look at the grand mean score (3.17) showed that almost all the items given above are serious reasons among the parents that participated in the study for their preference for the use of English as medium of instruction in private schools.

Null Hypothesis₁: There is no significant difference in parents’ and teachers’ reasons for their perceived preference for English as medium of instruction in Nigerian private schools.

Table 3:

Difference in Parents’ and Teachers’ Reasons for Perceived Preference of English as Medium of Instruction in Nigerian Private Schools.

Variable	Stakeholders	X	SD	N	df	t-Cal	P	Remark	Decision
Preference for EMoI	Parents	28.53	2.65	32	80	.312	.010	Sig	H ₀ Re
	Teachers	24.65	2.54	50					

Difference is Significant at p<.05

Independent t-test was run to determine the significant difference in parents’ and teachers’ reasons for their perceived preference for English as medium of instruction in Nigerian private schools. The result in Table 3 showed that there was significant difference (t= .312; p<.05; df=80). The mean score of parents (Mean= 28.53; SD= 2.65) is greater than that of teachers (Mean= 24.65; SD= 2.54). This hypothesis was therefore rejected.

Discussion of Findings

Research question one that probed into teachers’ reasons for their perceived preference for English as medium of instruction in Nigerian private schools showed that almost all the items given in the study are serious reasons among the teachers that participated in the study for their preference for the use of English as medium of instruction in private schools as confirmed by the grand mean score (3.04). Also, research question two that probed into parents’ reasons for their perceived preference for English as medium of instruction in Nigerian private schools showed that almost all the items given in the study are serious reasons among the parents that participated in the study for their

preference for the use of English as medium of instruction in private schools as confirmed by the grand mean score (3.17).

These two findings have been earlier reported in some previous studies. For instance, Grosjean (2014) and Galindo (2007) reported parental pressure or a parental preference for a shift towards total English immersion or English-medium instruction in schools. It is abundantly clear that the two stakeholders that took part in this study did favour English-medium instruction at secondary education. However, this finding invalidates the results that were previously found out in some studies (Milli, 2007; Mirici, Arslan, Hoşgörür, & Aydın, 2000)). For instance, Mirici, et al., (2000) in their survey conducted in 44 provinces of Turkey, among a total of 1780 school principals, directors, teachers, students and parents, the overall tendency is in disfavour of English language medium instruction in Anatolian high schools. Similarly, In the report of a survey conducted by Secondary Education General Directorate in 1997, Milli (2007) reported that 64.42% of parents and 56.23% of teachers did not favour Foreign Language-Medium Instruction (FMLI) in Mathematics and Science courses, and only 2.28% of them stated FMLI as a reason for sending their children to these schools. A vast majority of teachers believe in the negative effects of instruction in a foreign language and that reversion to Turkish would increase students' achievement in these courses. The growing modern day civilization in developing nations like Nigeria could be responsible for the findings generated in this study.

Finally, the null hypothesis that was postulated to determine the significant difference in parents' and teachers' reasons for their perceived preference for English as medium of instruction in Nigerian private schools was rejected. This is because there was significant difference in parents' and teachers' perceptions ($t = .312$; $p < .05$; $df = 50$). The mean score of parents (Mean = 28.53; SD = 2.65) is greater than that of teachers (Mean = 24.65; SD = 2.54). The noted difference could be as a result of some of the items that are not the same in the study. For instance, item number two in the teachers' scale: *"I do not have direct translation in for such terms as speed, acceleration, power, x-axis, y-axis, etc in the*

mother tongue'' was not included in the parents' scale, while item number four in the parents' scale: *"I want my child to learn English at a very good level because EMI is necessary at tertiary education level"* was not included in the teachers' scale. This finding in support of Tarhan (2003)'s study that established difference in the perceptions of parents and teachers in the use of English as medium of instruction in Turkish secondary schools.

Conclusion

In the lights of the findings from this study, it is revealed that majority of the stakeholders, that is, parents and teachers favoured the use of English as medium of instruction in Nigerian private schools. This is not a bad choice, especially at the secondary level, but there are evidences that in pre-primary and junior primary school levels in Nigeria, where the language of the immediate environment was prescribed for use by the national policy on education, the reverse is the case in all the private schools, not only in the sampled schools, but in all private schools.

Although, parents and teachers are positively disposed to using English as medium of instruction, their perceptions still differ. It should also be noted that English is perceived to have negative influences on the Nigerian language and culture, though not a serious reason for the perceived preference for the use of English as medium of instruction.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings, it is hereby recommended that:

- i. Governments at all levels should brace up in the effective implementation of the various aspects of the nation's NPE that have to do with the use of both the use of the language of the immediate environment at the pre-

- primary and junior primary school levels and that of English at the upper levels appropriately and to the letter.
- ii. English Language teachers should always be exposed to regular on-the-job training and re-training so that they could be more effective and productive in the use of English as medium of instruction.
 - iii. The use of English as medium of instruction should not be adopted at the expense of our rich cultural values. To this end, the emphasis that has also been placed on the use of local languages as currently provided for in the NPE should be followed and implemented effectively.

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