

## THE USE OF HOME BASED LANGUAGES: AS A TOOL FOR EFFECTIVE LEARNING OUTCOMES AND COGNITIVE ABILITIES

**Ibrahim Salihu Mohammed, PhD**  
English Department  
Nigeria Police Academy, Wudil, Kano  
faggeibrahimsalihu@gmail.com  
08065495000

### Abstract

*This paper, tries to accentuate some of the sociolinguistic elements in the Nigerian communities to serve as situation for highlighting the use of our home based indigenous languages in our educational enterprise at all level. Conversely, some scholars, researchers, and the like established that one of the superordinate problems deterring emphasis in the use of these languages in our schools is the lack of worthwhile policy devoid of political, social and religious issues. However, among other things derived from the use of our home based languages include, given birth to the kind of students who are very much appreciative and empathic of their cultural set-ups and boost their cognitive abilities. To this end, some Nigerians agitate for the teaching and learning using our indigenous languages. Like-minded academics, other intellectuals, also develop a considerable interest and seek for implementation of this plan. Notably, some academics at various conferences national and international organised by several Associations and Societies concern with indigenous African languages and their future status, such as; WALC, LAN, ESAN, WALS, LAG and WOCAL, to mention but a few. Therefore, interviews were conducted with two hundred people from different institution of learning for their responses, and a Likert scale used, showing percentage of acceptability or otherwise. The result shows that appropriate and everyday use of our home languages in schools, will enhance and improve teaching and learning and would depend pre mature language death or extinction for lack of rigorous use. Part of the recommendations are the need to resuscitate National Institute for Nigerian Language, held with the responsibilities to train teachers in Nigerian languages to curve shortage of specialist in language in the education enterprises.*

**Key words:** Indigenous, Enterprises, Education, Association, Cognitive

### **Introduction**

All languages have economic, social, political and cultural value to the speakers; some more than others. It is interesting to note that, as a result of a long and often violent history of subjugation and linguistic imperialism, the English language is associated with prestige, economic progress and modernity in Nigeria educational system, as medium of instruction and official to generality of Nigerians. Therefore, the use of indigenous mother tongue is automatically limited to mundane or social interaction, and in many instances associated with backwardness, illiteracy and ethno-traditionalism and cultural ethno centrism. Nonetheless, how can we change these perceptions and develop the economic, political social and cultural value of our indigenous languages to avoid pre mature death and/or phasing out of most indigenous languages.

The most problematic issue as to whether the English Language or our home based indigenous languages can enhance teaching and learning in our respective schools at all levels of education has been the demand of some Nigerians and other non -governmental enterprises. Conversely, the question of the language of instruction in our schools is a very crucial one and often controversial in many parts of the world especially in developing countries such as Morocco, Kenya, Cameroon, Ghana and South Africa to mention but a few.. It is even more complex in previously colonized multilingual and multi-ethnic countries where the official colonial language is different from the indigenous languages such as Nigeria. “The education sector is one of the areas that share in the crisis of language choice” (Baker, 2001). However, those who are advocating for the use of home languages as a means of imparting knowledge, claim that, it makes for meaningful teaching and learning and allow students' participation and comprehension of what taught and need to be taught in the teaching and learning process. While others were of the view, that the use of our indigenous languages in our educational enterprise as a means of imparting knowledge and acquisition of some other technical skills will automatically, hinder effective teaching and learning activities and therefore result to falling standard. Such a call or agitations of the language of instruction in our educational sectors, is central and debatable in many parts of Nigeria and Africa at large, especially, in a situation where there are multicultural and/ or multilingual people. Meaning, a complete mixture and/or conglomeration of a people from dissimilar traditional, cultural, sociological and linguistic background particularly Northern part, i.e. North East and/or North central of Nigeria. The education sector is one of the areas that share in the crisis of language choice.

### **Literature Review**

Owu-Ewie (2006:12) says, “education and language issues are very complex in Nigeria because of its multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multilingual situation. Added, English, the official language in Nigeria is used extensively in the print and electronic media, in the judiciary, the police, and the armed forces, legislature, in commerce and politics”. Bamgbose (1991) points to the colonial legacy that the inheritance situation how

the colonial experience continues to shape and define post-colonial problems, and practice in the higher domains, including education. Thus “while it would seem that African nations make policy in education, what they actually do is carry on the logic of the policies of the past” which, in the main, favour former colonial languages as the sole mediums of instruction in the education system. Today's education challenge in Nigeria have their root in the colonial education system. Consequence of linguist choice for quality education, self-determination develop and pupils/students right in education (Fasold: 1984).

English should continue to serve as the medium of instruction at all levels of education and in pursuance of Nigeria educational goals. However, our national constitution provides a policy and institutional framework for the protection, maintenance and promotion of all of these languages. Hence, a very specific constitutional obligation is placed on all spheres of government to create an enabling environment for all of these indigenous languages to fulfil their rightful roles to spearhead community development, bring about modernisation and assist in overcoming the prejudices and injustices of the past.

Despite that, government put in place a language policy guideline on the use of indigenous languages education among others in the National Policy on Education (NPE 2004, 2006) as follows: The medium of instruction in the primary school shall be the language of immediate environment (mother tongue) for the first three years. During which, English shall be taught as a subject. From the fourth year, English shall progressively, be used as a medium of instruction (abrupt switch) and the language of immediate environment and French shall be taught as subjects (NPE 2004, Section 4, No 19 e and f). This provision simply implies that at the lower primary school (i.e. primary 1-3), the medium of instruction for all subjects shall be the mother tongue (MT) but at the upper primary school (i.e. primary 4-6), the medium of instruction shall be the English language. Research evidence shows that adequate training in indigenous languages, as a medium will enhance adequate teaching and learning in our educational enterprise thereby boost cognitive abilities of the students/pupils. Researchers in linguistics and Nigerian languages argue that, our language policy, although very viably progressive on paper, has allowed English to become the 'de facto sole official language', which benefits only the middle class and elite in our society. At the same time too little is done to transform our indigenous languages into 'cultural capital' to create a better life for the working class as well.

Awoniyi (1974, p. 21) “home based language categorizes a large part of the people's environment, that is, it has names for most of the concepts, objects, actions, ideas, attributes and so on that are so important to them and society”. Added, “indigenous language as “the language which a group of people considered to be inhabitants of an area acquired in the early years and which eventually become their natural instrument of thoughts and communication”. In the same vain, David (2008:10) noted, “that the indigenous language is the people's environment and is also the natural basis on which

verbal skills can be built.”Some Researchers, language specialist, concerned academics do not see much value in Nigerian languages. In addition, Authorities seem to be very much reluctant to ensure that Nigerian languages, by appropriate legal provisions, assume their rightful role as of official communication medium in public affairs, judiciary, media and administrative, markets and educational domains, local and at national level. However, no one seems to take our indigenous languages seriously. They seem to have nothing to offer except in everyday communication between members of families and mundane conversation with friends and colleagues.

Nevertheless, in this study, responses were examined from different stakeholders in the educational enterprises as to whether indigenous language shall serve as the mechanism and/or means of imparting knowledge in our schools. However, educational policy shall be drafted to cater for such need in place of the earlier provision is to use Mother Tongue Education (MT Curriculum) later abrupt switch to English. However, one of the linguistic problems of some public interest in the teaching and learning industries is continue use of English language. Conversely, researchers, scholars and language specialist in teaching and learning process, the first language of the learner is of paramount importance. (Krashen. 1990) opines, “the idea that a learner is to be taught the fundamentals of a topic in his own language. Once the concepts are learnt, they can easily be reapplied to an L2 education stream”.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem of this work premised on the assumption that the use of our home based languages in Nigerian schools will surely develop LI skills improve cognitive abilities, reduce the fear of minority ones phasing out, and enhance the learning potentials of the students and cultural preservation. However, there are issues as to what extent the indigenous languages in education system will contribute to effective teaching and learning in the country. To this end, this study examined the impacts of the use of home based indigenous languages in our schools and how, this will enhance effective teaching and learning of all subjects.

### **Aim**

The study aims to measure the impacts of the use of our home based indigenous languages in our schools on the effective teaching and learning and improvement of cognitive abilities of our students/pupils.

### **Research Questions**

The study set out to answer the following questions:

1. Are teachers of the opinion to use our home based indigenous languages in the education system at all levels?

2. What is the impact of the use of our home based languages in educational system at all levels.?
3. Is the government, agencies and other non-government organisations ready to sponsor the implementation?
4. What are the possibilities of getting enough work force for the implementation?
5. Do you think the idea is viable and will yield fruitful result? (How viable is the idea)?
6. How many years would it take before teaching materials (Textbooks) be available?

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is significant in many respects in that it would confirm the desirability or otherwise of the importance in the use of home based indigenous languages in the education system in the country education system. Therefore, the study would confirm if the adoption of our home indigenous languages in education would facilitate or hinder effective teaching and learning.

### **Theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework for this study is based on Vygotsky's theory. He believes for developing indigenous languages were most valuable meaning that the language that learners most often use is scaffolded, which can assist in the analysis of the student's cognitive abilities

### **Methodology**

This research work adopts a descriptive based approach that employ questions and a face-to-face interview with some primary and secondary school teachers, teacher-trainers and some university lecturers to collect data for the study. The sample for the study is drawn from seven randomly selected primary schools and seven secondary schools: three JSS and four SSS at Fagge local government, in Kano State. Fifty teachers (50) in the Senior Secondary Schools, fifty (50) from Junior Secondary Schools and fifty(50) primary schools, thirty (30) from Saadatu Rimi College of Education Kano and twenty (20) University lecturers were randomly selected and questioned because, they are stakeholders from different educational enterprise therefore, teach learners one subject or the other. However, 200 teachers interviewed face-to-face on the use of home based indigenous languages at all levels of education instead of English language. Responses collected and analysed using simple percentage and Likert table.

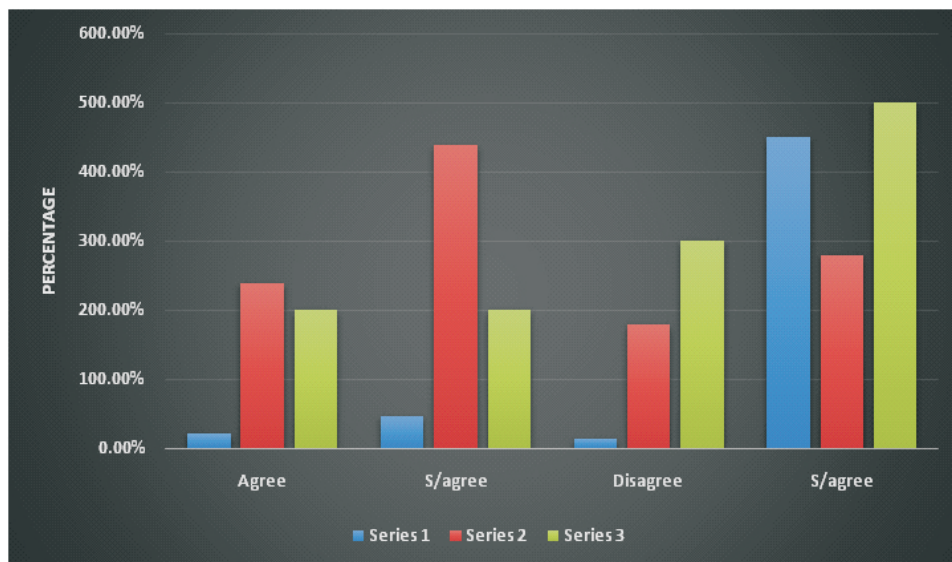
### **Results**

Are teachers of the opinion to use our home based indigenous languages in the education system at all levels?

**Table 1.**

Schools	.Agree	S. Agree	Disagree	S. Disagree	Total
SS	4	24	5	7	50
JSS	12	20	10	18	50
PS	14	30	5	1	50
COE	5	15	6	4	30
UN/LEC	10	5	1	4	20
Total	45	94	27	34	200
Percentages	22.5%	47%	13.5%	17%	100%

Table 1, shows that, 22.5% of the teachers "agree" meaning, are of the opinion to use our home based indigenous languages in the education system at all levels, while 47% "strongly agree" on their opinions. 13.5%of the teachers, "disagree" with such estimation and 17% "strongly disagree" on their opinions to use our home based indigenous languages in our schools at all levels. UNESCO (1953:37) stated, "the use of indigenous languages in education is psychologically, sociologically and educationally beneficial to learners and that every effort should be made to provide education in the home based languages". The bar chart below shows the percentages.

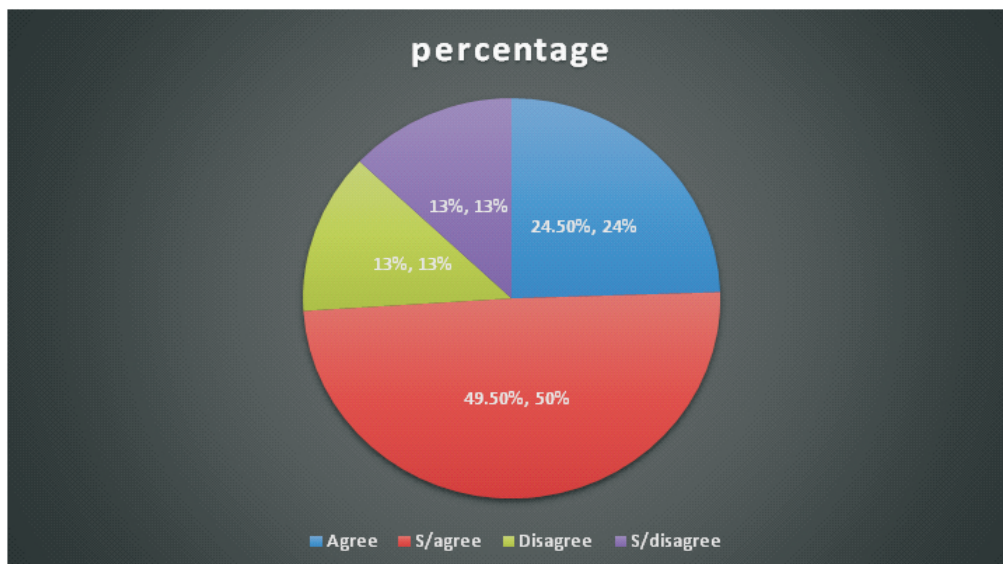


**Research Question 2:** is there any impact in the use of our home based languages in teaching at all levels .

**Table 2**

Schools	Agree	S. Agree	Disagree	S. Disagree	Total
SS	16	29	2	3	50
JSS	10	22	08	10	50
PS	9	30	7	4	50
COE	9	8	7	6	30
UN/LEC	5	10	2	3	20
Total	49	99	26	26	200
Percentages	24.5%	49.5%	13%	13%	100%

Table 2, shows that, out of one hundred percent, 24.5% of the teachers are of view that the use of our home languages in education will create strong impact on teaching and learning. 49.5% strongly agree in their opinions to use indigenous languages at all levels of education, 13%, disagree with the idea of using home languages as a means of imparting knowledge to our students at various levels of education also, thirteen percent (13%) strongly disagree with the idea respectively.



Is government or Non- governmental and/or agencies ready to sponsor the implementation?

**Table 3**

Schools	Agree	S. Agree	Disagree	S. Disagree	Total
SS	12	30	2	6	50
JSS	12	28	7	3	50
PS	17	23	5	5	50
COE	9	8	9	4	30
UN/LEC	5	11	2	2	20
Total	55	100	25	20	200
Percentages	27.5%	50%	12.5%	10%	100%

From table 3, 27,5% "agree" and 50% "strongly agree", with the fact that indigenous languages positively effects the teaching and learning at virtually all levels of education in Nigeria .These respondents believe that government and other non -governmental agencies would surely sponsor such programme. However, 12.5% of them “disagree”. Whether government could provide support to the implementation of the use of our indigenous languages in teaching and learning at all levels of education because, will not yield any positive effect in teaching and learning. 10% of respondents marked "strongly disagree", with the assumption/notion that there is readiness from the part of government to fully sponsor implementation of home languages in our educational system not to talk of other non-governmental organisations.

**Table 4** Are there possibilities of getting method and material enough work force for the implementation

Schools	Agree	S. Agree	Disagree	S. Disagree	Total
SS	7	33	7	3	50
JSS	10	27	8	5	50
PS	30	9	2	9	50
COE	8	18	2	2	30
UN/LEC	5	9	4	2	20
Total	60	96	23	21	200
Percentages	30%	48%	11.5%	10.5%	100%



Identification Of Phonological Problems Among Gbari Speakers Of English:

30.% marked "agree", and 48% marked "strongly agree" that there is the possibility of getting enough method and material vis- vis manpower for the implementation of the programme at all levels in our respective schools. 10.5% marked "strongly disagree" while 11.5% of respondents "disagree"and believe that it will be very difficult to have enough work force and material that would enhance smooth and adequate running of the implementation and therefore would not be a productive effort. Troike (1988:15) asserted in his study “that almost in all cases a student's relative competence in the use of his/her home language coincided with the student's relative achievement in English. Therefore, a reassessment of the entire education policy to bridge the big gap between policy provision and policy implementation is desired.”

Do you think the idea is viable and will yield fruitful result?

**Table 4**

<b>Schools</b>	<b>.Agree</b>	<b>S. Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>S. Disagree</b>	<b>Total</b>
SS	22	17	4	7	50
JSS	24	18	5	3	50
PS	22	15	3	10	50
COE	11	10	2	7	30
UN/LEC	4	7	5	4	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>200</b>
<b>Percentages</b>	<b>41.5%</b>	<b>33.5%</b>	<b>9.5%</b>	<b>15.5%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table four, exhibits responses of the respondents thus: 15.5 %strongly disagree that the idea of using our indigenous languages in our schools as mediums of instruction in place of the dominating language English language is not going to be fruitful. Since English is used as official and lingua franca in the country, therefore continue as such. 9.5% disagree with such an opinion that home languages replace English language as a means of imparting knowledge in our schools. However, 41.5% of the respondents agree with such an idea of using indigenous languages in our educational enterprise, to stop using English at the detriment of our home languages. Lastly 33-5% strongly agree that the idea of using our languages definitely will be highly productive therefore fruitful.

Schools	Agree	S. Agree	Disagree	S. Disagree	Total
SS	22	19	5	4	50
JSS	21	14	10	5	50
PS	30	17	3	0	50
COE	15	7	6	2	30
UN/LEC	10	6	1	3	20
Total	98	56	25	14	200
Percentages	49 %	28%	12.5%	7%	100%

From table 5, a percentage of 7 % “strongly disagree” and 12.5% “disagree”, with the fact that teaching materials would not be easy to produce and circulate to every part of the country as when due. Forty- nine percent (49%) agree that teaching materials could be produced within the shortest period and distributed to various parts and virtually ministries of education for onward distribution and/or circulation. Therefore, easy since most of these indigenous languages were codified. Twenty eight percent of the respondents (28%) believe that if the government and other individual organisations put hands together this would not constitute any obstacle to the implementation of this programme.

### Recommendations

The findings from this study show that the use of our home based languages in teaching and learning in our schools will yield good result. It is interesting to note that, a good number of the respondents of the study strongly believe that appropriate and everyday use of our home languages in schools will enhance and improve teaching and learning and would depend pre mature language death or extinction for lack of rigorous use. Thomas and Collier (2002:13) observed, “the more the number of years a learner used receiving instructions via their indigenous languages, the greater the achievement is said to be”. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made: The need to reposition the education enterprise to offer such tools and other necessary mechanism for systematic checking of the use of home languages while, policy is endorsed and implement. Remuneration, motivation and regular workshop should be put in place for teachers and stakeholders in education. The government should see to the implementation issues and other non-governmental organisations equally show commitment. An abrupt switch from home languages to the use of English language should be cancelled to ensure that the child had enough and a very good foundation to help learning, visa-vis adequate

retention of what taught. Therefore, this study suggests using indigenous languages from day one of education, the beginning to the end of students/pupils educational careers without any obstruction as per switching to another language. Therefore, English shall be taught as a subject as enshrine in the Nation Policy on Education, to allow interaction with outside world for bilingual or multilingual relationship and other benefits possible. There is need for the government to resuscitate National Institute for Nigerian Language, which shoulder the responsibility to train teachers in Nigerian languages to curve shortage of specialists in language in educational enterprises. The government should show more concern in the supervision, production and provision of all necessary materials, textbooks and other teaching materials to schools to enhance effective teaching and learning and to live up to its responsibilities in creating a conducive environment for language teaching and learning.

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