

KNOWLEDGE AND APPLICATION OF TRANSLINGUALISM: A STUDY OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN BICHI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, KANO STATE NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper sets out to evaluate an aspect of language policy in National Policy on Education in Nigeria. It examined the extent of knowledge on translanguaging and level of translanguaging application among primary school teachers in Bichi Local Government Area. The study adopted Survey research design and Multi stage sampling with population of 1094. A sample size of 292 participants was derived using Taro Yamane. Data were collected with aid of questionnaires and analyzed using mean and standard deviation score. Findings revealed that: knowledge of translanguaging is moderate among primary school teachers in Bichi Local Government Area and to some extent primary school teachers in Bichi Local Government Area adhered to translanguaging instruction. It was recommended among others that there should be regular sensitization on language policy as stipulated in NPE by the relevant bodies and that there should be more collaboration among the three tiers of government at enforcing language policy in primary education.

Keywords: Translanguaging; Knowledge; Application; Primary teachers

Introduction

During a book launch on Translation of English dictionary to Hausa language on 31st April, 2022 in Katsina, the Governor of Katsina State, Aminu Masari, tasked teachers in various schools in the state to teach pupils in mother tongue. The Governor reiterated

that primary school children from class one to three should be taught in their mother tongue as they will learn better (News Agency of Nigeria, 2022). The governor's statements aligned with the language policy in Nigeria.

The language policy in Nigeria explicitly states the medium of instruction at every level of education. Notably, is the emphasis on translanguaging. What is Translanguaging? Translanguaging simply means the switch from one language of instruction to another over a period of time. One of such citation on translanguaging is captured in section 4 subsection 19 E and F of Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014:8) which states that:

The medium of instruction in the primary school shall be the language of environment for the first three years. During this period, English shall be taught as a subject. From the fourth year, English shall progressively be used as medium of instruction and the language of immediate environment and French shall be taught as subjects (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014:12).

In relation to the above, educationists elsewhere are also debating on effect of translanguaging on teaching and learning. According to Jibril (1986), mother tongue or the language of the immediate community should be considered not only initially but throughout the whole of primary education. Corroborating the position, UNESCO (1953) opines that pupils should begin schooling through the medium of the mother tongue/ language of the immediate community and should be extended to later stage in education as possible. This is because, as Afolayan (1984) argues, children learn best using Mother tongue/ language of the immediate community (MT/LIC). Also, in line with this is that, Emenanjo (1998) affirms that MT experiment in Niger Republic confirmed that those who had their total primary education in MT turned out to be more resourceful (at manipulative ability, manual dexterity, and mechanical comprehension) than their counterparts from other schools. Also, Dutcher (2004) notes that students not only develop literacy skills more easily in a familiar language but they also develop cognitive skills and master content material more easily.

Considering the aforementioned relevance of MT/LIC in teaching and learning, UNESCO cited in Global Campaign for Education (2015) observes that majority of children in Africa (Nigeria inclusive) start school using a foreign language. The report claims that about a significant percentage of pupils enter primary school not speaking and understanding the medium of instruction (language of the classroom), because many of these developing countries education systems favour using lingual franca instead of mother-tongue teaching (Global Campaign for Education, 2015).

Therefore, the study recalls Emenanjo (1998) contention that there is lack of awareness on the part of the Supervisors/Inspectors of Education, Principals/Headmasters of Schools and practising teachers on the language policy as stated in the NPE. Could Emenanjo's assertion still be true? In furtherance to this, the study seeks to assess the knowledge level and application of Translanguaging among Teachers in Bichi Local Government.

Objective of study

The aim of this study is to evaluate the knowledge level and the extent to which teachers apply translanguaging. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Determine the level of knowledge on translanguaging as stipulated in the National Policy on Education among primary school teachers in Bichi Local Government Area.
2. Determine the extent of translanguaging application as stipulated in the NPE among primary school teachers in Bichi Local Government Area.

Literature Review*Concept of Translanguaging*

The author of the book 'the translanguaging imagination', Steven G. Kellman was said to be among the first scholars to use the term Translanguaging. According to Steven (2000) Translanguaging comes from two Latin words '*trans*' meaning across and '*Lingual*' meaning having to do with language. Although, over time translanguaging has been interpreted widely by scholars.

According to Canagarajah (2017), the prefix *trans* in translanguaging indexes a way of looking at communicative practices as transcending across autonomous languages. Canagarajah (2013) adds that translanguaging practices do not so much involve 'switching' between separate systems, but instead they involve drawing flexibly on resources from a single, unified languaging system, appropriate to context, interlocutor and interaction. Also, Lexico (2021) sees translanguaging as switching effortlessly from one language to another when speaking or writing. In another dimension, Garcia (2009) defines translanguaging as the act performed by Bilinguals at accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages in order to maximize communicative potential.

On the contrary, Fafunwa (2004) defines translanguaging as the switch to English language as medium of instruction at the course of primary school education. Also, translanguaging is when learners begin with Mother Tongue or language of immediate community but then gradually move to the official/foreign language as medium of instruction (Orekan, 2011). Furthermore, Blessing, (2019) posits that translanguaging is the use of several languages in educational system.

From the above definitions, translanguaging in the context of this study could be seen as a switch from one language of instruction to another over a period of a time. In other words, translanguaging is the change from MT to English language after third year of primary education in Nigeria.

Language policy in Nigeria

According to Musa (2010) language policy on education dates back to the colonial era around the year 1927. The British Advisory committee on native education in tropical Africa recommended that indigenous languages should serve as mediums of instruction in the lower primary schools. Over time Blench (2002) as cited in Blessing (2019) observed that the recommendation of the British Advisory committee on native education on the use of indigenous language became a concern in highly multi-ethnic and multilingual Nigeria with about 500 indigenous languages. In an effort to reconcile, English language was recommended as the medium of instruction. By 1977, the National policy on education advocates the use of indigenous languages in teaching at basic level of education. Emenanjo (1998) recalls that a four days seminar on the implementation of the Language provisions of the National Policy on Education was organized by the Language Development Centre of the Nigerian Education Research Development Council (NERDC) in October 1991. The seminars specific objective was on a comprehensive review of the implementation procedures for realizing the objectives of the language provisions of the NPE. At the end of the Ota Seminars, some recommendations were proffered as Emenanjo (1998) highlights below:

Government should continue with its policy of multilingualism".

Government should review and restate in a clearer form the language provisions of the NPE".

Government should provide active encouragement to the implementation of the MT/LIC medium of instruction policy at the primary school level".

Government should give active encouragement to the training and employment of all categories of teachers of (Nigerian) languages.

Appropriate curricula agencies should review and/or design more functional curricula for (Nigerian) languages.

Government should fund research into all aspects of language and language teaching in Nigeria and support such activities through grants to Departments of Linguistics and Nigerian/African Languages in tertiary institutions".

Government should provide adequate funding for the survey of Nigerian languages project with a view to ensuring its immediate implementation, language planning, language development and language use purposes".

Government should involve linguists and language specialists in all policy matters involving language in this country".

The language provisions of the NPE and their implementation should be constantly monitored and evaluated".

Translingualism and Application

There have been several deliberations on the application of translingualisms in education in the literature. In Erling, Adinolfi, and Hultgren (2017), they observed that 10 of the 11

teachers working in English and Hindi primary school in Bihar used a combination of languages (Hindi and English) for instruction, because there was an overwhelming sense that classroom code switching was a legitimate practice that was needed due to students' developing competence in English. Similarly, Jason and Amy (2021) reported that teachers make only occasional use of other languages in English language classrooms, most often for comparing and contrasting language features, explaining concepts, managing the classroom and translating for learners. Also, Chimirala's (2017) study affirms that most of the teachers reported using languages other than English in the classroom (69% of this usage involves explaining concepts and difficult words), but that only 71% allow their students to use other languages. Chimirala mentioned that if learners have to connect to the lesson, they should be allowed to use their multilingual repertoires. Durairajan (2017) opines that using L1 helps to tap into existing capabilities, plan for L2 use, and encourage greater use of bilingual texts

In Nigeria, studies have cited cases of non-application of translingualism. For example, Blessing (2019) argues that majority of the teachers have not been putting into practice the multilingual provisions of the national policy on education. Also, Eucharia (2020) agrees that most people are aware of translingualism in Nigerian education system, although such provision has remained an object of criticism, rejection and is therefore not implemented in schools. Corroborating this position, Ogunbiyi (2008) emphasis that despite the language policy, some schools, and most especially the private schools downgrade Nigerian languages to the background and promote the teaching of English language at lower primary level.

Based on the problems and objectives of the study, the following questions have been formulated to guide the study.

1. What is the level of knowledge on translingualism as stipulated in the National Policy of Education among primary school teachers of Bichi Local Government Area?
2. What is the extent of translingualism application as stipulated in the NPE among primary school teachers of Bichi Local Government Area?

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on threshold level hypotheses model. The model was propounded by James Cumming in 1979. Cummins argues that bilingualism can produce cognitive and academic benefit effects. The model explains the cognitive effects of bilingualism on bilingual children. This implies that the thresholds bilingual children attain in their two languages are crucial factors for their cognitive development.

Cummins (1979) proposes that there may be threshold levels of linguistic competence which a bilingual child must attain both in order to avoid cognitive deficits and in order to reap cognitive benefits in full. The model believes that there are two threshold levels of bilingual competence. Francis and Eucharia, (2019) listed these levels as;

the lower and

The higher.

The lower level as explained by Francis and Eucharia (2019) suggests that attaining a lower level would lead to any negative cognitive effects, whereas, attaining higher level might be necessary to lead to accelerated cognitive growth. Skutnabb-Kangas and Toukomaa (1977) argue that the basis for the possible attainment of the threshold level of L2 competence might depend on the level of competence attained in the mother tongue.

On this note, threshold model is relevant to the present study. Like the model, the language policy as stipulated in the National policy on education supports translingualism. Going by this model's hypothesis, the use of mother tongue in the first three years in primary school and switching at the fourth year to English language could promote higher threshold in student's proficiency in their MT and English language.

Methodology

The paper adopted survey design, since it is efficient, easier and allows anonymity and generalization of information from a large population (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). The population for the survey study is made up of 1,094 primary school teachers (826 males and 268 females) in 62 primary schools in Bichi Local Government Area, Kano State (Bichi Local Authority Education, 2020). Bichi was selected because it happens to be a Hausa-Muslim dominated part of North West region of Nigeria, with non-indigenes cutting across many ethnic groups in Nigeria.

Multi stage sampling techniques (simple random and accidental sample) were employed. A total of 20 (One third of 62) primary schools were randomly selected. Thereafter, using Taro Yamane formula a sample size of 292 respondents were determined. Thus, a total number of 292 QAKATAPT (Questionnaire for Assessment of Knowledge, and Application of Translingualism Among Primary School Teachers in Bichi Local Government Area) were distributed across the selected schools. QAKATAPT is divided into 3 sections. Section A: Biodata of respondents has 5 questions. Section B is titled state of Knowledge on translingualism based on the provisions of national policy on education with 5 Likert scale questions (6-10). Section C: level of translingualism application based on the provision of national policy on education has 6 Likert scale questions (11-16). The Likert scale is structured along a modified five-point structure. A rating scale of 1.00-1.80 is interpreted very low, 1.81-2.60 is low, 2.61-3.40 is moderate, 3.41-4.20 high and 4.21-5.00 is very high. Whereas, other data was analyzed using mean and standard deviation score, with the support of SPSS version 25.

Data Analysis and Results

A total number of 292 questionnaires were distributed to respondents. Of this number, only 277 questionnaires were returned. The decline in the distributed questionnaire (response rate) is in line with the recent development in behavioral research that not all distributed questionnaire may be returned (Ozohu-Sulieyman, 2013). Based on this chance of occurrence, scholars suggested a response rate of 60-70% as being generally considered significant and capable of producing higher confidence in survey result (Nigel, 2021; Jack, 2008). Thus, returned questionnaires were subjected to the response rate calculator which produced the response rate of 94.8%. Considering the response rate recommendation, this implies that the response rate is significant.

Question 1: What is the extent of knowledge on translingualism as stipulated in the National policy on education among Primary school teachers in Bichi Local Government Area?

Table 1: Responses based on extent of knowledge on Translingualism

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
1	There is a document called National policy on education that acknowledges translingualism in primary schools.	3.25	1.23	Moderate
2	Hausa language only is the medium of instruction when teaching primary 1-3	2.80	1.34	Moderate
3	English language is to be gradually introduced in combination with Hausa as medium of instruction when teaching primary 1-3	3.94	.93	High
4	English language only is the medium of instruction when teaching primary 4-6	3.46	1.11	High
5	English language is to be gradually introduced in combination with Hausa as medium of instruction when teaching primary 4-6	3.27	1.37	Moderate
Cluster mean		3.34		Moderate

Table 1, presents response based on extent of knowledge on translingualism. From the table, all the items, have mean scores above cut off point of 2.60. Furthermore, the cluster mean is 3.34. This result implies that there is moderate knowledge on translingualism among primary school teachers in Bichi Local Government Area of Kano.

Question 2: What is the level of translingualism application as stipulated in the National policy on education among primary school teachers in Bichi Local Government Area?

Table 2: Responses based on application of Translingualism

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
1	I make use of Hausa language only, when teaching all subjects in primary 1-3.	2.75	1.16	Moderate application
2	I make use of Hausa/Arabic language only, when teaching Hausa/Arabic language in primary 1-3.	3.24	1.22	Moderate application
3	I make use of English language only, when teaching all subjects in primary 1-3.	2.38	1.16	Slight application
4	I make use of English language only, when teaching all subjects in primary 4-6.	3.15	1.14	Moderate application
5	I make use of Hausa and English language simultaneously when teaching all subjects in primary 1-6	3.40	.91	Moderate Application
6	I make use of English language only, when teaching English language in primary 4-6.	3.58	1.06	High application
Cluster mean 3.08- Moderate application				

As presented on Table 2, responses based on the application of Translingualism show that all items except item 3, have mean scores above cut off point of 2.51. Furthermore, the cluster mean of all the items is 3.08. Therefore, the result implies that there is moderate application of translingualism instruction as stipulated in the NPE among primary school teachers in Bichi Local Government area.

Summary of findings

Based on the aforementioned data presentation, the following are the summary of findings;

- There is moderate knowledge on translingualism among primary school teachers in Bichi Local Government Area of Kano.
- Also, there is moderate application of translingualism instruction as stipulated in the NPE among primary school teachers in Bichi Local Government area.

Discussion of the Findings

The first findings of the study show that there is moderate knowledge on translingualism as stipulated in the NPE among primary school teachers in Bichi Local Government Area of Kano state. The finding of the study aligns with the study conducted by Eucharia (2020) who argues that most people are aware of translingualism section in Nigeria's National Policy on Education. Also, Cummins (1979) explains in the threshold model, the importance of translingualism. The model states that translingualism produces cognitive and academic benefit effects. This implies that translingualism is a crucial

factor for cognitive development of a child (lower and higher levels). Threshold explains that attaining a lower level would lead to negative cognitive effects whereas, attaining higher level might be necessary to lead to accelerated cognitive growth. Although, finding of the present study is however in contrast with that of Emenanjo, (1998) that argues that there is the lack of awareness on the part of highly placed ministry officials: Supervisors/Inspectors of Education, Principals/Headmasters of schools and practicing teachers on the language policy as stated in the NPE.

The second finding of the study shows that there is moderate application of translingualism instruction as stipulated in the NPE among primary school teachers in Bichi Local Government area. Thresholds model's claims that the reason for this, is because it has cognitive and academic benefit.

In addendum to the application of Mother Tongue before the gradual introduction of second Language, Okeke (2015) discovered that MT was a greater facilitator (though not at appreciable level of development) than second Language which rather causes interference and state of confusion in the learners. Likewise, Francis and Eucharia (2019) results show that parents, teachers and students have strong beliefs that using the MT to teach will facilitate the learning of English and other subjects and enhance participation in lessons.

On the contrary, Blessing (2019) maintains that majority of the teachers have not been putting into practice the multilingual provisions of the national policy on education due to several hiccups. Eucharia (2020) adds that the translingualism section in Nigerian education system provision has remained an object of criticism, rejection and is therefore not implemented in schools. Ogunbiyi (2008) emphasized further that despite the language policy, some schools most especially the private schools, downgrade Nigerian languages to the background and promote the teaching of English language at lower primary level. To this end, one could claim that the application of translingualism has been inadequate (Okoroma, 2001; Ndukwe, 2015).

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the above findings, the following conclusion is reached. The knowledge of language policy (i.e. translingualism) as stipulated in the NPE is moderate among primary school teachers in Bichi Local Government Area of Kano. Similarly, to some extent primary school teachers in Bichi Local Government adhere to translingualism instruction as stipulated in the NPE.

In view of the findings and conclusion, this study recommends that;

1. There should be regular sensitization on language policy as stipulated in NPE by the relevant bodies such as Local Education Authority, State Universal Basic Education Board and National Education Resource Development Centre etc.
2. There should be more collaboration among the three tiers of government at implementing language policy in primary education.

3. Language teachers should often be motivated (i.e financial etc) by governments and agencies concerned with primary education.
4. Sufficient instructional material on Mother Tongue or language of immediate communities should be readily available for language teachers and learners.

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