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## **Yorùbá in south-west Nigerian primary schools in the context of the National Policy on Education**

### **Abstract**

Studies on primary schools and language policy implementation showed that only a few schools in Nigeria adhered to the stipulated language policy. Therefore, the study examines the extent to which Yorùbá (the mother tongue) vis-a-vis English and Pidgin was used as a medium of instruction at lower primary schools, and, also, the extent to which Yorùbá vis-a-vis foreign languages (Arabic, English, and French) was taught as a subject at upper primary schools. This study involved 705 teachers from south-western primary schools. A questionnaire with a reliability index of 0.74, classroom observation, and a focus group discussion schedule was used for data collection. The mean and standard deviation scores were used to establish the scope of language use. The findings revealed that Yorùbá was used as a medium of teaching to a very little extent (2.29), English to some extent (4.36), whereas Pidgin was not significantly used (1.43). The research has shown that the status of "little extent" is also attributed to Yorùbá-English code-switching. The study concluded that Yorùbá as a medium of instruction is not exclusively implemented at lower primaries but actively taught as a subject at upper primary schools.

**Keywords:** mother tongue education, medium of instruction, south-west Nigerian primary schools, Yorùbá language

## 1. Introduction

Language is vital and central to the teaching-learning process because it is the medium through which all the subjects in the curriculum are taught in schools, from pre-primary to tertiary institutions. Government policies are formulated and implemented through a language. It is a way of self-expression and sociocultural distinctiveness (Manan 2018). Language is an indispensable developmental domain throughout the years of a child's education, so, the language policy of a nation concerning the levels of learners' education is paramount.

Language policy is a document postulated by a government through legislation to regulate how a particular language or specific language is to be used for national priority. Also, the planned policy of linguistic communication specified the use of a specific language(s) in education and was implemented according to the strategies stated in the policy (Gobana 2014). The objective of the language policy in education is to establish relevant instructional practices and perspectives for developing confident and competent learners.

The national language policy is unsuccessful without a comprehensive language policy in education and workable implementation plans. The instructors and learners use spoken and written language to transmit information from one side to the other. The teacher employs a language to present tasks, engage the students in learning programs, present academic content, and assess learning. The relationship between language and education can be divided into (1) learning a language as a subject to know the origin and the culture of that language and (2) learning through language as a medium of instruction.

The significance of the mother tongue in children's cognitive development led to the mother tongue policy in many African countries. However, studies on primary schools and the implementation of language policy have shown that only 5% of the schools in African countries (Nigeria inclusive) were adhering to the stipulated language policy (Murundu 2010). This means there is a sharp deviation from the actual classroom practice and the policy statement.

In this study, Yorùbá language, the learners' mother tongue (MT) in south-western Nigeria, is the point of reference among the major Nigerian languages declared as the means of instruction in lower primary schools and a subjects at both levels in Nigeria. Bámgbóṣé (2014) declared that Nigeria is one of the multilingual states that has been exposed to a colonial language and to learning through a foreign language. However, in 1977, the National Policy on Education simplified the language

policy in education<sup>1</sup>. So, the centrality and role of language on children's growth and cognitive development have made the Nigerian government provide policy guidelines on the language used in the learning processes in the educational system.

The Federal Government of Nigeria pronounces that the medium of teaching at lower primary 1-3 should be the learners' mother tongue and that the same language should be taught as a subject both in private and public primary schools (FRN 2013). It indicates that all subjects except the English language would be taught through the Yorùbá language in the south-western Nigerian primary schools.

In compliance with this policy, from primary 4-6, the English language shall gradually be used as a medium of education, while Yorùbá would be taught as a subject. Then, Arabic and French as foreign languages were included in the curriculum as subjects. Although Nigeria has a great number of native languages, Hausa, Igbo, and Yorùbá languages are recognised as National languages and means of teaching in the lower primary schools. These languages are having stable orthographies, standard written forms, and a great population of native and second-language speakers (Bámgbóṣé 2014).

Many observations indicate that the implementation of Yorùbá policy in private and government schools is not entirely practiced in south-western Nigeria. Teachers in private schools teach nursery classes and lower primary school students in English; similarly, government institutions compete with private schools, depriving students of their right to learn in their language (Ọjětúndé 2012, Githinji 2014). Studies have shown that only a few schools in Nigeria adhered to the stipulated language policy. Therefore, the study is aimed to investigate the position of the Yorùbá language as a medium of instruction at the lower and a subject at the upper private and public primary schools in south-western Nigeria.

## 1.1. Research objectives and questions

The specific purposes of the study were to find out:

1. The status of Yorùbá language vis-a-vis English and Pidgin<sup>2</sup> in lower primary schools in the context of the National Policy on Education in south-western

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<sup>1</sup> The policy was restated in the 2013 National Policy on Education (FRN 2013, pp. 6-8).

<sup>2</sup> Wherever the name Pidgin is used, it refers to (Nigerian) Pidgin English which draws its lexicon from different local languages as well as the English language. The Pidgin language is popularly spoken by students in tertiary institutions, markets, churches, and home settings in Nigeria, Ghana, Equatorial Guinea, and Cameroon. Yet, its status is not yet defined in the National Policy on Education, and it is not statistically employed as a means of teaching in Nigeria.

Nigeria; Yoruba-English code-switching was also distinguished as a separate mode of language use.

2. The status of Yorùbá language vis-a-vis English, Arabic, and French in upper primary schools in the context of the National Policy on Education in south-western Nigeria.

The following research questions were raised in this study:

1. What is the status of Yorùbá language vis-a-vis English, Pidgin, and code-switching, in lower primary schools in south-western Nigeria?
2. What is the status of Yorùbá language vis-a-vis English, Arabic, and French in upper primary schools in south-western Nigeria?

## **2. The status of mother tongue in education: Literature review**

This section raises theoretical issues of mother tongue education in multilingual societies. In particular, it focuses on studies and experiences related to the Yorùbá language in Nigerian education.

### **2.1. Significance of the mother tongue in the elementary education**

Fáfúnwá (1989: 10) in Akínsànyà and Tella (2019: 7) affirmed that the mother tongue supports pupils' education in the formative years (1-11) and that this should spread to as late a stage as possible. Additionally, it was affirmed that such a practice would allow learners to explore their natural environment, develop inquisitiveness, communicate in the natural language, and develop intellectual ability. Then, this would lead to a significant education that would make learners understand new concepts, useful to themselves, and also the society.

Likewise, Ọlájídé (2008: 186) stressed that language plays an essential role in learning at any level. He affirmed that the regular teaching and learning processes succeed in effective communication which is required of both the teacher and learners. Therefore, he concluded that no matter how effectively the teacher may have selected the learning experiences, it will be difficult for the learner's behaviour to change positively unless the teacher expresses the experience in an appropriate language, which is the learners' MT. Therefore, it has been observed that if a foreign language is used to teach pupils, they will face double challenges: they would struggle with the language of education and struggle with the subject matter in that language.

So, the language policy as specified in the policy on education is that the mother tongue of learners, and not a borrowed language, should be the medium of teaching in the early classes. That is why Lawal (2014) asserted that the primary goal of any meaningful and socially relevant education is to liberate the body, mind, and soul of its recipients so that they can be locally useful and relevant, before being globally competitive. He affirmed that the indigenous languages as media for understanding, digesting, and appropriating knowledge, values, and skills, definitely have significant roles to play in the decolonisation of education, thereby making them relevant to both personal and national needs.

Therefore, it could be concluded that using borrowed language in an early childhood institution is like taking a fish out of the water. It is acknowledged that using languages other than MT is like removing the shell of snails; so MT is one's coverage. Education in the mother tongue eradicates all confusion caused by the use of an unfamiliar language. The mother tongue helps learners give free rein to their views and express them in a creative language, thus paving the way for profitable education. In the same vein, Oládipò (2006) also affirmed that some children, in rural settings, only come into contact with English when they start primary school. Also, Fáfúnwá (2004) was in support of the motion of Lewis (1962) that no greater injustice can be committed against people than to deny them of expressing themselves in their language.

Adénégàn and Adénégàn (2015) examined the use of Yorùbá (indigenous language) in the teaching and learning of mathematics in primary schools. Then, the researchers asserted that the Yorùbá language is a viable means to teach mathematics contents and concepts at primary schools to enhance better performance on the part of the students and productive teaching activities on the part of the teachers. Also, the researchers elucidated that ethnomathematics is the process of presenting mathematical concepts related to the student's cultural and daily experiences with their relevance to the Yorùbá language. The researchers discovered that the Yorùbá contextual teaching approach to geometry and basic arithmetic, and the Yorùbá counting system mixed with other universally structured language counting systems would produce an excellent performance in mathematics. The researchers recommended that curriculum planners should incorporate indigenous languages medium into the mathematics curriculum.

## **2.2. The implementation of the mother tongue policy as a medium of instruction**

Teaching other subjects in the learners' mother tongue is considered to improve mental performance and ability to think critically, resulting in increased learning,

openness, and opportunity, improved educational objectives, lower total costs, and fewer risks of repeat and dropout. It encourages learners to develop a feeling of high self-esteem, motivation, initiative, and creativity, and it makes learning more languages easier. These results are achievable because mastery of the instructional language encourages active participation in the learning process (Ezeokoli & Ugwu 2019).

Having considered the significance of the language in education, the language policy in Nigeria mandates that the learners' language – Yorùbá (in south-west Nigeria) or the language of the immediate community – should be the medium of instruction in lower elementary schools, and English should be taught as a subject. However, despite the numerous benefits of the mother tongue policy in education, it is rarely used in Nigeria, where English, which is a second language, is the chosen medium of instruction at practically all levels of school. Even at the nursery and primary school levels, the mother tongue is no longer allowed as a means of teaching.

Also, Benson (2004), on the other hand, highlighted Nigerians' attitudes toward the use of the mother tongue as a medium, claiming that the mother tongue was restricted as a language of education because people believe that Nigeria needs one language for learning and that the first language lacks modern concepts. Additionally, Benson (2004) claimed that the application of multiple languages in education would cause confusion. Similarly, some people believe that the prevailing language (English) is important for the economy and that parents need it for schooling. He also pointed out that the policy needed qualified human and material resources in indigenous languages. Therefore, it was discovered that languages are competing with the specified language of instruction in African countries (including Nigeria), hence the mother tongue (Yorùbá) policy was not implemented. The following are the empirical studies that showed that the policy was not exclusively implemented, specifically, English, and the code-switching approach was employed by the primary school teachers as means of teaching.

Similarly, Òjètúndé (2012) stated that teaching children in their mother tongue at the lower elementary school level in Nigeria will supplement their language acquisition and benefit them in acquiring the sociocultural norms of their environment. Moreover, language is not only about getting things done; it also bears cultural burdens and histories and directs how people perceive and understand the world. However, Òjètúndé (2012) testified that this policy only appears on paper because the government finds enforcing mother tongue instruction problematic, particularly in private and urban public schools. On the contrary, what happens in the classroom differs from what is mentioned in the policy statement.

English was used as the medium of teaching in some private primary schools, and public school teachers code-switched (English and Yorùbá).

There are also similar experiences from some other African countries. In Kenya's lower primary schools, Githinji (2014) investigated the use of the indigenous language as a medium of instruction. The study's entire population included students, teachers, and parents. It was discovered that a wide range of languages was being utilised in the classroom, with no regard for educational language policy. Parents, teachers, school administrators, and the school district were in charge of the language of teaching. The researcher advised a cross-monitoring of the implementation of the language policy, teacher and education officer training, public awareness, and resource provision to benefit lower primary school students.

In south-western Nigeria, Adéyemí and Ajíbádé (2014) assessed the degree of language policy implementation in elementary and secondary schools. The findings revealed that language policy implementation was limited, and researchers established that only a very few teachers employed the medium of instruction prescribed in the National Policy on Education in south-western Nigerian primary and secondary schools. They noticed that the teachers were not guided by the stated language policy in both primary and secondary schools. As a result, the language policy's goals were not adequately implemented in schools.

Similarly, Ibrahim and Gwandu (2016) claimed that the policy of multilingual education in Nigerian elementary schools was not well implemented. They agreed that English has been portrayed as an expansionist language that poses a threat to the employment of the mother tongue as a teaching medium. Similarly, Ezeokoli and Ugwu (2019) stated that English was the favoured language of the teachers and parents and that the learners' MT was not recognised as a teaching medium. It was concluded that this choice and habit contributed to students' poor performance and rendered them illiterate in both English and their native language.

Furthermore, Fáfúnwá's experimental Ife 6-year primary project (1970-1978) in Nigeria on the use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction yielded positive results. Hence, Fáfúnwá (1989: 11) argued that using the mother tongue as a medium of instruction at a lower or preparatory level of education would be beneficial to pupils since learners at that age would readily understand things through their mother tongue, which is their mental instrument. Therefore, it was suggested that a child's native language can be utilised as a bridge to acquiring a foreign language in the early years of schooling. Because of the significance

placed on English by Nigerian parents, most parents prefer that their children be educated in English rather than their home tongue, even in primary schools. On the other hand, literate parents prefer an English medium school because they believe the products of an English medium education will be better. As a result, the linguistic policy of employing students' first language or the language of their immediate surroundings was abandoned entirely.

Similarly, Adésinà and Jégédé (2020) noticed that a lot of teachers at Nigerian public elementary schools and some private schools code-switched to expose pupils to both English and Yorùbá languages while also developing their competency in both. Teachers used code-switching when teaching science-related courses because they believed those disciplines required a higher level of mental thinking, language proficiency, and a grasp of scientific concepts. That is why Adésinà and Jégédé (2020) saw code-switching (English and Yorùbá) in Nigerian lower basic schools as an innovation and a viable medium of teaching for efficiently cultivating knowledge in bilingual communities.

### **2.3. The implementation of the mother tongue as a subject at the upper primary**

The word mother tongue in teaching and learning activities refers to the use of a pupil's native language as a medium of instruction in school. There is, however, a second part that is sometimes overlooked: it is teaching it as a subject in schools. While teaching through it as a medium of instruction focusing on pedagogy, the second aspect deals with cultural transmission and preservation. Although there are numerous cognitive and academic advantages to teaching through the mother tongue, learning it as a subject permit pupil to be competent in the usage of that language, and at the same time, it enhances the pupils to be acquainted with their root and cultural heritage. Meanwhile, Obanya (2004) matched education with the transmission of a society's cultural heritage from generation to generation, with the indigenous language serving as the medium for such transmission. Students may be cut off from their culture if the school fails to teach the learners' language, and education may become counter-cultural.

Yorùbá vis-a-vis other foreign languages (Arabic, English and French) were stipulated to be taught as subjects in south-western Nigerian primary schools. This study showed that the learners' language and English were strongly taught as subjects. Therefore, on the teaching of Yorùbá as a subject, Ezeokoli and Ugwu (2019) discovered in their study that the parents and teachers are very interested in passing on the societal values of the MT to pupils, so, they permit their pupils to learn Yorùbá. As a result, the majority of them want the mother



tongue to be taught as a school subject. The parents believe that teaching the MT will help students develop a sense of self-identity, foster good attitudes toward Nigerian culture and values, support the growth of indigenous languages, and aid in the transmission and conservation of Nigerian cultural traditions. So, in Nigeria, the learners' mother tongue (Yorùbá) was excitedly taught as a core subject both in the private and public primary schools in the urban and rural areas.

Regardless of the language policy, teaching mother tongue as a subject is common in African countries. According to Kyalo (2018), Kiswahili is the official language of Tanzania, and English is the language of management and education. As a result, in the current language education policy, Kiswahili is used as the major language of instruction in pre-primary and primary school, with English as a required subject. However, English is the primary language of instruction in secondary school, while Kiswahili is a required subject from primary education to university.

Githinji (2014) investigated the use of indigenous languages as a medium of instruction in Kenya primary schools. As stated earlier, a range of different languages was being used in the classroom, with no reference for instructional language policy. However, the finding of the study confirmed that the learners' mother tongue was taught as a subject in elementary classes.

In Lagos State, Nigeria, Abidogun (2012) investigated teachers' experiences with Yorùbá as a teaching medium. The submission was that the primary school instructors faced various constraints while using Yorùbá as a medium of teaching in schools. According to the findings, the Yorùbá language was effectively taught as a subject in the curriculum. However, it was suggested that indigenous language teachers' training and the distribution of instructional materials should be increased, and the Yorùbá teachers should be motivated.

As regards the teaching of foreign languages in Nigeria, English has become the major language of education, it is both the medium of instruction and a subject taught from pre-primary schools and continuing through higher institutions. In addition, it was stated in the national policy that the Arabic and French languages must be taught as subjects in primary schools. However, the teaching of Arabic and French was limited to a few primary private schools in south-western Nigeria due to a lack of qualified teachers for these two languages (Fáníran 2017).

### **3. Theoretical framework of the study and research methods**

This study is anchored within the theories which are primarily concerned with language acquisition and use of the mother tongue in a social setting. Among

them, the Lawal's (2014: 69) model of the mother tongue as a psycho-sociolinguistic concept is the most relevant for this study. It affirms that the acquisition of language that takes place during the first six years of childhood is part of what builds the pupil's mind and regulates the ideas and attitudes he/she gains from the society. The psycholinguistic theories support this approach to declare that the language that was attained by children through interaction with adults and older children in their environment for communication should be the language of education in the pupils' earlier stages to aid the learners' cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains.

A sociolinguistic dimension deals with the relationship between the language and the society in which the learners operate. Sociologically, teaching and learning activities become more realistic when learners are taught through the language of their society. Education fails when it fails to make the learner appreciate the social and cultural life of his community. Nisa's (2019) views support Benett (1980)'s submission that language and the sociocultural life of its speakers have a strong link, indicating that primary school learners should not be separated from their language. Therefore, the learners' mother tongue is a valuable teaching resource that must be utilized effectively, and the learners' rights must not be denied.

The essential tenets of psycho- and sociolinguistics make the grounds for studying the status of the Yorùbá language in the south-western Nigerian system of education. In this present descriptive cross-sectional study, a quantitative and qualitative strategy was employed to gather and analyse data on the condition of the Yorùbá language in primary schools in the context of the National Policy on Education. The target population was Yorùbá language subject teachers in all primary schools, with 201 (28.5%), 143 (20.3%), and 361 (51.2%) of the sampled instructors being from Lagos, Ondó, and Oyó states, respectively. The states, schools, and respondents were chosen using purposive and proportionate sampling approaches.

A researcher-designed questionnaire, classroom observation checklist, and focus group discussion agenda were the three study tools used to obtain information from the participants. This 44-item researcher-designed questionnaire portion checked the teachers' opinions on the state of Yorùbá as a medium of instruction at the lower primary school level in comparison to other alternative languages (English and Pidgin) and code-switching as a separate solution. Respondents chose from a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from "not at all", "very little extent", "little extent", "some extent", and "great extent" to indicate the extent of subjects they taught through Yorùbá or other possible languages in the

lower primary school curriculum. The score value was used for the inference. The values attached to the scale were 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, respectively. In the course of computation, a mean value above 2.5 attracted a high extent of usage while a value below 2.5 attracted a low extent of usage.

There were another 24 items in a quantitative approach on statements relating to the status of the Yorùbá language vis-a-vis other possible languages (English, French and Arabic) taught as subjects in the curriculum. The respondents chose “yes” or “no” to show the class levels where the Yorùbá and other possible languages were taught. Also, the classroom observation checklist and focus group discussion had items that were centered on the position of Yorùbá vis-a-vis other possible languages as media of instruction at the lower and subjects at the upper primary school levels.

The psychometric properties of the questionnaire were ascertained through content validity and test re-test reliability technique. Three lecturers in language education and two seasoned classroom teachers in primary schools validated the questionnaire. Test re-test reliability was adopted, and the questionnaire was administered twice to thirty Yorùbá language subject teachers that were not part of the sample. Then, the two sets of data generated from the test re-test administration were subjected to Pearson’s product moment coefficient (PPMC) statistics where a value of 0.74 reliability index was obtained<sup>3</sup>. Then, the data gathered through the questionnaire were analysed under research questions 1 and 2 using the mean and standard deviation, and percentage respectively. Qualitatively, 12 teachers were observed in the classroom with the observation checklist to ascertain the language of teaching, and a focus group discussion of 9 teachers was organized. Then, the opinions of the respondents were structured in themes to compare them with the quantitative result.

## 4. Data analysis

Research question 1 examined the status of the Yorùbá language vis-a-vis of English and Pidgin (including code-switching) as a medium of instruction in lower primary schools, while research question 2 examined the status of the Yorùbá language as a subject vis-a-vis Arabic, English, and French at the upper primary school level in south-western Nigeria. To answer research question 1,

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<sup>3</sup> 0.74 reliability index shows a positive correlation of the two sets of data generated through the test re-test of the instrument. It indicates the score is closer to PCC 1, and positive to the line of the best fit.

the teachers' responses were coded and graded to obtain the grand mean and arrive at what extent the language was used as a medium of teaching. Critical ranges of five Likert Scale of "not at all", "very little extent", "little extent", "some extent", and "great extent" were used to arrive at a decision. Tables 1-4 show the composite mean value of answers to the research question 1. Also, to answer research question 2, teachers' responses, which were based on "yes" or "no" answers, were coded and sorted using the percentage to arrive at a decision. Table 5 presents data on the status of Yorùbá and other possible languages as subjects in upper primary schools.

**TABLE 1.** Status of Yorùbá as a medium of instruction in lower primary schools in south-western Nigeria

To what extent do primary school teachers teach	Mean	Standard deviation	Inference
Mathematics through Yorùbá	2.61	0.45	little extent
Basic science through Yorùbá	2.73	0.33	little extent
Basic technology through Yorùbá	2.58	0.67	little extent
Information technology through Yorùbá	2.84	0.16	little extent
Physical and health education through Yorùbá	1.95	0.33	very little extent
Christian religious studies through Yorùbá	2.98	0.88	little extent
Islamic religious studies through Yorùbá	1.66	0.82	very little extent
Social studies through Yorùbá	1.87	0.52	very little extent
Civic education through Yorùbá	1.92	0.39	very little extent
Security education through Yorùbá	1.80	0.13	very little extent
Cultural and creative arts through Yorùbá	1.95	0.68	very little extent
<b>Composite mean</b>	<b>2.29</b>	<b>0.29</b>	very little extent

Table 1 reveals that respondents conceded that Yorùbá was used as a medium of instruction to a little extent to teach mathematics, basic science, basic technology, information technology, and Christian religious studies with their mean scores and standard deviation of 2.61 (0.45), 2.73 (0.33), 2.58 (0.67), 2.84 (0.16) and 2.98 (0.88), respectively. Also, the respondents used Yorùbá as a medium of instruction to a very little extent to teach physical and health education, Islamic

religious studies, social studies, civic education, security education, and cultural and creative arts with their mean and standard deviation of 1.95 (0.33), 1.66 (0.82), 1.87 (0.52), 1.92 (0.39), 1.80 (0.13) and 1.95 (0.68). This analysis implies that very few teachers admitted that the Yorùbá language was used as a medium of instruction to a very little extent in teaching with a composite mean score and standard deviation of 2.29 (0.29).

Table 2 presents data on responses concerning the function of English as a medium of instruction.

**TABLE 2.** Status of English as a medium of instruction in lower primary schools in south-western Nigeria

To what extent do primary school teachers teach	Mean	Standard deviation	Inference
Mathematics through English	4.37	0.86	some extent
Basic science through English	4.40	0.86	some extent
Basic technology through English	4.35	0.90	some extent
Information Technology through English	4.29	0.95	some extent
Physical and health education through English	4.24	0.93	some extent
Christian religious studies through English	4.18	0.94	some extent
Islamic religious studies through English	3.91	1.12	some extent
Social studies through English	4.29	0.88	some extent
Civic education through English	4.29	0.86	some extent
Security education through English	4.13	1.09	some extent
Cultural and creative arts through English	4.15	0.95	some extent
<b>Composite mean</b>	<b>4.36</b>	<b>0.87</b>	some extent

Table 2. shows that the participants affirmed that English was used to some extent to teach mathematics, basic science, basic technology, information technology, physical and health education, Christian religious, Islamic religious studies, social studies, civic education, security education, and cultural and creative arts respectively. It shows their mean scores and standard deviation of 4.37 (0.86), 4.40 (0.86), 4.35 (0.90), 4.29 (0.95), 4.24 (0.93), 4.18 (0.94), 3.91 (1.12), 4.29 (0.88),

4.29 (0.86), 4.13 (1.09) and 4.15 (0.95) respectively. It indicates that a majority of teachers used English to some extent to teach other subjects in south-western Nigerian lower primary, with a composite mean score and standard deviation of 4.36 (0.87).

Concerning code-switching as a medium of teaching, an analysis of the data gathered is presented in Table 3.

**TABLE 3.** Code-switching as a medium of instruction in south-western Nigerian lower primary schools

To what extent do primary school teachers teach	Mean	Standard deviation	Inference
Mathematics through code-switching	3.49	1.36	little extent
Basic science through code-switching	3.33	1.32	little extent
Basic technology through code-switching	3.28	1.33	little extent
Information technology through code-switching	3.13	1.37	little extent
Physical and health education through code-switching	3.29	1.33	little extent
Christian religious studies through code-switching	3.31	1.34	little extent
Islamic religious studies through code-switching	3.11	1.39	little extent
Social studies through code-switching	3.31	1.31	little extent
Civic education through code-switching	3.25	1.36	little extent
Security education through code-switching	3.14	1.37	little extent
Cultural and creative arts through code-switching	3.29	1.32	little extent
<b>Composite mean</b>	<b>3.27</b>	<b>1.34</b>	little extent

Table 3 shows that teachers code-switched in teaching mathematics, basic science, basic technology, information technology, physical and health education, Christian religious Islamic religious studies, social studies, civic education, security education, and cultural and creative arts and their mean scores and standard deviation were 3.49 (1.36), 3.33 (1.32), 3.28 (1.33), 3.13 (1.37), 3.29 (1.33), 3.31 (1.34), 3.1163 (1.39), 3.31 (1.31), 3.25 (1.36), 3.14 (1.37) and 3.29 (1.32), respectively. Therefore, it implies that some teachers code-switched to a little extent when teaching in primary 1-3, with a composite mean score and standard deviation of 3.27 (1.34).

Likewise, in south-western Nigeria, a fractional percentage of people use Pidgin as a medium of communication. Concerning Pidgin as a medium of education at the lower primary school level, the analysis of the data gathered is presented in Table 4.

**TABLE 4.** Pidgin as a medium of instruction in south-western Nigerian lower primary schools

To what extent do primary school teachers teach	Mean	Standard deviation	Inference
Mathematics through Pidgin	1.43	0.99	not at all
Basic science through Pidgin	1.44	0.95	not at all
Basic technology through Pidgin	1.43	0.95	not at all
Information technology through Pidgin	1.44	0.96	not at all
Physical and health education through Pidgin	1.45	1.00	not at all
Christian religious studies through Pidgin	1.45	0.96	not at all
Islamic religious studies through Pidgin	1.40	0.89	not at all
Social studies through Pidgin	1.43	0.93	not at all
Civic education through Pidgin	1.43	0.94	not at all
Security education through Pidgin	1.41	0.89	not at all
Cultural and creative arts through Pidgin	1.41	0.88	not at all
<b>Composite mean</b>	<b>1.43</b>	<b>0.85</b>	not at all

Table 4 indicates that the teachers sampled did not prominently use Pidgin as a medium of instruction to teach mathematics, basic science, basic technology, information technology, physical and health education, Christian religious studies, Islamic religious studies, social studies, civic education, security education, and cultural and creative arts. A mean value below 2.5 in all subjects indicates that it attracts a low extent of usage. Particular mean scores and standard deviation are 1.43 (0.99), 1.44 (0.95), 1.43 (0.95), 1.44 (0.96), 1.45 (1.00), 1.45 (0.96), 1.40 (0.89), 1.43(0.93), 1.43 (0.94), 1.41 (0.89) and 1.41 (0.88), respectively. It was deduced that the number of teachers that reported using Pidgin to supplement the medium of instruction in the south-western states was insignificant due to a composite mean score and standard deviation of 1.43 (0.85). This value of the composite mean and standard deviation when compared to that of English usage

shows English has a more extent of usage since the mean score is 4.36 while that of the Pidgin is 1.43. The standard deviation for English is on the positive side while that of Pidgin is on the negative side. However, the absolute value used in calculating the standard deviation will not allow the usage of this negative answer, as all value remains positive.

Based on the summary of the results obtained in Tables 1-4, it can be construed that English was used to teach the lower classes to some extent (4.36). Code-switching was used to a little extent (3.27). Yorùbá was used as a medium of teaching to a very little extent (2.29). At the same time, the Pidgin was not significantly used (1.43) to teach at lower primary schools in south-western Nigeria.

**TABLE 5.** Status of Yorùbá Language vis-a-vis Arabic, English, and French in Upper Primary Schools in south-western Nigeria

Language	Yorùbá		Arabic		English		French	
Class	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Primary 4	59 (8%)	646 (92%)	685 (97%)	20 (3%)	25 (3%)	680 (97%)	460 (65%)	245 (35%)
Primary 5	47 (7%)	658 (93%)	679 (96%)	26 (4%)	16 (2%)	689 (98%)	428 (61%)	277 (39%)
Primary 6	52 (7%)	653 (93%)	683 (97%)	22 (3%)	23 (3%)	682 (97%)	417 (59%)	288 (41%)
Composite	53 (7%)	652 (93%)	682 (97%)	23 (3%)	21 (3%)	684 (97%)	435 (62%)	270 (38%)

Table 5 reveals that out of 705 Yorùbá language subject teachers sampled, 652 (93%) agreed that Yorùbá was taught as a subject while the rest 53 (7%) disagreed with the statement.

In the same vein, 23 (3%) teachers confirmed that Arabic was taught at the upper primary school level while the rest 682 (97%) disagreed. In another development, 684 (97%) teachers affirmed that English was taught as a subject while the rest 21 (3%) disagreed with the view. Similarly, only 270 (38%) teachers affirmed that French was taught while the rest 435 (62%) disagreed. Therefore, it was deduced that most schools, both the public and private upper primary schools in the urban and rural areas, taught Yorùbá and English languages. In contrast,



French and Arabic languages were taught in a few private primary schools in the urban area.

Also, the result of focus group discussion and classroom observation tallied with the outcome of the quantitative data. It was affirmed that Yorùbá language was taught but not used as a medium of teaching in south-western states. The result also revealed that the lesson was delivered right from the introduction to the conclusion of the lesson using the code-switching approach, indicating that the teaching was not done through the language policy specified in the National Policy on Education in the south-western States in Nigeria.

## 5. Discussion of findings

On the status of Yorùbá vis-a-vis English, code-switching, and Pidgin as a medium of instruction in south-western Nigerian lower primary schools, the finding showed that the language used for teaching in the lower primary school level in south-western states varied. Therefore, English was used as a medium of instruction to some extent while the Yorùbá-English code-switching approach was employed to little extent. Also, Yorùbá was used as a medium of instruction to a very little extent, while Pidgin was not significantly used for teaching at lower primary schools in south-western Nigeria. Generally, the result indicated that the teachers in the sampled schools demonstrated the highest use of English followed by code-switching, and then the Yorùbá language, which was used as a medium of instruction to a very little extent. This result corroborates that of Ezeokoli and Ugwu (2019) that English was the teachers' preferred language, and the learners' MT was not recognised as a medium of teaching. Even Adésinà and Jégèdè (2020) considered the practice of code-switching (English and Yorùbá) in Nigerian lower basic schools as an innovative and suitable medium of instruction to in the bilingual environment.

Based on the status of Yorùbá language vis-a-vis Arabic, English, and French as a subject in south-western Nigerian upper primary schools, the finding indicated that in most upper public and private primary schools in the urban and rural areas, Yorùbá was taught as a subject, just like English, Arabic, and French. This indicates that Yorùbá was a core subject in primary schools. This is in line with the submissions of Adéyemí and Ajíbádé (2014) that it was being actively taught as a subject in south-western Nigerian primary and secondary schools. Meanwhile, English was given higher preference than the other two foreign languages (Arabic and French) which were merely considered as subjects in south-western Nigerian primary schools. It implies that Arabic and French were taught as

subjects only in very few upper primary private schools in the urban areas (Àjàpé & Yusuf 2014). The finding of this study tallies with Mishina and Iskandar's (2019) submissions that English had become the leading language of education in Nigeria.

## 6. Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn based on the findings of the study. It was shown that Yorùbá was used as a medium of education at the lower primary school to a very little extent (it was not exclusively used as a medium of instruction). English was used to some extent while a bilingual medium (Yorùbá and English) was adopted to a little extent, indicating that the use of Yorùbá as a medium of instruction at the lower primary schools in the south-western states was minimal. However, it was taught as a subject at upper primary schools from state to state in south-western Nigeria. Meanwhile, on the teaching of foreign languages (i.e. Arabic, English, and French), it could be concluded that English was actively taught but Arabic and French were taught as subjects rarely (following Fáníran (2017), it is only taught in a few upper primary private schools in the urban areas in south-western Nigeria).

## 7. Implications of findings and recommendations

This study exposed that the Nigerian language policy of using the learners' language was not effectively implemented in primary school education. It implies that there was a language variant, English, used by the south-western primary schools' teachers, and, at times bilingual method (English and Yorùbá) in teaching the primary school pupils. This situation is not compatible with recommendations and guidelines of the National Policy of Education.

Secondly, teaching Yorùbá as a subject in primary school is quite extensive, but the number of teachers and resources of teaching materials are still insufficient.

A conclusion can be drawn that the south-western Nigerian educational system is dominated by the English language. With reference to the earlier statements on the significance of mother tongue education, we may state that the language that is not actively taught would go into extinction, then, the transmission and preservation of the culture from generation to generation would be affected significantly.

Based on the study results, the following recommendations are offered:

In Nigeria, the Yoruba language policy is a top-bottom approach that stretches from the top makers (government) of the policy to the deliverers (teachers), for the implementation of the mother tongue policy to be successful. Both parties, i.e. implementers (linguists, school administrators, teachers, and parents) and government (policymakers) should interact to carry out the task on the policy formulation and the implementation.

The qualified, competent, and experienced language teachers in the primary schools should be prepared by the administrators of colleges of education, and faculties of education at the universities. This is the effective strategic plan for the mother tongue policy implementation.

The curriculum developers should have insight into the importance of the mother tongue in the preservation of pupils' culture and their comprehension of other subject concepts, then, they should produce relevant and sufficient curriculum materials based on the Nigerian indigenous languages.

Finally, the Ministry of Education at the federal, state, and local levels should enforce the implementation of the mother tongue policy so that both the private and public primary school teachers in south-western states would comply with the language policy. More importantly, there should be a series of seminars for primary school stakeholders to create awareness of the significance of the mother tongue in education.

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