



Class Room Communication: Challenges of Primary School Teachers in Adoption of Translingualism

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Abstract

A significant percentage of Nigerian students start and sometimes complete primary school using a foreign language, while others start using the language of their immediate communities or continue their primary education exclusively in English. It is important to analyze those dimensions that contradict the National Policy on Education (NPE) language policy provision, as these could cause potential damage to teaching and learning. Therefore, the study examined the existence and types of challenges to adopting translingualism in Nigeria by primary school teachers of Bichi Local Government Area in Kano. The study adopted a survey research design and multi-stage sampling (simple random and accidental) in distributing questionnaires to a sample size of 292 participants. Data collected were analyzed using a simple percentage score. Findings revealed, among others, that; there existed twelve challenges to translingualism which are both internal and external in nature. Of these twelve challenges, learners' attitude to language use, inadequate motivation of language teachers, and inadequate teaching staff are the major forms of challenges to adoption of translingualism. Given the findings, this study recommended 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 in enforcing NPE language policy provisions in primary education.

Keywords: Language Policy, National Policy on Education, Primary School Teachers, Translingualism

Introduction

Prior to independence in 1960, Nigerian educationists frowned at the educational goals set out by the British colonial system (Ibukun and Aboluwodi, 2010). One among such colonial goals was the strong emphasis on English language Proficiency at the detriment of knowledge acquisition. Musa (2010) explains that language policy on education in Nigeria dates back to 1927 during the colonial era. During this era, the British Advisory Committee on Native Education in Tropical Africa recommended that indigenous languages serve as instruction mediums in the lower primary school (Musa, 2010). But, over time, Blench (2002) as cited in Blessing (2019), observes that the recommendation of the British Advisory Committee on native education on the use of indigenous languages became a concern in highly multi-ethnic and multilingual Nigeria with over 500 indigenous languages. In fact, Daiby mentioned in Araromi (2018) affirmed that 25 percent of the languages spoken on the African continent are found in Nigeria. Therefore, in an effort to reconcile the conflict posed by the choice of language of instruction, English language was recommended as the medium of instruction.

Consequently, five years after Nigeria's independence, Fafunwa (2004:224) observes that



the country's educational system was not only colonial but more British than the British themselves. Hence, several efforts were made to address Fafunwa's observation. Some of such efforts led to the National Curriculum Conference of 1969 and a seminar of experts (i.e. voluntary agencies and external bodies) of 1973 (Adiele, 2006; Omale and Ibieta, 2013; National Policy on Education, 2014). Thereafter, the conference and seminar gave birth to National Policy on Education in 1977 (Wasagu, 2016).

The Nigeria National Policy on Education explicitly provides a set of procedures for the acquisition of further knowledge, skills, and competencies at each level of education under varieties of lingual (Adeyemi, Oribabor, and Adeyemi, 2012). The language policy provision as contained in the National Policy on Education (2014:8, section 14 subsection C) states as follows;

...Ensure the medium of instruction at pre-primary school shall be principally the mother-tongue or the language of the immediate community and, to this end, will develop the orthography of many more Nigerian languages and produce textbooks in Nigerian languages.

In the same vein, section 4 subsections 19 E and F of the document affirms that;

The medium of instruction in the primary school shall be the language of the 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 the immediate environment, and French shall be taught as subject (NPE, 2014:12).

This inclusion of varieties of Lingual (i.e. mother Tongue/ Language of Immediate community in addition to English) in teaching and learning, reiterates that the policy document considers the country a diverse, multilingual state (Britannica, 2021; Vanguard, 2021).

However, the foregoing postulation on language policy seems to vary with UNESCO's observation of African countries, Nigeria inclusive. UNESCO cited in Global Campaign for Education (2015) affirms that only in Africa do most children start school using a foreign language. The report further claims that a significant percentage of pupils enter primary school not speaking and understanding the medium of instruction (the 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). This trend is even despite Igboanusi (2008) finding that respondents preferred English and mother tongue education.

What could have been the reason for the contravention? In furtherance to this, the study seeks to evaluate language policy challenges (Translingualism). Specifically, the study seeks to;

- Determine whether there are challenges to translingualism among Primary school teachers of Bichi Local Government Area.
- Identify the challenges to the adoption of translingualism among primary school teachers of Bichi Local Government Area.

In line with the objectives the study seeks to achieve, the following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

- Are there challenges to translingualism adoption among Primary school teachers of Bichi Local Government Area?
- What are the challenges to the adoption of translingualism among primary school teachers of Bichi Local Government Area?



Concept of Translingualism

The author of the book 'the translingual imagination', Steven G. Kellman was said to be among the earliest scholars to use the term Translingualism. Translingualism comes from two Latin words '*trans*' meaning across and '*Lingual*', meaning having to do with language. Over time, translingualism has been interpreted widely by scholars.

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

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

In line with Fafunwa and Orekan's definitions, Translingualism is when the mother tongue or immediate community language is the initial language of permanent literacy for some years of primary education until the introduction of English as a medium of instruction in the classroom. Translingualism could occur in different folds. It could be in the form of Bilingual, Multilingual and plurilingual. In explaining, these forms of translingualism, Canagarajah (2013) contends that talks have to be in a single language. Hence, Canagarajah (2013) submits that translingualism allows the ability to use languages across diverse norms and codes usefully.

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

Challenges of Translingualism: A Review

Studies done elsewhere in tandem with language policy have identified numerous challenges against translingualism. These challenges may appear in many folds. The first challenge Okoroma (2006) identified is inadequacy of appropriate texts. Inadequate appropriate language textbooks relevant to children has been a problem facing teaching and learning mother tongue in Nigeria (Ndukwue, 2015; Okoroma, 2001). The second challenge is inadequate language teaching staff. According to Emenanjo (1998), there is a scarcity of trained language teachers all through the system. In the same vein, Ndukwue (2015) observes that trained language teachers are often rare to come-by. Similarly, often the teachers' identities are not considered, whether they are from the language speaking group and, whether the teacher is trained in the act of teaching and learning with the language of immediate community. The third challenge of translingualism is inadequate funding. Okoroma (2001) explains that effective implementation of the language policy has been hindered by inadequate funding. The government has refused to allocate enough money for the purchase of



recommended textbooks and instructional materials. Consequently, schools are faced with the problem of inadequate funding for day-to-day running of schools.

The fourth challenge is the problem of trio-lingual/inferiority of minority lingual. The heterogeneous or multi-lingual representation in the classroom by learners especially in urban centres has been a hiccup (Blessing, 2019). Also, Johnkenedy, Festus & Basil (2021) revealed that the multilingual nature of Nigeria, and lack of names for instructional materials and science equipment in the indigenous languages are impediments to the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction in Nigerian primary level of education. Similarly, Ndukwue (2015) asserts that the trio-lingual policy adopted by the government has indeed raised the status of the three major languages; Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, to national languages instead of having one national language, we eventually have three. The fifth challenge of translanguaging, according to Mohammed and Zarruk (1992) is inadequate instructional materials. They observe that instructional materials are scarce because of the cost of purchase which in some cases is outrageous. However, creativity on the part of language teachers should have curbed the problem of inadequacy of instructional material, but considering the pupils' population explosion, Adegbija (2003) argues that it will be unrealistic to think of modern audio-visual aids like the satellite, computer, internet, multi-media, and language laboratory because of the high cost of technological equipment. The sixth challenge of translanguaging is inadequate motivation of language teachers. According to Ndukwue (2015), another challenge to translanguaging is inadequate motivation of language teachers. Several educationists corroborate that language teachers have not been motivated enough by the government through- allowance to elicit their total commitment to language teaching, which is very demanding and more tasking than teaching other subjects, especially with communicative approaches (Ndukwue, 2015; Nwankwo, 2019; Obiakor and Malu, 2020; Omofonmwan and Odia, 2007).

The seventh challenge is inadequate state commitment. According to Eucharia (2020), government commitment has been inadequate in championing the course of language planning and policy implementation. Emenanjo (1998) shares Eucharia's observation that there is limited committed state involvement and responsibility in implementing language policy. Ndukwue, (2015) adds the absence of the state's commitment has worsened the situation as the policy lacks effective implementation mechanism. The eighth challenge is inadequate curricula. According to Mohammed and Zarruk (1992), the curricula do not reflect the difference between first and second language teaching. For example, Nigeria is a country with more than 250 languages, yet the curricula have been silent on the remaining languages. Consequently, the use of only English language as medium of instruction at all levels of education is detrimental to the promotion of indigenous languages and contravenes the provisions of the National Policy on Education (Araromi, 2018). The last challenge is interpretation problem. It was Shaibu (2013) that observes that indigenous language section of the National Policy on Education (NPE) has become a subject of controversy among educationists and linguists. As result of this controversy, by 1991, a team of Nigerian linguists recommended that it should be taken to represent the 'language of the wider communication (LWC)' and not a 'language of immediate community(LIC)'.

Methodology

The paper adopted a 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 (826 male and 268 female primary school teachers) in 62 primary schools in Bichi Local Government Area, Kano State (Federal Republic of



Nigeria, 2020). Bichi was selected because it happens to be a Hausa-Muslim dominated part of the North West region of Nigeria, with non-indigenes cutting across many ethnic groups in Nigeria with significant population. Multi-stage sampling techniques (simple random and accidental sample) was employed. A total of 20 (One third of 62) primary schools were randomly selected. Thereafter, a sample size of 292 respondents were determined using Taro Yamane formula. Thus, a total number of 292 QAKACTATB (Questionnaire for An Assessment of Knowledge, Application and Challenges of Translingualism Among Primary School Teachers in Bichi Local Government Area) were distributed across the selected schools. Data collected was analyzed using a percentage score with the support of SPSS version 25.

Results and Discussion

A total number of 292 questionnaires were distributed to respondents. Of this number, only 277 questionnaires were returned. This aligns with the recent development in behavioral research that not all distributed questionnaires will be returned (Ozohu-suliaman, 2013). Based on this chance of occurrence, scholars recommend a response rate of 60-70% as 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 a response rate of 94.8%. Considering the response rate recommendation, this implies that the response rate is significant.

Are there challenges to translingualism adoption among Primary school teachers of Bichi Local Government Area?

This question is about finding out the existence of challenges to adopting translingualism by teachers in Bichi Local Government Area primary schools.

Table 1 Distribution of respondents' response on existence of challenges

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Existence of Challenges	Yes	201	74.7%
	No	68	25.3%
Total		269	100%

As shown in table 1, the Yes category has 201 responses representing 74.7%, while, the No category has 68 responses representing 25.3%. These responses, therefore, imply that most of the participants affirmed that there are challenges to translingualism in Nigeria system of education.

This could perhaps be why, Blessing (2019) observes that most teachers have not been putting into practice the multilingual provisions of the national policy on education due to several hiccups.



Table 2 Distribution of types of challenges

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Types of Challenges	Internal	44	21.3%
	External	21	10.1%
	Internal and external	142	68.6%
	Total	206	100
	Missing cases	63	-
	Total	269	100%

Table 2 shows the distribution of types of challenges. According to the table, internal challenges have response rate of 44 representing 21.3%, external challenges have 21 responses representing 10.1%, while challenges that are both internal and external have response rate of 142 representing 68.6%

This result implies that most of the respondents confirm that the challenges to translanguaging are dual nexus of internal and external categories. This aligns with the study of Shaibu (2013) and Ogunbiyi (2008) that made mention of low morale, parent and proprietor problems as internal challenges, while Adelabu (2013) and (Eucharika, 2020) listed: inadequate funding, inadequate text and instructional materials among others as external challenges.

What are the challenges to the adoption of translanguaging in the Nigerian system of education among primary school teachers of Bichi Local Government Area?

This question is about finding out the challenges of translanguaging in the Nigeria system of education among primary school teachers in Bichi Local Government Area.

Table 3. Distribution of forms of challenges

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Forms of Challenges	Inadequacy of appropriate text	89	7%
	Inadequate teaching staff	135	10.7%
	inadequate funding	119	9.4%
	Problem of trio-lingual / inferiority of minority language pupils	95	7.5%
	inadequacy of Instructional Materials	127	10.0%
	Inadequate motivation of Language Teachers	144	11.4%
	Inadequate State government (s) commitment	107	8.5%
	Inadequate curricula	95	7.5%
	Interpretation problem	86	6.8%
	learners' attitude to language use	162	12.8%
	parental attitude to language use in school	97	7.7%
	Over population of pupils	8	0.6%
	Total	1264	100%



As displayed in table 3, inadequacy of appropriate texts has 89 responses representing 7%, inadequate teaching staff has 135 responses representing 10.7%, inadequate funding has 119 responses representing 9.4%, Problem of trio-lingual / inferiority of minority language pupils has 95 responses representing 7.5%, inadequacy of Instructional Materials has 127 responses representing 10%, Inadequate motivation of Language Teachers has 144 responses representing 11.4%, Inadequate State government(s) commitment has 107 responses representing 8.5%, Inadequate curricula has 95 responses representing 7.5%, Interpretation problem has 86 responses representing 6.8%, learners' attitude to language use has 162 responses representing 12.8%, parental attitude to language use in school has 97 responses representing 7.7% and overpopulation of pupils has 8 responses representing 0.6%.

The result, therefore, shows that 12 different forms of challenges hinder adopting translingualism among primary school teachers in Bichi Local Government Area. Of these challenges, analysis indicates that learners' attitude to language use ranked number one, followed by inadequate motivation of language teachers and lastly inadequate teaching staff. The result from the study slightly supports the findings from Emenanjo (1998) and Ndukwe (2015) studies that argue that trained languages teachers are often rare to come by. In the same vein, Nwankwo (2015) and Obiakor and Malu (2002) studies also made mention of inadequate motivation of language teachers.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of the study contribute to the existing fountain of knowledge by assessing the challenges of translingualism (language policy) in Nigeria among primary school teachers in Bichi Local Government Area, Kano-Nigeria. The study found out the existence of numerous challenges to translingualism among primary school teachers in Bichi, which are both internal and external in nature. Also, the study discovered that learners' attitudes to language use, inadequate motivation of language teachers and inadequate teaching staff are the major forms of challenge to translingualism adoption. To this end, the non-application of translingualism policy could affect teaching and learning of pupils' numeracy and literacy, among others. No wonder, Adebisi, (2013) and Okeke (2015) studies stress that children in rural schools taught in the mother-tongue performed better in reading skills than those from urban schools who were taught in the English Language.

Recommendations

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

1. There should be regular sensitization for stakeholders in education on language policy as stipulated in NPE by the relevant bodies.
2. There should be more collaboration among the three tiers of government at implementing NPE language policy in primary education.
3. Language teachers should often be motivated by the government and agencies concerned with primary education.
4. Sufficient instructional Mother Tongue or the language of immediate communities should be readily available for language teachers and learners.
5. Learners should be encouraged to adhere to the language policy, and defaulters should be punished accordingly.

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