



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



Teachers and parents' perception towards the use of local languages from grade one to grade four in six selected urban and rural schools of Kabwe District, Zambia

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Abstract

Teaching learners in local languages enables learners to learn from known to unknown and learners understand given instructions faster while perception influences education and its values. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate teachers' perception towards the use of local languages from Grades one to four in six selected primary schools of Kabwe district in the Central province of Zambia. Six head teachers, 24 teachers, 18 PTA Executive members, and 36 parents from six primary schools in Kabwe district, plus 3 district education officers were purposively sampled for the study. Data was collected using questionnaires and in-depth interviews to allow the researcher a platform to ask open-response questions and to explore the teachers' perceptions towards the use of local languages. The data was analyzed thematically by carefully identifying and expanding significant themes that emerged from the respondents' perceptions of the use of local languages. The study revealed that teenage pregnancy has a negative or detrimental effect on school attendance, academic performance, emotional behavior, and relationships between pregnant teenagers, their peers, and educators. The Study revealed that more administrators and teachers preferred their pupils to be taught in local languages from Grade 1 up to the University levels while a few were in favor of using English as a medium of instruction and only very few felt that it was more appropriate to use both languages during a child's early stages of learning. Given these findings, the study recommended steps that should be taken to develop local language policies that do not enhance a child's academic success and cognitive development but are also respective of ethno cultural characteristics and supportive of national unity.

Keywords: Instruction; Learners; Local Languages; Perception; Teaching

1. Introduction

Perception is the ability to see, hear, or become aware of something through the senses. In addition, perception is how something is regarded, understood, or interpreted (Smith, 2002). Perception not only creates our experience of the world around us but it also allows us to act within our environment. Moreover, perception is very important in understanding human behavior because every person perceives the world and approaches life problems differently (Matten, 2006). In Zambia, the process of formulating the language policy of the Ministry of Education has been characterized by features of inconsistency and lack of political will. During the pre-colonial period, the missionaries encouraged the use of local languages as media of instruction in Zambia, because they wanted to have an impact in preaching the word of God.

According to (Tembo, 2018), western education was first introduced to King Lewanika's territory of the Lozi people by the white missionaries in 1883. These architects of the education system encouraged the use of a local language to teach pupils from Sub A to Standard four (4) by teaching vernacular as a subject and using it as a medium of instruction. During the colonial period (1924-1963), The British government set up the Phelps-Stocks Commission to examine the educational systems in its colonies. The Phelps-Storks Commission recommended that primary education in the colony

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should be relevant to the practical needs of rural Africans and in particular Northern Rhodesia. In the same vein, it irrevocably recommended the use of vernacular languages in the lower primary years of school. "Young men and women wanted to be taught in English but missionaries responded slowly to this request because they felt that if the youths became competent in English, they would migrate to the industrial centers". (Carmody, 2014). However, "the general practice in the school system of Northern Rhodesia during the pre-colonial period was that in the early years of an African child's schooling should be in vernacular. Thus when a child begins schooling in his or her tribal area where for example, Bemba, Silozi, Kaonde, and Nyanja were used as media of instruction in the respective areas then, the child had to learn through that local language.

During the post-independence period, the new government carried on with the pre-independence education language policy of using local languages as media of instruction during the four years of education in primary schools. "In 1965 it was recommended that English should be used as the medium of instruction in all the schools from Grade one up to the University level. In 1966, the same policy was effected and from that time the regional official languages were taught as separate subjects in Zambian primary schools but not using them as media of instruction" (Kelly, 1995). In 1997 the government of Zambia introduced a policy of compulsory learning of the local language at the primary level. Zambia is widely claimed to have over 72 languages, although many of these might be better regarded as sublanguages. All of Zambia's vernacular languages are members of the Bantu family and are closely related to one another, together with English, which is the national language and the major language of business and education. Seven vernacular languages have official status. Together these represent the major languages of each province: Bemba (Northern Province, Luapula, Muchinga, and the Copperbelt), Nyanja (Eastern Province and Lusaka), Lozi (Western Province), Tonga (Southern Province), and Kaonde, Luvale and Lunda (Northwestern Province). A retrospective look at the use of African languages as languages of instruction in schools will show that much progress has been made over the years.

The advisory board (UNESCO) proposed that four vernacular languages, Tonga, Bemba, Lozi, and Nyanja were to be taught in schools for Africans" (UNESCO, 1953). In 1930, it was noticed that there was no single vernacular in Northern Rhodesia that could be used as a lingua franca for Africans. Most white missionaries continued running their schools while maintaining their curriculum and language policy toward the natives. By 1953, the language policy stated that a local language most familiar to learners (mother tongue) was used as a medium of instruction from Sub A to Standard Two while the most dominant local language was to be used to instruct learners from Standard Three to four. English was later introduced at Standard 5 through to upper levels. At that time, the vernacular was used as a medium of instruction and was accorded more periods per week on average and taught at lower primary schools more than any other subject (Kelly, 2016).

The outcome of this language policy shift was quite predictable because there was a minimum improvement in pupil performance in numeracy and literacy. The majority of citizens from various sections of the Zambian society have expressed their concern about the declining levels of reading and writing. It was clear that though pupils were physically in school, they had no access to learning due to their inadequate reading ability (MoE, 1996). The Ministry of Education in 1995, initiated a major research study under the auspices of Southern Africa Consortium for Monitoring of Educational Quality (SACMEQ). The report for SACMEQ was published in 1997 and its main findings indicated that 'only 25% of grade 6 pupils could read at minimum levels and only 3% could read at desirable levels.' It was clear that pupils could not read materials of their grade levels.

The continuous criticisms against the use of English as a medium of instruction in schools prompted the government to re-examine this policy. "From 1976 to date the government tried to go back to the usage of Zambian languages in each region as the language of instruction in the first four years of learner's education" (MoE, 2017). Recommendations were made to implement this policy. It was not clear as to why the government did not implement the proposed policy. "The English advocates argued that there were people who wanted their children to be taught in English and use it as the medium of instruction" (UNESCO, 1997). Because of these arguments, this study was conducted to investigate and establish teachers' attitudes toward the use of the Zambian language as a medium of instruction from Grade One to Grade Four.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

While some parents are happy with the current policy of using Zambian languages as the media of instruction in lower primary schools, others prefer English to Zambian languages. Teachers may have their attitudes for preferring particular languages between the two languages as the media of instruction. (Nkossa, 2017) advises that "people have to accept the language chosen as a medium of instruction in schools so that a particular language can develop " This includes parents, teachers, and the community at large so that the policy can succeed. "

1.2. The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the attitudes of teachers and parents towards the use of local languages from Grades one to four in primary schools.

1.3. Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

- Assess whether the school administrators and parents support the teaching of local languages in selected primary schools.
- Establish the perception of head teachers, teachers, and parents towards the teaching of local languages in selected primary schools.
- Analyze how teachers' teaching methods in local languages have affected learners' academic performance in selected primary schools.

1.4. Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by Spolky's theory (2007) on language policies which he says are driven by four common sociolinguistic situations, national or ethnic ideology, the existence of English as a world language, and notions of language rights. Language policies cultivate language skills needed to meet national priorities or to establish the rights of individuals or groups to use and maintain languages as well as help build a sound theoretical understanding of the subject area (Ricento, 2006).

1.5. Significance of the study

Language policies in education promote full participation in society and the economy through equitable and meaningful access to education and the most important policy decisions are about the choice of medium of instruction. Therefore, it is hoped that the information generated in this study would contribute to current literature on factors that contribute to the use of local languages as a medium of instruction and would be useful to school administrators, teachers, pupils, the Ministry of General Education and all the stakeholders interested in the purpose of language policies to strengthen strategies and policies of transforming the education sector from using English to local languages as medium of instructions.

2. Literature review

2.1. Importance of Teaching in Local Languages

The ability to preserve our local languages by teaching them in schools is one way of empowering future generations to respect who they are and what they stand for. "Teaching pupils in local languages is very important to the pupils because a local language is one of the most enigmatic possessions and acquiescence of our humanity and it is the principal factor that enables learners to become fully functioning members of the group into which they are born. Furthermore, nations can develop because language provides an important link between the individual and his/her social environment" (Raftopoulos, 2006). Furthermore, when a child is taught in local languages it keeps him or her "connected to culture and this strengthens feelings of pride and self-worth. Languages play a fundamental part in binding communities together as a culture and individuals to each other in society. Language is the expression of our culture and our land. We can't describe our culture and language if we don't have language" (UNESCO, 2002).

"When a child is taught in his/her mother tongue, the link is established between home and school. It helps him/her to feel free and accepted. It also helps parents to assist their children with school work since learning is done in a language they understand. In addition, when a child's mother language is not maintained, important links to family and other community members may be lost. By encouraging local languages in schools, parents can prepare the child to interact with the native language community" (Cummins 2015). UNESCO (2015) explains the use of local languages in schools that, "countries likely to achieve education for all are those where the language of instruction is the learner's mother tongue ". However, the prevalence of globalization and democratic ideas demonstrates that pupils must be proficient in international and regional languages to gain access to wider society and to participate meaningfully in their world.

Teaching learners in local languages helps to explain certain aspects of socio-linguistic change and it also helps in favoring the maintenance and restoration of local languages in learners. On the usage of local languages in schools (MoE, 2017) says, "It is a pedagogical process for explaining, communicating, asking, responding and activating the learning

process” and these are most effective when the language of instruction is familiar to pupils and teachers when learning expands into new learning and because of this understanding, learning is best done when learners move from known to unknown. Teaching in local languages helps in fostering better initial learning and integrates the school more meaning in the lives of local communities and teachers are also helped more especially when they are teaching complicated concepts as local languages will help them to translate to learners. Local languages should be taught because there is a need to preserve Zambia's past which would be lost in case local languages were phased out. Because learners are indigenous people, they have the right to revitalize, use develop, and transmit to future generations their histories, languages oral traditions and to designate and retain their names for communities' places and persons.

2.2. Teaching in a Foreign Language

According to (Ohanesian & Kashoki, 2020) "the policy of using European language such as English as a second language as medium of instruction in Africa is common in multilingual states that are sufficiently dominant to become a national language". For instance, all African countries have attained their independence from European countries but English, French or Portuguese have remained the official languages of the law. Local languages may be used in the lower courts in line with international law, and translation into various ethnic languages is also allowed if the accused does not understand the foreign language, but this happens mostly in the lower courts though all records of the court proceedings are kept in a foreign language and not in a local language. (Bonzie, 2016) explains the use of English a foreign language as a medium of instruction in the early years of a child's education when he says, "it does not cripple and destroy his production powers but it also holds back his mental powers". (Kashina 2016) subscribes to the views that "learners can grasp the content through the medium of their mother tongue" and he adds that "learners cannot understand lessons because of the foreign language being used." Pupils need an interrupted intellectual development. When pupils who are not yet for example, fluent in English switch to using only English; they are functioning at an intellectual level below their age. Interrupting the intellectual level of development in this manner is likely to result in academic failure. However, "when parents and children speak the language they know best with one another, they are both working at their intellectual maturity", (Ibid, 2016).

2.3. Language Policy

It is clear in many African countries and the Zambian situation the arguments in favour of either English or children's indigenous language as a medium of instruction are political, social cultural pedagogical, and practical. These arguments have also been adequately presented by (Ohannesian 2018), (Draisma 2017) and (MoE, 1996 and 2012). Sometimes even where there is a dominant language, there may be political resistance to its general acceptance. In some cases, it is agreed that the indigenous language that is sufficiently dominant has not yet been involved in an entirely satisfactory instrument of uses that meets men's needs in the modern world. That situation applies to Zambia where English has assumed such a dominant role that its use includes all of government administration, politics, law, medicine industry, trade, and newspaper.

Kashoki (2018) explains the reason for adopting the policy of using English as an official language in Zambia as policymakers " wanted national unity, to suppress tribalism, to promote rapid industrialization, and to acquire good jobs or to enter the new civilization". In Zambia, it was felt that for the country to be developed its' citizens needed the knowledge of English. In addition, English as an official language was seen as a source of pride, prestige, and superior social status far above the local languages and was therefore viewed more positively (Mwanakatwe 1968) explains that "the use of local languages as media of instruction was supported for pedagogical reasons." It was said that education in the mother tongue would cultivate in a child's imaginative faculties, facilitate his psychology development and lay a foundation and a sound base for his future intellectual advancement.

It is affordable to implement mother tongue as the first language of learning and teaching for all learners. Pupils learn better when they understand the language spoken in school, which would seem an obvious observation and indeed, it is home out by study after study. Even where an important goal of schooling is for children to learn a second language, this too is facilitated by starting with a language the child already knows. A second language is learned best when a first language is learned well. Learners learn to read in the language that they speak at home, with a second language introduced in the early grades. Whatever arguments have been advanced in favor of English or Zambian languages, one of the key arguments in the above review of the language chosen is it's being accepted by the pupils, parents, teachers, and society at large so that the policy can succeed, "Zambian languages should be taught to learners because it helps learners in mastering it so that there is development in proficiency in communication as communicative competence "develops learners capacity to express themselves and helps them to be sufficiently be socialized by teaching culture and other social values embodied in it" (Block, 2005).

Zambia is a multilingual state, and language policy issue is a complex one. The concerned people should just agree that the decision made should see to it that children have equal access to education, wherever they come from; rural, urban, middle or upper-class. Notwithstanding the arguments of using English which is a foreign language as a medium of instruction, some people strongly feel that it is not to adopt a foreign language. Kapwepwe quoted in Luangala (2015), describes the policy of teaching in the medium of English at the outset of primary education as "tantamount to robbing Zambian children of their cultural heritage and eliminating them from parents". Kelly (2016) says the pedagogical law of language is fully acknowledged and recognized in the 1977 educational reforms document which states that "teaching of Zambian languages in schools and colleges should be made more effective and language study should equal status with other important subjects".

(MoE 2017) as reiterated in the 1996 educational policy *Educating Our Future* which states that "teaching English as a medium of instruction from grade one has impacted negatively of the performance of the children write through and in this language which is quite alien to them". According to MoE (1996) says that "the practice is said to have contributed to children's ability to read competently and is said to have promoted rote learning since from the outset as the child has difficulties in associating with the printed form with their real underlying meaning". The policy acknowledges the research findings that support the use of local languages as media of classroom instruction. Children learn literacy skills more easily and successfully through their mother tongue and subsequently they can transfer these skills quickly and easily to English and another language. Successful first language learning is, in fact believed to be essential for literacy in second language and for learning content subjects through the second language. Also, the child learns more quickly through the medium of his or her mother tongue than an unfamiliar linguistic medium (Brunet, 2010).

2.4. Benefits of Local Language use in Schools

Language is used to encode meanings, transmit culture, express identities, recognize rights confer justice and word history. When pupils learn local language, they use it to communicate ideas, to pose questions to fellow learners; they use it to process their answers, to provide feedback to elaborate. Furthermore, they use it to comprehend, follow instructions, to convey their ideas relate to others, to demonstrate their understanding. When pupils and teachers do not share the same Language this core mechanism for communication is disrupted (Kashoki, 2020). Using local languages in schools provides benefits as (Collier, 2017) explains that "there can be improved learning outcomes." For example, there are usually higher pass rates for children who transitioned gradually from a local language to a foreign language than for children in a foreign language only. This is because the use of local languages that children understand allows teachers to use more effective teaching methods. Supporting mastery of the first language promotes the cognitive development needed to learn a second language. For instance, children with initial literacy in the mother tongue before beginning instructions in a foreign language achieved better results in a foreign language and Maths than children who had only participated in a foreign language schooling.

Judith (2015) explains that "the use of the mother tongue promotes a child's continuing cognitive development. A child who finds himself or herself in a class where he or she cannot speak or participate in discussions will tend to be passive". Language provides the tools for meaning to be shared between and among its speakers. A mother tongue or local language possesses some level of person field attributes since it lives, dies, or moves from one place to the other. Learning in the mother tongue helps learners to transfer sound to English because Zambian languages have a one-to-one correspondence between phonemes and letters. Unlike English which has 26 letters. Using a mother tongue in schools can help promote a child's positive image. Teaching Zambian languages, we assure our learners that our language is important and worth learning in schools. In addition, it signals to the learners that their languages and culture have value and this motivates them in school. Languages provide for the easy transfer of indigenous skills, values, and traits to the coming generation. Language is the carrier of the cultural heritage of societies thus death of a language constitutes the annihilation of the norms and beliefs of people. One thing which should not be ignored is that children differ in the sense that, those who come from urban areas attend nursery classes and pick up some English before they enter grade one. As it has been stated earlier, in Zambian language being used as a medium of instruction in some places may not be the child's mother tongue thereby creating equity problems (children whose mother tongue be extended to as late a stage in education as possible in particular, pupils should begin their schooling through the medium of the mother tongue because they understand it best and because to begin their schooling in their mother tongue will make the break between home and the school as small as possible". The use of local languages also ensures that the knowledge that the children bring to schooling is used as the basis for further learning. The policy of using local languages as media of instruction in schools reduces the repetition and in classrooms that use the first language of their mother tongue as the language of instruction, these children are five times less likely to repeat the year and more than three times less likely to drop out of schools in Guatemala covering about half of traditional schools, while dropout rates are about 25% lower.

Dakin (2015) says that “there are social-cultural benefits in using local languages in schools.” Often the use of local languages for instructions leads to the inclusion of more local content in the curriculum and greater participation of parents and community members as classroom resources. In addition, teachers are better positioned to become involved in the school and to feel that their knowledge and culture are valued because of the approval of local languages that come from their use in schooling. The use of local languages in informal education has a positive impact on adult literacy as well and parents see their children successfully learn to read and write in their languages. Parents are often motivated to attend literacy classes as well. Children who come from urban areas mostly have attended nursery schools and know how to speak English very well, while children who come from rural areas don't know how to speak and understand it very well, so, " when local languages are instituted in rural areas more especially among the more marginalized population, they have been widely shown to help those children to stay in schools longer and reach higher levels of education and increase social mobility ((Kashoki, 2018). Learners have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their language, in the manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning. Local language teaching brings out the indispensable role of mother tongues in ensuring the continuity of a child's psychomotor, affective, and cognitive development. Better employment opportunities in this country and overseas are available for individuals who are fluent in English and another language. Furthermore, local languages have to be taught in schools because they preserve cultural and other values transmitted by them. To this effect we need to promote Zambian languages and the best way is to teach them to help Zambians master their mother tongue. Therefore, the major task was to establish teachers' attitudes towards the policy of using Zambian languages from grade one to grade four.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Research design

The research design used a descriptive survey design with both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection to attain comprehensive results (Kombo et al 2006)). Qualitative methods were appropriate to this investigation as they produced detailed data from a small group of participants while exploring feelings, impressions, and judgments. On the other hand, a quantitative method makes the use of questionnaires, surveys, and experiments to gather data that is revised and tabulated in numbers, which allows the data to be characterized by the use of statistical analysis (Martyn, 2008).

3.2. Research site

The study was carried out in the six selected urban (Central, St. Mary's and Lukanga) and rural (Kafulamase, Kakwelesa, and Gethal) schools of Kabwe district in Central Province, Zambia.

3.3. Population, Sample, and Sampling Procedure

The population for the study was purposefully drawn from the six primary schools- three urban and three rural. A purposive sampling procedure was used to select head teachers (6) and (3) education officers while the simple random sampling procedure was used to select the teachers (24), PTA executive members (18), and parents (36). The sample size comprised 87 respondents. Also, the primary data was complimented by the secondary data which was derived from government policy documents, ministerial reports, and relevant literature on distance to school, learner absenteeism, and poverty. In the sampling of institutions, the study adopted the stratified cluster random sampling technique. Sampling was done based on urban and rural schools and zone by zone. Schools were clustered by rural zones. Two zones were purposively selected based on being rural or urban. The sampling was done at three levels: Sampling zones and schools- level 1, sampling teachers, PTA executive members, and parents- level 2, and sampling head teachers and education officers -level 3.

3.4. Data Analysis

In this research, data was analyzed qualitatively as in-depth interviews, questionnaires, and observation schedules were used as data collection instruments. A thematic approach was used, where data analysis started with the categorization of themes from the structured interviews, questionnaires, and observation schedules. Charts and graphs were used to analyze data. The data gathered was analyzed according to the themes of the study and per the order of the research objectives. Data generated from the interview guide was analyzed manually and also, and a combination of software MS Access, SPSS, and MS Excel was used to analyze data. Analysis was mainly descriptive, that is, mean, median, mode, range, and standard deviation. Related statistics were applied where possible. Statistical testing took the form of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), correlation, and regression both simple and multiple, (Babbie, 2015).

3.5. Ethical Issues

The study avoided pressuring respondents to take part in the research. Alternatively, informed consent and assent were obtained from respondents involved in the research, and the research topic was strategically selected to ensure that there was no harm whatsoever to the research respondents. In this research, the study was fully conscious of the need to abide by the ethical rule of respecting the privacy of individuals taking part in the research (Keling, 2016). In the same way, all the respondents of the research were to remain unidentified to the public as all their valuable views, opinions, and perceptions were only known by the researcher for use only in the research and participants' identities will forever remain hidden. The Researchers got permission from the District Education Board Secretary for Kabwe to interview education officers and head teachers while permission was got from the head teachers to interview teachers, PTA executive members and parents. The names of respondents would remain anonymous for the sake of confidentiality. However, the identity of the respondents was concealed in the thesis. Still, for identification in the thesis, the sixty teachers were allocated numbers 1 to 24, the eighteen PTA Executive members were allocated ordinal numbers 1st to 18th, and the thirty-six parents were allocated numbers 1 to 36. In comparison, the six Head teachers were allocated names of colours of Black, Blue, Yellow, Red, Purple, and Green. Zones and schools used pseudonyms.

4. Results and discussions

4.1. Learning in Familiar Local Languages

Research findings indicated that from the responses to the questions by the school administrators and teachers, it is clear to see that there is very limited understanding of the language of instruction policy even among the educators. It is indisputable that the majority, if not all teachers do understand that the term language of instruction refers to the language to be used when teaching. However, most of the pupils found it easy to learn in their mother tongue. Results obtained suggest that using a foreign language as a mode of instruction is of a disadvantage to the pupils in the selected primary schools as the majority of the pupils came from families that did not use English frequently. These findings agree with what (Benzie, 2016) found.

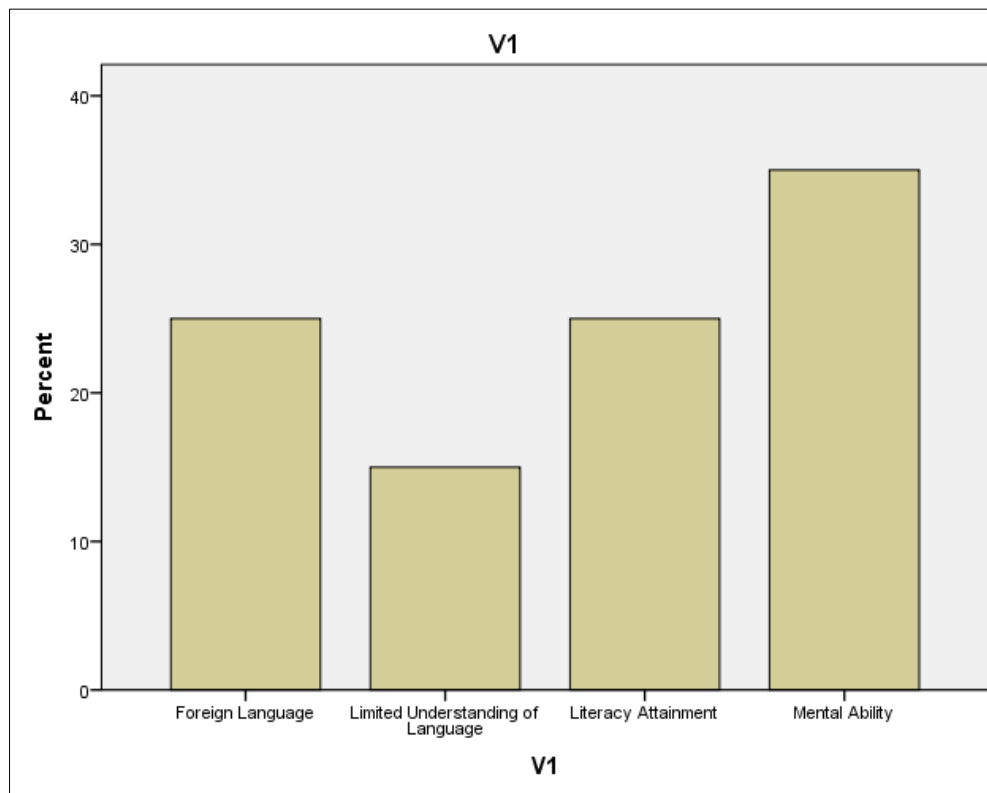


Figure 1 Head teachers and parents' Responses on the Support for Learning Local Languages in Primary Schools

In that study, Benzie agrees that using an unfamiliar language for early education as a medium of instruction destroys the productive powers and holds back the mental abilities of learners. From the interview responses, it was very clear that there were mixed feelings about the policy, both from teachers as well as from parents. In as much as there is

evidence of support for the policy both among teachers and parents, there were almost matching opposing views. Those who are pro-policy, emphasize the point of its enhancing early literacy attainment. They emphasize that learning in the local language helps children to grasp literacy and learn how to read and write faster and that it even becomes easier for learners in later grades to learn other things as they would have the foundations. The opposing views to the policy were a concern that the policy was creating a problem at a different level where children have to move from one region to another with a different familiar local language of instruction within the first four years of education and that most learners and parents also did not use a foreign language at home or in their locality. Figure 1 below illustrates these findings.

4.1.1. Teachers' Attitudes Towards the Use of Local Languages

From the findings of the research study concerning teachers' attitudes towards the use of local languages, 25% of respondents recorded shows that they were happy about local language in schools. 61.7% of the respondents showed that they were proud because it is their first language and that they express themselves well, their learners participated fully in local language lessons being their mother tongue and learners understood it very well. They did not know why people have negative attitudes towards the teaching and learning of indigenous languages. (Benzies 2016) explains that "the use of the English language as a medium of instruction in the early years of a child's education does not cripple and destroy his production power but it also holds back his mental powers. Ellis & Tomlinson (2018) subscribes to the view that learners can grasp the content through the medium of their mother tongue and he adds that learners cannot understand lessons because of foreign language being used. A teacher at Kafulamase Primary School said that "the use of local languages promotes the local languages developments and cultural heritage. Furthermore, when a child is taught in local languages it keeps him /her to be connected to culture and his strong feelings of pride and self-worth. Languages play a fundamental part in other societies. Language is the expression of our culture and our land. We can't describe our culture and our language if we don't have a language ". In addition, other respondents gave reasons like "because I use my first language to teach, this makes me feel proud and that it brings effective participation to learners and develops local languages." Some respondents said that learners follow the steps of the lesson. Other reasons that were given were that they just liked their first language to be used, they feel comfortable when teaching, learners feel free when learning in their mother tongue, and can express themselves freely.

4.2. Perceptions on the Use of Local Languages in Primary Schools in Kabwe District

The study found that 52.4% of the respondents had a negative view on the teaching of local languages in Primary schools; 21.4% had a positive view on local language teaching; 16.7% of the respondents stated that there were barrier challenges in the teaching of local languages while 9.5% of the respondents said local language being taught was not familiar to most pupils and teachers as illustrated in Table 1 below:

Table 1 Perception of Head Teachers, Parents, and Teachers Towards the Teaching of Local Languages.

Responses	Males	Females	Total	%
Barrier challenges	4	3	7	16.7
Positive view	5	4	9	21.4
Negative view	12	10	22	52.4
Not familiar with the language	2	2	4	9.5
TOTAL	23	19	42	100

From the study findings, it was noted that parents have a negative view of the use of Icinyanja as a medium of instruction in Kabwe district. Urban parents see Icibemba as a drawback in the education of their children. Parents in urban centers have a negative view of the use of Icibemba as a medium of instruction and as not beneficial to their children also due to prestige, they look down upon Icibemba and prefer their children to learn English instead. With parents in rural parts of Kabwe, the problem is that Icibemba is not the familiar language in the rural parts of Kabwe district and that is why it has received negative views from parents who are mostly speakers of other languages other than Icibemba. It should also be noted that each tribal group would like to maintain its culture and this is usually done through language (Draisma, 2019). In addition, the socio-cultural theory requires the involvement of parents and other more knowledgeable people to be involved in the learning process for positive results. Moreover, parents and other caregivers are tools that help children internalize what they learn.

Most of the teachers teaching early grades in the schools in Kabwe district may not be speakers of the familiar local language of instruction and therefore find some words difficult to know their meanings in local language as they are not familiar with the local language. Also, they find problems as an explanation of some terms in local language are difficult because some terminologies may be difficult to explain to pupils such as those in Mathematics and Science" (Smith, 2002). Some concepts cannot easily be translated into Ibibemba and even explanations of some terms in the local language seem to be difficult for teachers in the early grades. In addition, some concepts cannot be easily translated into the familiar local language and some words are usually wrongly spelled and pronounced due to the language barrier. Teachers who come on transfer from other regions who are not speakers of the familiar local language of instruction face language barrier challenges, planning is also a challenge on the part of teachers as the books they use are written in a foreign language. On the whole, some parents both in rural and urban parts of the district think that a foreign language is better than familiar local languages being taught to their children at an early grade level.

4.3. The Effects of Issuing Teaching/Learning Instructions in Local Languages in Primary Schools of Kabwe district

On the effects of issuing instructions in local languages at the early grades, the study found that the head teachers 10% complemented this as something positive. Second were teachers at 25% who insisted that issuing instructions in the local language has a positive effect on teaching and learning. Parents were at 20% supported the policy, PTA executive members (20%) gave their view as well on this matter and while educational officers were at 25% as illustrated in Table 2 below:

Table 2 Respondents' Views on Effectiveness of Local Language of Instruction

Views on the Effectiveness of Local Language Instruction	Effective (%)	Not Effective (%)
Head teachers	10	15
Teachers	25	20
Parents	20	35
PTA Executive members	20	15
Education officers	25	15

The study found that issuing instructions in the local language had positive effects on teaching and learning and as suggested by the respondents' pupils learn better and faster in their mother tongue than in a foreign language. They as well believed that pupils participate fully in class and contribute to the learning activity effectively. Even the pupils themselves believed that the local language can help them improve their academic performance as they fully understand the materials taught to them by the teachers. Some of the advantages included; good communication between teachers and pupils due to the language, learners learning from known to unknown, and pupils understanding a given instruction faster (Kashoki, 2018). Pupils have a sense of belonging since it is their language that is being used, reading becomes easier because they read in a foreign language easily in their language and they also believe that pupils can easily remember what they learn in class (Canham, 2020). On the other hand, most of the respondents had a view that the teaching materials were not readily available in the local language which was very difficult to teach in the local language

5. Conclusion

Respondents in this study gave a variety of reasons for their attitudes in teaching familiar Zambian languages. The reasons highlighted ranged from being a familiar mode of communication, bridging the gap created by English between home and school, using one language which the learners understand makes it easy for them to learn very well and the use of local languages promotes the local languages developments and cultural heritage. This study reveals that the use of the English language as a medium of instruction in the early years of a child's education does not cripple and destroy his production power but it also holds back his mental powers as pupils can grasp the content through the medium most of the respondents feel happy to teach in local languages, teachers, on the other hand, find problems as an explanation of some terms in local language are difficult because some terminologies may be difficult to explain to pupils such as those in Mathematics and Science. Using a foreign language as a mode of instruction of a disadvantage to the pupils in the selected primary schools as the majority of the pupils came from families that did not use English frequently while parents from urban areas see the local language as a drawback in the education of their children. Parents in urban centers have a negative view of the use of Ibibemba as a medium of instruction and as not beneficial to their children also due to prestige, they look down upon local languages and prefer their children to learn English instead.

Recommendations

The following are actions that should be taken based on the findings of this study:

- There is need for the Ministry of Education to formulate a policy aimed at making local languages a mandatory requirement for certification at levels as well as for proceeding to the next level of education.
- Colleges and Universities offering teacher training should change curricula on local languages' teacher training and the Ministry of Education must provide an effective campaign to educate teachers, parents, and learners that the use of the mother tongue as the language of instruction in the early years of education does not only help learners to acquire literacy, numeracy, and cognitive skills fast but it also enhances their learning of other subjects.
- There is need for the Government through the Ministry of Education to provide effective reforms aimed at raising the status of local languages and rekindling teachers' interest in teaching local languages.
- The Ministry of Education should post teachers to places where local languages are familiar to them for effective teaching.
- School head teachers to sensitize the community during the annual general meetings and Parents Teachers Association meetings on the importance of local languages for community members to in turn encourage their children not to shun away from local languages.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

Statement of informed consent




Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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