

Original Research Article

Challenges in use of mother tongue based education as medium of instruction in primary school for quality enhancement: in case of Wolaita Zone Administration (2012/2013)

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Abstract

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Mother Tongue based multi lingual Education has become increasingly important educational principle to make the child's language, culture and context the foundation of learning. While studies continue to show the advantages of educating children in their mother tongue both for their later acquisition and transference of reading skills to other languages, and for their total gain from educational input, the mother tongue as medium of instruction (MOI) still meets with resistance. The title of this study is therefore, Challenges in Use of Mother Tongue Based Education As Medium of Instruction in Primary School for quality enhancement: In case of Wolaita Zone Administration. Simple random sampling technique were employed to select sample public and private school and Purposive sampling to select academic staff and parents, students and teachers while the school principals were sampled using availability sampling method. The tools were used to gather relevant data from the research participants are questionnaire, in-depth semi-structured interviews, classroom observation, relevant document analysis and focus group discussion (FGD). The study result revealed the following influences at play on language choice of parents: lack of understanding, overcrowded and unorganized Wolaita medium public schools, reluctance of private schools to provide Wolaita medium instruction, absence of a clear policy that obliged the private sector provide mother tongue education, and the hegemonic position of Amharic/English language. In so doing, they disregard the role of mother tongue education in favor of second language medium. The study recommended that parents should be encouraged to choose their own language for their children and others should also appreciate their choices, teachers and school practitioners should pay attention to students' attitude and motivation towards medium of instruction, as they are important predictors of academic performance, zone administration and education bureau should prepare and deliver enough textbooks and other educational materials to the student within appropriate time schedule of the academic year. Also highly trained and pedagogically equipped teachers should participate into the teaching learning process in order to correct the misconceptions held towards vernacular language instruction. In addition, encouraging fiction, short story, poetry and other general reading materials writers in order to have ample reading materials would be necessary. Furthermore, preparation of dictionary and developing vocabularies in all subject areas to satisfy the need of the modern science and technology are worth the effort.

Keywords: Mother tongue, Medium of instruction, quality education Language policy, Attitude, Achievement, Motivation

INTRODUCTION

Mother tongue based education has become an important concept in the field of primary education in

many parts of the world. Various literatures indicate that Mother-Tongue Based Multi lingual education has a

decisive role in maintaining quality education. In a multilingual society, the language issue is of paramount importance because language use and language policy directly affect the daily lives of the language's speakers.

Since the 1953 UNESCO declaration on "The use of vernacular in education", which brought about the education principle that the "best" language of instruction is the mother tongue of the learner, several attempts have been made to implement various language policies in multilingual countries in Africa and elsewhere.

To this end, in Ethiopia, mother tongue education has been in place for the last 15 years or more at least in the majority language group. However, in spite of the effort exerted to maintain quality mother tongue education by all regions involved, there still a critical problem regarding children's ability to read and write in their own language. The EGRA (Early Grade Reading Assessment) research conducted recently in Ethiopia in eight language areas has shown that children at grade 1-4 are unable to read and write despite the opportunity they have in learning in their mother tongue. Moreover, the children of many of the majority language groups have not yet had the opportunity to learn in their mother tongue so far.

The use of mother tongue as medium of instruction during one's early years of schooling, results in improved acquisition of knowledge by pupils (Benson, et al, 2010). It has also been established that the use of the mother tongue as language of instruction is effective in helping with the acquisition of second language (Heugh, et al, 2006).

Language performs different functions including a means of communication, expression and conceptualization. It can also be used as a means of domination and discrimination; an instrument to give or block access to economic and political processes (Seyoum, 1997). Above all the role of language in education has been found to be very significant.

At the same time, the notion of national unity through a single official language is defended by policy makers, who point out the practical and financial drawbacks involved in teaching the vernacular in multilingual nations (Baker, 1996 and 1988).

Experiences in Africa and many parts of the world have shown that cognitive development is achieved faster by using the mother tongue as language of instruction in primary education (Kethelen et al, 2006). This implies that, if the medium of instruction at the early stages is the language that the learner understands very well, he/she can understand instructions and fully participate in the educational processes. Findings of that report stated: " ...the best medium for teaching a child is his mother tongue" (Criper and Widdowson, 1975 cited in Seyoum, 2009).

It is also pointed out (Robinson, 1996, cited in Seyoum, 2009) that use of the first language is a factor in educational achievement and that the educational process in any society ought to be conducted through a

language that both learner and teacher command well. Research results also have shown that mother tongue education should cover the teaching of the mother tongue as a subject and using it as a medium of instruction.

Unfavorable attitude towards their mother tongue or preference to some language over the mother tongue could develop due to unawareness and prejudices (Assebe, 1981: 42; Holmes, 1992:346). In other instances dislike toward language arises due to political bias, social stratification, economic incongruity, and other socio-psychological factors. As Assebe (1981) pointed out by referring to leach, preference of one language over the other is not because of instinct but for other reason.

As Leach argued

If we find political system which embraces several language groups, and these language groups are ranked in a class hierarchy, superior and inferior, there is a prima facie probability that the language situation is unstable, and that the higher ranking groups are tending to assimilate the lower ranking groups . . . it follows from very simple economic causes. It is advantageous for the individual to identify himself with those who possess political and economic influence (as quoted by Assebe, 1981:43).

Many social psychologists argue that an attitude is an internal state that affects the overt behavior (Fasold, 1984: 147). More specifically, "language attitude can have a great influence in areas such as education" (Holmes, 1992: 146). Furthermore, Fasold pointed out that "there is some evidence that language attitudes may influence how teachers deal with pupils; . . . and other evidence suggests that attitudes about language affect second language learning" (Fasold, 1984: 348).

Hidalgo (1998) and Young (2009), identified three factors that exert tremendous influence on the people's language choices in multilingual society, namely, government, regional ethnocentrism and ethnic disidentity and trends in media language choices. Although language policies are expected to alleviate problems related to choice of languages, mostly language policies do not consider the needs and interests of the language users. At this point Alexander (2005), stated that, language policies are really governmental strategies designed to promote the interests of specific classes and other social groups and do not necessarily take cognizance of the needs of the country in totality, nor global needs.

Therefore, clear and comprehensive language policies should be formulated to alleviate problems related to choices of language of instruction in multilingual society. Language policy, particularly in regard to the MOI in primary education is a key factor which can either facilitate and optimize access to the content of the

curriculum or block learning, preventing both access and equity (Heugh, et al, 2006).

Attitude towards a certain language can serve as a means to an end and as an end by itself as well. That is, attitude can serve as a promoter of a certain behavior. For example, if a person has a positive attitude towards that language, he would have interest to learn that language. On the other hand, if a person is exposed to a T.V program of that language and/or given school lesson, as a result the individual develops positive attitude and also enculturation takes place (Baker, 1988: 112-113).

Nunan and Lamb (1996) put the effect of attitude on learning as follows:

The attitude of learners toward the target language, the learning situation, and the roles that they are expected to play within that learning situation will have an important effect on the learning process. It will therefore have implications for the management of learning. If the learner has a negative attitude towards the language, the culture, the classroom or the teacher, learning can be impaired or even rendered ineffective (Nunan and Lamb, 1996:216).

However, in the case of mother tongue, attitude necessarily comes at first because mother tongue as the name implies, develops from the very beginning of early child hood. And as "...an important component of culture, it is also a salient feature of the individual's social, cultural or ethnic identity" (Hamers and Blanc, 2000:202).

Ethiopia is characterized by cultural pluralism where there are over 80 ethno linguistic groups. Ethiopia has been and remains to this day a multiethnic, multicultural and multilingual society (Teshome, 2003). It is linguistically diverse and hence the current government responds to this reality through the formulation of language use policy.

The government strongly argues that people should learn in their own mother tongue because language is the basis for identity, pedagogically it is more advantageous and it gives people psychological satisfaction and helps them develop positive self esteem. Currently, already 25 of the 84 languages spoken in Ethiopia are told to be used as media of instruction in the primary education (Seidel and Moritz, 2009). Each regional state has the constitutional right to choose, use and to develop the individual languages spoken there and to promote the cultures of its citizens. More importantly, they decide what language to use as a MOI in primary education.

In implementing the language policy different models of language use in education are employed in different regions of the country. In Wolaita Zone, there are three languages used as MOI in primary schools: Wolaita, Amharic and English. In most towns in the region there are English -medium schools established to meet the needs of non-Wolaita speaking nationalities. In these

schools, Wolaita is introduced as a 1-8th grade. Similarly, in Wolaita medium schools, English is taught as a subject as of grade 1-8th grade though the policy does not specify the grade for the introduction of this language as a second language. The study of English as a subject begins at grade 1, precisely as language use policy.

However, Ethiopia was an empire, and hence the imperial imposition of dominant power (Amhara) on the other ethnic groups occurred. That resulted in dominance of Amharic language. Amharic dominance meant that other languages were not to be accorded national status and they were often referred to as 'minority' languages (Seyoum, 2009). As a result, as stated by Seidel and Moritz (2009), Amharic as a medium of instruction is preferred in urban areas due to the multiethnic characters of many towns and the hegemonic position of Amharic language in the country.

On the other hand, although the current government of Ethiopia has made a paradigm shift in language use and choice, the language policy seems to be primarily formed and guided by political ideology rather than pedagogical merits (Teshome, 2003). This has been manifested in the less concern given to develop the local languages through the provision of better resources, including learning materials.

From the above discussions it could be summarized that the current trilingual language policy in primary education of Ethiopia corresponds to the multiethnic character of the country. This is not only a pedagogical approach but also an innovative cultural and economic policy with an international orientation. However, the implementation of the language use policy has been hampered by attitudinal problems, lack of resources and absence of detailed guideline on some aspects of the policy.

In Ethiopia, the current national language policy, which has been in place since 1994, along with other human rights and ethnic-related policies was incorporated in to the new constitution that took effect in 1996. Probably, the strongest manifestation of the current government's language policy is seen in the education system of the country. The ETP (1994) states as follows:

"Cognizant of the pedagogical advantage of the child in learning in mother tongue and the rights of nationalities to promote the use of their languages, primary education will be given in nationality languages."

Following the formulation of the language use policy, primary education has been given in mother tongue all over the country. However, the decision of the choice of language has been left to the regional states. Meanwhile, Wolaita Sodo University currently established the new Wolaita language department which offers Mother Tongue Instruction in order to have the professional educators in the field to teach the children in primary school (1-4) as a medium of instruction.

Conversely, studies conducted in examining the effectiveness of the Ethiopian language policy are very limited, especially with particular reference to pattern of academic staff and parents' preferences. This research therefore explores the challenges in use of mother tongue as medium of instruction in primary school at Wolaita Zone and the reasons why academic staff and parents choose to send their children to Amharic-English / Wolaita medium schools.

Problem statement

Today language policy is playing an important role in developing national unity. Whereas Ethiopia's linguistic path is more complex, so that language will only constitute part of that national unity. As one can see that an Ethiopian citizen can hardly speak about 3 to 4 languages but on the broader context we have to understand that national values and a shared vision transcend languages. Hence the curriculum should be utilized as an important vehicle for transmitting shared national values and vision, so that the multiplicity of languages in Ethiopia does not lead to a fracturing of national unity.

MTI facilitates the integration of the schools, remote rural schools, the surroundings often the illiterate communities which contribute to teaching the indigenous knowledge, production and cultural skills. Moreover it improves the Childs communication and interactions in the class room which leads to a more successful learning opportunity and when pupils acquire the basic skills (reading, writing and literacy) it will facilitate the acquisition of the second language and other school subjects (UNESCO, 2005 and 2003). Institutions will create or improve the orthography of the language, develop terminologies, design teaching materials, translate reference materials, to promote the language etc.

The findings of contemporary research support extended educational use of the mother tongue, and the addition of other languages through bi-or trilingual policies. This means that Ethiopian language education policy falls broadly within the parameters of "best policy" in terms of multilingual developing countries (Seyoum, 2009). However, implementation is not always aligned with actual policy (Heugh, et al 2006). Problems still abound the language policy: lack of education materials, lack of political commitment and, despite the overall success the main obstacle is overcoming material and professional shortages (Seyoum, 2009).

similarly, the use and promotion of mother tongue education faces a number of obstacles. One of these is attitudinal, reflected in self-denial. Some people may ashamed of their own language. According to Seyoum (2009), politically it is noted that governments reproduce their own classes through the medium of instruction.

Economically, the need to develop multilingualism requires resources in terms of teacher training, developing grammars and orthographies, producing and translating textbooks and supplementary materials. The cost issue is one of the arguments used against development of mother tongue education. Hence, the promotion of mother tongue education is challenged by historical, political and economic factors.

As clearly stated by Teshome (2003), the policy provides only a broad outline of the educational language policy goals. The policy does not provide for budgetary, human and physical resources. The language policy seems to be primarily formed and guided by political ideology rather than pedagogical merits. The development and nurturing of the languages require time and resource to enhance the learning interests of children.

On the other hand, as a primary school teacher with over eight years experience in Wolaita zone regional state, we observed some academic staff and parents in rural and urban areas whose home language was Wolaita preferred to send their children to Amharic-medium primary schools and parents sending their children to Wolaita medium schools where learners' first language was Amharic. In so doing, some academic staff and parents choose to disregard mother tongue education in favor of their second language as a medium of instruction. This practice is actually contrary to what the language use policy of Ethiopia dictates.

Therefore, this research offers some insight in to the choice of Amharic/Wolaita as Medium of instruction where the learner's home language is Wolaita/Amharic respectively and where government policy in fact requires home language as medium of instruction. The general objective of the study aimed at examining the challenges in use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction in quality enhancement.

Hence, in the light of the above perspectives this study will be designed to address the following research questions:

1. To what extent students with high attitude towards mother tongue instruction significantly differ from students with low attitude in academic achievement?
2. Is there a difference in students' attitude towards mother tongue instruction due to place of residence?
3. What attitudinal orientation is of grades 7 and 8 students towards Wolaita language as medium of instruction?
4. What are the major causes for unfavorable attitude towards mother tongue as a medium of instruction?
5. What is the nature of student-teacher interaction in the classrooms when Wolaita or Amharic is being used as a medium of instruction
6. What are the major challenges that hinder the implementation of mother tongue based education at primary school level in Wolaita Zonal Administration?

Table 1. The Descriptive statistics of the variables considered in the study (N=400)

Variables	Statistics			
	Mean	SD	Range of scores	
			Minimum	Maximum
Sex	--	--	--	--
POR	--	--	--	--
Attitude	112.00	18.80	75.00	158.00
Motivation	46.60	4.90	21.00	48.00
Achievement	0.393	0.998	-2.76	3.23

Note: POR = The respondents' place of residence, Att. = Students' attitude towards mother tongue instruction Mot. = Students' motivation towards mother tongue instruction Ach. = Students' achievement scores on Wolaita language in terms of z-score.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The study was a descriptive survey research design where questionnaires, interviews, focused-group discussion and document analysis were used to collect both qualitative and quantitative data from students, teachers, parents, principals found in the sample site. Simple random sampling technique were employed to select sample public and private school and purposive sampling to select parents, students and teachers while the school principals were sampled using availability sampling method. Questionnaire was used to know the attitude, motivation and achievement of students to ward mother tongue. The objective of the interviews is to examine respondents' attitudes toward the language policy and practice of language preference. Classroom observation was carried out to examine the nature of the interaction between students and teachers in a class. A sample of 400 students, 30 parents, 16 school teachers and 8 principals of the sample schools were invited to take part in the study. In total the research was involved 454 participants. All the participants were interviewed by the researchers for about 1 to 2 hours. All interviews were record in detailed hand written notes, all of which were later compile in to field notes. Classroom observations were record through note taking and check list. Moreover, attempt was made to analyze statistical data obtained from Education Office of Wolaita Zone Administration.

Procedures of data collection

Firstly, review of literature was made to assess theories and research reports pertaining to the issue under study so as to develop research questions and interview guides. Then, selection of study participants were made using information obtained from education office of Wolaita Zone Administration. Then, instruments of data collection were prepared, pre-tested and administered. Then, data were gathered from the key informants:

academic staffs, parents, students, teachers and school principals. The subjects were interviewed similar issues with different approach. Finally, the responses obtained via the quantitative and qualitative devices were categorized, organized, analyzed and then interpreted. However, the study results may be affected by the following limitations which were bring about by the instrument and subjects involved. The reluctance of some academic staffs and parents to respond and to provide genuine responses is some to mention.

Data analysis

The quantitative and qualitative data collected from questionnaire, interviews, participant observation and document analysis, FGD were first read from field notes by the researchers and then categorized using cross-case analysis approach to data analysis. The data were analyzed against the six research questions as categories. Then, data were verified, organized and analyzed systematically to view a clear picture of the issue under study by using SPSS Statistical tool.

RESULTS OF THE MAIN STUDY

As to the main purpose of the study, the result focuses on the relationship between academic achievement and students' attitude and motivation towards vernacular language as a medium of instruction. And sex and place of residence were considered as secondary variables in the investigation. To achieve the objective of the study two types of questionnaire were used. The first questionnaire deals with attitude and the other with motivation of students towards mother tongue instruction. The other two variables: sex and place of residence were obtained from the respondents' background information whereas the achievement data were taken from the record offices. Since all the data are numeric and are suitable to feed to the computer, the SPSS was used to

Table 2. Means, Standard Deviations and T-values for Boys and Girls on Attitude, Motivation and Achievement

Variables	Male (n = 205)		Female (n = 186)		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Attitude	118.68	20.45	116.21	17.78	-1.884	0.077
Motivation	41.60	4.87	41.46	4.82	-0.381	0.879
Achievement	.573	10.04	.082	.951	-4.146	0.000

Note: Att. = Attitude Mot. = Motivation Ach. = Achievement

Table 3: Chi square test between students grouped under positive (above the Neutral score) and Negative (below the Neutral score) with regard to attitude towards Wolaita language as media of instruction

	Positive (above the neutral score)	Negative (below the neutral score)	χ^2	Sig.
Observed	265	126	48.435	.000
Expected	195.5	195.5		

Note: The neutral scores (108) added to the negative side since the score was low

Table 4. Means, Standard Deviations and t-values for Boys and Girls on Attitude, Motivation, and Achievement

Variables	Urban (n = 221)		Rural (n = 170)		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Attitude	118.40	20.36	120.76	18.17	4.534	.000
Motivation	49.64	6.88	41.56	4.00	3.863	.000
Achievement	0.066	0.965	.698	0.986	5.454	.000

Note: Att. = Attitude Mot. = Motivation Ach. = Achievement

analyze the data. According to these analyses, the results are presented as follows: (Table 1)

Sex Differences on Attitude, Motivation and Achievement

Table 2 portrays that, the mean scores of male and female students of grades 7 and 8 on attitude and motivation were not significantly different at $t(a/2, 389) = -1.884, p > .077$ and $t((a/2, 389) = -0.381, p > .879$ respectively. Whereas the mean scores of male and female students of grades 7 and 8 on achievement were significantly different at $t(a/2, 389) = -4.146, p < .000$, showing that the boys have high achievement scores than girls. The result shows that both males and females of grades 7 and 8 have the same attitude and motivation towards mother tongue instruction though they differ in academic achievement of Wolaita language.

Attitudinal Orientation of Students towards Wolaita Language as Medium of Instruction

The result indicates that the number of students in the

upper group (those students who had been considered positive attitude) significantly different from the number of students in the lower group (those students who had been considered too had negative attitude) at $\chi^2 = 48.435, p < .000$. This indicates that those students who had positive attitude were more than those who had negative attitude towards Wolaita language as medium of instruction. Furthermore, more significant result would be achieved if we use the method of liquidating neutral scores (Babbie, 1995: 381-384) in to both positive and negative sides instead of adding them to negative side only. (Table 3)

Place of Residence and Differences on Attitude, Motivation and Achievement

As Table 4 indicates the mean scores of urban and rural students of grades 7 and 8 on attitude, motivation and achievement were significantly different at $t(a/2, 389) = 4.534, 3.754, 5.518, p < .000$ respectively. This shows that those students who dwell in the rural part scored higher in attitude, motivation and achievement than those who dwell in urban areas.

Table 5. Means, standard deviation, and T-values of achievement for students with Low /High Attitude and Motivation towards Mother tongue with Respect to Upper and Lower 25 %

Variables	Group	No.	Achievement		t	p
			M	SD		
Attitude	Upper	98*	0.003	0.901	-5.886	.000
	Lower	98*	0.788	0.931		
Motivation	Upper	98*	-0.078	0.861	-4.446	.000
	Lower	98*	0.501	1.045		

Note: The lower and upper 25% of the 400 respondents who scored low and high on attitude and motivation with respect to achievement are equal (98 persons)

Table 6. Means, Standard Deviations and T-values for Wolaita and Other Language Speakers as Mother Tongue on Attitude, Motivation and Achievement

Variables	Wolaita mother tongue (n = 251)		Others (n = 140)		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Attitude	122.04	17.83	105.26	17.01	-8.165	.000
Motivation	41.82	3.86	38.24	5.53	6.397	.000
Achievement	.6156	.9269	-.2889	.8491	-8.429	.000

Achievement Differences of Students with Low/High Attitude and with Low/High Motivation

From Table 5, the mean score of achievement of students who scored high and low on attitude scale differ to a statistically significant extent at $t(a/2, 194) = -5.886$, $p < .000$. This indicates that those students who have high attitude towards mother tongue as a medium of instruction have a high achievement on Wolaita language. Likewise, the mean score of achievement of students who scored low and high on motivation scale differ to a statistically significant level at $t(a/2, 194) = -4.448$, $p < .000$. This shows that those students of grades 7 and 8 who have high motivation towards mother tongue instruction are superior in Wolaita language achievement than those who have low motivation. To strengthen this result, comparison of means were undertaken to test achievement differences of students with low and high attitude and motivation with consideration of the median score (i.e. with respect to the upper and lower 50%). The result was exactly similar with Table 7 above.

Mother Tongue and other Language Differences on Attitude, Motivation and Achievement

As indicated in Table 6, the mean scores of Wolaita mother tongue speakers and other language speakers of grades 7 and 8 students were significantly different with regard to attitude, motivation and achievement in favor of Wolaita language speakers ($t(a/2, 389) = -8.065, -6.497, -8.529$, $p < .000$ respectively). This shows that Wolaita

language speakers had favorable attitude towards Wolaita language as medium of instruction than other language speakers. This in turn perhaps helped them to be more motivated to use and learn Wolaita in classroom situation.

Correlation Analysis of Variables in the Study for the Pooled Subjects

The above table 7 shows attitude was positively and significantly related with Wolaita language achievement ($r = .292$, $p < .01$) revealing that those students who have positive attitude towards Wolaita language as instructional media scored high on that language. Likewise, sex was positively and significantly related with achievement ($r = .203$, $p < 0.01$). To clarify this kind of relationship, correlation coefficient only is not enough because the types of variables are different. That is sex is dichotomous whereas achievement is continuous. So in order to see the relationship between such kinds of variables, difference of means or other kind of statistical analysis should be carried out as we have seen on Table 4 above. As to Table 4, boys scored high on Wolaita language than girls, since the mean score of boys was high. Table 7 also shows that sex has negative and significant relationship with place of residence ($r = -0.188$, $p < 0.01$) and the correlations of sex with attitude and motivation were positive and not statistically significant ($r = 0.092$, $p > 0.01$ and $r = .016$, $p > 0.01$ respectively).

In contrast, place of residence was negatively and significantly related with attitude, motivation and

Table 7. Means, Standard Deviations and Zero-Order Correlation Matrix of the variables in the study for the Pooled Subjects Variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4
Sex	--	--				
POR	--	--	-.198**			
Attitude	116.08	19.28	.092*	-.217**		
Motivation	40.53	4.84	.016*	-.189**	.366**	
Achievement	52.92	9.98	.203**	-.270**	.292**	.244**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). +Correlation is not significant

Table 8. Point-Biserial Coefficient indices and Agreement and Disagreement Response Distribution on Some selected Items that show the major Causes for Negative Attitude towards Mother tongue Instruction

Item No.	Negative factors affecting individuals' attitude in using vernacular language as medium of instruction	Item-test correlation coefficients	Agree	Disagree
1	Lack of textbooks and other educational materials	0.34	56%	45%
2	Lack of general reading materials	0.33	59%	41.85%
3	A shortage of trained teachers	0.28	60%	41%
4	Inadequacy of vocabulary	0.46	53%	48%
5	The writing system of many languages does not agree with the pressing need of the modern world	0.58	51%	48%

achievement ($r = -0.217$, $p < 0.01$, $r = -0.188$, $p < 0.01$ and $r = -0.270$, $p < 0.01$ respectively). The relationship has similar interpretation with Table 4.4 since the interrelationship among the variables is a kind of dichotomous and continuous. And finally, the relationship between achievement and motivation was positive and statistically significant ($r = .234$, $p < .01$). This shows that those students with high motivation score high grades or those students who have low motivation, score low on Wolaita language. Furthermore, the relationship between attitude and motivation was positive and significant ($r = .346$, $p < .01$). This reveals that those students who have high attitude towards mother tongue instruction are also highly motivated to use mother tongue as medium of instruction.

Challenges Affecting the Attitude towards Mother Tongue Instruction

Table 8, "A shortages of trained teachers" ($r = 0.28$ or 60%) and "Lack of general reading materials" ($r = 0.33$ or 59 %) were the most important factors that lead students towards negative attitude. "Lack of textbooks and other educational materials" ($r = 0.34$ or 56%) was a bit lesser cause for negative attitude. The third and fourth crucial factors that affect the students' attitude towards Wolaita language as medium of instruction negatively were "Inadequacy of vocabulary" ($r = 0.46$ or 53%) and "The problem of disagreement of writing system with the modern world" ($r = 0.58$ or 51%) respectively. To clear the cloud, according to Ebel (1991) high positive

correlation coefficients are obtained for items that high-scoring students on the test tend to get highest weight (item weight = above 3) and low-scoring students on the test tend to get low weight (item weight = below 3). The high score in this study indicates positive attitude and low score indicates negative attitude due to the weight assigned to the items. Therefore the low correlation coefficient could indicate more significant contribution for negative attitude.

Result obtained through interview, observation and FGD

The interview responses obtained from parents revealed that, majority of parents enrolled their children in private schools. Out of 15 parents whose home language was wolaita, only 4 preferred to send their children to Wolaita medium schools. However, all the sampled 15 parents whose home language was Amharic/other than wolaita send their children to Amharic/English -medium schools. We then asked the school principals and classroom teachers, "What is the tendency of parents in their choice of language of instruction?" All said, "... towards Amharic/English - medium of instruction".

Therefore, the data suggest that, although the majority of parents prefer to send their children to home language medium schools, some parents prefer to enroll their children in second language medium classes. Hence, the language preference of some parents was not consistent with the requirement of the language use policy of the country.

To get some impression about parents' preference for

MOI, we asked all parents why they send their children to English/Amharic medium schools. Most of them replied that because Wolaita and Amharic is their mother tongue respectively. However, during my interviews with parents who send their children to second language (Amharic) medium schools while the child home language was Wolaita, Five said, "due to absence of well organized trained teachers of Wolaita medium schools or classes". Four said, "public schools are overcrowded"; "Amharic and English has national and international power" respectively and one said, "To better develop second language of my child"

Approximately, three-fourth of the teachers and school principals of both sample schools responded that, most parents prefer to enroll their children in Amharic/English -medium schools and classes because Amharic is widely spoken in the town and Amharic is a mother tongue for the majority of children, including children from non-Amhara ethnic background. Moreover, some of the teachers I interviewed replied the following reasons: lack of balanced view about the languages, parents' wrong perception, influence from social environment, prejudice", and" Influence from previous regimes"

Similarly, almost all student participants suggested the following reasons regarding parents who send their children to second language classes: "family view"; "wrong perception of parents"; "psychological"; "lack of understanding/knowledge"; and "influence from Amharic /English language".

Participant observation was employed to examine the nature of classroom interaction between students and teachers in four sessions, but two class students. In all the four sessions we observed a 40 minute class interaction on Moths and Amharic lessons in Wolaita medium classes and Math's and Wolaita in Amharic/English-medium classes. During Moths lessons we observed students actively participating and asking questions when the MOI was Wolaita and Amharic. However, the interaction was almost none when the lessons shifted to second language instructions, to Amharic/English for Wolaita medium class students and to Wolaita for Amharic / English -medium class students.

Therefore, the observation result showed a great level interaction in the classrooms when the MOI is in the language that students are more familiar with. It also implies that second language does not necessarily result in better learning because of the language barrier.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study attempted to examine Wolaita Zone students' attitude towards their vernacular language as a medium of instruction and its major challenges. The results

indicated that grades 7 and 8 students had favorable attitude towards their native language as instructional medium and attitude was an important predictor of Wolaita language achievement. Therefore, from the aforementioned discussions one arrives at the following conclusion:

Comparison of means between upper and lower 25% and above and below the median score indicated that there was a significant difference between pupils with high and low attitude and motivation scores regarding achievement. That is those students who scored high on attitude and motivation achieved better in Wolaita language and those who had low score in attitude and motivation also achieved low in Wolaita language. There was no sex difference regarding attitude towards Wolaita language as a medium of instruction. Both boys and girls had positive attitude towards their native language being used as a medium of instruction.

There was significant difference between rural and urban dwellers regarding attitude and motivation towards the use of Wolaita language as a medium of instruction. That is rural students had favorable attitude and motivation towards Wolaita language as a medium of instruction and achieved high than urban students. All the variables incorporated in the study contributed significantly to Wolaita language achievement. More precisely, among the variables added to the model, attitude had strong direct effect and was the superior predictor of Wolaita language achievement.

The major causes for the development of negative attitude towards Wolaita language as medium of instruction were 'A shortage of trained teachers', ' Lack of general reading materials', ' Lack of textbooks and other educational materials', ' Inadequacy of vocabulary' and 'problem of writing system'. Their degree of effect follows the order they are presented here. Attitude, motivation, sex and place of residence had significant direct effect on achievement.

The current language policy of Ethiopia dictates the use of the mother tongue as MOI throughout primary education, from grade 1 through 4 in the Wolaita. Accordingly, all the participants of the present study positively view and appear to agree with the policy. Therefore, the pedagogical, political, social and psychological advantages of the policy were identified by the participants. The data obtained from key informants revealed that parents' choice of MOI inclined to Amharic and English language, including parents of Wolaita home language learners. Therefore, the teams would conclude that, although the choice of most parents was in accordance with the language use policy, the choice of some parents was found to be inconsistent.

The study result revealed the following influences at play on language choice of parents: lack of understanding, overcrowded and unorganized Wolaita medium public schools, reluctance of private schools to provide Wolaita medium instruction, absence of a clear

policy that obliged the private sector provide mother tongue education, and the hegemonic position of Amharic/English language. In so doing, they disregard the role of mother tongue education in favor of second language medium. Therefore, this action of parents will maintain the dominance of Amharic/English and it is contradictory to what the government of Ethiopia is trying to promote, multilingualism.

Recommendations

Based on the aforementioned discussions and conclusions the following recommendations are made:

One of the major reasons for some parents to enroll their children in second language medium schools and classes was lack of understanding and misconception of parents as perceived by the study participants. Regarding this, Seyoum (2009) argued that, except for the brief interlude of transitional arrangements in 1991-92, there has been no positive and open discussion on language policy in Ethiopia. Secrecy underpins language policy discourse (ibid). Therefore, without associating the choices of parents with historical and political issues parents should be encouraged to choose their own language for their children and others should also appreciate their choices.

It would be advisable for educators, curriculum designers, counselors, family and the society at large to bear in mind that affective factors like attitude, motivation etc. had significant importance in influencing students' academic achievement as cognitive factors do. Individuals with low attitude and motivation towards their mother tongue seem to be impeded in performing their vernacular language achievement and even the performance of other subjects since it was used as a medium of instruction. Therefore, teachers and school practitioners should pay attention to students' attitude and motivation towards medium of instruction, as they are important predictors of academic performance.

Unfavorable attitude and misperceptions towards the media would prudently be investigated through student self-report checklist or questionnaire and early appropriate interventions could be taken by arranging special program such as persuasion, modeling and by rendering counseling services. The Zone administration and education bureau should prepare and deliver enough textbooks and other educational materials to the student within appropriate time schedule of the academic year. Also highly trained and pedagogically equipped teachers should participate into the teaching learning process in order to correct the misconceptions held towards vernacular language instruction. In addition, encouraging fiction, short story, poetry and other general reading materials writers in order to have ample reading materials would be necessary. Furthermore, preparation of dictionary and developing vocabularies in all subject

areas to satisfy the need of the modern science and technology are worth the effort. Endeavors should be made to educate the grade levels with the objectives to alter the unfavorable attitude held by the students towards native language instruction by preparing some kind of experience sharing conferences, workshops and seminars as extracurricular activities.

Further development of the local languages requires the development of more educational materials and implementing new ways of instructional delivery. Therefore, the education office of Wolaita Zone Administration should equip public schools with adequate and relevant learning materials other than text books so as to maximize the pedagogical advantage of the language policy.

Finally, future researches should deal with additional affective variables, which hinder Wolaita language achievement like anxiety and other cognitive variables (like language aptitude and cognitive abilities). In addition further studies should assess the effect of attitude on achievement on large scale including elementary and junior schools, teachers' and parents' attitude towards vernacular language instruction, etc.

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