

USING HAUSA LANGUAGE IN THE ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY OF HIGHER INSTITUTION IN BAUCHI, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Nowadays, use of native languages such as Hausa in teaching and learning is becoming an order of the day. This study utilized Hausa language to assess students of higher institution in Bauchi using a quasi-experimental approach involving 21 (test) students and 17 (control) participants. The participants were assessed using Montreal Cognitive Assessment in Hausa language. The study participants included; 55.3% males and 43.7% females; 65.8% pre-100 level students and 34.2% 100 level students; 68.4% Hausa, 7.9% Yoruba, and 23.7% Fulani; 92.1% Muslims and 7.9% Christians. This research investigates the impact of language on academic performance, comparing students assessed in Hausa language and English language. The results show that students assessed in Hausa language scored higher (mean score: 26.57 ± 5.670) compared to those assessed in English language (mean score: 24.157 ± 2.577). This finding suggests that using mother tongue in teaching and assessment may improve students' understanding and academic performance. The study's findings are consistent with previous research, and it is recommended that incorporating native languages in educational systems could improve academic achievement and performance. The study suggests that incorporating native languages in educational systems could improve academic achievement and performance.

Keywords:

Language of Instruction, Academic Performance, Mother Tongue, Hausa Language, English Language, Student Assessment.

Introduction

Educators have been identifying problems affecting education in this country in an effort to provide possible solutions and attain sustainable development. Research efforts made by several scholars indicate that language difficulties are major hurdles in learning among the non-native English speaking students, let alone in Nigeria. Language is an emphatic tool for communication in each society, therewith, language is key to unlocking concepts of societies (Ashafa, 2015). Language is a systematic conventional sound reiterated or signs or written in form of symbols utilized by various human societies in order to communicate or pass messages. There are several languages in the world, and in this country (Wushishi et al., 2016).

Most countries have citizens that utilized different languages to communicate (Olsen, 2022). African countries, like other parts of the world have different tribes, cultures, and Languages. But, many of them, including Nigeria utilized general languages such as English or French as official medium of communications and teaching and learning (Ashafa, 2015). In Nigeria, the official language been used to teach and learn is English, which was borrowed from the British. Therefore, the native or indigenous people may found English difficult in their daily interactions, instead use their native mother languages mostly. Children are also raised by the use of the various native languages. Hausa language is an important medium of communication in northern part of Nigeria and elsewhere. The young ones or students going to schools are forced to learn in English language despite the fact that they comprehend native Hausa language much better (Ashafa, 2015; Olsen, 2022).

In turn, this effect may cause a problem in teaching mother tongue is crucial and beneficial and may positively swindle the pendulum of academic activities, academic achievement, and academic performance, among other parameters (Mohammed, 2024). The significance of mother tongue in learning at any level was corroborated in many scientifically proven studies. Parable, Ozoemena et al. (2022) investigated the potential of mother tongue for instructions in primary education (Nigeria), whereby the results, the authors stressed the benefits of language in any human society. Catoh & Bivan (2019) disclosed that, the assessment of use of mother tongue at preprimary level in northwestern Nigeria, is a laudable policy despite the prevailing bottleneck. Agbedo et al. (2012) revealed that, mother tongue in Nigeria is a great tool for national development and human capacity enrichment. Mohammed et al. (2024) suggest that use of Hausa language in teaching core sciences has met a lot of challenges as poor development. Thus, Hausa Language was used in the assessment of Students of higher institution in Bauchi, Nigeria

Materials and Methods

The research design applied in performing this study is a Quasi-experimental type. The population of the study refers to the higher institution students that joined the study voluntarily, and all their ethical rights were protected. 21 students were assessed in Hausa language briefly, and 17 control students were assess using English language. The assessment was done through the use of Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MoCA) test as outlined summarily as follows:

“Individual items on the MoCA were divided into five cognitive-specific domains (attention/executive function, visuospatial, language, memory, and orientation) based on previous research. The attention/executive function items included Trail Making Test B (1 point), digit span (2 points), target

detection (1 point), verbal fluency (1 point), abstraction (2 points), and serial seven subtractions (3 points). The visuospatial items included clock drawing (3 points) and cube copying (1 point). The language items included object naming (3 points) and sentence repetition (2 points). The memory items included recall of five previously presented words (5 points). The orientation items included six orientation-based questions (6 points)” (Gluhm et al., 2015; Sarkingobir et al., 2023).

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the participants

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	21	55.3
Female	17	44.7
Tribe		
Hausa	26	68.4
Fulani	9	23.7
Yoruba	3	7.9
Religion		
Islam	35	92.1
Christianity	3	7.9
Level		
Pre-100	25	65.8
100	13	34.2

Based on the results in Table 1, the demographic characteristics of participants include, 55.3% males, 43.7% females, 65.8% at pre-100 level, 34.2% at 100 level, 68.4% Hausa, 7.9% Yoruba, 23.7% Fulani. Additionally, there was 92.1% Muslims, and 7.9% Christians.

Table 2: Impact of assessment of high institution students using Hausa language

Type of participants (Group)	Number of students (N)	Mean marks	Standard deviation	X ²	Remarks
Test group (Students assessed in Hausa)	21	26.57	5.670	22.11	Significant
Control group (students assed in English)	17	24.157	2.577	13.20	Significant

The effect of colonization has led to the use of foreign languages like English as medium of communication or education in many African states, such as Nigeria, let alone in Bauchi state. This was against the background fact that, language as a medium of communication has strong connection between behavior and educational changes. It is a major prerequisite for attaining academic successes, and skills (Sani, 2024). Thus, it is important to disclose that, educational and other forms of development of many societies are linked to the enrichment of their languages (Ashafa, 2015). Language is a way of communication that enable people to understand each other easily, comprehend feelings, exchange informalities, and pass innovations and knowledge (Cato & Bivan, 2019).

According to the results depicted by Table 2, the mean score of students assessed in Hausa language was 26.57 ± 5.670 , and that of students assessed in English language was 24.157 ± 2.577 . This finding indicates that, the students that received and assessment in Hausa language score more marks ($26.57 + 5.670$) more than the ones assessed in English (24.157 ± 2.577) ($P < 0.05$). This illustrate the importance of using mother tongue, typically Hausa language in teaching students. This was relevant to the other findings related such as that Olsen (2022) that revealed the English language curriculum as a major setback that constrain development and education of ethnic people in Nigeria. Olsen (2022) further stressed that, students ascribed that learning in mother tongue (Hausa language for instance) help in promoting positive attitude to education. Another similar study that utilized quasi experimental approach by teaching children science subject in Hausa, show that they had more academic achievement than the peers, as reported by Ado et al. (2024). Wushishi et al. (2016) In their study found that, use of Hausa language in teaching biology science in secondary school students was more favorable on academic performance in Sokoto, than the use of English language. Likewise, Ashafa (2015) found out after an experimental study that, secondary school students taught in Hausa language score more than their counterparts in Sokoto. Therefore, use of mother tongue such as Hausa language as tool of instructions is no doubt a major move that encourage students understanding of lessons been taught. The government should come up with better ways of incorporating native language (s) as a way of increasing academic achievement and performance or efficiency of our educational systems.

Conclusion

The study concludes that using mother tongue, specifically Hausa language, as a tool of instruction and assessment can significantly improve students' understanding and academic performance. The findings suggest that incorporating native languages in educational systems can be a major move towards enhancing academic achievement and efficiency. Therefore, the government and educational stakeholders should consider promoting the use of mother tongue in teaching and learning processes.

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