

Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education and Learning Outcomes Among Students in The Yoruba Language in Southwestern Nigeria

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Abstract: *This study examined the influence of Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education on students' learning outcomes in the Yoruba language in Southwestern Nigeria. The study adopted a quantitative research approach using a cross-sectional survey design within a Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) framework. The population comprised Senior Secondary School students offering Yoruba language and Yoruba language teachers in public secondary schools in Southwestern Nigeria. A sample of 300 respondents consisting of 270 students and 30 teachers was selected using a multistage sampling technique. Ekiti State was selected using simple random sampling, nine public secondary schools were selected using purposive sampling, while students and teachers were selected using simple random and purposive sampling techniques respectively. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and students' Yoruba language achievement scores obtained from school records. The instrument was validated through face and content validity by experts in Educational Evaluation and Yoruba Language Education. Reliability was established using the test-retest method and Cronbach's Alpha reliability test, which produced a reliability coefficient of 0.82. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) at a 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education had a significant positive effect on students' learning outcomes. Teachers' attitudes, institutional support, and classroom engagement also significantly influenced learning outcomes. Classroom engagement partially mediated the relationship between Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education and learning outcomes. The study recommended stronger implementation of mother-tongue education policies, improved teacher training, and provision of instructional materials to enhance Yoruba language learning outcomes.*

Keywords: Classroom Engagement; Mother-Tongue; Institutional Support; Teacher Attitudes; Yoruba Language

INTRODUCTION

The National Policy on Education provides a clear guideline on the language policy in education in Nigeria, which states that the mother tongue or language of the immediate environment is to be used as the medium of instruction in the early stages of the school particularly at the pre-primary and lower primary levels while English is to be introduced as a subject and eventually become the language of instruction in the higher classes (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014). The purpose of this policy provision is to ensure that learners' understanding is increased, their cognitive development is supported, and effective learning is promoted by enabling children to start their education in a language they understand. Studies on bilingual education have indicated that teaching in the native language helps children learn concepts more effectively as it reduces the cognitive load and enhances participation in the classroom (Cummins, 2000).

The policy promotes the preservation of cultural identity and the development of indigenous language, by promoting indigenous language in education. Mother-tongue instruction has been linked to better academic performance and literacy development as it enables learners to make a connection between the classroom knowledge and their cultural and social experiences (Heugh, 2011). Mother-tongue-based multilingual education has been a long-standing recommendation by international educational organizations like the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) due to its benefits of better learning outcomes, greater confidence in learning, and better engagement in the classroom when education is delivered in one's mother-tongue (UNESCO, 2021). However, in Nigeria, the implementation of mother-tongue education in schools is weak in many schools. English is still the language of instruction in the classroom because of the impression created in society that English is used for socioeconomic development and global communication opportunities (Bamgbose, 2011). This has left a disconnect between policy and practice in the classroom and thus the effectiveness of indigenous language education in many Nigerian schools. In recent policy debates, the need to enhance the quality of mother-tongue education to boost learners' achievement and enhance the quality of education at all levels of basic education has been reiterated.

One of the major indigenous languages that will benefit from this policy is the Yoruba language widely spoken in Southwestern Nigeria. Yoruba is taught as a subject in the schools, but it has not been used as a medium of instruction for other subjects and thus limiting its impact on students' learning outcomes. Hence, there is a need to strengthen mother-tongue based multilingual education by improving the implementation of education policies, training teachers and providing teaching and learning materials to improve overall academic achievement and the education of the Yoruba language in particular. It has been suggested that indigenous languages play a significant role in the effective teaching and learning of languages especially in a multilingual context such as Nigeria. Studies have demonstrated that using the learners' home language as a medium of instruction can help to minimize language barriers and enhance learners' comprehension in the classroom (Obiakor, 2024). Research on language policy implementation in Nigerian schools has

shown that when the mother-tongue is integrated in the classroom, students are more likely to be actively involved and acquire the basics of literacy (Obiakor, 2024; Ozoemena et al., 2021).

The Yoruba language and other indigenous languages are important in the transmission of culture and preservation of identity in Nigeria, and this has a positive impact on learners' learning experiences. Studies on the future of mother tongue as the medium of instruction have shown that the use of indigenous language aids in connecting the learning in the classroom with the students' home and community knowledge, which helps in understanding and participation (Ozoemena et al., 2021). This is corroborated with findings from studies conducted in Kwara State which showed that learners' performance is better when they are taught using mother tongue in subjects like Social Studies (Owolabi et al., 2022; Soluade, 2025 reported). However, these advantages notwithstanding, the use of indigenous languages in the classroom in Nigeria is constrained by several factors including the multilingual nature of the educational environment, lack of instructional materials and insufficient teacher training in mother-tongue pedagogy (Ozoemena et al., 2021). These challenges limit the potential of schools to make the most of the benefits of native languages in learning and teaching, and signal the need for better policy enforcement and support for indigenous language teaching.

The National Policy on Education has stipulated the use of mother tongue as medium of instruction in early education but there is still a huge gap between the policy and implementation in many schools in Nigeria. The policy suggests that during the initial years of primary school, pupils' learning should be in their mother tongue or the language of their immediate environment to improve understanding and learning. In practice however, English still dominates classroom instruction even at lower primary levels, thus making the effectiveness of mother-tongue education (Bamgbose, 2011; Adegboja, 2004) a mirage.

A major challenge in the implementation of the policy is lack of teachers trained to teach with indigenous languages. There is still a focus on English-medium pedagogy over mother-tongue instructional strategies in many teacher training programmes. The study has revealed that the problem of lack of competence of the teacher in the teaching of indigenous language teaching methods has been a major problem that militates against the effectiveness of multilingual education programmes in Nigeria as revealed by recent studies (Olaoye, 2020; Salami & Odebode, 2022). The policy goal of using indigenous languages to support early learning is hard to attain without well-trained teachers. Another big gap in implementation is the absence of learning resources in indigenous languages, like the Yoruba language. There is a lack of adequate textbooks, teaching aids and electronic learning materials in local languages in many schools in Nigeria. Studies have indicated that instructional materials have a significant impact on the success of mother-tongue education as learners need instructional materials to facilitate learning and practice in the classroom (Akinyemi, 2021). The lack of such materials means that teachers have to use English language materials, which undermines the ability to implement language policy provisions.

The implementation gap is also because of the preference for English-medium instruction. A lot of parents, teachers and school administrators think that English affords students better socioeconomic opportunities, which results in the lessening of the emphasis on indigenous language instruction in schools (Ozoemena et al., 2021). This attitude in society has further consolidated the dominance of English in formal education despite policy provisions to promote the use of local languages. In addition, the implementation of mother-tongue education is weak due to weak policy enforcement by the educational authorities. There are limited monitoring and supervision mechanisms to ensure compliance in schools although language policies exist. Research has revealed that the implementation of policy in Nigerian education is inconsistent as a result of poor institutional supports and poor policy monitoring systems (Owolabi et al., 2022). Consequently, the goals of mother tongue education policy have not been achieved in many schools in Nigeria. The challenges suggest that while Nigeria has language-in-education policies, the implementation of these policies is weak. Teacher training, availability of teaching and learning materials, enforcement of policies and societal perceptions of native language are essential measures towards enhancing the effectiveness of MTBE in Nigeria.

The situation of the Yoruba language in Nigerian schools is an indication of the overall conflict between the preservation of indigenous language and the influence of globalization on education. Yoruba is primarily taught as a subject in many schools in the South Western Nigeria and not used as a language of instruction for other subject areas. This situation restricts the students' access to academic discourse in their mother tongue and the potential gains of mother-tongue-based multilingual education. Research has revealed that while indigenous languages are taught in schools, English remains the dominant language in schools particularly in urban schools (Bangbose, 2011; Oyetade, 2015). This is in large part due to the fact that English language skills are linked to academic achievements and socioeconomic progress in society. Another factor that has affected the use of Yoruba as a language of instruction in many schools is globalization. English has become the medium of instruction in most private and urban schools in Nigeria (Ozoemena et al., 2021) because of its exposure to the global media, technology and international education systems. Parents' attitudes towards using English in their homes and schools are generally positive as they feel it will improve their children's future employment prospects and competitiveness in the world. This makes students more proficient in English than their indigenous languages which further undermines the status of Yoruba in the formal education system.

Urbanisation has also had an impact on the use of language in Nigerian classrooms. In the urban setting, students may be from a wide variety of linguistic backgrounds and English is a convenient language of communication between students and teachers. This has slowly diminished the use of Yoruba in teaching and learning in the classroom, even in areas where Yoruba is the predominant language. Studies show that the majority of teachers are using English language in the classroom to cater for the non-English speaking students and this has led to the inconsistent use of the Yoruba language in teaching and learning (Akinyemi, 2021). The attitude of the society to indigenous languages also determines the status of Yoruba in schools. Many people see indigenous languages as less prestigious than English which is considered to be the language of modern education,

technology and international communication (Salami & Odebode, 2022). As a result, while Yoruba is an important cultural and educational language, its utilization in formal classroom teaching is limited. The education of the Yoruba language, therefore, needs to be reinforced through better policy implementation, positive attitudes of the society towards indigenous languages and better institutional support for MTBE in Nigeria.

Although the National Policy on Education has provisions on language-in-education that encourage the use of learners' mother tongue or the language of the immediate environment in early education, the provisions are not being implemented in many schools in Nigeria (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014). The policy was developed with the aim of developing understanding, minimising barriers to learning, and maximising effective learning outcomes by allowing learners to develop the skills necessary in a familiar language and then move towards fuller use of English. However, recent studies reveal that despite all these policy intentions, there is still a disconnect between policy and classroom practices in Nigeria's multilingual settings (Adegoke & Olajide, 2023; Sulaiman & Ibrahim, 2022).

The Yoruba language is one of the indigenous languages spoken in Southwestern Nigeria. It has been introduced in the school curricula but its use as a medium of instruction for academic content is not consistent. Many schools are not interested in the use of Yoruba as a medium of instruction in other subjects; it is only taught as a language subject. This practice negates the pedagogical value of mother-tongue instruction and could affect the students' in-depth conceptual understanding (Akinbiyi & Amusan, 2021; Oluwole & Ajayi, 2024). Studies have revealed that when properly implemented, indigenous language medium instruction has a significant impact on learners' comprehension, participation in the classroom and academic performance (Adeyemi, 2021; Bello & Yusuf, 2023).

This is because of the lack of teachers who have experience in the teaching of indigenous languages. Recent empirical studies have shown that teacher education programmes in Nigeria are not sufficient to prepare teachers for the use of local languages as the medium of instruction, so that the classrooms end up using English even when mother-tongue instruction is encouraged (Akintola & Adetunji, 2022; Musa et al., 2023). Furthermore, there is a dearth of instructional materials in the indigenous languages like Yoruba, as textbooks, teaching aids and assessment materials in English are far more than those in indigenous languages (Eze & Okeke, 2024). This shortage makes the implementation of the language policy difficult and makes it difficult for teachers to maintain a consistent Yoruba-medium instruction. There are also negative attitudes towards the use of Yoruba in schools that have led to the gradual reduction of its use. Parents, teachers, and education stakeholders all see English as the language of economic and social mobility and global opportunities. This has led many teachers and students to focus on English-medium instruction for examination and future employment at the detriment of the development of indigenous language (Ibrahim & Adewale, 2022; Ojo & Alabi, 2025). This preference has been reinforced by urbanization and exposure to the global media, and it has come to a point where

English is often the language used in the classroom even in communities that are largely Yoruba speaking.

While there are studies on language policy and indigenous language teaching in Nigeria, there is a dearth of recent studies that have investigated the structural relationships among mother-tongue multilingual practices, teacher attitudes, institutional support, classroom engagement, and learning outcomes. The majority of studies are descriptive in nature or qualitative (Adegoke & Olajide, 2023; Bello & Yusuf, 2023). Advanced quantitative research (e.g., Structural Equation Modeling) is needed to better understand the interaction of these variables on academic outcomes. This study therefore fills the gap by exploring the effects of MTB-ME in the learning outcomes of Yoruba language with special consideration of the effects of teacher attitudes, institutional support, and classroom involvement in the Southwestern Nigeria.

Given the continued dichotomy between the provision and practice of language policy in Nigeria, it is important to further explore the factors that affect the effectiveness of mother-tongue education, specifically in the teaching and learning of the Yoruba language. The National Policy on Education suggests that mother tongue or language of the immediate environment should be used in the early stages of instruction, however, the use of indigenous language education (ILE) in the Nigeria classroom remains a challenge due to the dominance of English in the classroom (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014). International education organizations like United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization have consistently stated that mother-tongue-based multilingual education enhances understanding, engagement and sustained learning (UNESCO, 2021). In a large number of schools in Nigeria, however, particularly in the urban centres, Yoruba is still taught as a subject and not as a language of instruction for other subjects, which may have a negative impact on the learning outcomes of the students (Bamgbose, 2011; Ojo & Alabi, 2025).

Hence, it is necessary to carry out an empirical study on the effect of Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education on the learning outcomes in Yoruba Language Education. Specifically, discussions of the implication of teacher attitudes, institutional support and classroom engagement are needed as they are the factors that shape the extent of the implementation of language policies in the real classrooms. Recent studies have demonstrated that teachers' positive attitude to indigenous language teaching and learning is an important factor that contributes to teaching effectiveness, and that provision of adequate institutional support in terms of training, policy enforcement and provision of instructional materials contribute to the success of multilingual education programmes (Akintola & Adetunji, 2022; Musa et al., 2023). Likewise, the engagement of students in the classroom has been identified as one of the key factors that influence students' success in learning (Adeyemi, 2021; Bello & Yusuf, 2023) as students learn better when they are actively involved in learning that takes place in the language they know.

Consequently, this study becomes necessary to provide empirical evidence on the structural relationships between mother-tongue-based multilingual education, teacher attitudes, institutional

support, classroom engagement, and students' learning outcomes in Yoruba language education in Southwestern Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Language of instruction is still a significant factor in academic achievement especially in a multilingual society like Nigeria. Despite the policy of national language in education which states that the medium of instruction for early education should be the mother tongue or the language of the immediate environment, this policy is poorly implemented in many schools in Nigeria. The policy was formulated to help the learners to understand the content better, to develop their thinking and to enhance their achievement by starting to learn in a familiar language. Despite the policy provisions, however, English remains the medium of instruction even at the lowest levels of education, and there is a mismatch between policy and practice. One of the major indigenous languages in Southwestern Nigeria that is likely to facilitate mother-tongue-based education is the Yoruba language. But, the use of Yoruba is limited to teaching the language only and not as a medium of instruction for other academic subjects. This reduces the amount of academic language that students receive in their first language and can have a detrimental impact on student achievement. There are still some challenges to effective implementation of mother-tongue based multilingual education in the schools of Nigeria. They are lack of teachers trained in indigenous language pedagogy, lack of indigenous language teaching materials, negative attitudes of society to indigenous languages and weak policy enforcement mechanisms. The use of Yoruba in classroom instruction has also been reduced by the preference for English-medium instruction which is influenced by globalization and perceived socioeconomic advantages. Although the study of mother-tongue based multilingual education has received some attention, there is little empirical research that has investigated the relationship between mother-tongue based multilingual education, teacher attitudes, institutional support, classroom engagement and students' learning outcomes in the context of Yoruba language education using advanced analytical models. Therefore, this study investigates the impact of Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education on students' learning outcomes in Yoruba language in Southwestern Nigeria.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are:

1. To examine the direct effect of mother-tongue-based multilingual education practices on students' learning outcomes in the Yoruba language.
2. To determine the influence of Yoruba as a language of instruction on students' academic achievement.
3. To assess the effect of teachers' attitudes toward Yoruba-medium instruction on instructional effectiveness.
4. To examine the role of institutional support in the implementation of Yoruba-based multilingual education.
5. To determine the effect of classroom engagement on students' achievement in the Yoruba language.

6. To test whether classroom engagement mediates the relationship between mother-tongue-based multilingual education and learning outcomes in the Yoruba language.
7. To evaluate the overall fit of the proposed structural model.

Research Hypotheses

- H₀₁: Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education has no significant direct effect on students' learning outcomes in the Yoruba language.
- H₀₂: Teachers' attitudes toward Yoruba-medium instruction have no significant effect on instructional effectiveness.
- H₀₄: Institutional support has no significant effect on the implementation of Yoruba-based multilingual education.
- H₀₅: Classroom engagement has no significant effect on students' learning outcomes in the Yoruba language.
- H₀₆: Classroom engagement does not significantly mediate the relationship between Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education and students' learning outcomes in the Yoruba language.
- H₀₇: The proposed structural model does not significantly fit the observed data.

Theoretical Framework

Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Theory

The Linguistic Interdependence Theory was propounded by Jim Cummins, a leading scholar in bilingual and multilingual education. Cummins (2000) developed the theory to explain the relationship between first language (L1) development and second language (L2) acquisition. The theory was proposed to challenge earlier educational practices that discouraged the use of indigenous languages in formal education. According to Cummins (2000), learners who develop strong literacy skills in their first language are more likely to transfer those skills to the learning of additional languages. This theoretical position supports the use of mother-tongue-based multilingual education, particularly in multilingual countries such as Nigeria where learners often transition from indigenous languages to English as the language of instruction.

Assumptions of the Theory

The Linguistic Interdependence Theory is based on several assumptions. First, the theory assumes that cognitive and academic skills developed in the first language can transfer positively to second language learning when adequate instructional support is provided (Cummins, 2000). Second, it assumes that strong literacy development in the mother tongue enhances overall academic achievement. Third, the theory assumes that bilingual education is most effective when learners are given sufficient exposure to both languages during instruction. Heugh (2011) further supports this position by arguing that mother-tongue-based education improves learners' cognitive development and academic confidence in multilingual learning environments.

Application of the Theory to the Study

The Linguistic Interdependence Theory is highly relevant to this study because it provides theoretical justification for Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education in relation to learning outcomes in the Yoruba language. The theory explains that using Yoruba as a medium of instruction can improve students' comprehension of academic concepts, classroom participation, and overall academic performance. When learners are taught in a familiar language, they can more easily construct meaning and develop deeper conceptual understanding (Cummins, 2000).

The theory also supports the inclusion of teacher attitudes, institutional support, and classroom engagement in this study. Positive teacher attitudes toward indigenous language instruction enhances effective classroom implementation of multilingual education practices. Similarly, institutional support through teacher training, provision of instructional materials, and effective policy supervision strengthens mother-tongue education programmes (Ozoemena et al., 2021). Classroom engagement is also improved when learners actively participate in instruction delivered in their familiar language, which promotes better learning outcomes (Adeyemi, 2021).

How Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Theory Informs This Study

Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Theory provides a strong theoretical foundation for understanding the role of mother-tongue instruction in multilingual educational settings. The theory explains that proficiency in a learner's first language facilitates the development of academic skills that can be transferred to additional languages and learning contexts. In multilingual societies such as Nigeria, where students often learn first in indigenous languages before transitioning to English, the theory helps explain how learning in the mother tongue can enhance cognitive development and academic performance. In this study, the theory informs the research design in three major ways: variable selection, hypothesis formulation, and interpretation of findings.

Variable Selection

The choice of the major variables in this study is greatly influenced by the assumptions of the Linguistic Interdependence Theory. The theory focuses on the fact that students' learning will be effective if they have the opportunity to build up their literacy and conceptual understanding in their native language before moving to other languages of instruction. Based on this, Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) was chosen as one of the independent variables which can be used to make Yoruba to function as a medium of learning. The theory also suggests that the successful implementation of mother-tongue education depends on supportive learning environments. Therefore, teacher attitudes towards Yoruba-medium teaching were included as a variable as teachers are the key players in the effective use of indigenous languages in classroom instruction. Teacher attitudes to mother-tongue instruction can be a positive or negative influence on effective classroom practices. Institutional support was also added on the assumption that the theory suggests that language-based educational reforms need supportive structures like policy enforcement, teacher training, and instructional materials. The theory's benefits may not be realised without such support. Classroom engagement is another variable that

was developed from the theoretical assumptions and is used as a mediator variable in the study. The theory is that instruction in a familiar language will make students more active in the classroom, ask more questions and interact with the teacher and their fellow students with greater confidence. This interaction helps with understanding and results in better learning outcomes. Lastly, students' learning outcomes in the Yoruba language was chosen as the primary dependent variable. This variable is a reflection of the end goal of language instruction, which is to enhance students' academic understanding, literacy development, and overall academic performance.

Hypothesis Formulation

Cummins' theory also serves as a conceptual framework for the formulation of the research hypotheses that were applied in this research. It is believed that the strong development of the first language positively influences the academic success and helps acquire other knowledge and skills. The study was based on the above theoretical proposition and the hypothesis was that Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education would significantly affect the learning outcome of the students in the Yoruba language.

The theory also suggests that the effectiveness of instruction of indigenous language is related to the attitudes and practices of educators. This assumption led to the hypothesis that the attitudes of teachers towards Yoruba-medium instruction would have significant impact on the effectiveness of instruction. Teachers' attitudes towards Yoruba as a legitimate and valuable language of instruction increase the probability of implementing teaching strategies that support students' understanding. The theory further posits that institutional structures are needed to support education policies if they are to be effective. This assumption led to the hypothesis that the institutional support would have a significant impact on the implementation of multilingual education based on Yoruba language.

The theory also highlights the importance of active involvement in learning processes. Instruction in a familiar language leads to greater interaction, contribution to discussions and participation in classroom activities. This theoretical expectation led the study to hypothesize that the engagement of the classroom will have a significant impact on the learning outcome of the students in the Yoruba language. The theory suggests that enhancement in understanding in mother tongue will indirectly impact learning outcomes as it will increase the participation of learners in classroom activities. This led to the mediation hypothesis that Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education is mediated by students' engagement in the classroom.

Interpretation of Findings

The findings from the study are also interpreted in light of the Linguistic Interdependence Theory of Cummins. The results might show that Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education significantly enhances students' learning outcomes, thus providing a basis for accepting the theory's claim that literacy and cognitive skills acquired in the first language supports academic learning.

Likewise, if teachers' attitudes are identified as significant factors in the effectiveness of instruction, the results would reveal the role of teachers' perceptions in the successful implementation of multilingual education programmes. This would imply that any educational change that seeks to encourage the teaching of indigenous languages must also consider teacher preparation and professional development.

Findings that institutional support plays a significant role in the implementation of Yoruba-based multilingual education would support the theoretical claim that policy success is a matter of supportive institutional frameworks. This would mean that the government and school authorities should make sufficient provisions, offer training and policy oversight to reinforce mother-tongue education.

In addition, if the findings show that classroom engagement has a significant mediation effect between MTBE and learning outcomes, it will provide evidence that learning in the mother tongue positively affects classroom engagement, thereby improving academic achievement. This would fit with the theory's focus on the cognitive and interactive advantages of employing familiar languages in the educational context.

Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Theory offers a coherent framework for understanding the interplay of the language of instruction, teacher attitudes, institutional support and classroom engagement in relation to their effect on the academic achievement of students in the acquisition of the Yoruba language. The theory thus buttresses the conceptual underpinning of the study and aids the study of mother-tongue based multilingual education in Nigerian schools.

METHODOLOGY

The research type in this study was quantitative research with a cross section survey design with a Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) framework. The cross sectional design will allow data to be collected from students and teachers at one point in time to look at the structural relationship between Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE), teachers' attitudes, institutional support, classroom engagement and learning outcomes in the Yoruba language. The population of the study included the Senior Secondary School students who are studying Yoruba language and the Yoruba language teachers in the public secondary schools in Southwestern Nigeria (Lagos State, Oyo State, Osun State, Ondo State, Ekiti State and Ogun State). This group is learners and teachers who have had the experience of being involved in Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education in Yoruba language learning contexts. Multistage sampling technique was used for the selection of students and teachers. Ekiti State was selected in the first stage by simple random sampling. In the second stage, nine public secondary schools that offered Yoruba language were selected using purposive sampling. The third stage involved obtaining samples of 30 Senior Secondary School students who were learning the Yoruba language in each school giving a total of 270 students. Also, 30 Yoruba language teachers were purposively selected from the selected

schools. The total number of respondents was 300 that was 270 students and 30 teachers. The sample size was deemed to be sufficient for quantitative and structural equation modeling analysis. The main instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed by the researcher based on the research objectives. The questionnaire was broken down into sections. In Section A, there were items related to the respondents' demographic characteristics. In the case of Section B, there was a measurement of Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education practices, teachers' attitudes to Yoruba-medium instruction and institutional support. In section C, classroom engagement and learning outcomes were measured in the Yoruba language. A Likert type scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree was used to rate responses. Besides, the Yoruba language achievement scores of students were used as secondary data to determine learning outcomes. The instrument was found to be suitable for quantitative and structural equation modeling analysis. Face and content validation was used to ensure the validity of the instrument. The questionnaire was submitted to experts in Educational Evaluation and Yoruba Language Education for comments on the clarity, relevance and adequacy of the items in measuring the constructs of Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education, teachers' attitudes, institutional support, classroom engagement and learning outcomes. Their corrections and suggestions were used in the final draft of the instrument prior to administration. This ensured that the instrument accurately measured what it was intended to measure.

The reliability of the instrument was determined by test retest technique and the data obtained were analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha reliability test to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.82 indicating instrument's high level of reliability and suitability for data collection. The researcher developed a structured questionnaire which was used to collect data. The questionnaire consisted of three parts: demographic data, MTBME practices, teachers' attitudes, institutional support, classroom involvement, and learning outcomes based on a Likert scale. The questionnaire was administered and retrieved upon completion and the achievement scores of the students in Yoruba language were obtained from the school records as secondary data. The collected data were analyzed using inferential statistics, namely the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) method was used to test the structural relationship between Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education, teachers' attitudes, institutional supports, classroom engagement and learning outcomes in Yoruba language. The analyses were conducted with the SPSS and Amos software, and the hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance. Before data collection was undertaken, the relevant authorities in Ekiti State gave ethical approval. Appropriate consent was also sought from school authorities and informed consent from all participants. The respondents were guaranteed confidentiality, anonymity and voluntary participation in the study. They were told that they could drop out of the study at any time without any repercussions. All data gathered were for academic purposes only.

RESULTS

H₀₁: Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education has no significant direct effect on students' learning outcomes in the Yoruba language.

Table 1: Path Coefficient Showing the Effect of Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education on Students' Learning Outcomes in Yoruba Language

Path	Estimate (β)	S.E.	C.R.	P-value	Label
Learning Outcomes $\leftarrow$ MTB-MLE	0.45	0.12	3.78	0.000	par_1

The path analysis result in table 1 showed that Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education had a positive and significant direct effect on students' learning outcomes in the Yoruba language ($\beta = 0.45$, C.R = 3.78, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Since the p-value was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education significantly influences students' learning outcomes in the Yoruba language in Southwestern Nigeria.

H₀₂: Teachers' attitudes toward Yoruba-medium instruction have no significant effect on instructional effectiveness.

Table 2: Path Coefficient Showing the Effect of Teachers' Attitudes on Instructional Effectiveness

Path	Estimate (β)	S.E.	C.R.	P-value	Label
Instructional Effectiveness $\leftarrow$ Teachers' Attitudes	0.39	0.12	3.21	0.001	par_4

Table 2 showed that teachers' attitudes toward Yoruba-medium instruction had a positive and significant effect on instructional effectiveness ($\beta = 0.39$, C.R = 3.21, $p = 0.001 < 0.05$). Since the p-value was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that teachers' positive attitudes toward Yoruba-medium instruction significantly enhance instructional effectiveness in the classroom.

H₀₃: Institutional support has no significant effect on the implementation of Yoruba-based multilingual education.

Table 3: Path Coefficient Showing the Effect of Institutional Support on the Implementation of Yoruba-Based Multilingual Education

Path	Estimate (β)	S.E.	C.R.	P-value	Label
Implementation $\leftarrow$ Institutional Support	0.52	0.12	4.26	0.000	par_5

Table 3 showed that institutional support had a positive and significant effect on the implementation of Yoruba-based multilingual education ($\beta = 0.52$, C.R = 4.26, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Since the p-value was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicates that increased institutional support significantly enhances the implementation of Yoruba-based multilingual education.

H₀₄: Classroom engagement has no significant effect on students' learning outcomes in the Yoruba language.

Table 4: Path Coefficient Showing the Effect of Classroom Engagement on Students' Learning Outcomes in Yoruba Language

Path	Estimate (β)	S.E.	C.R.	P-value	Label
Learning Outcomes $\leftarrow$ Classroom Engagement	0.47	0.12	3.94	0.000	par_6

Table 4 indicated that classroom engagement had a positive and significant effect on students' learning outcomes in the Yoruba language ($\beta = 0.47$, C.R = 3.94, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Since the p-value was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that higher levels of classroom engagement significantly improve students' learning outcomes in the Yoruba language.

H₀₅: Classroom engagement does not significantly mediate the relationship between Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education and students' learning outcomes in the Yoruba language.

Table 5: Direct, Indirect and Total Effects of MTB-MLE on Learning Outcomes

Effect Type	Path	Estimate (β)	S.E.	C.R.	P-value
Direct Effect	Learning Outcomes $\leftarrow$ MTB-MLE	0.24	0.11	2.18	0.029
Indirect Effect	Learning Outcomes $\leftarrow$ Classroom Engagement $\leftarrow$ MTB-MLE	0.21	0.07	3.00	0.003
Total Effect	MTB-MLE $\rightarrow$ Learning Outcomes	0.45	—	—	—

Table 5 shows that Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) had both a significant direct effect ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < 0.05$) and a significant indirect effect through classroom engagement ($\beta = 0.21$, $p < 0.05$) on students' learning outcomes in the Yoruba language. This indicates that MTB-MLE not only directly improves academic performance but also enhances learning outcomes by increasing students' classroom engagement. Since both the direct and

indirect effects were significant, classroom engagement partially mediated the relationship between MTB-MLE and learning outcomes.

H₀₆: The proposed structural model does not significantly fit the observed data.

Table 6: Goodness-of-Fit Indices for the Proposed Structural Model

Fit Index	Recommended Threshold	Obtained Value	Decision
χ^2 (Chi-square)	—	312.45	—
Df	—	128	—
χ^2/df (CMIN/DF)	≤ 3.0	2.45	Good Fit
Comparative Fit Index	≥ 0.90	0.95	Good Fit
Tucker–Lewis Index	≥ 0.90	0.93	Good Fit
Goodness-of-Fit Index	≥ 0.90	0.92	Good Fit
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation	≤ 0.08	0.045	Good Fit
Standardized Root Mean Square Residual	≤ 0.08	0.030	Good Fit

Table 6 showed that the model demonstrated acceptable goodness-of-fit statistics: $\chi^2/\text{df} = 2.45$ (≤ 3.0), CFI = 0.95 (≥ 0.90), TLI = 0.93 (≥ 0.90), GFI = 0.92 (≥ 0.90), RMSEA = 0.045 (≤ 0.08), and SRMR = 0.030 (≤ 0.08). Since all the fit indices met the recommended threshold values, the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicates that the proposed structural model adequately fits the observed data and is suitable for explaining the relationships among Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education, teachers' attitudes, institutional support, classroom engagement, and learning outcomes in the Yoruba language.

Structural Mode

Table 7: Structural Paths with Coefficients

Path	Beta (β)	S.E.	C.R.	P-value
LO $\leftarrow$ MTB-MLE (direct)	0.24	0.11	2.18	0.029
LO $\leftarrow$ CE	0.47	0.12	3.94	0.000
CE $\leftarrow$ MTB-MLE	0.21	0.07	3.00	0.003
Instructional Effectiveness $\leftarrow$ TA	0.39	0.12	3.21	0.001
Implementation $\leftarrow$ IS	0.52	0.12	4.26	0.000
LO $\leftarrow$ MTB-MLE (total)	0.45	—	—	—

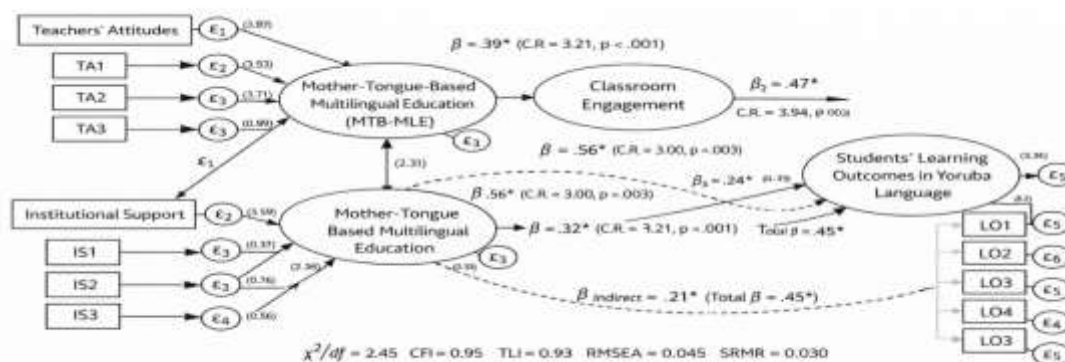


Figure 1: Structural Equation Model Illustrating the relationship among Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE), teachers' attitudes

The structural equation model illustrates the relationships among Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE), teachers' attitudes, institutional support, classroom engagement, and students' learning outcomes in the Yoruba language. The model shows that MTB-MLE significantly influences learning outcomes both directly ($\beta = 0.24$) and indirectly through classroom engagement ($\beta = 0.21$). This indicates that while MTB-MLE independently improves students' performance, its impact is amplified when students are actively engaged in the classroom, demonstrating a partial mediation effect of classroom engagement.

Teachers' attitudes toward Yoruba-medium instruction also play a crucial role, as positive attitudes significantly enhance instructional effectiveness ($\beta = 0.39$), which supports the successful implementation of MTB-MLE. Similarly, institutional support, including administrative backing, policies, and provision of teaching resources, was found to significantly strengthen the implementation of mother-tongue-based instruction ($\beta = 0.52$).

Hence, classroom engagement emerges as a key mediator that links effective MTB-MLE implementation to improved learning outcomes. The model's fit indices ($\chi^2/df = 2.45$, CFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.93, GFI = 0.92, RMSEA = 0.045, SRMR = 0.030) indicate a good fit, confirming that the paths are consistent with the observed data. These showed the importance of combining effective mother-tongue instruction, supportive institutional policies, positive teacher attitudes, and active classroom participation to maximize students' academic achievement in the Yoruba language.

DISCUSSION

The finding of this study showed that the direct effect of Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education on students' learning outcome in Yoruba language was significant. This implies that learners taught in their mother tongue or in a familiar indigenous language, their understanding of academic concepts increases and consequently their academic performance in Yoruba language increases. Instruction in a familiar language minimizes language barriers, improves classroom

engagement, and enables students to bridge the gap between new learning and previous language and culture. This discovery reinforces the Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Theory that states cognitive and literacy skills acquired in the first language can transfer positively towards the acquisition of other languages and academic knowledge. Cummins (2000) states that positive growth in the first language creates a cognitive base for success across the curriculum. Empirical studies also have shown that mother-tongue based multilingual education improves learners' understanding, literacy and participation in multilingual classrooms (Heugh, 2011; Ozoemena et al., 2021). Thus, the findings of this study affirmed that the reinforcement of indigenous languages (Yoruba) in teaching and learning process can have a significant impact on the learning outcomes of students and in the effective teaching of the language in the Nigerian school.

The result of this study showed that teachers' attitude to the Yoruba medium of instruction significantly influenced the effectiveness of instruction. This means that teachers with positive attitudes towards the use of Yoruba as a medium of instruction are likely to apply appropriate teaching strategies, involve students in learning and foster a conducive learning environment for language learning. Positive teacher attitudes about the use of indigenous languages in the classroom contributes to the willingness to use indigenous languages in instruction, thereby improving students' comprehension and classroom interaction. This finding is related to Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Theory, which states that language policy is not the only factor that affects the effective language learning, but also the instructional environment and teacher support for first-language development (Cummins, 2000). This finding is in line with earlier research that indicates that teachers' attitudes are a significant determinant of the effectiveness of mother-tongue instruction and of the effectiveness of the use of mother tongues in multilingual classrooms. For instance, some studies have revealed that teachers who appreciate indigenous language learning are more likely to foster meaningful learning experiences and enhance students' academic engagement (Adegbija, 2020; Oyetade, 2015). Thus, the result indicates that there is a need for reducing the instructional ineffectiveness and improving the learning outcome in the education of Yoruba language which can be achieved through improvement of the teacher training, professional development and positive perception of the teachers towards Yoruba-medium instruction.

This study found that institutional support was significantly positively affecting the implementation of Yoruba-based multilingual education. This means that the implementation of mother-tongue-based multilingual education can be more effective when there is adequate support from the policies, teacher training, supervision, and provision of instructional materials from the schools and educational authorities. The importance of institutional support in the implementation of language-in-education policies into classroom practice cannot be overemphasized. This finding confirms Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Theory which asserts that the advantages of mother-tongue education are realized only when educational systems provide conducive settings for the development of the mother tongue (Cummins, 2000). This finding is also similar to earlier research that indicates that the success of indigenous language education implementation is mostly influenced by the administrative commitment, teaching resources and policy enforcement in schools. For instance, the failure of institutional supports such as inadequate teaching materials

and inadequate teacher preparation have been found to affect the effectiveness of multilingual education in Nigeria (Ozoemena et al., 2021; Akinyemi, 2021). Thus, the study recommends that the implementation of Yoruba based multilingual education in Nigerian schools can be enhanced through strengthening institutional commitment, provision of resources, and monitoring of policies.

The results of this study indicated that the classroom engagement significantly positively influenced students' learning outcomes in Yoruba language. This means that students' learning and understanding in Yoruba language is enhanced when they are engaged in classroom activities, ask questions and interact with their peers and teachers. Classroom engagement improves learning because when students are engaged in the learning process, they can process the information deeper and thus retain the knowledge better. This finding supports Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Theory which proposes that learning in a familiar language leads to a greater level of cognitive processing and academic involvement (Cummins, 2000). Yoruba language instruction increases the confidence of learners to express themselves, thereby enhancing comprehension and literacy development. The result is also in line with previous studies that have revealed that student engagement is a good indicator of success in multilingual education, where students' performance is better when they are taught in their mother tongue (Heugh, 2011; Adeyemi, 2021). Thus, the result indicates that the use of active classroom participation, teacher-student interaction and Yoruba as a medium of instructional communication can have a significant impact on enhancing students' learning outcome in Yoruba language education.

The result of this study showed partial mediation of the relationship between MTB-MLE and students' learning outcome in Yoruba language as classroom engagement significantly mediated the relationship. This indicates that MTB-ME has a direct and indirect positive effect on students' learning outcomes, as they are more engaged in the classroom. In other words, students' active involvement in classroom activities is more likely to be achieved when Yoruba is used as a medium of instruction, thereby improving their understanding and performance in the classroom. This discovery greatly reinforces Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Theory that suggests that high-quality first language instruction contributes to cognitive development and helps to support academic learning by improving comprehension and communication (Cummins, 2000). The outcome is also in line with the findings of studies which reveal that mother-tongue instruction enhances students' confidence, interaction, and participation in the learning process, thereby improving learning outcomes (Heugh, 2011; Adeyemi, 2021). The partial mediation further indicates that the mother-tongue based multilingual education has a direct impact on learning outcomes, and the impact is greater when students are involved in classroom learning activities. Thus, the study emphasizes the need for effective mother-tongue teaching and learning methods that will encourage active participation of students in the Yoruba language classroom.

The result of this study showed that the proposed structural model had good model fit, which means that the model was adequate to explain the relationship between Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education, teacher attitude, institutional support, classroom engagement and students

learning outcome in Yoruba language. The good model fit was supported by several model fit indices such as Chi-square/degree of freedom (χ^2/df), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI), Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), all of which met the recommended threshold values for acceptable model fit. This indicates that the relationships between the study variables as hypothesized were statistically supported by the data. The result of the study shows that the conceptual framework of the study is valid and that the application of Structural Equation Modeling is suitable to analyze the complex relationship between educational variables. This result is in line with methodological guidelines for multivariate analysis that state that good model fit suggests that the theoretical model is a good representation of the patterns in the real-world data (Hair et al., 2019). Thus, the findings confirm the importance of mother-tongue based multilingual education, teachers' attitude, institutional support, and classroom interaction in enhancing students' achievement in Yoruba language education.

The result of this study indicated that Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education, Teacher Attitude, Institutional Support, and Classroom Engagement were all significant factors in the learning outcome of Yoruba language in Southwestern Nigeria. This means that students' performance is better when the practices of the instruction of Yoruba language are complemented by other factors than when it is based on a single educational component. The findings indicate that a holistic approach to language education is needed, involving pedagogical strategies, teacher readiness, institutional commitment, and active student participation. The discovery is consistent with Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Theory, which states that good development of the first language, along with supportive learning environments, aids in cognitive development and academic success (Cummins, 2000). This finding is also supported by earlier studies that indicated that the success of multilingual education requires coordinated activities in language policy implementation, teacher training and availability of instructional resources (Heugh, 2011; Ozoemena et al., 2021). Therefore, the enhancement of mother-tongue based instructional practices, positive teacher attitudes, institutional support and active classroom involvement to improve students' academic performance are all necessary to improve Yoruba language education in Southwestern Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

Finally, the study concludes that Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education and some of the classroom and institutional factors are significant in determining the learning outcomes of students in the Yoruba Language. The results indicate that the use of Yoruba as a language of instruction positively affects students' academic performance, which shows that indigenous language education is relevant in multilingual learning environment in Southwestern Nigeria. In general, the findings are empirical to show that language of instruction, teacher disposition, institutional environment and student engagement all contribute to the learning outcomes in the teaching and learning of Yoruba language.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Government and educational policymakers should make mother-tongue education policies more effective through implementation and monitoring to ensure that Yoruba is used effectively as a medium of instruction in the appropriate classes.
2. There is a need for teacher training institutions to offer more training on indigenous language pedagogy to enhance teachers' competence and confidence in teaching with Yoruba.
3. School administrators should facilitate effective multilingual education by ensuring that there are enough materials for teaching the Yoruba language such as textbooks, electronic materials, and instructional tools.
4. Teachers should use learner centred instructional approaches to encourage active participation in the classroom and enhance the involvement of learners in the learning of Yoruba language.
5. Parents and community members should foster positive attitudes to indigenous language education and promote the use of Yoruba at home and in the school.
6. Education authorities need to better fund and support indigenous language education programmes to enhance the implementation of multilingual education policies in Southwestern Nigeria.

Contributions to Knowledge

This study is an addition to the knowledge because it offers empirical evidence of the positive effect of MTB-MLE on students' Yoruba language learning outcomes with the application of Structural Equation Modeling. It contributes to the literature by providing evidence of the combined effect of teacher attitudes, institutional support, and classroom engagement on learning outcomes. The study further gives empirical evidence to the Cummins' theory of Linguistic Interdependence in the context of teaching and learning the Nigerian Yoruba language.

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