

Perceptions of Preschool Stakeholders on the Impacts of English as the Dominant Language in Early Childhood Education and Care Centers in Yoruba-Speaking States, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated the perceptions of stakeholders on the assumed impacts of English as a dominant language in some selected ECECC in Yoruba-speaking states. 617 stakeholders, 247 preschool teachers, 204 School owners/heads, and 166 parents and community members across the seven states, were randomly selected for the study. Four research questions were raised and answered. A validated questionnaire titled 'Perception of Preschool Stakeholders on the Impacts of English as Dominant Language in ECECC was used to elicit information from the respondents. Data was collected and analyzed using descriptive statistics. Findings revealed that above-average parents and community members (64%) believe that using English in ECECC will prepare children for future educational activities and global relevance. A notable number of school owners/heads (89%) opined that using English in ECECC prepares children for external examinations and competitions, 86.5% indicating that English language instruction boosts school enrollment. A significant proportion of ECCDE teachers (65%) believe that important educational concepts from local languages can lose their meanings when taught in English. And the majority (183) of the ECCDE teachers in the states indicated that only English is used for classroom activities. It is obvious that all the stakeholders who participated in the study placed a high level of worth on the use of the English language due to the assumed impacts. There is a need to re-orientate stakeholders on the fact that children have more to gain when their mother tongue is used in the preschool classroom during the teaching and learning activities.

Keywords

Dominant language, language of the immediate environment, Early Childhood Education and Care centers, preschool stakeholders

Introduction

English, being described as the language of the Colonial Masters, has been adopted in Nigeria as the official language. It is the language that is being used in any official setting, including academic institutions, to carry out day-to-day activities (Majebi & Oduolowu, 2022). English serves as the *lingua franca* for education, trade, and employment and is an essential skill for anyone wanting to succeed professionally or academically in the 21st century (King, 2018). More so, it is seen as the gateway to global citizenship, economic progress, and enhanced social standing (Trudell, 2016). It is also considered the language of unity in Nigeria, in which speakers of other indigenous

languages code-mix in their speech (Ibrahim & Gwandu, 2016). Thiong'o (1986) expresses that great honor was accorded to the English language at the expense of the indigenous languages in Africa. This language is seen as the language of intelligence, while African languages are seen as peripheral and are always presented in a derogatory manner.

The dominance of the English language in educational programs at all levels, including early childhood education, is a global phenomenon. Language, either verbal or non-verbal, is at the center of children's care and education. Every activity organized to achieve the aims and objectives of education at all levels can only be meaningfully accomplished with the

use of language. It plays a significant role in the implementation of both the written and hidden curriculum. Adepoju (2013) asserts that language is embedded in school subjects; it is difficult to separate learning concepts and processes of a subject from learning to use language to represent and use these concepts and processes. Language is also strongly connected to a child's development. It is crucial in achieving holistic development during the early years of life. It occupies significant roles in the care, development, and learning of children during their early years.

Early childhood education is commonly known to consist of programs and services purposefully designed to ensure children's access to maximum care, healthy development, and meaningful learning that can guarantee a strong foundation for living and learning during the early years. All these programs and services are expected to be in accordance with the rights of the child as identified by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the Child Rights Act (2003), especially in the areas of culture and cultural practices. Given cognizance to the culture of the child, among which the use of the mother tongue or language of the immediate environment was given special consideration. The mother tongue is the language of instruction acknowledged and recommended by both national and international bodies for children during their early years.

International and national documents and policies, such as Nigeria's national policy on education (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 2007, 2013), made its stand known on the use of the language of the immediate environment as the expected language of instruction in early year classrooms. At the African continental level, the desire of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and the African Charter on the Rights of

the Child (1989) is to see the local language being used as the language of instruction in the classroom. Ntagu (2010) expresses that one of the objectives of the OAU at its cultural policy meeting in Addis Ababa was the encouragement of the use of African languages as a vehicle of instruction at all levels. This did not just start; United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO) (1953) emphasized that children need to be educated in their mother tongue, especially in early childhood education. The body supports children in being taught in their mother tongues.

The advocacy for the use of the language of the immediate environment or mother tongue in early years classroom is based on evidence from different studies, reports, and academic opinions on its ability to yield a better result when adopted as an instructional medium (Fafunwa 1976, Taiwo 1976, Obanya 1992 & 1998, Akinola and Adetunji 2020, Ozoemena et al 2021, Majebi and Oduolowu, 2021). It has been found potent in promoting relevant and meaningful learning. Children tend to be actively involved in teaching and learning and learn better when they are being taught in the language of their immediate environment (Fafunwa, 1989, UNESCO, 2016, Zegarni, 2016, Majebi and Oduolowu 2021). The use of language of the immediate environment has been found to be of immense help in promoting childhood literacy and functional education (Osokoya 2000, Okono and Enang (nd)). It has also been acknowledged to promote the development of identity, self-esteem, and basic communication skills and is also believed to awaken in the child an interest in learning the language (Modica, Ajmera and Dunning, 2010; Majebi, Jimoh and Ogunbiyi, 2024). Fafunwa, 1976). Majebi & Oduolowu (2021) emphasized that children would acquire a lot of habits, attitudes and skills better and with a minimum

of trauma if they are taught in the language of their immediate environment. It is also seen as the one that assisted people to remain related to their culture and roots (Nishanti, 2020, Adedigba, et al. 2023).

Despite the advantages credited to the use of language of the immediate environment and the recognition it has been accorded globally, researchers have reported that pre-primary and primary schools in Nigeria are failing in their level of compliance with the recommendations in the National Policy on Education by FRN, 2013. English has become the dominant language in care and learning in early childhood care centers and classrooms. The majority of the pre-primary schools engage in practices (medium of instruction, pedagogies, and materials) that are contrary to the recommendations from the document specifically prepared to guide educational practices in Nigeria (Majebi, 2017). This is not limited to schools alone; children from an average Nigerian home are already exposed to communicating in the English Language. Adepoju (2013) attested that an average child in Nigeria, especially in Yorubaland, comes to school from home already equipped with the English language.

The English language is referred to as the world language. It has gained great dominance and respect across all walks of life, silencing mother tongues or indigenous languages gradually. Opinions varied when describing the status of the English language in the nations of the world, while Crystal (2003) says English has already grown to be independent of any form of social control. The growth momentum has become so great that nothing is likely to stop its continued spread as a global lingua franca in the foreseeable future. Graddol (2003) believes that English is stoppable. Emphasizing the unpredictability

inherent in language use, he suggested that the current global wave of English may lose momentum and saw the real possibility of new language hierarchies emerging in the next century, with English holding a less global position.

However, international organizations have made legal provisions through some vital documents related to people's language to give every language equal treatment. These documents include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (2015), the Declaration of the Rights of Persons, National, Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992), the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights (1996), and the Universal Declaration of Cultural Diversity (2002). They are prepared and provided to preserve and practice each language. The laws are set up to show that each language must not be bound or legislated out of existence. This language differs according to the communities and nations of the world. Each community, just like each individual, has its own language that expresses the ideas, values, and attitudes of its members.

Given a preference for the English language above the mother tongue or the language of the environment in early childhood classrooms might not be totally free from challenges. The early years cover the period when children are expected to be exposed to practices that give cognizance to the culture of the immediate environment, especially the language (Majebi & Oduolowu, 2020). Language and culture are intertwined. It is good to note that language does more than just facilitate communication; it occupies the most significant place in culture and serves to sever ties between children and their culture. Language is the essential bedrock on which culture is built and handed to the future generation. It is at the core of cultural identity. The child's cultural identity

occupies a prominent place in the child's rights (Majebi, Jimoh, and Ogunbiyi, 2024). The educational programs during the early years are supposed to take the culture of the children into cognizance. Culturally appropriate practices are considered appropriate for ECE programs. However, when English is the dominant language in the field of early childhood education and care (ECEC), it might result in the violation of the rights of the child. It might put children in conflict situations about their identity. Children will be denied the opportunity to learn in a developmentally appropriate way, which acknowledges culture as one of the components (Lettington, 2018). Children whose first language is different from the English language might experience difficulty participating fully in classroom activities. The practice also is a deviation from inclusive educational practices. It can marginalise children from other language backgrounds.

Among the three major languages spoken in Nigeria is the Yoruba language. The Yoruba language is a tonal and analytical language spoken predominantly in west and southwestern Nigeria, parts of Benin and Togo. It is one of Africa's most widely spoken indigenous languages, with over 50 million speakers. Campbell (1991) describes Yoruba as a tone language whose many varieties are spoken across West Africa with about 20 million native speakers. It is spoken natively in Nigeria as well as the neighboring countries of the Republic of Benin and Togo (Washington, 2017). Hewson (nd) says that the Yoruba language has many dialects, and there are two million second-language speakers who use it as a lingua franca.

According to Okanlawon (2018) Yoruba sound system is used to create many words that can form infinite linguistic patterns. In this system, there are three sets of sounds that make up Yoruba words: consonants, vowels, and tone.

Yoruba is not only a means of communication; it is a repository of culture, philosophy, and identity expressed through proverbs, poetry (oriki), folktales, and music. Ojo (1999) affirmed that Yoruba language is complex and deeply rooted in culture. Yoruba has three distinct tones (high, mid, and low) that determine word meanings, making pronunciation crucial. The language boasts diverse dialects but maintains mutual intelligibility. Beyond verbal communication, Yoruba incorporates symbolism and gestures, reinforcing its depth as a language of history, spirituality, and knowledge transmission.

The dominance of the English language has the tendency of depriving children and young learners of benefits from some of the rich components of the Yoruba language. This was corroborated by Ajepe & Ademowo (2016), who assert that the dominance of the English Language can lead to linguistic and cultural disadvantages. This was further expanded by Oluga & Babalola (2012); according to them, the dominant use of English in Nigeria has negative implications on the quality of the indigenous languages used by many, especially the elites. They can hardly express themselves in their indigenous language without code-mixing with lexemes or phrases of English or indigenous language intermittently. If the adults who are part of the stakeholders of children's education could end up in the described situation about language usage, it becomes necessary to examine their perceptions on the impacts of English as the dominant language in Early childhood education and care centers.

Education as a system generally is believed to be a social service that needs the collaboration of different stakeholders to achieve its objective maximally. A stakeholder, according to Overseas Development Institute (ODI) (2009), is a person, a group of people, or an

organization who has something to gain or lose through the outcomes of a planning process, project, or program. In many circles, these are called interest groups. British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) (2018) also describes a stakeholder as anyone with interest in a business, program, or system; it could be an individual, group, or organization that is affected by the activity of such business, program, or system. In this study, stakeholders include the preschool teachers, parents, community, and school heads and school owners, as well as the government who have a vested interest in matters related to the care, development, learning and progress of learners. They make direct and indirect investments in children for them to do well because they will benefit in some ways. These are the categories of people who deal directly with children.

Linguistic imperialism proposed by Robert Phillipson (1992) anchored this study. It states that the dominance of English worldwide can marginalize other languages. He addresses language as an instrument of power.

Research Questions

1. What is the perception of parents/community members on the impacts of using English as the hyper-central language in early childhood education and care centers?
2. What is the perception of school Heads/Owners on the impacts of using English as the hyper-central language in early childhood education and care centers?
3. What is the perception of ECCDE teachers on the impacts of using English

as the hyper-central language in early childhood education and care centers?

4. What is the language commonly used by the ECECC teachers across the Seven Yoruba speaking states?

Methodology

Design and sample selection

This study adopted the descriptive survey design. The purposive sampling technique was used to select seven states in Nigeria, namely Oyo, Osun, Ekiti, Ondo, Ogun, Lagos, and Kwara States, who participated in the study. The States were selected because they all have Yoruba as their predominant language. The Yoruba language is one of the three major indigenous languages in Nigeria. It is largely spoken by the people from the West and Southwest of Nigeria. The National Policy on Education (2007, 2013) recommended that a language of the immediate environment should be adopted to teach children in the early years. Some adults in the Yoruba-speaking region do not take pride in speaking this language. They exposed their children to communicating in the English Language right from birth/home. Hence, the need to investigate the perceptions of stakeholders on the assumed impacts of English as a dominant language in some selected ECECC in Yoruba-speaking states.

Schools with pre-primary school sections, parents who have children in the pre-primary school, and community members were randomly selected based on the willingness of the headmasters/mistresses/community members to participate in the study

Sampling Techniques and Sample

A total number of 617 stakeholders consisting of 247 preschool teachers, 204 School owners/heads, and 166 parents & community members across the states were randomly selected for the study. These people were selected because they have direct dealings with the education and care of children or wards. Four research questions were raised and answered.

Instrument

A questionnaire titled 'Perception of Preschool Stakeholders on the Impacts of English as Dominant Language in ECECC was used to elicit information from the respondents. The draft of the questionnaire was given to two analysts and early childhood experts for face and content validity. The questionnaire has two sections: the demographic information of the respondents and 10 items of 4 Likert scale on the perceptions of different stakeholders.

Procedure for Data Collection

Early Childhood Education Lecturers in higher institutions of learning located in each of the States involved were the gatekeepers for data collection. They were contacted for assistance in selecting research assistants, monitoring administration, and retrieving the questionnaire. An online meeting was held to brief them on the purpose of the research and the target population. This was done to equip them with necessary information, which, in turn, provided adequate guidance to the research assistants on the administration of the questionnaire. Five research assistants who are B.Ed students in those higher institutions in each of the states were selected for the distribution and retrieval of research questionnaires to the stakeholders in their various categories and locations. Soft copies of the instruments were sent to the

Gatekeepers for printing while the researcher provided the financial implications. The initial plan was to reach government officials in charge of ECE to get information on the government's commitment to the issues at hand, but it was suspended when the responses were not forthcoming.

Data Analysis

In this study, a four-point Likert scale was utilized to assess the perception of stakeholders. The responses to the questionnaire were systematically collected, organized, coded, and analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques. The analysis was conducted in two stages:

Demographic Analysis:

The demographic characteristics of the respondents were summarized using frequency counts and percentages. This provided an overview of the distribution of participants based on variables such as gender, state, school type, and educational background.

Perception Analysis Using a Four-Point Likert Scale:

A four-point Likert scale was used to measure respondents' perceptions, with response options such as: Strongly Agree (4 points), Agree (3 points), Disagree (2 points), and Strongly Disagree (1 point). A weighted average was computed for each item on the questionnaire to analyze the overall perception of each stakeholder group.

The weighted average values were then interpreted based on predefined decision thresholds. For instance:

3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Positive Perception

2.50 – 3.49 = Moderately Positive Perception

1.50 – 2.49 = Moderately Negative Perception

1.00 – 1.49 = Strongly Negative Perception

This approach provided a quantitative measure of stakeholders' perceptions, facilitating a clear understanding of their views on the subject under investigation

Results

Demographic Information

Table 1: Demographic information of the respondents

	Parent/Community members (%)	School heads/owners (%)	Teachers (%)
Gender			
Male	58 (35.0)	78 (38.2)	72 (29.1)
Female	103 (62.0)	115 (56.4)	172 (69.6)
Unknown	5 (3.0)	11 (5.4)	3 (1.2)
State			
Ogun	16 (9.6)	30 (14.7)	23 (9.3)
Lagos	11 (6.6)	19 (9.3)	43 (17.4)
Oyo	20 (12.0)	31 (15.2)	43 (17.4)
Ondo	26 (15.7)	33 (16.2)	43 (17.4)
Osun	10 (6.0)	21 (10.3)	21 (8.5)
Ekiti	30 (18.1)	2 (1.0)	28 (11.3)
Kwara	40 (24.1)	39 (19.1)	34 (13.8)
Unknown	13 (7.8)	29 (14.2)	12 (4.9)
School Type			
Public		86 (42.2)	120 (48.6)
Private		112 (54.9)	121 (49.0)
Unknown		6 (2.9)	6 (2.4)
Educational Status			
O'level	37 (22.3)	7 (3.4)	24 (9.7)
NCE	49 (29.5)	29 (14.2)	78 (31.6)
B. Ed	54 (32.5)	89 (43.6)	97 (39.3)
M.Ed	19 (11.4)	52 (25.5)	16 (6.5)
Ph. D	1 (6)	7 (3.4)	-
Others	3 (1.8)	15 (7.4)	29 (11.7)
Unknown	3 (1.8)	5 (2.5)	3 (1.2)
TOTAL	166	204	247

Table 1 shows the demographic information of the respondents, which reveals a diverse sample from different regions. The majority of respondents across the three groups (parents/community members, school heads/owners, and teachers) are female.

Specifically, 62.0% of parents/community members, 56.4% of school heads/owners, and 69.6% of teachers are female. The male representation is 35.0% for parents/community members, 38.2% for school heads/owners, and 29.1% for teachers. A small percentage of respondents did not disclose their gender: 3.0% for parents/community members, 5.4% for school heads/owners, and 1.2% for teachers.

Geographically, the respondents are distributed across seven states in Nigeria, with varying

representations. Among parents/community members, the largest groups come from Kwara (24.1%) and Ekiti (18.1%). For school heads/owners, Kwara (19.1%) and Ondo (16.2%) have the highest representation. Teachers are more evenly distributed across Lagos, Oyo, Ondo (each with 17.4%), and Kwara (13.8%). A noteworthy portion of respondents did not specify their state: 7.8% for parents/community members, 14.2% for school heads/owners, and 4.9% for teachers.

In terms of school type, the majority of school heads/owners and teachers are affiliated with private schools, accounting for 54.9% and 49.0%, respectively. Public school representation is slightly lower: 42.2% for school heads/owners and 48.6% for teachers. A small percentage of respondents did not disclose the

type of school they are affiliated with: 2.9% for school heads/owners and 2.4% for teachers.

Educational status varies significantly among the respondents. For parents/community members, the highest educational attainment is O'level (22.3%), NCE (29.5%), and B. Ed (32.5%). Among school heads/owners, B. Ed holders constitute the largest group (43.6%), followed by M.Ed holders (25.5%). Teachers predominantly hold B. Ed (39.3%) and NCE (31.6%). A few respondents across all groups hold Ph.D. degrees or other qualifications, and a small percentage did not specify their educational status.

Research Question 1: What is the perception of parents/community members on the impacts of using English as the dominant language in early childhood education and care centers?

Table 2 shows that the perception of parents and community members on the use of English as the dominant language in early childhood education and care centers (ECCDE) is positive (WA = 61.66%). A majority believe that using English in early childhood classrooms can enhance children's performance and language development, with 62.8% (34.1% strongly agree and 28.7% agree) and 63.4%

(32.3% strongly agree and 31.1% agree) supporting these views, respectively.

Additionally, 64.2% (30.5% strongly agree and 37.2% agree) emphasize the importance of exposing children to both their native language and English during teaching and learning activities. There is also a belief that using English will prepare children for future educational activities and global relevance, with 64.4% (28.2% strongly agree and 36.2% agree) and 70.3% (30.2% strongly agree and 40.1% agree) supporting these perspectives.

On the other hand, there are significant concerns about the cultural impact of using English exclusively. Many fear that it will make children forget their culture and deny them the opportunity to learn their mother tongue, with 47.8%

Table 2: Perception of Parents/Community members on the use of English as the dominant Language in Early Childhood Education and Care Centers

S/N	Perception of Parents/Community members	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
1.	Using English Language in early childhood classrooms will help to improve children's performance	56 (34.1)	47 (28.7)	23 (14.0)	38 (23.2)
2.	Exposing children to English language in the early years will help in their language development	53 (32.3)	51 (31.1)	37 (22.3)	23 (23.2)
3.	The dominance of the English Language in early childhood classrooms will strengthen children's capacity to learn their own language	30 (18.5)	54 (33.3)	32 (19.8)	46 (28.4)
4.	The use of the English Language alone in early childhood classrooms will make them forget their culture	39 (24.2)	38 (23.6)	52 (32.3)	32 (19.9)
5.	It is important for children to be exposed to their native and English Language during English teaching and learning activities	50 (30.5)	61 (37.2)	23 (14.0)	30 (18.3)
6.	Exposing children to English language alone will deny them the opportunity to learn their own mother tongue	45 (27.4)	55 (33.5)	43 (25.9)	21 (12.8)
7.	Using the English language in ECCDE centers will not affect children's culture	31 (19.6)	75 (47.5)	35 (22.2)	17 (10.8)
8.	Using the English language in ECCDE centers will prepare children for future educational activities	46 (28.2)	59 (36.2)	44 (27.0)	14 (8.6)
9.	Using the English language in ECCDE centers will help children to be relevant in the global world	49 (30.2)	65 (40.1)	29 (17.9)	19 (11.7)
10.	Using the English language in ECCDE centers will hinder children from participating in community activities	58 (35.4)	41 (25.0)	40 (24.4)	24 (15.2)
Weighted Average (%) = 61.66					

Decision Value: Negative (1-49%); Positive (50- 100%)

(24.2% strongly agree and 23.6% agree) and 60.9% (27.4% strongly agree and 33.5% agree) expressing these worries. A notable 50.4% (35.4% strongly agree and 25.0% agree) believe that using English alone in ECCDE centers will hinder children from participating in community activities. However, opinions are divided on whether English use in ECCDE centers will affect children's culture, with 67.1% (19.6% strongly agree and 47.5% agree) believing it won't, and 52.3% (18.5% strongly agree and

33.3% agree) thinking it will help children learn their own language better.

Research Question 2: What is the perception of school Heads/Owners on the impacts of using English as the dominant language in early childhood education and care centers?

Table 3 shows that the perception of school heads and owners on the use of English as the dominant language in early childhood

Table 3: Perception of School Heads/Owners on the use of English as the dominant language in Early Childhood Education and Care Centers

S/N	Perception of School Heads/Owners	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
1.	Important educational concepts from local languages can lose their meanings if taught in the English language	91 (45.0)	64 (31.7)	28 (13.9)	19 (9.4)
2.	The English language is used in early childhood education and care centers (ECCDE) because there are no available textbooks written in the native language.	53 (26.2)	72 (35.6)	45 (22.3)	32 (15.8)
3.	Using the English language as the language of instruction at ECCDE centers prepares children for external examination/competition	78 (38.8)	101 (50.2)	18 (9.0)	4 (2.0)
4.	Using the English language as the language of instruction at ECCDE centers increases enrolment	65 (32.3)	109 (54.2)	18 (9.0)	9 (4.5)
5.	Using the English language eliminates the inferiority complex	58 (29.0)	96 (48.0)	31 (15.5)	15 (7.5)
6.	Adopting English as the only dominant language in the ECCDE centers will make children lose touch with their cultural values	58 (28.6)	67 (33.0)	44 (21.7)	34 (16.7)
7.	The use English language as the language of instruction in early childhood centers is to deny them of their right to cultural identity	40 (19.8)	55 (27.2)	52 (25.7)	55 (27.3)
8.	Using English as the only dominant language in ECCDE centers is a mark of international standard	54 (27.3)	100 (50.5)	26 (13.1)	18 (9.1)
9.	Using English as the only dominant language ECCDE centers is to satisfy the parent	47 (23.3)	80 (39.6)	43 (21.3)	32 (15.8)
10.	Using English as the only dominant language in the field of early childhood education and care breaks the rule of giving every language equal opportunity	51 (25.2)	59 (29.2)	52 (25.7)	40 (19.8)
Weighted Average (%) = 69.47					

Decision Value: Negative (1-49%); Positive (50- 100%)

education and care centers (ECCDE) is positive (WA= 69.47%). A notable 76.7% (45.0% strongly agree and 31.7% agree) believe that important educational concepts from local languages can lose their meanings if taught in English, highlighting the risk of linguistic and cultural erosion. However, a substantial number of school heads and owners, 61.8% (26.2% strongly agree and 35.6% agree), attribute the use of English to the lack of textbooks in native languages. They recognize the practical benefits of using English, such as preparing children for external examinations and competitions, with 89% (38.8% strongly agree and 50.2% agree) supporting this view, and increasing enrollment, with 86.5% (32.3% strongly agree and 54.2% agree) indicating that English language instruction boosts school enrollment.

Despite these practical considerations, there are significant concerns about cultural implications. Over half of the respondents, 61.6% (28.6%

strongly agree and 33.0% agree), worry that adopting English as the only hyper-central language will make children lose touch with their cultural values. Moreover, 47% (19.8% strongly agree and 27.2% agree) feel that using English as the primary language of instruction denies children their right to cultural identity. While 77.8% (27.3% strongly agree and 50.5%

agree) view the use of English as a mark of international standard, opinions are divided on whether it serves to satisfy parents, with 62.9% (23.3% strongly agree and 39.6% agree) in agreement. Lastly, 54.4% (25.2% strongly agree and 29.2% agree) believe that using only English breaks the rule of giving every language an equal opportunity.

Table 4: Perception of ECCDE Teachers on the Use of English as the Dominant Language in Early Childhood Education and Care Centers

S/N	Perception of ECCDE Teachers	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
1.	I feel that important educational concepts from local languages can lose their meanings if taught in the English language	89 (36.6)	69 (28.4)	52 (21.4)	33 (13.6)
2.	If I have my way, I will prefer to teach the children in my class in their native language	48 (19.4)	110 (44.5)	47 (19.0)	42 (17.0)
3.	I use the English language as the language of instruction at ECCDE centers to make it easy for them to have a strong foundation for learning	99 (40.1)	117 (47.4)	23 (9.3)	8 (3.2)
4.	I use the English language as the language of instruction in ECCEC	90 (37.7)	124 (51.9)	14 (5.9)	11 (4.6)
5.	I use the English language in early childhood education and care centers (ECCEC) because there are no available textbooks written in my native language.	72 (29.5)	80 (32.8)	63 (25.8)	28 (11.5)
6.	Adopting English as the only dominant language in the ECCDE centers will make children lose touch with their cultural values	47 (19.5)	76 (31.5)	78 (32.4)	40 (16.6)
7.	The use of English language as the language of instruction in early childhood centers is to deny them of their right to cultural identity	45 (18.5)	51 (20.6)	91 (36.8)	56 (22.7)
8.	Using English as the only dominant language in ECCDE centers is a mark of international standard	89 (36.8)	96 (39.7)	38 (15.7)	19 (7.9)
9.	Using English as the only dominant language ECCDE centers is to satisfy the parent	37 (15.2)	84 (34.6)	80 (32.9)	42 (17.3)
10.	Using English as the only dominant language in the field of early childhood education and care breaks the rule of giving every language equal opportunity	56 (23.2)	92 (38.2)	63 (26.1)	30 (12.4)
Weighted Average (%) = 64.61					

Decision Value: Negative (1-49%); Positive (50- 100%)

Research

Question 3: What is the perception of ECCDE Teachers on the impacts of using English as the dominant language in early childhood education and care centers?

Table 4 shows that the perception of Early Childhood Care, Development, and Education (ECCDE) teachers on the impacts of using English as the dominant language in early childhood education centers in Nigeria is high. A significant proportion of teachers, 65% (36.6% strongly agree and 28.4% agree), believe that important educational concepts from local languages can lose their meanings when taught in English. This sentiment aligns with 63.9% of teachers who prefer teaching children in their native language (19.4% strongly agree and 44.5% agree), indicating a strong inclination towards

preserving local linguistic and cultural heritage. However, despite these concerns, a majority of teachers use English as the language of instruction to provide a strong foundation in learning, with 87.5% (40.1% strongly agree and 47.4% agree) supporting its use for this purpose. Additionally, 89.6% (37.7% strongly agree and 51.9% agree) affirm its implementation in their centers, driven by practical considerations such as the unavailability of textbooks in native languages, supported by 62.3% (29.5% strongly agree and 32.8% agree).

Furthermore, teachers also express concerns about the cultural implications of using English as the sole language of instruction. A substantial number, 51% (19.5% strongly agree and 31.5% agree), fear that children may lose touch with their cultural values, and 39.1%

(18.5% strongly agree and 20.6% agree) feel that it denies children their right to cultural identity. However, some teachers recognize the benefits of adopting English for its international standard, with 76.5% (36.8% strongly agree and 39.7% agree) in favor.

Teachers are divided on whether the use of English is to satisfy parents, with 49.8% (15.2% strongly agree and 34.6% agree) agreeing and 50.2% (32.9% disagree and 17.3% strongly disagree) disagreeing. Lastly, 61.4% (23.2% strongly agree and 38.2% agree) believe using only English breaks the rule of giving every language an equal opportunity.

Research Question 4: What is the language commonly used by the ECECC teachers across the Seven Yoruba-speaking states?

Seven Respondents provided no response, one indicated they use both, and 183, the majority in the states, indicated that only English is used. A teacher in Lagos indicated Hausa and English. A teacher in Kwara, Oyo, four from Lagos, and three from Ekiti indicated English and Native language. 4 teachers from Lagos, Oyo, Ekiti, and Ondo specified that they use English and Yoruba. 8 teachers from Kwara also specified that they use Yoruba and English. Two teachers in Lagos indicated they use a combination of Igbo, Yoruba, and English.

Table 5: Language commonly used by the ECCDE Teachers across the Seven Yoruba speaking states

State	No Resp	Both	Eng	Eng & Hausa	Eng & Nat. lang	Eng & Yor	Eng, Yor & Igbo	Igbo	Nat. lang	Per-spec-tive lang	Y o	Total
Ogun	0	1	22	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	23
Lagos	0	0	32	1	4	4	2	0	0	0	0	43
Oyo	1	0	36	0	1	4	0	0	0	0	1	43
Ondo	1	0	36	0	0	4	0	0	1	1	0	43
Osun	0	0	19	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	21
Ekiti	1	0	19	0	3	4	0	0	0	0	1	28
Kwara	4	0	19	0	1	8	0	0	0	0	2	34
Total	7	1	183	1	9	24	2	1	1	1	7	235

Discussion

A majority of the parents and community members believe that using English will prepare children for future educational activities and global relevance. They emphasize the importance of exposing children to both their native language and English during teaching and learning activities. They also believe that using English in early childhood

classrooms can enhance children's performance and language development. These findings are in line with Ajepe and Ademowo (2016), who reported that English is a criterion for measuring success and social status. Some parents who love their children to speak their indigenous language are equally more concerned with the education and future of these children, which is tied to high proficiency in the English language

However, they believe that using English alone in ECCDE centers will hinder children from participating in community activities. Their opinions are divided on whether English use in ECCDE centers will affect children's culture.

A notable number of school heads and owners recognize the practical benefits of using English, such as preparing children for external examinations and competitions. This finding corroborates with Ajepe and Ademowo (2016), who conceived that proficiency in English is attached to career and social growth. It also opens certain doors to those who have it and commands respect everywhere it is displayed. It also increases enrollment, indicating that English language instruction boosts school enrollment. However, important educational concepts from local languages can lose their meanings if taught in English, highlighting the risk of linguistic and cultural erosion. Many worry that adopting English as the only hyper-central language will make children lose touch with their cultural values. Ajepe and Ademowo (2016) conceived that proficiency in English is attached to career and social growth. It also opens certain doors to those who have it and commands respect everywhere it is displayed.

A significant proportion of teachers believe that important educational concepts from local languages can lose their meaning

when taught in English. More than half of the teachers prefer teaching children in their native language. They indicate a strong inclination towards preserving local linguistic and cultural heritage. A substantial number fear that children may lose touch with their cultural values and feel that it denies children their right to cultural identity. Over half of the respondents worry that adopting English as the only dominant language will deny children their right to cultural identity. These findings are already happening, as reported by Oke (2013), that the younger generation of Yoruba speakers Anglicizing their Indigenous Yoruba names without considering the effects on the Indigenous languages

183 respondents, which is the majority in the states, indicated that only English is used during the teaching and learning activities in early childhood education and care centers. This is in agreement with the submission of Okono & Enang (nd) that mother tongue education is provided in less than twenty Nigerian languages throughout the country.

There are too many issues when English is the dominant language in the education and care of children. Oluga & Babalola (2012) opine that there are severe implications for the decline in the use of indigenous language.

Conclusions

Stakeholders in early childhood education and care have positive perceptions of the impact of English as the dominant language in early childhood education and care centres. This might not be a result of the love for it but of the fact that English is the language of education, trade, and employment.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made

- The government should provide a monitoring team to enforce the implementation of the recommendation of NPE on the language of instruction
- English should not be a criterion for anyone seeking job within one locale
- Parents should reinforce and motivate their children to be proud of their culture

Ethical Consideration

Permissions were sought from the school heads/owners to secure access to their schools and for their teachers to be involved in the research. The study did not require any formal permission. Participants were informed about the essence of the study. They were told that participation was not compulsory. If they were not interested, they were free to withdraw. All the respondents gave their oral consent to participate. This was done since the research did not collect information on their private or medical lives. They were assured of the confidentiality of their perception of the issues discussed and that they would remain anonymous.

Strengths and Limitations

A limitation of this study may be that the recruitment of respondents was done through gatekeepers. This may impact the choice of teachers, parents, and community members. Also, the study failed to examine the courses studied at the teacher training institutions by the teachers. There was a need to check if they were trained to handle children in the early years. Covering all the states that speak the Yoruba language increases the chance of harvesting the perception of a good number of people.

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