
**MOTHER TONGUE EFFECT TO THE TEACHING OUTCOMES IN ENGLISH
SUBJECT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN UGANDA.
A CASE OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KANYUM
SUB-COUNTY IN KUMI DISTRICT.**

1 Tapi Isaiah, 2 Ojok Alex

1, 2 Metropolitan International University

ABSTRACT

This project was about the effect of mother tongue (L1) on the English subject outcome in secondary schools in Uganda from selected schools in Kanyum sub county, Kumi District. Questionnaires were designed and used to get secondary data; where by respondents were required to answer the questions. The researcher conducted face to face interviews with students and teachers on issues pertaining the influence of mother tongue (L1) on English Subject outcome in secondary schools from selected schools in Kanyum Sub County.

A number of languages had been advanced about the need for a second language. In the context of this study, English was the language stressed mostly. English was a language which was widely spread and in Uganda it was the major medium of communication and instruction in a classroom situation with an exception of the Thematic Curriculum. David (1997) in his encyclopedia of language said that; children learn to speak in a popular view by copying the utterances heard around them and by having correct responses strengthened by the repetitions, corrections and other reactions that adults provide.

Key words: Mother Tongue and Teaching Outcomes

Background of the study

Mother tongue effect was a phenomenon viewed by many scholars as "mother tongue influence " which had been an actual response to the applied results of the structural methods known as audio-visual, audio-oral and structural global (Lekova

2010).

Liu (2001) said that mother tongue (L1) influence in particular as language transfer known as L1 interference, linguistic interference and cross meaning which refers to speakers or writers applied the knowledge from their mother tongue or native language acquisition method into learning a second language and that was English.

According to Viola (2013), she said that influence or effect was the early step to integration perceived as welcome process of using mother tongue L1 or other based on the facts that the influence or effect can appear in phonology, grammar, word formation, word and sentence sequence among others (Negeri2011). However, the difficulties in L1 (mother tongue) and its importance into second language acquisition (SLA) besides the relationships between students' mother tongue (L1) and second language (L2) linguistic resources always appear difficult, (Republic of Uganda, 1981)

So far, the mismatch between the language used in schooling and spoken at home might had important inferences for educational attainment, (Ramachandrani 2012:2). It was also natural as well as scientific that every language was governed by a rule, style, appearance, among others. Besides, whenever we encounter English language, our natural tendency wanted to hear it in terms of the sounds of our own language that we actually perceived it rather differently from the way native speakers did (Anthony. D, 2023).

Moreover, the natural instinct urged to look for similarities and differences in order to draw some comparisons with what we know already. So, we consciously or unconsciously bring what we know to what we do not making it impossible to learn anything entirely from scratch Nichols, (2002).

Statement of the Problem

Learning English was a growing need in this age of globalization. Through another language, we spoke with people from around the world. However, since people

expressed themselves best in their mother tongue, they were faced with challenges of learning English language.

In Uganda, teaching English as a foreign language was a challenging task in that when teachers taught a new language outside of its original context, they were often faced with a lack of adequate published materials that helped to enhance fluent writing in the target language (Schumann, 1978). The problem of lack of materials was only one of the many problems that had a negative impact on the learning and performance in English subject particularly among the selected secondary schools in Kanyum sub-county.

Objectives of the study

The study was basically intended to find out the impact of mother tongue (L1) on the performance of learners in English subject in secondary schools in Kumi district.

- 1. To establish how mother tongue (L1) affects the performance of learners in English subject in selected schools.*
- 2. To examine the effects of mother tongue (L1) on the performance of students in English subject.*
- 3. To suggest the strategies to minimize mother tongue effects on the performance of English subject in selected schools.*

Research Questions

- 1. How does mother tongue affect the performance of Learners in English subject?*
- 2. What are the effects of mother tongue on the performance of learners in English subject?*
- 3. What are the strategies to minimize mother tongue effects on the performance of learners in secondary schools in selected schools?*

Methodology

Research Design

The researcher adopted or used a descriptive research design in order to study the effect of mother tongue to the teaching outcome in English subject since the information gathered involved questionnaires.

The purpose of this research design was to describe systematically the situation or area of interest factually and accurately.

Population study

The study was conducted in Kanyum Sub County, Kumi district. The residents of Kanyum

Sub County are dominated by Ateso speakers.

Population considered was the samples from Kanyum comprehensive secondary school lower secondary section, St. Elizabeth secondary School lower section.

Sample Size determination

A total of 50 respondents was interviewed. These included students of 2021 lower secondary one and two learners.

Sampling technique and Procedure

According to Mutai (2001) in purposive sampling, the researcher handpicked the cases to be included in his sample on the basis of his judgment of their typical in terms of their current enrolments.

Systematic sampling was used to select learners from each school by the use of class registers depending on the number of learners in the class register. Every third (or forth) learners were

selected for inclusion in the sampling depending on the number of learners in the class. Simple random sampling was used to select the respondents.

Data collection instruments

Questionnaire

The questionnaires were administered on some students and teachers in the selected schools so that the researcher could compare and contrast data given on the influence of mother tongue (L1) on English subject performance at lower level in the two schools.

Interview

The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with some teachers and students, from both senior one and senior two on issues pertaining to the respondent's background, the school enrollment, the influence of mother tongue on learner's performance in English subject at lower secondary level.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. Different data sets were used in analyzing data collected, that was to say, where necessary SPSS package was used (Nelson. K, 2022). Bar graphs were used to give a clearer outlook about the influence of L1 on learners' performance in English subject at lower secondary level and they were done in Microsoft Excel. Recommendations were made using the outcome of the result of the analysis.

RESULTS

Demographic Aspect of Respondents

Gender of English Teachers

Table 1 Showing Gender of Respondents

<i>Teacher gender</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>

Male	28	56
Female	22	44
Total	50	100

**Source: Primary Data
2020**

From table 1 and figure 4.1, it can be seen that the majority of respondents were males that was (28) representing 56% of the total number of respondents, 22 respondents were female representing 44% of the respondents. This was an indication that gender sensitivity was taken care off so the findings therefore cannot be doubted on gender grounds; they can be relied for decision making.

Educational level of Respondents

Table 2: Showing academic qualifications of the respondents

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage
O level	5	10
A level	10	20
Diploma	9	18
Degree	26	52
Total	50	100

**Source: primary data
2020**

Results in table 2 indicate that majority of the respondents were degree holders representing 52%. These were followed by a level with 10 respondents representing 20%, diploma followed with 9 respondents representing 18%. The number of

respondents that had completed 0- level was 5 representing a percentage of 10. This implies that the respondents are well educated and therefore the information obtained from them can be relied on for the purpose of this study.

Age distribution of respondents

Table 3: Showing age distribution of respondents

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
15-19years	8	16
20-24 years	15	30
25-29 years	14	28
30-34 years	9	18
35-39 years	4	8
Total	50	100

**Source: primary data
2020**

Table 3 above shows that, majority of respondents were aged between 20–24 years (30%) respondents followed, by 25-29 years represented by 14(28%) respondents. the number of respondents that between the ages of 30 and 34 was 9 representing a percentage of 18. Those that were between 15 and 19 years were 8 represented by 16%

in table 2. The least number of the respondents that were involved in this study were in the age bracket of 35 and 39 representing a percentage of 8. From the above analysis, it can be construed that

majority of the respondents were mature hence the information obtained from them could be trusted and looked at as true and a good representation of the information the researcher was looking for.

Mother tongue usage in schools.

Table 4 shows the usage of vernacular by the teachers and the learners in Kanyum secondary school in Kanyum Sub County in Kumi district.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	35	70
No	6	12
Not sure	9	18
Total	50	100

Source: primary data 2020

Table 4 shows that an overwhelming majority of the people of Kanyum, Kumi District could tell the effect of mother tongue on the teaching outcomes in English subject, 70% of the total number of respondents. Some 18% of the respondents were not sure about the causes of mother tongue effect while only 6 respondents-that was 12% of the respondents were not aware of the causes of mother tongue effect on the teaching outcomes in English subject in Kanyum secondary school in Kumi District. These findings showed that people in Kanyum Sub County are very much aware of the

effects of mother tongue influence but no serious action and research had been undertaken.

The major causes of mixing English with Ateso phrases.

Table 5. Shows the major causes mixing Ateso with English, in Kumi District.

Cause	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Using Ateso most of the time.</i>	30	60
<i>Relaxed administration on enforcing English speaking in schools</i>	15	30
<i>Negative attitude towards English</i>	5	10
Total	50	100

*Source: primary data
2016*

Table 5. above shows that the major causes of mother tongue interference among the learners.

60 of the respondents believed that learners were speaking Ateso most of the time. Another

30% of the respondents believed that the major cause of mother tongue interference on English on the learners around Kanyum sub county Kumi District was the relaxed school administrations in enforcing spoken English interfering performance in schools represented by

15 numbers of respondents. Those who agreed that the negative attitude towards English by learners was the major cause of drug abuse among the learners in Kumi Municipality were 5 represented by a percentage of 10. The findings showed that

there was need for civic education of the parents aimed at sensitizing them on how to encourage their learners about the benefits of their children speaking English. And the need for the administrators to be strict in the enforcement of English speaking in schools.

Perception of Teachers and Students on the effect of Mother Tongue on the teaching outcome in English subject

Table 6: Students' Responses on Influence of Mother Tongue on Performance

Responses	Yes		No	
	(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)
a) Language used by teachers in conversations influence performance of English	111	58.0%	80	41.9%
b) Use of mother tongue influences Performance in English.	147	77.0%	44	23.0%

Table 6 shows that respondents indicated that the language their teachers used affected the

teaching of English while 80 (41.9%) respondents indicated that the language their teachers used did not influence their performance in English. These findings show that language used by teachers affected students' performance in English. Therefore, since the prevalence of switching language was high as indicated earlier, then this affected performance of English in secondary schools of Kumi. Kolawole (2002) has a similar view when he talks about the language that teachers use and argued that some students did not understand grammar because their teachers themselves did not know it and, in most cases, English language teachers in the senior primary and junior secondary schools' resort to the use of mother tongue to teach (code switching); this led to poor performance of English.

Therefore, the findings imply that language used by teachers in classroom affects the performance of English.

A majority of students, (147) 77% of students agreed that use of mother tongue affects performance of English while (44) 23% disagreed. Therefore, majority of students perceived that use of mother tongue has an influence in performance of English in secondary schools of Kumi District. This concurs with Dulay and Burt (1982) who studied the area of native language and found that majority of students believed that there was interference of mother tongue on the target language. They further considered interference as the automatic transfer, due to habit, of the surface structure of the first language onto the surface of the target language. These findings therefore demonstrated that use of mother tongue affected teaching of English.

Table 7: Teachers' Responses on Perception of the Influence of Mother Tongue on Performance of English

Responses	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree
a) Students who use mother tongue perform poorly in English.	(4) 50%	(3) 37.5%	-	(1) 12.5%
b) Students who use English perform better in English	(3) 37.5%	(5) 62.5%	-	-
c) Use of mother tongue influences performance of English.	(2) 25.0%	(6) 75.0%	-	-

Table 7 shows that (4) 50.0% of the teachers strongly agree that students who use

mother tongue perform poorly in English whereas (3) 37.5% agree. On the contrary, (1) 12.5% of the teachers disagreed that students who use mother tongue perform poorly in English. None of the teachers either strongly disagreed or was undecided. Therefore, a total of 87.5% of the teachers agreed and strongly agreed that students who use mother tongue in school perform poorly in English.

Table 7 also shows that (6) 75.0% of teachers agree that use of mother tongue affects teaching of English while (2) 25.0% strongly agree. None of the teachers strongly disagreed, disagreed or was undecided. These findings confirm that indeed use of mother tongue influences the performance of English.

Table 8: Students' Responses on Measures Taken to minimize Mother Tongue effect

Responses	Yes (f)	(%)	No (f)	(%)
a) your school has a language policy	183	95.8	8	4.2
b) The language policy prohibit students from speaking mother tongue.	158	82.7	33	17.3
c) You are punished for speaking mother tongue.	176	92.2	15	7.8
d) Students who speak in English is rewarded in some form.	22	11.5	169	88.5

Table 8 shows that (183) 95.8% of students responded by indicating that their schools had a language policy while (8) 4.2% of the respondents indicated that their school did not have a language policy.

The study further wanted to find out whether a Language Policy prohibits students from speaking in mother tongue. Table 12 shows that (158) 82.7% of the students agreed that indeed their school language policy stopped them from using mother tongue in conversations while (33) 17.3% disagreed, that is, language policy did not prohibit them from using mother tongue in conversations.

Furthermore, (176) 92.2% of the students admitted that they were punished whenever they used mother tongue in school while 7.3% indicated that they were not punished. On the other hand, 88.5% of the students indicated that they were not rewarded for conversing in English while 11.5% said that they were rewarded for conversing in English. These findings indicate that students are punished often and rarely rewarded.

Moreover, teachers responded to questions that required them to bring out measures that should be taken to curb use of mother tongue.

Table 9: Teachers' Responses on Measures Taken to minimize Mother Tongue effect.

Responses	Yes (f) (%)	No (f) (%)
a) Your school has a language policy.	8 100	- -
b) The language policy prohibits students from speaking mother tongue.	5 62.5	3 29.3
c) Students are punished for speaking mother tongue.	8 100	- -
d) Students who speak in English are rewarded in some form.	- -	8 100

Table 8 shows that when teachers were asked whether there was a language

policy in them

school, (8) 100% of them acknowledged the availability of a language policy. Furthermore, (5) 62.5% agreed that the language policy in their school stopped students from conversing in English while (3) 37.5% indicated that the language policy did not stop students from conversing in mother tongue.

In addition, the table shows that (8) 100% of the teachers indicated that students were punished for conversing in mother tongue while (8) 100% of the teachers agreed that students were not rewarded for conversing in English.

Conclusions

English was valued highly in Kanyum with a lot of prestige being attached to the language. A lot of time and energy was dedicated to learning English in schools. Despite this, not much attention was given to enhance the speaking skill in the average classroom. That the learner picked up the skill from general classroom activities and instruction of a period of time was a false assumption made. As a result, the learners were not able to develop this skill and hence lacked confidence while conversing in English.

Recommendations of the study.

- 1. Students of public day secondary schools of Gatundu should be discouraged from conversing in mother tongues. Moreover, stringent language policies that are feasible should be developed.*
- 2. Teachers should cultivate a positive perception towards the use of English in school. They should be role models to the students and encourage them to converse in English.*

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