

## **EFFECT OF MOTHER TONGUE ON LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AMONG CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DISABILITY IN OTANA INTEGRATED SCHOOL JOS NORTH, PLATEAU STATE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study examined the effect of mother tongue on language acquisition among children with learning disability in Otana Integrated School, Jos North, Plateau State. The study investigate whether mother tongue have effect on language acquisition among children with learning disability in Otana Integrated School, three research question were generated for the study and data collected for the testing the assumption were analyzed by the use of simple percentage in order to obtain responses to the questionnaire items were formulated for pupils to find out the effect of mother tongue on language acquisition among children with learning disability, the population of the study comprises of fifty six pupils and four facilitators, ten pupils were drawn from each class and two facilitators as well. The findings revealed that mother tongue have effect on the acquisition of language among children with learning disability. Based on the findings, it was generally accepted that in teaching and learning processes, the mother tongue of the child is of utmost importance. For one thing, it categorizes a large part of the child's environment, that is, it has names for most of the objects, actions, ideas, attributes and so on that are so important to him, as well as to any society. Government and non- governmental organization should encourage students, parent and teachers to teach children with learning disability in their mother tongue, especially when things are complicated for them to assimilate or understand.*

***Keywords: Mother Tongue, language acquisition, learning disability and Integrated School***

### **INTRODUCTION**

Language is a means of communication and it contributes in no small measure to national building and development. It provides us with not only just a mode of interaction, but also with a capacity of representation. Language is a socio-cultural phenomenon, which has the characteristics role of communication as well as being an index perform a communicative role. According to Farinde and Ojo (2001) they cited Ginson, stating that "language is a system of conventional vocal symbol used for communication by a whole community". It decoded. According to Akindele (1999) stated that, "language is a system of symbol sor vocal system by which human being communication experience, express their feeling and thoughts to one another. In the view of Ginson (2000) "language is the institute whereby humans communicate and interact with one another by means of habitually used oral- auditory arbitrary symbols".

Language acquisition is therefore, the process by which a man acquired the capacity to perceive and comprehend language, as well as to produce and use words and sentences to communicate. Language acquisition is also a process whereby children learn their mother tongue. It is also a process of retaining a specific variant of human language". Language acquisition unlike learning, it is a sub- conscious, implicit and rapid way of acquiring language which do not involve formal teaching occurring roughly from birth to the time one starts school and or beyond depending on the person's degree and severity of learning disability. Language issues are therefore very imperative and sensitive because it touches the identity and ego of members of the community and thus possess problem and therefore need to be solved.

Mother tongue (MT) which could be referred to as first language (L1) or the first language a person picked up in his early childhood. A first language does not mean first in the sequential sense

of term but as other meanings. Similarly, the term "mother tongue" does not mean a mother tongue or language. The term L1 and MT are used interchangeably.

Farinda and Ojo (2001) opined that, mother tongue (MT) is the first language (L<sub>1</sub>) person pickup in his childhood. It has not learned but acquired. It is a language that encodes early concepts of the child. It is multilingual person. Mother tongue is a language in which a multi-greatest linguistic facilities or initiatives knowledge. It is the language in which for the effectiveness of its function required the learner's knowledge of all the four basic skills of learning that is speaking, listening, reading and writing.

Mother tongue is defined as the language that person, or group of persons speak best, and so is often the basic for socio-linguistics identity. It is also the language which a group of people considered inhabiting and which eventually becomes their natural instrument of thought and communication. Such views are but merely reflections of the different methodological shift in acquiring second language which have brought new and different outlooks in the role of mother tongue.

Mother tongue is the language acquired by everyone ever since his birth. A learner encounters mother tongues effect while learning or speaking a foreign or second language (L<sub>2</sub>). Effects of mother tongue sometimes affects a person's thought process in the science that he thinks in mother tongue and expresses in (L<sub>2</sub>) people use incorrect pronunciation of words while communicating English for instance. A Hausa native speaker pronounce THE as Ze, PEOPLE as Feafle, JOYCE as Joysy, PLEASURE as pleazja, PROBLEM as froblem, FROM as prom among others. Such words are affected by the sound pattern of their mother tongue therefore pronounced incorrectly. A (L<sub>2</sub>) Learner has an unconscious preference to convey his customs from his (L<sub>1</sub>) to the target language. The influence of mother tongue on the acquisition of (L<sub>2</sub>) has a significant effect in acquisition and pronunciation of some words. Many L<sub>2</sub> learners comes across this issue including Student with learning disability as they most times use words from their parent language while communicating in L<sub>2</sub>.

Furthermore, second language acquisition is a psychological process which involve communication, recapitulation, stability in learning, trial and error, interference of the acquired language, translation method (Delbio A., 2018) the psychological way of acquiring language also teaches the natural method to acquire the language, which one uses in expressing ideas, knowledge, beliefs, opinions, commands, thanks, feelings and it also expresses amusement, pleasure, approval or bitter feelings all with the aid of language either L<sub>1</sub> or L<sub>2</sub>.

More so, Mother tongue is one's native language, mother -tongue further refers to the language of one's mother or the language one speaks with one's mother or more generally, the language that is provided by a child's direct attendant in the home, without any participation of educational institutions. In every corner of the world, young children are learning languages at home that differ from the dominant language used in their broader social world. These children arrive at school with a precious resource: their mother tongue. Mother tongue therefore, is defined as the language which a group of people considered to inhabitants of an area acquired in the early years and which eventually becomes their natural instrument of thoughts and communication (Awoniyi, 1978). Mother tongue is the first language (L<sub>1</sub>) that a person learned. In term of that interpretation, the person is defining as a native speaker of the first language, although one may also be a native speaker, speaker of more than one language, if all of the languages were learned without formal education, such as through cultural immersion before puberty. Often a child learns the basics of the (L<sub>1</sub>) from family (Wikipedia 2007). It is therefore generally accepted that in teaching and learning processes, the mother tongue of a child is of utmost importance. For one thing, it categorizes a large part of the child's environment, that is, it has names for most of the objects, actions, ideas, attributes and so on that so important to him, as well as to any society. In many developing countries today, this is either local language or the language of the previous colonizing power. The mother tongue is the child's environmental and is the natural basics on which verbal skills can be built, children learn through communicating in a language which they understood.

It was in recognition of the importance and contribution of mother tongue to education that

made the federal ministry of education in collaboration of mother tongue to educational statutory agencies include in the National Policy on Education published in 1977, revised 1981, the use of mother tongue as a medium of educating pupils at the pre-primary and primary level throughout the country.

Learning is a complex task that requires several mental functions to coordinate and work efficiently. Each step in the learning process places demands on underlying skills such as auditory and visual processing, attention, logic and reasoning and processing speed. If one or more of these skills is weak or underdeveloped, the students will struggle to learn (Learningex.com.2014). Learning disability is a general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulty in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning or mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual, presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction, and may occur across the life span. Problems of self-regulating behavior, social perception and social interaction may exist with learning disabilities, but do not by themselves constitute a learning disability. Although learning disabilities may occur constantly with other handicapping conditions (For example sensory impairment mental retardation, social and emotional disturbance) or with extrinsic influences (such as cultural differences, insufficient or inappropriate instruction), they are not the results of these conditions or influences (National joint committee on learning Disability, NJCLD, 2016, 1993).

Children with learning disabilities struggle to acquire language vocabularies, pronunciation of words, spellings, reading and writing, reasoning, memory, and/or organization, these children may be smart, but conventional instruction techniques just don't work for them. For over 80% of these children with learning disabilities, weak underlying learning skills are the source of these difficulties and these skills cannot be simply "taught" Rather, these children can succeed in school, careers, and life with the right program of assessment, training, practice and also to improve their reading performances (learningnc.com 2014) children with learning disabilities by definition have average intelligence, yet experience processing problems that affect their ability to process information. Almost, all learning disabilities are reading-based, often referred to as dyslexia, children with reading disabilities (dyslexia) are faced with processing problems that impact their ability to read fluently and effectively.

Therefore, the reading performance of children with learning disabilities in academic pursuit is as a result of some instances, children with learning disabilities come from a wide variety of backgrounds and cultures. Similarly, there are a variety of causes to a learner's struggles, that contributes to a student learning struggles, while some children struggle due to basic genetic limits of others struggle because of poor or inadequate instruction due to mother tongue, the largest single cause of learning struggles (over 80%) is weak underlying cognitive skills.

### **Statement of the Problem**

It has been observed that problem of poor language communication among children with learning disabilities has hindered their effective language development, the children grew with poor language communication when compared with their counterparts who are not learning disabled. The causes of the problem remained unknown, although researches attributed the poor language development to environmental factors while others attributed the problem to mother tongue, hence the researcher is motivated to prevent the cause from the last factor which is mother tongue by presenting the topic "Effect of Mother tongue on language acquisition among children with learning disabilities in Otana Integrated School, Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The aim of the study is "Effects of mother tongue on language Acquisition of Children with Learning Disabilities in Otana Integrated School, Jos North" the specific objectives are:

1. To Examine the extent to which the use of mother tongue could influence language acquisition among Children with Learning Disabilities in Otana Integrated School.
2. To find out whether or not mother tongue interfere with language acquisition among Children

- with learning Disabilities
3. To suggest some possible measures that can be employ to improve language acquisition among children with learning Disability.

### **Research Questions**

The under listed research questions are meant to guide the study:

1. What is the extent to which the use of mother tongue could influence on language acquisition among Children Learning Disability in Otana Integrated School?
2. To what extent do mother tongue interference with language acquisition of Children with Learning disabilities in Otana Integrated School?
3. What are some of the measures that could be employ to improve language acquisition among children with learning disabilities in Otana Integrated School?

### **Hypothesis**

There is no significant different in the mean score of pupils with learning disabilities who acquire mother tongue and their counter apart who have not.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is particularly beneficial to the following stakeholders; pupils with learning disability, parents, teachers, curriculum planners and the government.

The focus of the study to pupils with Learning Disability (L.D) is to help pupils to acquire communication skills read and write excellently. It will also create an enabling and conducive environment for proper communication for the learners without the existence of mockery by classmates, or the society at large. It also creates a wide range of enlightenment whereby pupils with Learning Disability will have unlimited access of acquiring A language effective and learning good mode of communication which will help their learning capabilities and promote their academic performance.

Consequently, parents stand to benefits from the research by an understanding to the option available to their pupils in order to help them improve their learning and system of effective communication, ultimately leading to greater support to the pupils from their parents.

Teachers will benefit informed seminars, workshops and conferences on the effect of mother tongue on language acquisition on pupils with learning disabilities and how they can apply different methodologies to teach them so as to carry everyone along, irrespective of the degree of disabilities which in turn improve the academic performance of those categories of children with disability.

Curriculum planners will utilize the findings of this study to design appropriate activities, which will help boost the academic achievement of c ~ n with learning disabilities, also same knowledge will guide them to ensure and take into cognizance the strength and weakness of children with L.D and need to recognize the importance of L<sub>2</sub> when planning their curriculum. Furthermore, the government will benefit from this research in the sense that, it will reduce illiteracy rate among pupils with Learning Disability with time especially in terms of communication, second language acquisition, pronunciation among others. It will also promote independence and selflessness which can boost the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of a nation and in turn lead to mockery and discrimination free society.

Finally, the results of this research will help future researchers to gain insight into the potentials of the use of mother tongue and second language as well and seek to improve it over time. In general, the principle and practice of education will be enhanced through the results of this study when children with learning disabilities' performance improve significantly through the use of effective communication including their mother tongue.

### **Scope of the Study**

The study examined the effects of mother tongue on language acquisition of children with learning disability in Otana Integrated School, Jos North L.G.A of Plateau State. The research will

focus on effect of mother tongue on learning disabilities and as well performance of children with learning disabilities.

**Method and Procedure**

The research design adopted the cross sectional survey method. This design was appropriate for this study because it enabled the researchers to collect data from a relatively wide section of the population at the same time and at less cost. It also ensured confidentiality which encourages full participation and maximum cooperation among participants.

The population of the studies includes 56 pupils with learning disability in grade level one and two as well as 6 teachers of grade level one and two (3 for each) at Otana Integrated School Jos North Local Government area of Plateau State.

The study employed ten (10) pupils drawn from grade level one and another Ten (10) pupils from grade level two as well as 4 teachers (2 from each level grade) who are teachers of pupils with learning disability in Otana Integrated School Jos North Local Government of Plateau State. In all, 20 pupils and 4 teachers were utilized and use for the study.

**Table 1: Population Distribution of Teachers and Pupils Drawn from Grade levels one and Two**

S/N	Grades	Population	Sample
1	Grade One	25	10
2	Grade Two	25	10
3	Teachers	6	4 (2 For Each)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>24</b>

The researchers employed the use of simple random sampling to select the sample for the study. Cohen (2018) asserted that simple random sampling enables researchers to ensure that all participants (pupils) are equally provided with chances of being selected for the study. The list of the class was written in a pieces of paper folded and kept in a bowl, mixed thoroughly, the researcher picked the two grades at random to represent the sample grade. This was also used to sample out 10 pupils and 2 facilitators from each grade in Otana Integrated school, bringing to the sample a total number of 20 students, 2 teachers respectively.

The instrument for data collection was questionnaire; the choice of the questionnaire is because of the need to collect confidential information, and to reach the large sample with a little cost. The questionnaire includes both close-ended question. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section A contained question on respondent’s personal data while section B contained items for respondents in respect to the research topic.

The research instrument was created by the researcher. Four likert-type scale ranged from “Agree” (A), “Disagree” (D) to “undecided” (Un) was used by the researcher. According to Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh (2012), the likert scale is one of the most widely used techniques to measure for descriptive survey studies.

To ascertain the validity of the instrument, content validity was adopted, in which the researcher subjected the instrument to face validity by giving it to the supervisor to examine the effectiveness of the items. The structure and language of the questionnaire was modified in the light of her corrections. The instrument was structured in such a way as to minimize the effect of errors such as inconsistency and ambiguity.

A letter of introduction stating the pupils’ bio-data and purpose of the research was attached to the questionnaire. The researcher personally administered the questionnaire to the respondents and collects the filled questionnaires the same day.

The data collected was analyzed using simple percentage. The formula for calculating the simple percentage is;

$$\frac{NR \times 100}{TN} = 1$$

Where;  
 NR = number of respondent.  
 TN = total number of sample.  
 100 = constant.

**Data Analysis and Results**

**Table 2: Presentation of Respondents by Gender.**

S/no	Sex	Number of Respondent	Percentages
1.	Male	6	25
2.	Female	18	75
	<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 2 shows the sex distribution of the respondents, where 25% of the respondents are male and 75% of the respondent are females. This shows that females are the majority of the respondents.

**Table 3: Presentation of Respondents by Age Range.**

S/no	Age	Number of respondents	Percentages
1.	less than 20	4	17
2.	21-30	20	83
	<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100</b>

From Table 3 shows the age range of the respondents, out of 24 respondents, 17% falls within the age less than 20, while 21-30 has 83% and the majority.

**Table 4: Presentation of Respondents by Qualification**

S/no	Qualification	Number of respondents	Percentages
1.	First School Living Cert	0	0
2.	Senior Sec. School Cert	5	21
3.	First Degree	15	63
4.	Post Graduate	4	17
	<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100</b>

From Table 4 shows 0% of first school living certificate of the respondents, 17% postgraduate, 21% senior secondary school student and 63% respondent with first degree and the majority as well.

**Table 5: Presentation of Respondent According to Working Experience**

S/No	Working experience	Number of respondent	Percentage
		4	
1.	<b>less than 5</b>		17%
		15	
2.	<b>6-10</b>		63%
		5	
3.	<b>10 and above</b>		21%
		<b>24</b>	
4.	<b>Total</b>		<b>100%</b>

From Table 5 shows 17% of respondent are between the working experience less than 5 years, 6-10 years are 63%, which are the majority and 10 years and above are 21%.

**Research question 1:** What is the extent to which the use of mother tongue could influence

language acquisition among children with learning disability in Otana Integrated School?

**Table 6: Percentage Summary of Extent to which the use of Mother Tongue Could Influence Language Acquisition among Pupils with Learning Disability**

S/No	Statement	A	D	Un	TOTAL
1	Early practice/learning	24 (100%)	-		24 (100%)
2	Proficiency	10 (42%)	9 (38%)	5 (21%)	24 (100%)
3	Intuitive of forms of language	12 50%)	6 (25%)	6 (25%)	24 (100%)
4	Trial and error	6 (25%)	4 (17%)	14 (58%)	24 (100%)

From Table 6 Shows results that 100% of the respondents agreed that early practice/learning promote language acquisition of pupils with learning disability. Also 42% of the respondents agreed to the statement that proficiency promote the level of mother tongue amongst children with learning disability, 38% disagreed and 21% could not decide on the statement. 50% of the respondents agreed to the statement that Intuitive of forms of language on children promote language acquisition, 25% disagreed, while 21% of the respondent were for undecided. Furthermore, 25% of the respondent agreed to the statement that trial and error promote language acquisition of pupils with LD, 17% disagreed, while 58% of the respondent were undecided.

**Research question 2;** To what extent do mother tongue interfere with language acquisition of children with learning disabilities in Otana Integrated School?

**TABLE 7:** Percentage Summary of extent of Mother Tongue interfere with language of pupils with learning Disability

S/N	Statement	A	D	UN	Total
5	Phonological interference e.g; stress, rhyme, intonation, speech sound, etc.	16 (67%)	4 (17%)	4 (17%)	24 (100%)
6	Grammatical interference e.g; word order, pronoun and determinant, tense, etc.	5 (21%)	19 (79%)	-	24 (100%)
7	Orthographic interference e.g; ways in which words of a language are spelled.	11 (46%)	6 (25%)	7 (29%)	24 (100%)

From Table 7 shows that 67% of the respondent agreed that phonological interference e.g; stress, rhyme, intonation, speech sound, etc. increase language acquisition of pupils with learning disability, 17% for each disagreed and undecided. 21% agreed with the statement Grammatical interference such as word order, pronoun and determinant, tense, etc., 79% disagreed. More so, 46% of the respondent strongly agreed Orthographic interference such as ways in which words of a language are spelled, promote language acquisition of pupils with learning disability, 25% of the respondent disagreed, while 29% of the respondent undecided.

**Research Question 3:** What are some of the measures that could be employ to Learning from simple to complex in Otana Integrated School?

**Table 8: Percentage Summary of Measures That Could Be Employed to Learning from Simple to Complex to Promote Language Acquisition of Pupils with Learning Disability**

S/N	Statement	A	D	SD	TOTAL
9	Constant practice	24 (100%)	0	0	24 (100%)
10	Training and re-training	12 (50%)	6 (25%)	6 (25%)	14 (100%)
11	Learning from simple to complex	11 (46%)	4 (17%)	9 (38%)	14 (100%)

From Table 8; Shows that all the respondent attested to the statement that constant practice promotes language acquisition of pupils with learning disability. Also 50% of the respondent agreed that Training and re-training improve language acquisition among children with learning disabilities, 25% of the respondent disagreed with the statement, while the other 25% indicated undecided. More so, 11% of the respondent agreed that Learning from simple to complex improve language acquisition among children with learning disabilities, 17% disagreed, while 38% undecided with the statement.

### Summary of Findings

1. It was found that language is a socio-cultural phenomenon, which has the characteristics role of communication as well as being an index perform a communicative role.
2. It was also revealed through the study that mother tongue is defined as the language that person, or group of persons speak best, and so is often the basic for socio-linguistics identity.
3. The study found that pupils with learning disabilities struggle to acquire language vocabularies, pronunciation of words, spellings, reading and writing, reasoning, memory, and/or organization, these children may be smart, but conventional instruction techniques just don't work for them. Therefore, the reading performance of children with learning disabilities in academic pursuit is as a result of some instances such as their background, culture and genetic factors.
4. The study also shows that early learning/practice, proficiency and intuitive mastery of the forms of language could influence language acquisition among children with learning disability.
5. It was also revealed through the study that phonological interference, grammatical and orthographic interference affect language acquisition of children with learning disability.
6. The study also revealed that constant practice of language, training and retraining of language, and learning from simple to complex are some of the measures to improve language acquisition among children with learning disabilities in Otana Integrated.

### DISCUSSION

The study was meant to investigate into the effect of mother tongue on language acquisition among children with learning disability in Otana integrated, Jos North Local Government of Plateau State. In the study, 24 respondents were utilized (6 male and 18 female), the ages of the respondent ranges from less than 20 to 30 years, qualification ranges from first school living certificate, senior secondary school certificate, first degree, to post graduates, while working experience ranges from less than 5 years to 10 years and above. Three research questions were generated from the study which includes, what is the extent to which the use of mother tongue could influence on language acquisition among Children Learning Disability in Otana integrated School? To what extent do mother

tongue interference with language acquisition of Children with Learning disabilities in Otana integrated School? What are some of the measures that could be employ to improve language acquisition among children with learning disabilities in Otana integrated School?

The study shows that mother tongue is a traditional term for a person's native language that is, language learned from birth. Also called a first language, dominant language, home language and native tongue (although these terms are not necessarily synonyms) (Askcom 2015). Mother tongue (MT) which could be referred to as first language (L1) or the first language a person picked up in his early childhood. A first language does not mean first in the sequential sense of term but as other meanings. Similarly, the term "mother tongue" does not mean a mother tongue or language.

Furthermore, the research question one shows that early practice and learning could improve and influence mother tongue of person with learning disability, research question two shows that Phonological interference such as stress, rhyme, intonation, speech sound, etc. could interfere with language acquisition more than grammatical and orthographical. While research question three shows that constant practice is one of the measures that can be employed to improve language acquisition from simple to complex among children with learning disability in Otana Integrated.

Finally, it was then generally accepted that in teaching and learning processes, the mother tongue of the child is of utmost importance. For one thing, it categorizes a large part of the child's environment, that is, it has names for most of the objects, actions, ideas, attributes and so on that are so important to him, as well as to any society. The mother tongue is the child's environment and is the natural basis on which verbal skills can be built, children learn through communicating in a language, which they understood. It was in recognition of the importance and contributions of mother tongue to education that made the Federal Ministry of Education in Collaboration with other educational statutory agencies include in the National Policy on Education states that importance of the use of mother tongue as a medium of educating pupils at the pre-primary and primary level. However, it is sad to note that in Nigeria, policies are only made; they may not be properly implemented.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the data generated and results obtained from the data analyzed, the following conclusion is drawn by the researcher, the introduction of mother tongue is a giant and magnificent effort towards academic excellence. Hence, the important of mother tongue in language acquisition cannot be overemphasized; educational administrators should put more effort to ensure that schools across the nation are well equipped with facilitators that can aid in effective delivery of information to a large audience using the audience first language, which intern may enhance the academic performance of pupils with learning Disability.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the research findings, the researchers articulated the following recommendations;

1. Curriculum planners should ensure that mother tongue especially the Nigerian language such as hausa, igbo and yoruba are made part of the compulsory subject so as to promote multi greatest linguistic facilities and initiative knowledge.
2. Training and retraining of teachers and student on the important of mother tongue in special need education.
3. Oral English teachers should be employed to teach pupils poems, rhymes, and other forms of linguistic way of acquiring better knowledge and to prevent language interference.
4. Parent should also coach their wards on how to speak the first language along with second language in order to prevent language interference especially those that are closely related.
5. Government should improve their attitude of seeing education as a dump ground for politics and carry out her responsibility of providing funds and qualified teachers for effective services for its citizenry in education sectors across federal, state and local authorities.

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