



Mother Tongue Education and the Acquisition of English Language as a Second Language by Akoose Speaking Pupils

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Abstract: Cameroon is a very diversified linguistic entity with about 284 languages for a population of 15,803,220 inhabitants (Grimes 2002). This situation causes the nation to face quite some challenges with choices of languages utilized as media of instruction at various levels in schools. This article focuses on Early Education whereby, we investigate learning through the medium of the MT and its implication for a better proficiency of the L2 (English Language) by these learners. The endeavor requires the application of various strategies to accomplish the task of learning the L2. It is obvious that at the initial phase, there is bound to be interference of the first language into the second language (L2) with different outcomes. Its hypothesis stipulates that children will learn more when they are instructed in the language they master most and better rather than when they are taught in their L2 or L3. The sample for this study comprises 20 teachers and 460 pupils. In order to collect the relevant data, interviews, language test, participant observation and questionnaires were used. Therefore, the investigation engaged both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The theoretical framework used for this study is Krashen's theory of Second Language Acquisition. The data was analyzed using both frequency and percentage tables and charts. The findings indicated among other things that the children understood, participated, performed and retained information much better when using mother tongue as medium of instruction than when they are taught solely in English language; that, children are more attentive in class when their mother tongue is used to them than when English is used at the initial phase of their educational exposure. Also, an amazing finding amongst others in this research endeavor is the fact that pilot school pupils who employed mother tongue in early learning as medium of instruction did not only perform better in all school curricular subjects but also in English language subject than their counterparts in the regular school system whose medium of instruction was English language.

Keywords: Mother Tongue, Akoose Learners, Second Language, Second Language Acquisition.

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1. INTRODUCTION

English language learners despite their different backgrounds, face difficulties when it comes to learning English as a second or foreign language. When children go to school it is for them to be educated and not for the teachers to make a fool out

of them. Education means to add to the knowledge one already has. In fact, some definitions of education assert that it is not adding but bringing out the knowledge already existing in man because man is not a tabula rasa as a philosopher like John Locke mentioned (Tambo, 2008). Therefore, for best results

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to be achieved in a teaching experience, what is to be taught should be done in a language the children understand without which the teacher will not be making a fool out of the children but also of himself. Many decades ago in Africa, it was believed that our local languages which were what everybody knew and was using to communicate should be relegated to the background and the colonial language should be employed for everything.

It was not a bad idea that other people's language be learned; but, what was bad was the move towards the deliberate or conscious act of eradication and extinction which Africa languages were pushed to. Nowadays, even though many people can understand at least one of the Western languages and hardly have a problem in understanding information, messages or instructions delivered through it, there still exists quite a significant population who cannot communicate through the medium of the second language. So, since these people must also be open to the education given anywhere else in the country, their minority language must be taken into cognizance and, when this is done, policy makers, curriculum designers and teachers would start realizing that provisions should be made for learners' L1 to be used as a medium of instruction for the purpose to learn and actually know what is being taught them. Gone are those days when a child's mother tongue was totally out of bounds in class even when it was a local language. What should be the teacher's priority is to find out how best teaching and learning can be achieved in a classroom situation. Where there are learners who have only one of the indigenous languages as their L1 and would meet one of the official languages in school and in class for their very first time, support should be given in their first languages. Since the goal of schooling is literacy acquisition, everything must be put in place for that goal to be achieved, including the language of instruction to be used. Therefore, our result show that when learners have Akoose or any other Cameroonian language as L1, they should be given support education and study guidance in their mother-tongue for better teaching learning outcome.

Language in communication has a very vital role to play because it is the means through which people are able to communicate. This therefore means that if there is no mutual intelligibility between two or more people trying to tell the other something, those people cannot attain their goal of communication. Before children get to class at the age of 3-4, they already have been introduced to a language at home (Akoose). While in class, teachers immediately start off with different subjects and lessons and these are delivered in a new language altogether: English. This of course is barely understood by the children and therefore complete

participation and understanding on their part are not met. Also, this system has for long been encouraging reciting in the nursery sector which, in later life, children are not able to show proof of knowledge of these things they have been parroting. For some time now people have been wondering why this is happening. But until a thorough investigation is done about it, we will only continue to wonder why little and simple things we know for sure children know and master before going to nursery school yet, they are not able to show proof of it; the simple reason being that of language barrier. This is to say that before going to class, children have a glimpse of the world around them in their mother-tongue. So, for teachers to explain where these things are coming from; what they are doing there and where they are going to, it is better to do so in the language they master better while simultaneously telling them what they represent in English or French.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A great number of similar studies have been conducted on language learning which often suggest the benefits of L1. On the aspect of the use of L1 in the teaching of L2 and other foreign languages, a number of authors have published on the subjects. These authors are regrouped into optimistic and pessimistic groups. The optimists believe that learning the L2 through the medium of the L1 'may provide learners with additional cognitive support that allows them to analyze language and work at a higher level than would be possible where they are restricted to the sole use of their L2' Storch and Wigglesworth (2003). In the same vein, Brookes-Lewis (2009) for example, stated that the inclusion of L1 in L2 classroom is unavoidable and the further indicated that it may also positively contribute to the learning of the target language. According to these researchers and many others (i.e., Burden, 2001; Cianflone, 2009), the use of L1 should be allowed in classrooms owing to its contribution to learners' cognitive development, and should model the learning of first language. Furthermore, they believed that a distinction between first and second language is necessary to indicate the difference to the students (Burden, 2001). On the other hand, the pessimistic group (Harmer, 2001; Swain 2011) argued that inclusion of L1 in EFL and ESL classrooms do not considerably impact students' learning of the target language. Moreover, some of them (Littlewood & Yu, 2011) were also of the view that allowing the use of L1 do not strengthen learners' cognition but may result in inappropriate transfer of the bad language habits from first language to the target language; thus, it should be abandoned. Those who shared the view of using monolingual approach (hindrance of first language) in classrooms, however, were strongly criticized as such an approach was considered to be impractical, and maximum exposure to the second

language approach alone was considered to be inadequate for second language learning (Cook, 2001). Our study with the use of Akoose provide fresh evidence to support the view of the optimist that learning through the medium of the L1 forster learning in general and enhance the mastery of the L2.

The term “language acquisition” became commonly used after Stephen Krashen contrasted it with formal and constructive learning. The distinction between acquiring and learning was made by Krashen (Kashen 1982) as quoted in [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First language](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_language) as part of his Monitor Theory. According to him, the acquisition of a language is a natural process whereas learning a language is a conscious one. In the former, the learner needs to partake in natural communication situations. In the latter, error correction is present as is the study of grammatical rules isolated from natural language. Language acquisition in very simple terms refers to the process of acquiring a language. On this topic Kosur (2010) defines language acquisition as, “*the process whereby children acquire their first language*”. She goes on to say that all humans (without exceptional physical or mental disabilities) have an innate capability to acquire language and that children even have the possibility of acquiring more than one first language if they are exposed to them. On the same line mentioned above, contrarily, Piaget (1926) is quoted as a reluctant psychologist to ascribe specific innate linguistic abilities to children and instead considers the brain to be a homogenous computational system, with language acquisition being one part of general learning. According to Piaget, cognition development and language acquisition are life-long active processes that constantly update and re-organize schemata. He proposes that children develop L1 as they build a sense of identity in reference to the environment and describes phases of general cognitive development, with process and patterns changing systematically with age. Piaget assumes language acquisition is part of the complex cognitive development, and that these developmental phases are the basis for an optional period for language in childhood. On his part, Singleton (1995) points out that ‘there are many exceptions, noting that 5% of adult bilinguals master a second language even though they begin learning it when they are well into adulthood long after any critical period has presumably come to a close’. Robert (2002) observed that factors other than age may be even more significant in successful second learning, such as personal motivation, anxiety, input and output skills, setting and time commitment. Chomsky (1965) on his part asserts that environmental factors must be relatively unimportant for language acquisition emergence, as so many different factors surround

children acquiring L1. Instead, Chomsky claims language learners possess innate principles building a Language Acquisition Device (LAD) in the brain. Although it does not describe an optimal age for SLA, the Universal Grammar (UG) proposed by Chomsky implies that younger children can learn languages more easily than older learners, as adults must reactivate principles developed during L1 learning and forge an SLA path: children can learn several languages simultaneously as long as the principles are still active and they are exposed to sufficient language samples (Pinker, 1995). With these review it is seen that a lot has been written on language acquisition but none has yet mentioned whether or not learners under the age of five should be taught in school in their mother-tongue since it will not disturb their acquisition of other languages in any way given that they can learn as many as three languages when exposed to them. An experimental program in Mother Tongue education has been functioning in Boyo Division in the North West Region of Cameroon. In this program, selected schools in Boyo use the local language Kom as a medium of instruction. The present research is an investigation on Akoose which adds fresh ideas justifying study through the MT.

Mother tongue is the first language that a child acquires or the language a child masters most and which he uses as his instrument of communication. It can be a country’s native language, national language or official language. Yet, once a language falls within the range of the aforementioned types and it is the language that stimulates the child’s LAD, that language is his or her mother-tongue. Mother-tongue education therefore refers to the process of education carried out using one’s mother-tongue or first language. For this to be done, both the teacher and the learner must share the same language for effective teaching and learning. This explains why this system of bilingual education as stated by Trudell Barbara (1993:15) cannot be successful in a situation or class where a homogenous language does not exist as mother-tongue for the learners. But in areas where there is the case, the question is: why not implement the use of mother-tongue hand-in-gloves one other official language of the country in teaching? Of course, education is all about acquiring, and as far back as the beginning of time, language is the means through which this can be achieved. The language an individual use to think is the most intimate language one has. Imagine a child who is bilingual of say Akoose and English with the former as his MT. If he wants to indulge in any form of reflection or meditation whatsoever in which language would he conveniently do that? It should definitely be his first language. To this effect, the Conference des Ministres de l’Education des Pays d’Expression Francaise (CONFEMEN) decided to launch an enquiry in all French-speaking countries to

promote the use of indigenous African languages in the education systems. It put in place, together with the Secretariat Technique Permanent (STP), a coordination team so that by the end of 1980 an enquiry will be launched for the promotion and integration of national languages in the educational systems. Since this was done, reports have been coming up acknowledging the progress in the implementation of native languages in the educational system of African countries.

A research carried out by the UNESCO has confirmed that children who undergo basic education in their own language stand a better chance in performance academically than those only educated in English.

In Kenya, children are allowed, following a Mother Tongue policy, to carry out education in Pre-school and even right up to lower primary in their Mother Tongue. English can be used in the later years of primary education and in secondary school. This is the view of the Minister of Basic Education at the Ministry of Education Science and Technology Mary Njoroge. According to her "*The policy is supposedly in effect in the rural areas. In urban areas, there is no uniform mother-tongue (instruction)*". As quoted in Njorge's article.

Ng'ang'a on his part thinks that local languages should be promoted at the very basics of learning such as nursery schools, then let the children slowly be introduced to a second language, and that, this must not be the thing only for the rural areas. He however acknowledges the importance of English.

Malawi, according to UNESCO'S article also embraced Mother Tongue education where the national language Chichewa is used as a medium of instruction in the first four years of primary schooling.

The Thomas and Collier study on instructional strategies for language minority students also encourages mother tongue education. Concretely, programme 4⁴ stipulates the following:

Minority language children receive 2-3 years of education in their first language from teachers who speak their language and who use their language as a medium of instruction. Initial literacy is provided in L1. *Language and life: Essays in Memory of Kenneth L. Pike*; edited by Wise, Headland, and Brend; PL 139, 2003.

Language learning and language acquisition are used interchangeably except when directly addressing Stephen Krashen's work. Noam Chomsky's view on language learning is that it is

something that is preferably done in the earliest years of life. To him, the language acquisition device (LAD) which is a mechanism in the human brain which enables an individual to recreate correctly the rules (grammar) and certain other characteristics of language used by speakers around the learners wears out over time. This device is not normally available by puberty and this is how he explains why adolescents and adults find it difficult when learning aspects of a second language (L2).

Based on a research by Ann Fathamman on the relationship between age and second language productive ability, the difference in the rate of learning English morphology, syntax and phonology is based upon the difference in age. Nevertheless, age does not affect the order of acquisition in second language learning.

It is normal for people who have multilingual background to have their native language influence their second language in any other age. This is often at the cognitive level where learners find themselves thinking in their L1 rather than in the target language. This is based on the document in en.wikipedia.org/wiki/language-contact. language.

Deepak K. Samida thinks there are certain strategies, which can be employed by learners in learning a language. If they can be well understood by teacher, they could better enhance language learning in multilingual societies. Oxford (1990) in his article entitled *Language Learning Strategies with Language Learning Strategies* he makes mention of the fact that there are 62 strategies of language learning but which are divided into direct and indirect strategies. The former referring to those used directly in dealing with a new language and, memory, cognitive and compensation are the three groups that belong to this type of strategies.

The indirect learning strategies contrarily, help the learner to regulate the learning process. They are basically to support and manage language learning without direct engagement. They are also regrouped in three main subgroups: the metacognitive, affective and social strategies. Elsewhere, O'Malley, Chamot and Kupper (1992) carried out a research on language learning and according to their research finding, effective listeners use three specific strategies: self-monitoring, elaboration and inferences while ineffective listeners were concerned with the meaning of individual words. This study is vital in the specifics of language learning because it demonstrates the use of certain learning strategies to improve learning among students.

According to Oxford (as quoted in Deepak K.Samida's article earlier mentioned), language strategies are "*operations employed by the learner to aid the acquisition, storage, retrieval and use of information*". A further expansion of this definition includes "*specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferable to new situations.*" (Oxford, 1990:8). In these definitions, we notice that the weight in foreign language teaching and learning is changing from teacher-centered to learner-centered instruction. This is the prime reason why language-learning strategies are now a call for concern more than ever before.

UNESCO defines Literacy as; *the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, compute and use printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential and to participate fully in their community and water society.*

Since it is no longer important for one to just know how to read and write especially in our today's world, education should decrease from encouraging the 'pouring' system of teaching which most often only leads to induction. Even the examples of concepts taught drawn from the western civilization: poems and rhymes taught especially at the nursery school level, should be things that children actually understand. They should not just recite them because they told the words. If children can therefore be taught and groomed in such a way that they will be able to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, compute and use printed written materials associated with varying context, even the economic impact of such a system will be felt. This is due to the fact that many policy analysts consider literacy rate as a crucial measure to enhance a region's human capital. Some grounds upon which this is made is firstly that literate people generally have a higher socio-economic status and enjoy better health and employment prospects; and that policy makers argue that job opportunities and access to higher education, increase with level of literacy (Ibid).

Language contact occurs when two or more languages interact. According to an article by SIL International (2011) on the link www.sil.org/sociolinguistics.LNG-contact.html-, it is not language which actually comes into contact with each other; rather, it is always the speakers of the language who are in contact. Their attitudes towards each other will affect the way they speak. Though our focus is not on contact linguistics (the study of language contact), we are going to highlight some

common outcomes of language contact especially those directly linked to this study. The most common products of this contact are pidgins, Creoles code-switching and mixed languages.

Fishman (1972:543) defines multilingualism as "*the established used within a single policy of more than one linguistic system*". Weinrich (1953) on his part views this as a practice of alternately using three or more languages. With these definitions and many others, one could come up with what they have in common that the premise taken by the authors lies in the use of more than one language. In a multilingual setting, people acquire and use different languages; some can do so simultaneously without much problem. Yet, in other cases, this poses a problem in the society due to the fact that speakers will tend to use the languages without differentiation. Nonetheless, multilingualism like bilingualism permits people to interact well with others.

3. METHODOLOGY

The informants are basically teachers, pupils and parents. The primary information includes basic information about pupils' background, history, interest, level of education and their expectation related to learning English as a second language. The teachers have taught for at least three months in the primary school. They have an idea of what teaching in English is all about but also are not new in teaching in mother-tongue (Akoose). Our focus was Tombel town in Kupe Muanenguba-Division of South West Region of Cameroon in which we have pupils attending the pilot linguistic school and those who did not attend the pilot school, and also in Yaounde in order to compare the performances of pupils in pilot and non-pilot schools. A total of 460 pupils and 20 teachers were contacted for the collection of relevant data. These kids are from primary one to primary six.

Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used for the purpose of this research. One of the concerns of this study is to understand people's experience in context. With this, the qualitative approach is deemed appropriate for this study as pupils and teachers can be observed and interviewed in their natural settings. Also, the research emphasizes on quantitative approach to compare the learning skills of pupils who went to pilot linguistic school to those who did not go to pilot linguistic school. Questionnaires, observation and interviews were used as instruments for data collection. A test was administered in which primary four to six pupils were asked to write essays on topics such as 'My first day in school'. In the lower classes, the kids were asked their preference in language as used in the classroom. To obtain higher response validity, pupils were explained that their responses would be kept confidential. Apart from a

questionnaire, data was also collected through interview and interaction. Interview was conducted to some pupils to observe their pronunciation and content understanding. Conducting oral interview gave the researcher the opportunity to analyze the use of mother tongue in teaching other subjects. Spelling drills was administered to examine if pupils could write out words correctly without committing spelling errors. Data were also collected through classroom observation. The researcher observed that in certain moments the learners went silent in class during questioning. These learners went silent because of lack of befitting words to express what they wanted to say. Data was also collected through video recording. 25 kids were given words in Akoose and they were asked how those words are called in English. In the course of this process, their voices

were recorded. Parents were also interviewed and their voices recorded on the use of mother tongue in class.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Both demographic details and attitudes of learners and informants were discussed separately. It gives details on schools and the respondents' information and also general information on the children under study.

It is important to know the names of schools selected for this study and the classes of the informants. Each class visited has its enrollment and the total number of pupils in each class.

Table 1: Respondents information and school

| Schools | Class | Number of children with english as mother tongue | Number of children with pidgin english as mother tongue | Number of children with akoose as mother tongue | Number of children with other mother tongues | Number of children with french as mother tongue |
|------------|-----------|--|---|---|--|---|
| PPS TOMBEL | 1,3 and 6 | - | 10 | 85 | 5 | - |
| CPS TOMBEL | 1,4 and 6 | - | 12 | 90 | 5 | - |
| GPS NGAB | 1,2 and 6 | - | 5 | 95 | - | - |
| GPSG1 | 1,5 and 6 | - | 15 | 61 | 19 | - |
| FIBNPS | 1,3 and 6 | 15 | - | - | 80 | 20 |
| DBPS | 1,5 and 6 | 10 | - | - | 35 | 85 |

Seven primary schools were investigated, five from Tombel and two from Yaounde. From Tombel we have the Presbyterian Primary School (PPS), Catholic Primary School (CPS), Government Primary School groups 1 and 2(GPS) and Government Primary School Ngab. While in Yaounde we investigated Les Fleurettes International Bilingual Primary School (FIBNPS) Yaounde and Djuno Bilingual Primary School (DBPS) Yaounde. From this number, 3 of the schools are pilot schools that is PPS, CPS and GPS Ngab while GPS G1 and 2, FIBPS and DBPS are non-pilot schools. The respondents came from primary 1 to 6 respectively. The choice of these

classes is to observe how a child at his early age can learn and internalize a new language through the use of their mother tongue. The total number of children in the classes visited were 460 pupils. Out of this number, 25 kids resident in the capital city of Yaounde have English as mother tongue. 42 of the pupils with Pidgin English as mother tongue. 331 residents in the Tombel vicinity have Akoose as mother tongue while 144 of the pupils have diverse mother tongues. These statistics puts Akoose in a comfortable position. This results show that Akoose dominates in the suburbs linguistically.

Table 2: Age group of learners

| AGE | 5 YEARS | | 6 YEARS | | 7 YEARS | | 8 YEARS | | 9 YEARS | | 10 YEARS | | 11 YEARS | | 12 YEARS | |
|-------------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|----------|-------|----------|-------|----------|-------|
| | BOYS | GIRLS | BOYS | GIRLS | BOYS | GIRLS | BOYS | GIRLS | BOYS | GIRLS | BOYS | GIRLS | BOYS | GIRLS | BOYS | GIRLS |
| HOOLS VISIT | 40 | 60 | 60 | 80 | 40 | 50 | 30 | 40 | 10 | 15 | 10 | 15 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 0 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

From the statistics collected, 40 boys and 60 girls were 5 years old. 60 boys and 80 girls were 6 years old, 30 boys and 40 girls were 7 years old, 30 boys and 40 girls were 8 years old, 10 boys and 15 girls were 9 years old, as against 10 boys and 15 girls who were 10 years old while 5 boys were 3 girls are 11 years old respectively. It is worth noting that only 2 boys were 12 years old.

There is a strong belief among the majority of learners that they would learn more effectively using their L1. The table below shows the response of various respondents in terms of their preference or non-preference of using Akoose in learning and teaching.

Table 3: The importance of Akoose in Learning and Teaching

| Respondents | Yes | Percentage | Number | Percentage |
|-------------|-----|------------|--------|------------|
| Teachers | 16 | 80% | 4 | 20% |
| Parents | 18 | 90% | 2 | 10% |
| Learners | 35 | 87.5% | 5 | 12.5% |

87.5% of pupils agreed that learning through the medium of Akoose helped to improve their English. They said that learning through their mother tongue in which they are adequately proficient would help them to understand the difficult concepts in their subjects. Their wish is to have all learning materials offered in Akoose from primary one up to the university level. 80% of the teachers preferred Akoose as the medium of instruction. The study found out that a greater number of parents are in support of the use of mother tongue as the language of learning and teaching. It shows that 90% of parents attached

great value to Akoose as a medium of instruction. They encourage government to implement policies that can make African languages part of the languages of social mobility and power, currently a monopoly of European languages (Ngugi 2003).

Teaching a second language means the instructor masters his or her first language. Our concern is to know whether or not the instructor shares the same MT with their learners. This will be seen in the table below.

Table 4: Do you share the same Mother tongue as the children you teach?

| Responses | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| Yes | 15 | 75% |
| No | 5 | 25% |
| Total | 20 | 100% |

15 out of the 20 teachers share the same mother tongue as the pupils they teach, giving us a percentage of 75%. This statistic thus gives the better chance for mother-tongue education if properly put in place. 5 of the other teachers are from other cultural or linguistic background apart from Akoose, they speak other Cameroonian languages but have a

partial knowledge of Akoose because of their stay in the environment.

A number of teachers were asked in the questionnaire if they have ever tried using MT as L1. Their responses can be seen on the table below.

Table 5: Have you ever tried using your MT or L1 in teaching your pupils?

| Responses | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| Yes | 17 | 78% |
| No | 03 | 22% |
| Total | 20 | 100% |

From the results, 17 teachers 78% confirm that they have been using the mother tongue in teaching for the past years. The teachers confirmed that in their locality (Tombel sub-division) most of the pupils at the early age come to school knowing how to speak only the mother tongue. With this situation, for effective communication to take place the teachers teach using the mother-tongue for

mutual intelligibility. This means that if there is no mutual intelligibility between two or more people trying to tell the other something, the teacher and learner cannot attain their goals.

It is of importance to know when the teachers use Mother Tongue in class. This will be explained from the table below.

Table 6: When to use Mother Tongue in Class

| Responses | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| During the class or game | 3 | 26.6% |
| At the onset of the lesson or game | 15 | 60% |
| Others | 2 | 14% |
| Total | 20 | 100% |

15 teachers constituting 60% of the total population use mother-tongue at the onset of the lesson. 3 other teachers making 26.6% use it during the lesson. This is because in the course of an exercise when they find children getting stuck at some point, they have to do whatever it takes to rescue them by using a more familiar language for better understanding. 2 other teachers use it at other moments. They use it during special periods set aside

for mother tongue. From the results therefore, a good number of instructors used the mother tongue at the onset of the lesson showing that pupils easily retain their lessons when mother-tongue is used at the beginning of lectures.

Questions were asked to teachers if they would encourage the use of Mother Tongue in school. The following responses were obtained.

Table 7: Would you as an instructor advice the use of Mother Tongue in your School

| Responses | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| Yes | 17 | 90% |
| Not Really | 3 | 10% |
| No | NIL | Nil |
| Total | 20 | 100% |

The table shows that most teachers (90%) advise the use of MT for teaching in their schools. Fewer (10%) have a mixed feeling about this innovation in the educational system in their school; one of the reasons being that it could 'hamper the free flow of English and French which are the general languages of instruction' as most teachers in DNPS Yaounde puts it. The majority, however are of the

opinion that it should be encouraged most of all because in education, 'we start from the known to the unknown'

A question was asked to know the participation of pupils when MT is used to teach other subjects in class. With this, the following responses were gotten.

Table 8: level of participation when Mother Tongue is the working language

| Responses | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|------------|-------------|
| Shyly | 18 | 17.65% |
| Averagely | 22 | 23.53% |
| Boldly | 60 | 58.82% |
| Total | 100 | 100% |

From their responses above it is now clear that there is a tremendous difference between using English and MT as language of instruction in the primary school. Most children (58.82%) participate boldly, fewer (23.53%) participate averagely and only a few (17.65%) are shy to talk in class using the MT. one main reason could be that they understand what is being asked of them and can easily provide

the answers as opposed to when English is L1 where they more skeptical about what they are being asked to do or say.

Teachers were asked to rate the performance of pupils in their various classes they teach. The following responses were gotten from them.

Table 9: What is the performance level of children when MT is L1?

| Responses | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| High | 11 | 58.6% |
| Average | 6 | 35.29% |
| Low | 3 | 17.65% |
| Total | 20 | 100% |

The responses from the table shows that 11 out of 20 respondents confirm that children's

performance is high and not average or low when MT is used to teach. With table 8, it is obvious that when

Akoose is used to the children, they tend to not only participate boldly, but also perform very high. Most children (35.29%) performance is averagely as against 17.65% of children whose performance is low.

The following responses were gotten if the teaching of MT in the classroom be extended in all the regions of Cameroon.

Table 10: Would you advise the use of MT in other parts of the country?

| Responses | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| Yes | 19 | 95% |
| Not sure | Nil | Nil |
| No | 1 | 5% |
| Total | 20 | 100% |

Table 10 shows that most teachers would advise that this system of education should not only end in their schools but that it should be encouraged nationwide. They think this will help both the teachers and the kids greatly in class in the teaching learning process. Above all, most of those who advise it think that it would be a privilege to know several languages which will serve, not only to ease communication but also, it could save it times of danger.

The general statistics collected shows that teachers 82.35% advise the use of mother tongue as L1 in their schools. The teachers said that, African languages are said to be promoted in a way which is believed to be breaking down the legacy of apartheid languages. This is to challenge the hegemony of western languages and to eliminate the stereotypes of African languages which are held by many speakers of African languages.

85% of pupils are always attentive in class when mother tongue is used. This result may account to the fact that, when teaching a child through the language he understands better he is focused and follows up the lesson since communication is done through his L1. From the results obtain it is realized that, there is no kid who will not pay attention when Akoose is used in the classroom.

It is realized that the use of the mother-tongue (Akoose) will not be tempered with children's mastery of English and French languages. This is because, from the analysis, mother-tongue as a support language makes teaching and learning easier on the part of the teacher and also the kids. Communication is successful if there is mutual intelligibility between interlocutors; as such using the mother-tongue at this level helps the child to effectively master English language.

The results also show that, a large number of kids finds it easy reading in the mother-tongue (Akoose). Many reasons accounts for this; availability of didactic material, the organization of literacy classes, the creation of the community radio where

presentation of programs is done in the mother tongue and the organization of literacy classes.

The study came to the realization that, learners when conversing with their friends they find it comfortable in coding and switching on to the mother tongue. When they conversed with their teacher, they stuck often and couldn't expose themselves freely due to lack of vocabulary. It was realized that during lessons at times the learners go silent in class when they are posed to answer questions and they avoided answering because of their lack of befitting words to express what they wanted to say. But when they conversed with their peer groups, they used English words along with their mother tongue to express their feelings.

Teaching through the medium of the mother-tongue promotes multilingualism. When this system of education is aptly put in place as it has already started in some localities, learners will be more open in learning as many languages as possible, thereby increasing the communicative capacities of each and every one in this country endowed with as many languages as the resources therein. It would also help in situation of robbery for instance. There are many experiences that we know that teach us that it is good to understand one's mother-tongue or another person's because it can actually save one's life.

When such a system is adopted, children will not only have quality education and become multilingual, they will also be able to uphold and pass it from generation to generation. This is because as during mother-tongue lesson for example, simple short stories, riddles and jokes, salutations and appreciations are taught.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper concludes that learning English as a second language by pupils whose mother-tongue is Akoose emphasizes the importance of mother-tongue education. In literacy acquisition, language has a prominent role to play. This is because every being, without any exception, has to communicate and for this to be possible they need a medium-language. The

language is not just any vocal sound, but it must be a code that its speakers must be able to decode. It has therefore been the prime motive of this study to show with facts, how much language can play in children's learning. Parents and children are shying away from English language and are instead moving closer to the use of mother-tongue in the process of learning. This is the reason why the teachers and the power in place should put in more efforts now that the government has given a green light, in putting into effect the teaching of indigenous languages in schools. It has proven effective in other countries both here in Africa and the world at large; why not take it more seriously than what has been obtaining already; to raise better and more efficient citizens in the world.

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