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**ATTITUDES OF HAUSA SPEAKERS TOWARD THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN
SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN DUTSIN-MA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA,
KATSINA STATE, NIGERIA**

Sanusi Mohammed Dan Ali

Government Day Secondary School Dan Ali Danmusa Local Government Area Katsina State.

sanusimohammeddanali@gmail.com/08050308411

Garba Musa

Rabiu Musa kwankwaso college of Advanced And Remedial Studies.

Tudun Wada Kano.

Suraja Adamu Jigawa

Jigawa State College of Remedial And Advanced Studies (JICORAS) Babura

Abstract

This study investigates the attitudes of Hausa speakers toward the English language in selected secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area of Katsina State, Nigeria. The study focuses on students' perceptions of English as a second language and examines the factors influencing their attitudes toward learning and using the English language. The

research was motivated by the persistent challenges of mother-tongue interference, negative language attitudes, and low communicative competence among secondary school students. A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews administered to students and English language teachers in ten selected secondary schools. A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed and retrieved successfully. The data were analyzed using frequency counts and simple percentages. Findings revealed that although many students acknowledged the importance of the English language for academic achievement and future careers, a large proportion still preferred speaking Hausa with classmates and within school environments. The findings also showed that excessive use of the mother tongue, inadequate exposure to English, and teachers' code-switching negatively affect students' proficiency and attitudes toward English language learning. The study concludes that positive language attitudes are essential for effective second language learning. It therefore recommends that teachers should encourage regular use of English in classrooms, organize interactive activities such as debates and discussions, and create a supportive learning environment that motivates students to communicate confidently in English.

Keywords: Language attitude, Hausa speakers, English language, mother tongue interference, second language learning.

Introduction

The English language occupies a central position in education, administration, commerce, science, and international communication worldwide. The language has become a global medium of communication and continues to expand beyond its native boundaries. In multilingual countries such as Nigeria, English serves as the official language and medium of instruction in schools. The language was introduced into Nigeria through colonial administration and has remained significant even after independence.

Nigeria is a linguistically diverse nation with over five hundred indigenous languages. In such a multilingual setting, English performs important functions as a language of unity and formal communication. Despite its importance, many learners still struggle to learn and use English effectively, especially in northern Nigeria, where Hausa is widely spoken.

Language attitude refers to people's feelings, opinions, beliefs, and perceptions toward a language. Positive attitudes toward a language usually encourage learners to study and use the language effectively, while negative attitudes may hinder language acquisition and communication. Students who value the English language are more likely to develop confidence and competence in speaking, reading, and writing.

In the Hausa language dominates everyday communication among students both inside and outside the school environment. In Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area of Katsina State, the Hausa language dominates everyday communication among students both inside and outside the school. Most students communicate freely in Hausa with classmates, friends, and sometimes teachers. This situation often limits students' exposure to the English language and affects their communicative competence. The persistent use of the Hausa language in classroom

interactions contributes to poor spoken English, grammatical errors, and negative attitudes toward English language learning.

English language remains a compulsory subject in Nigerian schools and is required for admission into tertiary institutions. Therefore, students' attitudes toward the English language warrant scholarly attention, as they directly influence academic performance and communication skills. This study therefore investigates the attitudes of Hausa speakers toward the English language in selected secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area.

Statement of the Problem

Mother-tongue interference remains one of the major problems affecting the learning of English as a second language among Hausa-speaking students. Many students prefer speaking Hausa during classroom interaction and social communication rather than English. In some cases, teachers also switch between English and Hausa while teaching, thereby reducing students' exposure to correct English usage.

The frequent use of the Hausa language within school environments negatively affects students' pronunciation, vocabulary development, grammatical competence, and communicative confidence in English. As a result, many students find learning English difficult despite recognizing its importance in education and career development.

Furthermore, inadequate language learning materials, poor reading culture, and limited opportunities for oral practice also contribute to negative attitudes toward English language learning. This situation has continued to affect students' performance in English-language examinations and their communication skills.

Against this background, this study investigates the attitudes of Hausa speakers toward the English language in selected secondary schools in the Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study is to investigate the attitudes of Hausa speakers toward the English language in selected secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area.

The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine the attitudes of Hausa-speaking students toward English language learning.
2. Identify the factors affecting students' learning and use of the English language.
3. Determine the extent to which mother-tongue interference affects students' attitudes toward English.
4. Suggest strategies for improving positive attitudes toward English language learning among students.

Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the attitudes of Hausa-speaking students toward the English language?
2. What factors affect students' learning and use of the English language?
3. To what extent does mother-tongue interference affect students' attitudes toward English?
4. What strategies can improve students' attitudes toward English language learning?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it contributes to existing knowledge on language attitudes and second-language learning in Nigeria. The findings will help teachers, students, curriculum planners, and educational stakeholders to understand the factors affecting students' attitudes toward the English language.

The study will also assist teachers in developing teaching strategies that encourage active participation and effective communication in English. Students will benefit from the findings by becoming more aware of the importance of positive attitudes toward English language learning.

Academically, the study contributes to research on sociolinguistics, language attitudes, and second-language acquisition, particularly among Hausa-speaking learners of English.

Scope of the Study

The study focuses on the attitudes of Hausa speakers toward the English language in selected secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area of Katsina State, Nigeria. The study specifically examines students' attitudes toward the English language, factors affecting language learning, and the influence of the mother tongue on English language usage.

The research was limited to ten selected secondary schools comprising public, private, and community schools. The respondents included students from Senior Secondary School One (SS I) to Senior Secondary School Three (SS III) and English language teachers.

Literature Review

Concept of Language Attitude

Language attitude refers to individuals' feelings, opinions, beliefs, and reactions toward a language and its speakers. According to sociolinguists, language attitude can be positive or negative depending on social, cultural, educational, and environmental influences. Positive language attitudes encourage language learning and promote effective communication, while negative attitudes discourage learners and reduce motivation.

Language attitude is closely connected to language use and language identity. Learners who value a language are more willing to practice and improve their competence in that

language. In multilingual societies, attitudes toward a language may also be influenced by its social status, economic importance, and educational value.

English Language in Nigeria

English language plays an important role in Nigeria because it serves as the official language and language of education. It is used in government institutions, legal systems, mass media, commerce, and academic activities. Due to Nigeria's multilingual nature, English has become a unifying language among people from different ethnic backgrounds.

Despite its importance, English language learning in Nigeria faces several challenges, including poor teaching methods, inadequate language materials, overcrowded classrooms, and mother-tongue interference. In northern Nigeria, the Hausa language strongly influences students' pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammatical structures in English.

Mother-Tongue Interference and Second Language Learning

Mother-tongue interference occurs when features of a learner's first language affect the learning and use of a second language. This interference may appear in pronunciation, sentence construction, vocabulary usage, and grammatical patterns.

Among Hausa-speaking learners, mother-tongue interference often affects the pronunciation of English sounds, stress patterns, and sentence structures. Students who frequently use the Hausa language within school environments may find it difficult to communicate fluently in English.

Researchers have argued that excessive dependence on the mother tongue reduces learners' exposure to the target language. As a result, students may develop low confidence and poor communicative competence in English.

Review of Related Empirical Studies

Several studies have examined language attitudes and English language learning in Nigeria.

Igboanusi (2018) investigated attitudes toward bilingual education among Nigerian students, teachers, and parents. The study revealed that respondents supported the use of both English and indigenous languages in education. The findings suggested that the English language remains important for educational advancement despite a strong attachment to indigenous languages.

Olatunji (2012) examined English language teachers' attitudes toward Nigerian English. The study found that teachers preferred Standard Nigerian English for classroom teaching and assessment. The findings also showed that teachers' educational qualifications influenced their attitudes toward language use.

Wayar (2017) studied students' attitudes toward the English language in northern Nigeria. The study reported that many students considered English important for academic and career success, although female students demonstrated more positive attitudes than male students.

Adegbija (2004) examined attitudes toward English and indigenous languages in Nigeria. The study found that Nigerians highly valued indigenous languages as symbols of cultural identity, while English was preferred for official communication and educational purposes.

Adegbite (2003) investigated university students' attitudes toward English and indigenous languages in Nigeria. The study revealed that many students preferred English for formal communication but still valued their mother tongues for cultural and social interactions.

The reviewed studies demonstrate that language attitudes significantly influence second-language learning and communication. However, there is limited research specifically focusing on Hausa-speaking secondary school students in the Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area. This study therefore fills this gap.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in Sociobiological Theory as proposed by Edward O. Wilson. The theory considers language as both a social and biological phenomenon influenced by interaction and environmental factors.

The theory is relevant to this study because language learning occurs through social interaction and communication within a particular environment. Students' attitudes toward the English language are influenced by their cultural background, peer interaction, and school environment. Frequent interaction in the Hausa language in schools affects students' exposure to English and, consequently, influences their attitudes toward English language learning.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to collect information on students' attitudes toward the English language and to analyze the factors influencing such attitudes.

Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of students and English language teachers in selected secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area of Katsina State.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Ten secondary schools were selected through simple random sampling. The selected schools included public, private, and community secondary schools.

A sample of 200 students from SS I to SS III participated in the study. Systematic random sampling was used in selecting the students. In addition, 20 English-language teachers were purposively selected for their direct involvement in English-language teaching.

Instruments for Data Collection

The instruments used for data collection were questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. Section A collected demographic information such as gender, age, and class level, while Section B focused on students' attitudes toward the English language.

The interview was conducted with selected English-language teachers to obtain additional information about students' language attitudes and classroom communication patterns.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher personally administered the questionnaires to students and teachers in the selected schools. The respondents were given adequate time to complete the questionnaires before collection.

The researcher also conducted interviews with selected teachers to gather supplementary information about students' use of the English language in schools.

Method of Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using frequency counts and simple percentages. The analysis was presented in tables and interpreted in line with the research objectives and questions.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

Demographic Information of Respondents

Table 1: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	122	61%
Female	78	39%
Total	200	100%

The table above shows that 61% of the respondents were male, while 39% were female. This indicates that male students constituted the majority of the respondents.

Table 2: Class Distribution of Respondents

Class	Frequency	Percentage
SS I	78	39%
SS II	70	35%
SS III	52	26%
Total	200	100%

The table indicates that students from SS I formed the highest percentage of respondents.

Analysis Based on Research Questions

Research Question One: What are the attitudes of Hausa-speaking students toward the English language?

Table 3: The English Language is Important for My Career

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	60	30%
Agree	70	35%
Undecided	40	20%
Strongly Disagree	30	15%
Total	200	100%

The findings show that 65% of the respondents agreed that the English language is important for their future careers. This indicates that most students recognize the importance of the English language.

Table 4: I am Proud of Learning the English Language

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	60	30%
Agree	76	38%
Strongly Disagree	25	12.5%
Disagree	39	19.5%
Total	200	100%

The table reveals that the majority of the students expressed positive attitudes toward learning the English language.

Research Question Two: What factors affect students' learning and use of the English language?

Table 5: The English Language is Difficult to Learn

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	70	35%

Agree	50	25%
Strongly Disagree	32	16%
Disagree	48	24%
Total	200	100%

The findings indicate that 60% of the respondents considered English difficult to learn. This difficulty may be connected to poor language exposure and mother-tongue interference.

Table 6: I Like Speaking English

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	64	32%
Agree	84	42%
Undecided	12	6%
Disagree	40	20%
Total	200	100%

The results show that 74% of the students liked speaking English. This suggests that students generally possess positive perceptions toward English despite communication challenges.

Research Question Three: To what extent does mother-tongue interference affect students' attitudes toward English?

Table 7: I Prefer Speaking Hausa with My Classmates

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	68	34%
Agree	80	40%
Disagree	52	26%
Total	200	100%

The table shows that 74% of respondents preferred speaking Hausa with classmates. This demonstrates the strong influence of the mother tongue on students' communication patterns.

Table 8: I Speak English with My Classmates

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	60	30%

Agree	24	12%
Undecided	23	11.5%
Strongly Disagree	83	41.5%
Disagree	10	5%
Total	200	100%

The findings reveal that most students rarely communicate in English with classmates. This limited use of English contributes to poor communicative competence.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study indicate that students generally recognize the importance of the English language for academic and career purposes. Many respondents expressed pride in learning English and acknowledged its educational value.

However, the study also revealed that many students preferred to communicate in Hausa within school settings. This confirms that mother-tongue interference remains a major factor affecting students' proficiency and attitudes toward the English language.

The findings support previous studies by Adegbija (2004) and Wayar (2017), which observed that although the English language is highly valued in Nigeria, indigenous languages still dominate social interaction among learners.

The study further revealed that inadequate exposure to the English language and frequent code-switching by teachers negatively affect students' communication skills. Students who rarely communicate in English tend to lack confidence in speaking and writing the language.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

This study examined the attitudes of Hausa speakers toward the English language in selected secondary schools in Dutsin-Ma Local Government Area. The findings revealed that students generally appreciate the importance of the English language for educational and career advancement. However, excessive use of the Hausa language within school environments negatively affects students' attitudes and proficiency in English.

The study concludes that mother-tongue interference, inadequate language exposure, and classroom code-switching contribute significantly to students' difficulties in learning the English language.

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