

## **EFFECTS OF BILINGUALISM STRATEGY ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS IN ENGLISH STUDIES IN ILE IFE, OSUN STATE, NIGERIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study determined the effects of bilingualism on the academic performance of primary school pupils in English Studies in Ile-Ife, Osun State. Additionally, it examined the interactive effects of sex and bilingualism on the academic performance of primary school pupils in English Studies in Ile-Ife, Osun State and further investigated the effects of the strategy on the attitude of the pupils in learning English Studies in the study area. The study utilized an experimental research design and the instruments used for data collection are Test of Knowledge of Reading Comprehension (TKRC) in English Studies and Pupils Attitude Questionnaire (PAQ) towards the effects of bilingualism strategy on the academic performance of primary school pupils in English Studies in Ile-Ife (PAQ). The sample consisted thirty three pupils of two randomly selected primary three classes of primary schools in Ile-Ife. Using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA), the results showed that students performed better when they were taught using bilingualism strategy than when they were taught using monolingual strategy with the statistical value of Sig=0.024, F=5.811 ( $p < 0.05$ ). Result also showed that there is a transfer of knowledge of the Pupils' L1 to the understanding of English studies in the classroom and that irrespective of sex the pupils performed better when they were taught using bilingualism. The results also revealed that bilingualism has significant effect on the attitude of the pupils towards the learning of English reading comprehension. In conclusion, this study suggests that bilingualism strategy is effective in improving the academic performance of primary school pupils in English reading comprehension in Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria.

**Keywords;** bilingualism; english studies; strategy; academic performance.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Bilingualism is commonly defined as the use of two languages by an individual (Asha, 2004). It is a fluctuating system in children and adults whereby use of and proficiency in two languages may change depending on the opportunities to use the languages and exposure to other users of the languages. It is a dynamic and fluid process across a number of domains, including experiences, tasks, topics and time.

Simultaneous bilingualism and sequential bilingualism are both present, but for the purpose of this project work, the focus will be more on sequential bilingualism because it's the common form of bilingualism Primary School Students in Ile-Ife are exposed to and thereby influencing their academic performance. Simultaneous bilingualism occurs when a young child has had significant and meaningful exposure to two languages from birth. Ideally, the child will have equal, quality experiences with both languages.

Sequential bilingualism occurs when an individual has had significant and meaningful exposure to a second language, usually after the age of 3 and after the first language is well established. These second language learners are referred to as "English language learners" in U.S. schools. The "bilingual" experience is unique to every individual. There is variability in the amount and quality of exposure to the languages the individual learns, as well as the experiences he or she has using the languages when interacting with others. Bilingualism is a feature not just of individuals, but also of societies. Societies in which two languages are used regularly, or in which more than one language has official status or a recurrent functions, can be called bilingual. For example, Canada is a bilingual country because French and English are both official languages, even though many citizens of Canada are monolingual English speakers.

Bilingualism in the education sector is known as Bilingual education which is the use of two different languages in classroom instruction. Bilingual education involves teaching academic content in two languages, in a native and secondary language with varying amounts of each language used in accordance with the program model. Bilingual education refers to the utilization of two languages as means of instruction for students and considered part of or the entire school curriculum.

Research indicates that there are numerous advantages to bilingualism. Bilingualism has been reported to improve the following skills:

- Verbal and linguistic abilities
- General reasoning
- Concept formation
- Divergent thinking
- Metalinguistic skills, the ability to analyze and talk about language and control language processing

These abilities are important for reading development in young children and may be a prerequisite for later learning to read and write in a new language.

Teachers in primary schools prefer teaching their Students using two languages, their mother tongue and English language. This has influence the Students performance in so many ways. It has helped most primary school pupils performed better academically because they tend to understand better when taught with their mother tongue. Although, Students in a monolingual society are not performing woefully too but most of them are average students. On the other hand, it has affected them in the sense that they find it difficult to learn English language which is the accepted language of communication in class and a universal language. Such Students believed that there is no need for them to know the language since their teacher will always interpret everything communicated to them in English to their mothers tongue. In fact, some teachers are fond of the habit of interpreting each word to Student in their mother tongue all for them to understand which can actually help them to understand but at the same time prevent them from understanding the second language as soon as they should. Some teachers also prefer explaining to pupils in their mother tongue which is possibly the teacher's mother tongue because the teacher herself do not understand English language very well and its impossible to give what he or she doesn't have. These are some reasons for the investigation of influence of bilingualism.

Bilingualism has been the bedrock of the advancement of cognitive skills of Students. Researches proved that bilingual students have more cognitive skills than those who speak one language. Additionally, they develop multicultural skills to be able to thrive in an increasingly diverse society (Diaz, 1985)

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to improve the performance of the pupils in English reading comprehension through the use of bilingualism in Osun State. The specific objectives are to;

- (i) Determine the effects of bilingualism strategy on the academic performance of primary school pupils in English reading comprehension in Ile-Ife, Osun State.
- (ii) Examine the interactive effects of gender and bilingualism strategy on the academic performance of primary school pupils in English reading comprehension in Ile-Ife in the study area, and
- (iii) Investigate the effects of the bilingualism strategy on the attitude of the pupils in learning English Studies in the study area.

### **Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were generated for the study;

- (i) There is no significant effect of bilingualism strategy on the academic performance of primary school pupils in English reading comprehension in Ile-Ife, Osun State;
- (ii) There is no significant interactive effect of gender and bilingualism strategy on the performance of primary school pupils in English reading comprehension in the study area; and
- (iii) There is no significant effect of bilingualism strategy on the attitude of the pupils in the use of bilingualism in the study area

### **Theoretical Review**

#### **Common Underlying Proficiency Theory of Bilingualism**

The common underlying proficiency theory of bilingualism refers to what is known as “balance proficiencies”, but takes it one step further (Baker, 1998). It states that language attributes are not apart in the cognitive system but transfer readily and are interactive and also lesson learned in one language can readily transfer into the other language. This theory was propounded and developed to re-conceptualize transfer within a cognitive framework which was strongly against the assertion of the behaviouris who believed that errors were largely the result of interference. That is, the habits of L1 were supposed to prevent the learner from learning the habits of L2. This was begun by Larry Selinker. In his formulation of inter language theory, he identified language transfer as one of the mental processes responsible fossilization. Subsequently, there has been widespread acknowledgement that learners draw on their L1 in forming inter language hypothesis. Learners do not construct rules in a vacuum; rather they work with whatever information they have at their disposal. This includes knowledge of their L1. The L1 can be viewed as a kind of input from the inside. According to this view, then, transfer is not ‘interference’ but a cognitive process.

Common Underlying Proficiency also believes that the thoughts that accompany talking, reading, writing, and listening come from the same central engine. There is no integrated same of thought. People have the capacity to store easily many languages and can also function in many languages. Information, processing skills and educational attainment may be developed through two languages. Cognitive functioning and school achievement may be fed through any channel, they feed from the same central processor. The language use in the classroom needs to be sufficiently well developed to be able to process cognitive challenges in the classroom. Speaking, listening, reading and writing any of the languages helps the cognitive system to develop. However, if made to operate in an insufficiently developed language the system will not function at its best. Operating in a poorly developed L2 will result in poor quality and quantity of what they learn in complex curriculum materials. Oral and written form may appear weak and impoverished when one or both languages are not functioning fully cognitive functioning and academic may be negatively affected.

### Concept of Bilingualism

Bilingualism is the ability of an individual or the members of a community to use two languages effectively. Bilingualism is commonly defined as the use of at least two languages by an individual (ASHA, 2004). It is a fluctuating system in children and adults whereby use of and proficiency in two languages may change depending on the opportunities to use the languages and exposure to other users of the languages. It is a dynamic and fluid process across a number of domains, including experience, tasks, topics, and time. NALDIC says definitions of bilingualism range from a minimal proficiency in two languages, to an advanced level of proficiency which allows the speaker to function and appear as a native-like speaker of two languages. A person may describe themselves as bilingual but may mean only the ability to converse and communicate orally. Additionally, there is monolingualism, which is the ability to use a single language. The ability to use multiple languages is known as multilingualism.

Bilingualism have two major types which are simultaneous bilingualism and sequential bilingualism. **Simultaneous bilingualism** occurs when a young child has had significant and meaningful exposure to two languages from birth. Ideally, the child will have equal, quality experiences with both languages. **Sequential bilingualism** occurs when an individual has had significant and meaningful exposure to a second language, usually after the age of 3 and after the first language is well established. These second language learners are referred to as "English language learners" in U.S. schools. In an education setting, it is referred to as bilingual education. Bilingual education is the use of two different languages in classroom instruction. Bilingual education has a lot of potential benefits on the academic achievement of primary school students. When limited English proficient students are still learning English, it may be better to teach other subjects in their primary language. To the extent that the course content is more accessible when taught in the native language, limited English proficient students will not fall (as far) behind in these other subjects while they are catching up in English. Receiving instruction at school in the native language may also improve students' skills in their native language. Additionally, parents of limited English proficient students, who themselves typically lack proficiency in English, may be better able to assess their children's school progress, help with schoolwork, and communicate with teachers in a bilingual education setting. Instruction in the native language might develop general language skills that facilitate learning new languages. For example, some strategies developed for reading in the native language may be applicable for reading in English.

## METHODOLOGY

The research design used was pretest-posttest quaisi experimental design. The population of this study comprised all primary school pupils in Ife- East Local Government in Ile- Ife, Osun state. The sample comprised two primary three pupils that were randomly selected. One for experimental group and the other for control group. The instrument used for this research was 20 multiple questions on comprehension test. Two intact classes of primary 3 were randomly selected from primary schools through simple random sampling technique in Ife East Local Government Area of Osun State. Validation was carried out and test-retest was conducted to ascertain its reliability outside the scope of study given 0.76 reliability using Pearson Correlation coefficient.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The major intention of this study was to investigate and study the effects of bilingualism strategy on the academic performance of primary school pupils in English studies in Ile-Ife, Osun State. This chapter is concerned with the presentation, interpretation and analysis of data collected through the results of the tests given to the Students in both the control group and experimental groups. It also discusses the discussion of finding

### Testing of Hypotheses

#### Hypothesis 1

**Null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>):** There is no significant effect of bilingualism on the academic performance of primary school pupils in English Studies in Ile-Ife.

**Alternative hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>):** There is a significant effect of bilingualism on the academic performance of primary school pupils in English Studies in Ile-Ife.

This hypothesis was tested at a probability level of 0.05 using the means, standard deviations and standard errors of the performances of the sampled pupils subjected to both teaching strategies which include English language only (control) and a combination of English and Yoruba languages (bilingualism). Analysis of covariance was also carried out to test for the significance of the effect of bilingualism on the academic performance of pupils in the study area.

**Table 1:** *Descriptive analysis showing the effect of bilingualism on the academic performance of primary school pupils in English Studies in Ile-Ife*

Teaching Strategies	MEAN	STD DEV	STD ERR
ENGLISH (Control)	10.71	15.17	4.06
YOR + ENG (Bilingualism)	27.14	16.14	4.31

Std dev= standard deviation; Std err= standard error; Yor= Yoruba and Eng=English

Table 1 above shows that at 0.05 probability level, there is a significant difference ( $13.74 \pm 4.06$ ;  $15.43 \pm 4.31$ ) between the average performance of the pupils taught in English Language only (control) and that of pupils taught in both Yoruba and English Languages (bilingualism). Hence, there is enough statistical evidence to reject the null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>) which states that there is no significant effect of bilingualism on the performance of primary school pupils in Ile-Ife.

**Table 2:** Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) showing the effect of bilingualism on the academic performance of primary school pupils in English studies in Ile-Ife

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects						
Dependent Variable: performance						
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Partial Eta Sig.	Squared
Corrected Model	1755.146(a)	2	877.573	31.655	.000	.717
Intercept	803.306	1	803.306	28.976	.000	.537
Post test	1723.003	1	1723.003	62.151	.000	.713
Bil. Strategy	161.109	1	161.109	5.811	.024	.189
Error	693.069	25	27.723			
Total	4862.500	28				
Corrected Total	2448.214	27				

a R Squared = .717 (Adjusted R Squared = .694)

The result in Table 2 above shows that at 0.05 probability level, there is a significant effect of bilingualism on the pupils' academic performance in English Part of speech with the significance value =0.24 ( $p < 0.05$ ). This therefore implies that the bilingual teaching strategy has a significant effect on the academic performance of the primary school pupils. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

## Hypothesis 2

**Null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>):** There is no significant effect of bilingualism on the performance of primary school pupils in English Studies in Ile-Ife based on sex.

**Alternative hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>):** There is a significant effect of bilingualism on the performance of primary school pupils in English Studies in Ile-Ife based on sex.

To test this hypothesis, descriptive analysis as well as analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) were done to examine the effect of bilingualism on the academic performance of primary school pupils in English studies in Ile-Ife basis of sex.

**Table 3:** Descriptive analysis showing the effect of bilingualism on the performance of primary school pupils in English Studies in Ile-Ife based on sex.

Strategy	Sex	Mean	Std Dev.	Err
<b>English (Control)</b>	Male	14.25	4.72	1.49
	FEMALE	13.13	6.57	3.29
<b>ENG + YOR (Bilingual)</b>	Male	7.5	6.27	2.22
	FEMALE	11.88	8.98	4.49

Std dev= standard deviation; Std err= standard error; Yor= Yoruba and Eng=English



The result of the descriptive analysis presented in Table 3 above shows that under the control group (English only), there is no significant difference in the average performances recorded from both genders considering the standard deviations and standard errors. However, under bilingualism strategy, considering the standard deviations and standard errors of the observations, there is a significant difference in the average academic performances of the pupils. Since this is not the case for both teaching strategies, there is no sufficient statistical evidence to say that there is a significant effect of bilingualism on the academic performance of primary school pupils on the basis of sex. In other words, the effect of bilingualism on the performance of the primary school pupils in English studies in the study area is not a function of the gender of the pupils. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted.

**Table 4:** Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) showing the effect of bilingualism on the performance of primary school pupils in English studies in Ile-Ife based on sex

*Tests of between-subject effects*

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	2011.518(a)	2	1005.759	4.019	.031	.243
Intercept	1903.894	1	1903.894	7.608	.011	.233
Sex	122.232	1	122.232	.488	.491	.019
Teaching Strategy	1889.286	1	1889.286	7.549	.011	.232
Error	6256.339	25	250.254			
Total	18300.000	28				
Corrected Total	8267.857	27				

R Squared = .243 (Adjusted R Squared = .183)

Table 4 shows that after controlling for the effect of sex as the covariate at 0.05 and 0.01 levels of probability, there is still a significant effect [ $F(1,25)=1889.29$ ,  $p=0.011$ ] in the performances of primary school pupils under the control and bilingualism teaching strategies. This implies that the sex of the pupils subjected to bilingualism test is not a determinant of their performances. This therefore gives enough statistical evidence to **accept** the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) which states that there is no significant effect of bilingualism on the performance of primary school pupils in English Studies in Ile-Ife based on sex.

### Hypothesis 3

**Null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ):** There is no significant effect of bilingualism on the attitude of the pupils in learning English studies in the study area.

**Alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ):** There is a significant effect of bilingualism on the attitude of the pupils in learning English studies in the study area.

To test this hypothesis, the data collected on the attitude of the pupils in learning English studies, after subjecting the pupils to the bilingualism teaching strategy, were analyzed using descriptive statistics in order to compute the mean, standard deviations and standard errors of the observations. Also, ANCOVA was carried out using the attitude of the pupils as the dependent variable and the teaching strategy (bilingualism) as the independent variable.

**Table 5:** *Descriptive analysis showing the effect of bilingualism on the attitude of primary school pupils in learning English Studies in Ile-Ife*

Teaching Strategies	MEAN	STD DEV	STD ERR
ENGLISH (Control)	0.99	0.00	0.13
YOR + ENG (Bilingualism)	2.22	0.69	0.13

Std dev= standard deviation; Std err= standard error; Yor= Yoruba and Eng=English

The descriptive analysis presented in Table 5 above shows the average attitude, the standard deviations and standard errors of the observations. Considering both the standard deviations and standard errors of the two means (Control=0.99; Bilingualism = 2.22), the difference between the two means is statistically significant. It can therefore be inferred that the bilingualism teaching strategy had a significant effect on the attitude of the primary school pupils in learning English studies in the study area. Hence, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant effect of bilingualism on the attitude of the primary school pupils in learning English studies in the study area is rejected.

**Table 6:** *Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) on the effect on bilingualism on the attitude of primary school pupils in learning English studies in Ile-Ife.*

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects  
Dependent Variable: Attitude

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	10.538(a)	2	5.269	21.450	.000	.632
Intercept	32.328	1	32.328	131.608	.000	.840
Attitude	.216	1	.216	.880	.357	.034
Teaching Strategy	10.529	1	10.529	42.864	.000	.632
Error	6.141	25	.246			
Total	89.000	28				
Corrected Total	16.679	27				

a R Squared = .632 (Adjusted R Squared = .602)



From the descriptive analysis table above, it can be seen that bilingualism, as a teaching strategy, has an effect on the average attitude of the pupils in learning English studies (English only =  $0.99 \pm 0.13$ ; Yor + English =  $2.22 \pm 0.13$ ).

Also, at 0.05 and 0.01 levels of probability, there is a significant difference in the attitude of pupils in learning English studies after being subjected to bilingualism teaching strategy ( $p < 0.05$ ). Hence, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant effect of bilingualism on the attitude of pupils in learning English studies in the study area is rejected.

## **DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS**

The study was carried out in order to seek ways of improving pupils' academic performance in English reading comprehension through the use of bilingualism strategy. Diaz (1985) revealed that one critical question is how instruction is linguistically organized in bilingual or second language. Non-English-speaking or bilingual preschool students in the Nigeria typically find themselves in one of three types of classroom language settings: first-language classrooms in which all interaction occurs in the pupils' first language; bilingual classrooms in which interaction is split between the first language and English; and English-language classrooms in which English is the exclusive language of communication. Cook (2017). English as a second language (ESL) refers to the process of producing bilinguals by teaching English as an L2 to learners in an English-speaking context. ESL is distinguished from English as a foreign language (EFL), which is instruction delivered in a context where English is not used regularly outside the classroom, using the instructional techniques and the intensity of instruction required to achieve success. The term English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) is meant to encompass both English as a second language (ESL) and English as a first language (EFL).

According to the first objective of this study which said to determine the effects of bilingualism on the academic performance of primary school pupils in English Studies in Ile-Ife, Osun State, the first table above which was analyzed using mean deviation and standard deviation formula The table above shows that at 0.05 probability level, there is a significant difference ( $13.74 \pm 4.06$ ;  $15.43 \pm 4.31$ ) between the average performance of the pupils taught in English Language and that of pupils taught in both Yoruba and English Languages. Hence, there is enough statistical evidence to reject the null hypotheses ( $H_0$ ) which states that there is no significant effect of bilingualism on the performance of primary school pupils. The result lends credence to the findings of Blumenfelds (2009) when the researcher carried out a similar study using the college students. His findings revealed that bilingualism has significant effect on the student's acquisition of English fluency skill. From the findings of this study, it is known, however, that bilingual speaking pupils show wide variation in both their first and second language hearing. Since pupils abilities in both of these areas have been shown to independently predict English reading performance in middle school, both must be considered critical to pupils' future academic success. (Sheng, et al, 2006). The primary school pupils in the experimental group who were taught using English language and their mother's tongue which is Yoruba Language performed better than the pupils in the control group who were taught using English Language alone. There was a positive transfer of the experimental pupils L1 (Yoruba Language) which is the influence that the learner's L1 exerts on the acquisition of an L2 (English Language).

The second table above is the analysis of the data collected from the primary school pupils through the test result given to them to examine the effects of bilingualism on the academic performance of primary school pupils in English studies based on sex. A one-way ANCOVA was conducted to examine the effectiveness of bilingualism on the academic performance of primary school pupils in English studies in Ile-Ife while controlling for the effect of sex. The correlation table above shows that at 0.05 probability level, there is no significant relationship between the sex of primary school pupils and their academic performance. Hence, the null hypotheses ( $H_0$ ) which states that there is no significant relationship between the academic performance of primary school pupils and their academic performance is accepted which is in line with the early research work done by Hull and Vaid (2007). Lastly, the frequencies and percentages of the responses of the pupils to all the variables shown in Table 3 above whose significance was measured with the error bars on the bar charts show that a higher percentage of the pupils that bilingualism has a significant effect on the attitude of the pupils in learning English reading comprehension in the study area as earlier postulated by Cook (2017). . Therefore, there was enough statistical evidence to reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) which states that there is no significant effect of bilingualism on the attitude of the pupils in learning English Studies in the study area.

## CONCLUSION

The study revealed that bilingualism strategy is appropriate and effective in teaching primary school pupils in English reading comprehension in the study area..

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the findings of the study, the following recommendations are hereby made:

- Primary school teachers should adopt bilingualism strategy as one of the effective methods that can be employed to improve primary school pupils' English Studies.
- Curriculum planners should incorporate this strategy in the curriculum as one of the techniques and methods to be considered.

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