

---

## COMPARATIVE STUDY OF UNILORIN FACULTIES OF ARTS AND EDUCATION STUDENTS' PERCEPTION ON YORUBA LANGUAGE AS A COURSE OF STUDY

**Victoria O. OGUNNIRAN**  
Department of Arts Education,  
Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin,  
Ilorin, Nigeria  
ogunniran.vo@unilorin.edu.ng

### **Abstract**

*This research work is a comparative study of Unilorin Faculty of Arts and Education Students' perception on Yoruba as a course of study in the University. The purpose of the study is to ascertain the perceptions of higher institution students towards the choice of the mother tongue (Yoruba) as a course of study. One research question and two research hypotheses were formulated to guide this study. The research design used for this study was a survey type of descriptive. The population of the study consisted of all the students from the Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Education in University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. The sample of the study was made up of One hundred (100) students that were randomly selected from the two faculties, forty-eight (48) students from the Faculty of Arts and fifty-two (52) students from the Faculty of Education. A structured questionnaire which was validated and tested reliable at **0.68r** was used to collect data for the study. A descriptive statistic of percentages was used to analyse the demographic data while inferential statistics were used to test the hypotheses set for the study at **.05** alpha level of significance. The result of the study revealed that there was no significant difference in faculty of Arts and Education students' perceptions on the choice of Yoruba as a course of study. It was therefore recommended that the Nigerian major languages should be used as media through basic 1-6, they should be taught as L2 in Junior and Senior Secondary; and government should make Mother Tongue a compulsory subject that must be passed at credit grade for admission into higher institutions of learning.*

### **Introduction**

Nigeria is a multilingual and multiethnic environment. A large number of indigenous languages exist and the number has been put differently, Bamgbose (1992) maintains that it is 513, while, Ayilara and Oyedeji (2000) state 500. That is the reason why the languages in Nigeria are categorized into; the developed, developing and undeveloped languages. The developed languages are those with stable orthographies, standard written forms and a large population of speakers who are both native speakers

and those who have acquired them as second language. Hence, in Nigeria, Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa are the developed and categorized as the major languages (Bamgbose, 1992). Yoruba language is one of the major Nigerian languages that are declared as the medium of instruction; the Yoruba language is spoken as a mother language of about (30) million peoples in Nigeria and neighbouring countries such as the Republic of Benin and Togo. It is also spoken in some parts of Brazil and Cuba (Lawal,1996). *The* Yoruba speakers reside in the South Western Region states of Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Oyo, as well as Kogi, Kwara states in the North Central region (Amoloye, 2006).The study of the Yoruba language dated back to 1817 with the work of Bowdich which appeared in print in 1819. In 1945, the language assumed to have played a unique role in educational system of the western region of Nigeria; the department (later known as ministry) of education recognised Yoruba as the medium of instruction in the first four years of primary education (Adeyemi & Isola, 2010).

Its choice to attain the status of a subject to be taught in schools seems to be a consequence of the pioneering efforts of the evolutionary activities of the earlier missionaries whose efforts had sown the seed of further development of the language. Abiri (1982;) in his study traced the history to the insistence of Christian Missionaries and converts to go beyond limiting their knowledge as learners to read the Bible as being promoted by the Colonial government who was actively opposed to the teaching of the local language. However, Yoruba continued to be taught at the lower levels of primary school where it was also used as a medium of instruction. The visitation of the American Phelps-strokes Commission to Africa between 1922 & 1925 rekindled the interest in the study of African languages and Yoruba benefited tremendously as it began to be studied as a subject in the secondary school and much later it became available at the Cambridge school certificate and London University's Matriculation Examinations-the predecessor of the modern West African School certificate (WASCE), the National Examination Council Certificate (NECO) and London University's General Certificate of Education. These examinations helped to maintain some interest in Yoruba language studies which later received greater impetus in the late 1960's when the University of Ibadan and the University of Lagos approved Yoruba language as a course of study in 1966. Yoruba language is intensively studied in Colleges of Education and Universities like Obafemi Awolowo Ile-Ife, University of Ilorin, University of Ado Ekiti, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Lagos State University etc and about 48 Universities in United State of America including Harvard University (Tribune 16th May 2013, page 15).

Government also, in the National Policy on Education (NPE), stresses the importance of language as a means of promoting social interaction and national cohesions and preserving culture. Therefore, every child in Nigeria should be taught in his mother tongue or the language of immediate environment from the primary 1-3. Furthermore, in the interest of national unity, it is expedient that every child is required to learn one of the three major Nigerian Languages, Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba, (FRN, 2013). Chanda (2010) says that the MT should be saved from extinction. There are many beautiful languages going extinct. One can say that if the whole world speaks only one language, it would be

boring just; as if all flowers would become only roses, the garden would lose its sparkle. One comes to understand that MT is a viable, reliable and indispensable tool that can promote and improve the educational system in Nigeria, especially in the early childhood education, so it calls for study in higher institutions. Fafunwa (2005) opines that depriving the indigenous speaker of his language for education is like removing his soul. Lawal (1989) also asserts that using a borrowed language in the early childhood institution is like taking a fish out of water. It is informed that using languages other than MT is like removing the shell of snails; so MT is one's coverage. Education in the mother tongue removes all the inhibitions that beset the use of a foreign language Teaching and learning of Yoruba language portrays the glory and beauty of the language. If the language is not taught in schools, this generation and the next may not know about the monarchies (type of Yoruba government), Yoruba culture, folklore, folktales, philosophy, traditional art and architecture, songs and drumming, poetry and names; all will go into extinction. The teaching of the Yoruba language in schools would preserve its heritage. Therefore, one seems to conclude that no greater injustice can be committed against people than to deprive them of using their language.

Despite the significance of Yoruba language in Nigerian education, it was discovered that the Nigerian has made English language lingua franca, a language used for education, communication, interaction, language of international diplomacy, business, commerce, popular media, science and technology. Therefore, the students are having wrong perception towards the learning and studying of Yoruba language because of uniqueness of English language which is recognized as tools of political and economic power of this age. Added to this, government places much premium on English language at the detriment of the indigenous language. For this reason, much priority is placed on the recruitment of English language teachers (Tony, 2005).

Perceptions refer to evaluative concepts encompassing opinions and beliefs. Attitudes, opinions, beliefs, intentions, evaluative beliefs are interrelated concepts that have been areas of study for social psychologists. This present study attempts to describe the "perceptions" as opinions and beliefs, which are related to attitudes of the undergraduate students of faculties of arts and education towards the Yoruba language as a course in the higher institution of learning.

Unfavourable attitude of students towards their mother tongue or preference to foreign language over mother tongue could be due to unawareness of the significance of the mother tongue (Ogunsiji, 2001).). In other instance, dislike towards the mother tongue arises due to political bias, social stratification, economic incongruity, and other socio-psychological factors.

Thomas (2010) asserted that a course of study is an integrated course of academic studies, undergraduate candidates in the higher institution of learning choose academic studies due to various factors like: opportunity to earn a high salary, job security, respected occupation e.t.c. Students go for nursing, engineering, medicine, mathematics, and English course in the university. Some students deliberately take Yoruba language as a course of study while some students are forced into it. But outside

the country there are many universities that are sending candidates to study Yoruba language, but in Nigeria universities students studying Yoruba were negatively treated especially by their mates.

Bill (2004) concurred that students believe that they have known enough of their mother tongue since they use it for communication in their immediate environment, but their facility in it needs to be increased and developed. Actually, studying Yoruba as a L2 will exposes learners to Yoruba grammar, phonology, phonetic, syllables, tonal marks, proverbs, sentences and words formulation etc. They also believe that, learning or studying English language will enable them to relate and communicate with people outside their immediate environment easily, they thought Mother Tongue are not adequately developed to express modern scientific and technological knowledge, and it may in turn result in cognitive deficit and low productivity of scientific and technological knowledge. Fafunwa (1982) lamented that many institutions in Africa have not devoted sufficient attention to African culture in their curriculum. He then suggested that African folklore, mores, and literature; African music, African art; African languages, African history and civilizations; African ethics and religions; and African social and political institutions should be given prominence in the primary and secondary schools, as well as in the tertiary institutions.

Salawu (2006) observed that the undergraduate students' perception towards their MT as a course of study is not encouraging in Nigeria, there are countries that have preference for their MT, there was a research study carried out by Yushau and Bokhari (2002) in Saudi Arabia to see the effectiveness of the MT in Teaching and learning of mathematics. They translated the mathematics handout from English language to Arabic language to reduce the language barrier of the new students into University. A handout of Arabic translations of the Mathematics terminology of the entire course was given to the students. At the end of the experiment, the teachers found out that the insertion of an Arabic translation of key words and concepts helped most of the students to recall the concepts they had learnt at the secondary school level. They recommended that the use of the mother tongue in mathematics class will remove fear, anxiety and this will be very helpful in minimizing students' language difficulty in learning mathematics.

Bangbose (2011) asserted that one would have expected African speakers to be proud of their language, but quite often one encounters negative attitudes. The most common of such attitudes is that of the elites who prefer education in the English language for their children. Parents that belong to lower social groups also want similar education for their children. In Nigeria, there are a great number of private primary, and secondary schools who take glory in the English medium. The language syndrome affects the perceptions of students in primary and secondary schools, so the undergraduate students in the higher institution of learning have relegated the study of Yoruba ( the mother tongue in south western states) as a course of study to the ground. Therefore, they downgrade their colleagues that chose Yoruba as a course of study in the university.

Barkhuizen (2002) examines high school students' perceptions of the status and role of Xhosa (an indigenous African language) and English in the educational context. He

surveys 2825 students in 26 high schools throughout the Eastern and Western Cape Provinces. These Xhosa high school students were being instructed in their mother tongue and also learning English as a second language. It was discovered that students had a preference for English as a second language. Dyers (1999) in her study of Xhosa university students' attitudes towards South African languages, he observed that the undergraduate students preferred English to their mother tongue. Ede Iyamu, Sam., Aduwa, Ogiegbaen (2008) examined the parents and teachers' perception on mother tongue medium of instruction policy in Nigerian primary schools, it was discovered that they gave preference to English. Olajide (1991) stresses that Nigerian university undergraduates showed difficulty in reading Yoruba. Olu (1996) laments the poor reading and writing skills in Yoruba among groups of learners in the university. Yet, a number of scholars observed that reading and writing skills are fundamental to the intellectual and national development. This study, however is to examine the undergraduate students' perception towards the choice of Yoruba as a course of study in University of Ilorin, sample, population, timing and scope of this study makes it different from the above studies, this is part of gaps in the body of knowledge that this paper intends to fill.

### **Research Question**

The following research question was raised in the course of this study.  
What is the perception of students towards Yoruba as a course?

### **Research Hypotheses**

This research hypothesis was formulated for this study.

HO<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant difference between the perceptions of Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Education students on Yoruba as a course of study.

HO<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant difference in the perceptions of Faculty of Arts and Education male and female students towards Yoruba as a course.

### **Methodology**

This research work is comparative study of Unilorin Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Education Students' perception on Yoruba Language as a course of study in the University Two research questions and two research hypotheses were formulated to guide this study. The research design used for this study was a descriptive research design of survey type. The population of the study consisted of all the students from the Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Education in University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. The sample of the study was made up of One hundred (100) students that were randomly selected from the two faculties, forty-eight (48) students from the Faculty of Arts and fifty-two (52) students from the Faculty of Education. A research **structured questionnaire** which was validated and tested reliable at 0.68r was used to collect data for the study. A descriptive statistic of frequency counts and percentages were used to analyse the demographic data while inferential statistics of mean, standard deviation simple

percentage and t-test was used to test the hypotheses set for the study at .05 alpha level of significance.

**Research Question One:** *What is the perception of students towards Yoruba as a course?*

In order to examine students’ perception towards Yoruba as a course, participants’ responses on the items were subjected to percentage analysis. Given that the questionnaire items were structured in a four-response type, the minimum and maximum range score were 20 and 80 respectively. The range score was divided into two levels (negative and positive) and the cut-off of 30.00 was therefore obtained. Thus, students’ whole score fell within the range score of 20.00 – 50.00 and 51.00 – 80.00 which were negative and positive perception respectively. The summary statistics is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Analysis of students’ perception towards Yoruba as a course

Perception	Frequency	Percent
Positive	42	42.0
Negative	58	58.0
Total	100	100.0

From table 1, result shows that 42% (42) of the respondents have a positive perception towards Yoruba as a course while 58% (58) have a negative perception towards Yoruba as a course. The result implies that majority of the respondents have a negative perception towards Yoruba as a course.

**Hypotheses Testing**

**Research Hypothesis One:** *There is no significant difference in the perception of Faculty of Arts and Education students towards Yoruba language as a course.*

**Table 2:** Mean, standard deviation and t-test analysis on the difference in the perception of Faculty of Arts and Education students towards Yoruba language as a course

Faculty	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig (2 tailed)	Decision
Arts	68	17.5	1.60	2.611	98	.010	<b>Rejected</b>
Education	32	16.6	1.83				

**P<0.05**

Result from table 2 shows the t value yielded 2.611 which is significant with P value  $.010 < 0.05$ . This shows a significant result. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is a significant difference in the perception of Faculty of Arts and Education students towards Yoruba language as a course ( $t_{(98)} = 2.611$ ;  $P < 0.05$ ). The difference can be seen in the mean of Faculty of Arts students; 17.5 which is greater than the mean of Faculty of Education students; 16.6 (i.e.  $17.5 > 16.6$ ).

**Research Hypothesis Two:** *There is no significant difference in the perception of Faculty of Arts and Education male and female students towards Yoruba as a course*

**Table 3:** A table of two-way ANOVA analysis on the difference in the perception of Faculty of Arts and Education male and female students towards Yoruba as a course

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Corrected Model	27.362 <sup>a</sup>	3	9.121	3.284	.024	
Intercept	10182.550	1	10182.550	3666.111	.000	
Gender	7.647	1	7.647	2.753	.100	
Faculty	23.984	1	23.984	8.635	.004	<b>Not Rejected</b>
Gender * Faculty	6.015	1	6.015	2.166	.144	
Error	266.638	96	2.777			
Total	29878.000	100				
Corrected Total	294.000	99				

a. R Squared = .093 (Adjusted R Squared = .065)  $P > 0.05$

Result from table 3 shows the F value ( $_{2, 96}$ ) yielded 2.166. Result also shows that there was no statistically significant difference in the mean perception of male and female students while there was a statistically significant difference in the mean perception of faculty of Arts and Education students. However, result shows that there was no statistically significant interaction of gender and faculty on the perception of students with P value  $.144 > 0.05$ . This shows a non-significant result. Hence, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This means that there is no significant difference in the perception of Faculty of Arts and Education male and female students towards Yoruba as a course ( $F_{(2, 96)} = 2.166$ ;  $P > 0.05$ ).

### Discussions of Findings

Finding revealed that there was no significance difference in the perception of Faculty of Arts and Education students towards Yoruba language as a course of study. The wrong perception of students toward Yoruba as a course of study affects their attitude towards studying and even to the students that take Yoruba as a course of study. This finding is in agreement with Ene's (2008) assertion that most Nigerian especially the

Igbos have a negative attitude towards their indigenous., Chanda 2010; Bamgbose (2011) asserted that the Nigerian students have negative perception on their MT and this is vividly noticed the way they addressed themselves in English on campus. Barkhuizen 2002 investigated on students' perception on the status and role of Xhosa and English in South Africa, it was discovered that the students have wrong perception on their MT. Likewise; the undergraduate students did not appreciate their mother tongue, so they mock it as a course.

Furthermore, Finding revealed that there was no significant difference in the perception of male and female students towards Yoruba language as a course but they believe that since they understand the rudiments of the language, and they speak it very often with their family, friends, neighbours, colleagues and close or distance relations, that underscore the reason for not studying it in higher institution. This study agreed with the view of Bamgbose (2011) who justifies that knowing the rudiment of a language or being able to speak the language does not mean that language can't be studied again. Ogunsiji (2001) carried out a study on the language attitude and language conflict in West Africa, he discovered that Africans are not passionately study their languages as academic courses. This gives wrong impression to the undergraduate students little do they know that Yoruba language is studied to preserve the language for the coming generation, to preserve the culture heritage and to preserve our identification.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

Indigenous languages are eligible to be proudly studied as L2 in the higher institution of learning as it is stipulated in the Policy on Education. (FRN, 2013). It is mental slavery to suggest that Nigerian language (Yoruba ) is not comprehensible for thinking or is not intelligible to study as a course.

It was observed that students prefer studying English language and other courses to Yoruba because they thought they have better chances of employment in labour market than their counterparts that studied Yoruba. Consequently, this perception led to the discouragement of students from taking up Yoruba language as a course of study in higher institution and the number of students coming in to university to study Yoruba is drastically not encouraged.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

Government should enforce the Mother Tongue or indigenous language to be the medium of instruction in primary schools. It should be one of the core subjects L2 in all our primary and secondary schools, even in the institution of higher learning, the major Nigerian languages should be incorporated into the General Nigeria Studies (GNS). This will help to preserve our cultures and save the indigenous languages from going into extinction. Government should also make textbooks and instructional materials available for the teaching and learning of Mother Tongue in all our secondary and primary schools.



Nigerian languages should be developed to become the language of science, education, media, commerce, technology, political constitution etc If the developed countries like Germany, India, Japan, China are using their languages in technology, and contributed immensely to their development Nigeria as a country can progress through our mother tongue, then it can be a course of study .Language institution should be re visited and make it functional for the training of students

Government and parents should encourage students to study indigenous languages in the higher institutions in order to preserve our language and save the society from the language servitude and prove it that studying Nigerian languages as courses in higher institution of learning is not a curse but a prestigious course.

### References

- Abiri, J.O.O. (1982). *Learning and Teaching Yoruba in Post-Primary Institution*, Ibadan: Macmillan.
- Adegbija, E. (2003). Central language issues in literary and basic education: Three Mother Tongue Experiments in Nigeria. In A. Ouane (2004) (Ed.) *Towards a Multilingual Culture of Education*, Hamburg: UNESCO Institute for Education, 299-331.
- Awobuluyi, O. (1992). Language education in Nigeria theory policy, policy and practice. Retrieved January 29, 2010, From [www.Fafunwa foundation tripod. com](http://www.Fafunwa foundation tripod. com)
- Bamgbose, Ayo. (2011). African languages today: The challenges of and prospect for empowerment under globalization. In: G. Eyamba & E. Bokamba et al. (Eds.). *Selected proceedings of the 40th annual conference on African linguistics*. Somerville, MA: Cascadilla. Proceedings Project.
- Barkhuizen, G. P. (2002). Language in education policy: Students' perception of the status and role of Xhosa and English. *System*, 30(4), 499-515. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0346-251X\(02\)00051-9](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0346-251X(02)00051-9)
- Chanda, A. (2010). The importance of regional language and mother tongue for children. An Article on Indian Blogger.
- Ede, O.S. Iyamu, & Sam. E.Aduwa, Ogiegbaen ( 2008) Parents and Teachers' Perception of Mother Tongue Medium of instruction Policy in Nigeria Primary schools
- Ene, I.O (2008). Education reforms and the implementation of the mother- tongue medium Policy.
- Fafunwa, A. B. (1982) 'Yoruba in Education – Integrated Primary School Curriculum Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013). *National Policy on Education*. Yaba, Lagos. NERDC Press.
- Fudor, J.A. (2004). The language of thought: England. The Harvest Press.
- In: R.A. Lawal, S.A. Jimoh, S.A. Olorundare and N.Y.S. Ijaiya (eds) *Education Reforms in Nigeria Past, Present and Future*. Ibadan: Stirling- Horden Publishers Ltd.
- Lawal, R. A. (1989b). Towards the evaluation of an indigenous national language for Nigeria: In R.A. Lawal & K. Olugbade, (Eds.). *Issues in Contemporary African Social Political Thought*, 1, 32-39.1

- Lawal, R. Adebayo (1989b) The roles of the Mother-tongue in the decolonization of education in Africa. In Bayo Lawal and Kola Olugbade (eds.) issues in contemporary African social political thought Ibadan.
- Ogunsiji, A. (2001). Language attitude and language conflict in West Africa. Edited by Herbert Igboanusi, Enicrawunfid Publishers.
- Olajide S.B (2007). Reforming the mother tongue content of Nigerian education for sustainable national empowerment. In: R.A. Lawal, S.A. Jimoh, S.A Olorundare and N.Y.S.I jaiya (eds.) *Education Reforms in Nigeria Past, Present and Future. Ibadan: Stirling-Horden Publishers Ltd.*
- Olajide, S. B. (1991). *Problems of reading among secondary school students in mother tongue.* Ilorin: University Press
- Salawu, Abiodun (2006) 'Indigenous Language Media: A Veritable Tool for African Scheme in Nigeria: A Six-year Project'. Adebisi Afolayan (Ed.) Yoruba Language and Literature. Ife and Ibadan: University of Ife Press and University Press Limited, pp. 291 – 299.
- Yushau, B. & Bokhari, M.A. (2002). *Language and mathematics: A mediational approach to bilingual Arabs.* Department of Mathematical Sciences, King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia.