Assessing the Parental Attitude to Tiv Language as a Medium of Instruction in Primary Schools in Tiv Speaking of Benue State, Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined parental attitudes towards Tiv Language as a medium of instruction in primary schools in Tiv-speaking areas of Benue State, Nigeria. Specifically, it examined parents' preferred medium of instruction, their perceptions of pupils' academic performance under Tiv- and English-medium instruction, and strategies for promoting parental acceptance of Tiv. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design involving 330 Tiv parents from seven Local Government Areas: Katsina-Ala, Konshisha, Kwande, Logo, Ukum, Ushongo and Vandeikya. Data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire titled Parental Attitude towards Tiv Language as a Medium of Instruction Questionnaire (PATLMOIQ). The data were analysed using frequencies, percentages, the chi-square goodness-of-fit test and paired-samples t-test at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that 190 respondents (57.6%) preferred Tiv, while 140 (42.4%) preferred English as the medium of instruction. This difference was statistically significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 330) = 7.58$, $p = .006$. Parents also rated perceived academic performance more favourably under Tiv-medium instruction ($M = 3.72$) than under English-medium instruction ($M = 3.41$), with a statistically significant difference, $t(329) = 9.37$, $p < .001$. Advocacy (36.4%), sensitization (33.3%), and seminars or conferences (30.3%) were identified as strategies for promoting parental acceptance of Tiv-medium instruction. The study concluded that Tiv remains a valuable medium of instruction in primary schools. It recommended effective implementation of mother-tongue education policies, provision of qualified teachers and instructional materials, and sustained parental sensitization to promote Tiv-medium instruction alongside English-language development.

Keywords: Tiv Language, Medium of Instruction, Parental Attitude, Bilingualism, Mother Tongue, Primary Education

INTRODUCTION

Children all over the world have the right to be educated in their mother tongue. This is a requirement for international community. There is therefore the general belief that the mother tongue has great influence on the way children learn. UNESCO's declaration on the rights of persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992) pronounces that the persons belonging to minorities have the right to enjoy their own culture and use own language in private and public freely without interference or any form of discrimination. Also worthy of note, many years of research have proved that there are more advantages in giving children education in their mother tongue than in foreign language (Udu 2013) cited in Kpagh (2020). Linguists agree that children who begin their education in their mother tongue have a better start, and continue to perform better than those who start school with a second or foreign language (Ummin, 1979, 1981, 2000; Kpagh,2018, 2020; Udu, 2025; chahur &Iorshagher; 2025,).

Mother tongue as a medium of instruction is therefore crucial for increased participation in a world that has

been transformed into a global village. As a result, the use of Tiv language as a medium of instruction in primary school across Tiv speaking areas no doubt lays a conceptual for the learning of other languages (Kpagh, 2018, 2020). Ezeudu , (2006) cited in Kpagh (2018, 2020), opined that the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction has to be strengthened in view of its benefits to the learning of the second language since a poor background in the child's mother tongue acquisition can constitute a barrier to the study of other subjects in general.

Against this backdrop, the importance attached to mother tongue by government is reflected in the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004, 2008, 2012) which stipulates that Government appreciates the importance of language as a means of promoting social interaction and national cohesion; and preserving cultures. Thus, every child shall learn in the language of the immediate environment. Section 4 paragraph 19 also states that "the medium of instruction in the primary school shall be the language of immediate environment for the first three years".

A critical look at this declaration above makes the pro-Tiv language adherent have a sigh of relief that the language has finally been given a place it deserves on the linguistic map of Nigeria Kpagh (2018, 2020).

In spite of the above assertion, it is not yet victory for the Tiv language because some Tiv parents believe that it is only through foreign language acquisition that white-collar jobs can be obtained. Corroborating with the above, Shoja (2013) says that parents in Benue State where the Tiv language is predominant spoken do withdraw their children from public schools where Tiv language is used as a medium of instruction to private schools so that they will be exposed to English. It is unfortunate that the majority of the Tiv pupils cannot read and write properly in English language as their parents' desire. The purpose of this research is therefore to assess the parental attitude to Tiv language as a medium of instruction in primary schools in Tiv-speaking areas of Benue State, Nigeria.

Problem Statement

Language is one of the most important human attributes and endowments that are essential and germane to national, socio-economic and human development. Language and culture are interwoven; and together, they define our cultural traits, norms and values (National Language Policy, 2022). One of the Policy's goals is to "ensure the mother tongue or the language of immediate Community (LIC) is used as a medium of instruction at designated levels of education" (8). The policy further stipulates that to ensure effective delivery of instructions and attendant positive outcomes, mother tongue (MT) or Language of the Immediate Community (LIC) shall be used as the medium of instruction from Early Childhood Care and Development Education to six years of primary education. (NLP,2022).

However, as laudable as this declaration is, some Tiv parents do not want the Tiv language to be used as a medium of instruction in the primary school. This could be seen from the low admission of students in the Department of Tiv Language, College of Education, Katsina-Ala, in 2025/2026 academic session, one of the higher institutions that is saddled with responsibility of training teachers that will teach the Tiv language at the basic level of education in the state. Thus, the present study is to assess the parental attitude to Tiv Language as a medium of instruction in the primary schools in Benue State.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Determine the preferred medium of instruction among Tiv parents for their children in primary schools in the selected areas.

2. Compare Tiv parents' perceptions of pupils' academic performance under Tiv- and English-medium instruction.

3. Identify approaches that may encourage Tiv parents to accept Tiv as a medium of instruction in

primary schools.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. Which medium of instruction do Tiv parents prefer for their children in primary schools in the selected Tiv-speaking areas of Benue State?

2. Is there a significant difference between Tiv parents' perceptions of pupils' academic performance under Tiv- and English-medium instruction?

3. What approaches may encourage Tiv parents to accept Tiv as a medium of instruction in primary schools?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H_{01}: There is no significant difference between the observed proportions of Tiv parents who prefer Tiv and English as media of instruction in primary schools.

H_{02}: There is no significant difference between Tiv parents' ratings of perceived academic performance under Tiv- and English-medium instruction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Framework: The Tiv Language

Tiv is a language, a tribe, and the progenitor of the Tiv people (Udu, 2009,2025; Kpagh, 2020). Tiv language is spoken mainly in North-central Nigeria and the Republic of Cameroon. There appears to be conflicting reports about the exact population of the Tiv speakers. The Joshua Project (2025) estimates the population of Tiv speakers in Nigeria to be 5,017,000 and those in Cameroon to be 1,900, suggesting that the population of the Tiv tribe is close to 6 million. In Nigerian, Tiv speakers are found in large numbers in the States of Benue, Cross River, Nasarawa, Plateau, Taraba, and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja (Udu, 2019, 2025; Kpagh, 2018, 2020; Adzer,2024; Ahar & Ishima, 2024). In the Republic of Cameroon, the Tiv people have settled in Akwaya sub-division, Manyu, Southwest Province (Eberhard et al., 2024). Greenberg (1963) asserts that Tiv along with Bitare and Batu are Tiv old languages and are three of the seven co-ordinate branches of Bantu. Due to its widespread nature, Blench (2016) refers to Tiv as a major regional language in Nigeria. Tiv is one of the nine network languages broadcast on national radio stations in Nigeria. Others are Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Fulfulde, Efik, Edo, Izon and Kanuri Udu (2025). In compliance with the policy provision of the National Language Policy of Nigeria (NLP, 2022) Tiv is also a language of instruction in basic 1-6 for schools located in Tiv speaking areas. This makes Tiv language an important language culturally, educationally, and socio-politically Udu, (2025).

The Tiv language has been committed into writing long ago. According to Rubingh, (1969:112). The first literature produced in Tiv was a small reader published in 1914 called "*Zua Tiv*" (The Tiv language) which was followed in 1916 by the Gospel of Mark. Apart from serving as a medium of religious instructions, Tiv language was also used in the past as a medium of instruction in schools. The Dutch first enacted the idea of developing and reducing Tiv into a written form. The Dutch Reformed Missionaries developed the language and taught all other subjects in it (Orjime, 2004).

Attempts by foreign linguists like Abraham, did not yield much profit in the development of the language. Many of such works were on Tiv grammar. For example, Abraham (1940)'s *The Principles of Tiv*, was based on mere grammatical materials, which should have used literary publications for their applications. So for a long time, the Tiv language has developed and possesses most of the vital qualities of a standard language but

which is yet to be fully standardized. The language has a formal writing system, grammar books, and many literature texts and are used in school for academic purpose (Udu, 2009).

Teaching the Tiv Language in Benue State

Teaching in Tiv language in Tiv speaking areas in Benue State started with the activities of the Christian Missionary. The missionaries did not reach Tiv land until about five decades after their arrival in the southern part of Nigeria (Chioke, 2003). It was until 17th April, 1911 that Rev. Zimmerman led a group of the Dutch Reformed Church Missionaries (DRCM) from South Africa to enter Tiv land and they settled at Sai (Rubingh, 1969; Ikpa, 1985; Iyortyom, 2001). The DRCM brought along its Christian message, the apartheid policy of South Africa where separate development was emphasized (Ikpa, 1985). The Africans were thus to study and write in African languages (Tsumba, 1997). They also discovered that the linguistic barrier between them and the natives would not permit effective communication of the gospel with the natives. As a result, mother tongue (Tiv) was introduced both as a medium of instruction as well as a subject in all DRCM primary schools in Tiv land from primary 1-4 initially. In order to fully implement this language policy, the DRCM church was further indigenized and the Tiv wing of The Church of Christ among the Tiv, became known in Tiv language as **Nongo U Kristu U Ken Sudan Hen Tiv** (NKST) (Tsumba, 2003).

It is pertinent to stress here that discussing western education in Nigeria, particularly in Tiv land without mentioning the roles played by the various missionary bodies such as the DRCM, and RCM will amount to nothing. From 1911-1980; more than 120 books were produced in Tiv language, either by writing or translation. One of such translations was the bible stories in Tiv language. Tiv children had access to most of these books and could read and write the Tiv language fluently because the DRCM insisted that education must be given in the mother tongue. This paid off well. The work of evangelization proceeded very fast through education; the pupils understood what was taught right from the beginning to the end of the lesson. It is of interest to note that Rev. Judd was able to reduce the Tiv language to writing and Akirga Sai was the first Tiv man to read and write in Tiv language (Ahenekaa and Achineku, 2007). It should be noted that English was not even the medium of instruction or a subject of study at this level.

Nevertheless, while the DRCM introduced mother tongue medium of instruction for acquiring western education, the Roman Catholic Mission (RCM) on their part brought the "Straight-for-English" approach to education Shoja, (2005). They were more interested in the teaching of English language Kpagh (2018, 2020). This explains why the native products of their schools were more proficient in the English language than their DRCM School products (Rubingh, 1976) cited in Kpagh (2018, 2020).

At this stage of the inception of mother tongue education, the Christian missionaries were at ideological variance with the colonialists on the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction. The colonial government thus moved in with emphasis on the English Language as the medium of instruction. They maintained that the Tiv child must study English and adopt it as the language of education since it is the language of commerce and must be given in the language of the colonial masters (Shoja, 2005). This development brought a great desire of Tiv people to study in English; the pressure was so great that there was a modification by the policy. Tsumba (2002) opines that:

...in the 50's English was introduced as a subject right from primary one to four. English also became a medium of instruction from standards five to six. For the NKST primary schools products, a special class was designed for them called "remove class" which acted as a transition class for a change from Tiv to English to enable the pupils take up studies fully in English and only study Tiv as a subject.

This transition from Tiv language as a medium of instruction in the Primary school to English language marked a gradual abandonment of the mother tongue medium Kpagh, (2018,2020). From this time onward, the changes that came were more for English language in the classroom and less mother tongue (Tiv) which gradually diminished from the classroom after a long period of time. Shoja, (2013:24) asserts that the reason for this linguistic transition was that "the recipients of colonial education were meant to take up menial jobs in colonial government". When Nigeria attained independence, she had to re-define her values in accordance with the challenges and aspirations of the new nation (Shoja, 2013). This accounts for the introduction of the new

National Policy on Education in 1977. The document has been revised in 1981, 2004, and 2012. Article 10 of the 2004 edition on the importance of language states: "Government appreciates the importance of language as a means of promoting social interaction and national cohesion; and preserving cultures. Thus every child shall learn the language of his immediate environment".

A critical look at the declaration above makes the pro-Tiv language adherent in Nigeria heave a sigh of relief that the language has finally been accorded the rightful place it desires on the linguistics map of Nigeria. However, a careful and thorough analysis reveals that it is not yet victory for Tiv language in the Nigerian education system Kpagh (2018, 2020). It is of importance to note that the *Nigerian Language Policy* (NLP, 2022*)* as enshrined in the *National Policy on Education (2012:* 17) in order to address this issue states: The medium of instruction in the primary school shall be language of immediate environment (mother tongue) for the first three years. During this period, English shall be taught as a subject. From fourth year, English shall progressively be used as a medium of instruction and French shall be taught as a subject.

As a result, looking at the roles assigned mother tongue show that the roles are quite minor as compared to the roles assigned English, our official language. The hypothetical question one needs to ask is how can a Tiv child read and write in his Tiv Language if he/she only studies the language for the first three years of primary school? (Udu,2013; Kpagh, 2018, 2020). One observes that the socio-linguistic seeds of discord have been sown by the policy in relegating the Tiv language to the background and one can only remember with nostalgia the good old days when it was used as medium of instruction and its values to the Tiv nation Shoja, (2005).

This discussion will not be competed if the study of Tiv language at different levels of education is not mentioned. Though the National Policy on Education has clearly stated that the language of instruction in the lower basic primary school shall be the mother tongue (Tiv), it is disheartening to note that as plausible as this statement is, Tiv language is sparingly taught in primary and secondary schools in Benue State. Where it is taught at all, it is at the discretion of the head teacher and the principal (Udu, 2013).

Mention has been made right from the beginning that it was the DRCM/NKST that rendered Tiv language to writing and reading forms. It is therefore interesting that Tiv language is most taught in NKST primary and secondary schools in Benue State of Nigeria Kpagh (2018, 2020). Apart from these categories of schools, some public and catholic schools also teach Tiv language at the discretion of the head teachers and principals. However, private nursery/primary and secondary schools in Benue State neglect the teaching of Tiv language. Tiv children are neither learning nor perfecting their expressions. At home, the training of a child to use the mother tongue to communicate meaningfully is the responsibility of parents and all adults. In the past, the home used to be full of interactional activities such as proverbs, songs, folk tales, riddles, and jokes that encouraged language learning. The child was unconsciously immersed in these activities and through them; he developed language to a point of perfection Udu, (2013). It is worrisome that that the story has changed this time around. Today, most parents pay less attention to the way their children use Tiv. The desire of some parents is for their children to learn English language which has more social prestige is an entry requirement for admission.

In the Colleges of Education, Katsina-Ala in Benue State, those students who are studying Tiv language are looked upon as inferior to their counterparts studying English and French languages. Shoja (2005, 2013) says, in an investigation into the choice of course of study among the students of the Department of Tiv Language Studies, College of Education, Katsina-Ala, it was observed that out of 150 students interviewed, only about 46 chose to study Tiv because they wanted it. Most of the students confessed that they could not gain admission to study courses of their choice and so chose Tiv as last resort. It is in the light of the above that the researchers want to assess the parental attitude to Tiv language in Benue State of Nigeria.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework that guided this study is Developmental Interdependence Hypothesis of Cummins (1979). This theory stipulates that the child's language competence is partly dependent on the level of competence already achieved in the first language. The more developed the first language, the easier it will develop a second language. When the first language is at a low stage of evolution, the more difficult the

achievement of bilingualism will be. The framework also incorporates theories on mother tongue education and second language learning drawn from the works of Bamgbose (1991); Robinson (1996); Lambert (1997); Hornby (1977); Benson (2005), Adegbaji (2009).

One of the expectations and assumptions of bilingual education is that when children continue to develop their abilities in two or more languages throughout their primary school years, they gain a deeper understanding of the language and how to use it effectively (Baker, 2020; Cummins, 2020; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2020).

Bilinguals argue that it is highly desirable for multilingual societies like Nigeria to support the use of mother as a medium of instruction in the learning of young bilinguals in schools Scarcella (1990) in Tompkins & Hoskisson, (1995) cited in Kpagh (2018,2020). Mother tongue as a medium of instruction in the primary school years offers the best introduction to learning that eventually becomes useful in the learning of foreign languages (Whestley, 1992 in Mwamwenda, 1996; Hawes, 1979; Hakuta, 1986 in Travesrs, Elliot & Kratochwill, 1993; Ndamba, 2008; cited in Kpagh 2018, 2020; Baker, 2020; Cummins, 2020; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2020; Chahur & Iorshagher, 2025; Udu,2025). A good number of research on learning of second language shows that if a child masters the first language, then learning another language becomes less problematic in that habits of speech, listening, reading and writing can be transferred to the learning of the second language (Cummins, 1979,1981,2020; Hawes, 1979; Obanya, 1985; Dawes, 1988; Krashen, 1985 in Kpagh, (2018,2020).

Despite the findings that mother tongue as a medium of instruction has positive effects and is crucial in the initial phase of the child's school life, research has also shown that some parents have nonchalant attitude to mother tongue as medium of instruction. In one study, Chahur and Iorshagher (2019) found that some Tiv parents in Benue State have become used to English as a language which provides their children with a more profitable future in the world of employment. English language is viewed as performing higher functions than the mother tongue which does not give employment, while parents tend to negatively evaluate mother tongue because it does not perform such higher functions. In another study, Udu (2013) found that parents out of ignorance insulate their children from mother tongue to induce facility in the use of English language, thus depriving children of basic source of education and imaginative development. Shoja (2005), Walu (2009), Muriana & Jubril (2011), OlaOlorun, Ikonta &Adeosun (2013) and Kpagh (2018,2020) in their respective study on mother tongue found that parental attitude to the use of mother as medium of instruction is not encouraging. In their findings, some parents preferred English as language of instruction for their children. A situation where parents prefer English as their children's L1 calls for attention. Their negative attitude to the mother tongue as their children's L1 is erroneous. The consequence of the continued preferences for English means the displacement and replacement of Nigerian languages with foreign languages Shoja, (2005). This portends danger to the survival of the Tiv language, Kpagh (2018, 2020).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design to examine Tiv parents' attitudes and preferences regarding the use of Tiv Language as a medium of instruction in primary schools. The design was appropriate because data were collected from respondents at a single point in time without manipulating the study variables. It enabled the researcher to obtain quantitative information on parents' preferred medium of instruction, perceptions of pupils' academic performance under Tiv and English Languages, and approaches for promoting acceptance of Tiv as a medium of instruction.

Area of the Study

The study was conducted in seven Tiv-speaking Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Zone A, Benue State, namely Katsina-Ala, Konshisha, Kwande, Logo, Ukum, Ushongo and Vandeikya. Benue State is located in Nigeria's North-Central geopolitical zone and is predominantly agricultural. The Tiv constitute one of the major ethnic groups in the state, and Tiv Language is widely used for communication within homes and communities. The predominance of Tiv-speaking populations and the presence of primary schools in the

selected LGAs made the area suitable for investigating parental attitudes towards Tiv as a medium of instruction.

Population of the Study

The population comprised Tiv parents with children attending public and private primary schools in the seven selected LGAs. Parents were targeted because their attitudes and preferences can influence the acceptance and use of indigenous languages in children's education.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

A sample of 330 Tiv parents was selected. The distribution was: Katsina-Ala (55), Konshisha (42), Kwande (50), Logo (41), Ukum (45), Ushongo (43), and Vandeikya (54), representing 100% of the sample.

A combination of stratified, purposive and simple random sampling techniques was used. Stratified sampling ensured representation of all seven LGAs. Purposive sampling was used to identify Tiv-speaking communities and primary schools relevant to the study, while simple random sampling was used to select eligible parents from the identified locations. Eligible respondents were Tiv parents residing in the selected LGAs, having at least one child enrolled in a primary school within the study area, and willing to participate.

Instrument for Data Collection

Data were collected using a researcher-developed structured questionnaire titled Parental Attitude towards Tiv Language as a Medium of Instruction Questionnaire (PATLMOIQ)". The instrument was developed from the research objectives, questions and relevant literature on mother-tongue and bilingual education. The questionnaire consisted of four sections. Section A collected demographic information. Section B measured parents' preferences for Tiv and English Languages as media of instruction using paired Likert-type items. Section C assessed parents' perceptions of pupils' academic performance under Tiv- and English-medium instruction, including understanding, participation, retention and overall performance. Section D examined approaches for promoting parental acceptance of Tiv Language, including sensitization, community advocacy, teacher training, development of instructional materials and parental/community involvement.

The measurement of variables captured parents' preference for Tiv and English was measured using corresponding Likert-type statements, allowing paired comparison of the two language preferences. Perceived academic performance was measured through parental ratings of pupils' understanding, participation, retention and overall performance under Tiv and English instruction. Approaches for promoting acceptance of Tiv were measured through Likert-type items, with higher scores indicating stronger agreement with the effectiveness of each approach.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by experts in language education and educational measurement. The responses were subjected to Cronbach's alpha analysis to determine internal consistency of the instrument. A coefficient of 0.70 or above was considered acceptable, while unclear or inconsistent items were reviewed before the final administration.

Procedure for Data Collection

To administer the instrument that was validated for the research, an introductory letter was collected from the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) indicating the permission of the Executive Chairman in regards to carrying out the research in the primary schools in the State. The principal researcher carried out the research with the help of a co-researcher and research assistants when they were educated on how to distribute and collect the questionnaires as well as who is qualified to be given the questionnaire and interview.

Instruments for Data Analysis

Data were coded and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 27. Frequencies and percentages were used to summarise respondents' demographic characteristics, preferences for the medium of instruction and selected approaches for encouraging parental acceptance of Tiv. A chi-square goodness-of-fit test was used to examine whether the observed numbers of parents preferring Tiv and English differed significantly from an equal distribution. The second hypothesis requires a within-respondent comparison of ratings for Tiv- and English-medium instruction. A paired-samples t-test may be used if the composite ratings are treated as approximately continuous and the relevant assumptions are satisfied. Alternatively, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test may be used when its assumptions are appropriate for the paired ratings. All inferential tests were evaluated at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results/Findings

Distribution of Respondents by Local Government Area1.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents Based on Local Government Area

Local Government Area	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Katsina-Ala	55	16.7
Konshisha	42	12.7
Kwande	50	15.2
Logo	41	12.4
Ushongo	43	13.0
Ukum	45	13.6
Vandeikya	54	16.4
Total	**330**	**100.0**

Source: Data Analysis, 2026

Table 1 shows that the 330 respondents were distributed across the seven selected LGAs. Katsina-Ala had the highest representation, with 55 respondents (16.7%), while Logo had the lowest, with 41 respondents (12.4%). All seven LGAs were represented in the sample.

Research Question One

What medium of instruction do Tiv parents prefer for their children in primary schools in Tiv-speaking areas of Benue State?

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents Based on Preferred Language of Instruction

Language of Instruction	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Tiv Language	190	57.6
English Language	140	42.4

Source: Data Analysis, 2026

Table 2 shows that 190 respondents (57.6%) preferred Tiv as the medium of instruction, while 140 (42.4%) preferred English. The difference was 50 respondents, corresponding to 15.2 percentage points. Tiv was therefore the more frequently preferred medium among the sampled parents. However, the descriptive difference alone does not establish statistical significance; hence, Hypothesis One was tested using the Chi-square goodness-of-fit test.

Test of Hypothesis One

$H_0$1: There is no significant difference between Tiv parents' preference for Tiv Language and their preference

for English Language as a medium of instruction in primary schools.

Table 3: Chi-square goodness-of-fit test of parental preference

Statistic	Result
Sample size	330
Observed frequency: Tiv	190
Observed frequency: English	140
Expected frequency per category	165
Chi-square statistic	7.58
Degrees of freedom	1
p-value	.006
Decision	Reject H_{01}

Source: Data Analysis, 2026

The chi-square goodness-of-fit test indicated a statistically significant difference between the observed frequencies of parents preferring Tiv and English, $\chi^2(1, N = 330) = 7.58$, $p = .006$. Since the p-value was below the 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis was rejected. The result indicates that Tiv was significantly more frequently preferred than English among the sampled parents, assuming equal proportions under the null hypothesis.

Research Question Two

Is there a significant difference between Tiv parents' perceptions of pupils' academic performance under Tiv- and English-medium instruction?

Table 4: Comparison of perceived academic performance ratings

Medium of instruction	N	Mean	Standard deviation
Tiv	330	3.72	0.58
English	330	3.41	0.64
Mean difference	—	0.31	—

Source: Data Analysis, 2026

Table 4 illustrates a higher mean rating for perceived academic performance under Tiv-medium instruction (M = 3.72, SD = 0.58) than under English-medium instruction (M = 3.41, SD = 0.64). The mean difference was 0.31. This pattern suggests that parents rated perceived academic performance more favourably under Tiv-medium instruction. However, the observed difference requires statistical verification; therefore, Hypothesis Two was tested using an independent-samples t-test.

Test of Hypothesis Two

$H_0$2: There is no significant difference between Tiv parents' ratings of perceived academic performance under Tiv- and English-medium instruction.

Table 5: Paired-samples t-test of perceived academic performance

Statistic	Result
Number of paired observations	330
Mean difference (Tiv − English)	0.31
Standard deviation of paired differences	0.60
Standard error of the mean difference	0.033
t-value	9.37
Degrees of freedom	329

p-value	< .001
Decision	Reject H_{02}

Source: Data Analysis, 2026

The paired-samples t-test indicates a statistically significant difference between ratings of perceived academic performance under Tiv- and English-medium instruction, $t(329) = 9.37$, $p < .001$. Since the p-value was below the 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Research Question Three

What approaches can be used to encourage Tiv parents to accept Tiv Language as a medium of instruction in primary schools?

Table 6: Approaches for Encouraging Parental Acceptance of Tiv Language

Approach	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**	**Rank**
Advocacy	120	36.4	1st
Sensitization	110	33.3	2nd
Seminars/Conferences	100	30.3	3rd
Total	**330**	**100.0**	

Source: Data Analysis, 2026

Table 6 shows that advocacy was the most preferred approach for promoting parental acceptance of Tiv as a medium of instruction, reported by 120 respondents (36.4%), followed by sensitization with 110 (33.3%) and seminars and conferences with 100 (30.3%). The findings suggest that combining advocacy, sensitization, and stakeholder-focused educational forums could strengthen parental awareness and acceptance of Tiv-medium instruction in primary schools.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The finding that 57.6% of the respondents preferred Tiv as the medium of instruction, compared with 42.4% who preferred English, relates to the studies of Chahur and Iorshagher (2019) and Udu (2013), which reported that some Tiv parents favour English because of its perceived socioeconomic and educational advantages. However, the present finding reveals that a greater proportion of the sampled parents preferred Tiv, suggesting a recognition of the importance of mother-tongue education. This finding supports Cummins' (1979) Developmental Interdependence Hypothesis, which posits that competence developed in the first language can facilitate second-language learning. It also aligns with Baker (2020) and Cummins (2020), who emphasise the benefits of developing children's abilities in their languages throughout their school years. Thus, Tiv-medium instruction should be viewed as complementary to English-language learning rather than a barrier to it.

Similarly, the finding that parents rated perceived academic performance more favourably under Tiv-medium instruction (M = 3.72) than under English-medium instruction (M = 3.41) is consistent with the reviewed literature on the educational benefits of mother-tongue instruction. Udu (2013) argued that distancing children from their mother tongue may deprive them of an important foundation for learning and imaginative development. The finding also agrees with Cummins' (1979) theory that first-language competence can support the acquisition of a second language through the transfer of relevant linguistic and cognitive skills. Furthermore, Baker (2020) and Skutnabb-Kangas (2020) support sustained development of children's languages in bilingual education. However, because the present study examined parents' perceptions rather than pupils' actual academic achievement, the findings indicate perceived advantages rather than conclusive evidence of superior performance under Tiv-medium instruction.

Finally, the finding that advocacy (36.4%), sensitization (33.3%), and seminars/conferences (30.3%) were identified as approaches for encouraging parental acceptance of Tiv-medium instruction relates to Chahur and Iorshagher (2019), Udu (2013), and Kpagh (2018, 2020), whose studies highlighted the challenges posed by

parents' preference for English over indigenous languages. The findings suggest that parental attitudes can be addressed through awareness creation, community engagement, and educational advocacy. These strategies are consistent with Cummins' (1979) Developmental Interdependence Hypothesis because they can help parents understand the potential value of developing Tiv while their children acquire English. Therefore, effective collaboration among parents, teachers, school administrators, community leaders, and government is essential for strengthening Tiv-medium instruction and promoting bilingual competence among pupils in Benue State.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that Tiv remains a valuable medium of instruction in primary schools within Tiv-speaking areas of Benue State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that a greater proportion of the sampled parents preferred Tiv to English as the medium of instruction and rated pupils' perceived academic performance more favourably under Tiv-medium instruction. These findings underscore the educational and cultural importance of mother-tongue education and support Cummins' (1979) Developmental Interdependence Hypothesis, which emphasises the contribution of first-language development to second-language learning. However, the continued preference for English among a substantial proportion of parents highlights the influence of its perceived socioeconomic and educational advantages.

The study further concludes that advocacy, sensitization, and seminars or conferences are important approaches for encouraging parental acceptance of Tiv-medium instruction. Therefore, government, school administrators, teachers, parents, and community leaders should collaborate to promote the use of Tiv in early primary education while ensuring the progressive development of English proficiency. Adequate instructional materials, trained teachers, consistent policy implementation, and active parental involvement are necessary to achieve this objective. Such efforts would strengthen pupils' foundational learning, preserve Tiv language and cultural identity, and promote effective bilingual education in Benue State.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study have implications for language-in-education policy, classroom practice, parental engagement, teacher preparation and the preservation of Tiv language. The finding that 57.6% of the sampled parents preferred Tiv as a medium of instruction, compared with 42.4% who preferred English, suggests that there is a meaningful level of parental support for using Tiv in primary education in the selected Tiv-speaking Local Government Areas of Benue State. Education authorities and school administrators should therefore take parental views into account when planning and implementing mother-tongue instruction. The finding supports efforts to implement the relevant language-in-education policy in ways that are responsive to local linguistic circumstances and supported by appropriate teaching resources.

The higher mean rating for perceived academic performance under Tiv-medium instruction (M = 3.72) than under English-medium instruction (M = 3.41) suggests that parents may see educational value in teaching through a language familiar to pupils. This has implications for classroom practice: teachers may use Tiv to explain concepts, encourage participation and support comprehension during the early years of schooling, while also providing systematic opportunities for pupils to learn English. Such an approach is consistent with the study's discussion of additive bilingualism, in which the development of the mother tongue is supported alongside the learning of an additional language. However, because the study measured parents' perceptions rather than pupils' achievement through standardized tests, the results should not be interpreted as conclusive evidence that Tiv-medium instruction causes better academic outcomes.

The findings also imply that parental acceptance is important to the practical success of mother-tongue education. Advocacy (36.4%), sensitization (33.3%) and seminars or conferences (30.3%) were identified as approaches for encouraging acceptance of Tiv as a medium of instruction. SUBEB, school leaders, teachers, traditional and community leaders, and language-education stakeholders can use these approaches to explain the educational purpose of Tiv-medium instruction, address concerns about English proficiency, and encourage parents to participate in school-language discussions. These activities should present Tiv and English as complementary learning resources rather than competing choices.

Finally, the study has implications for teacher development and the production of learning materials. Parental support alone may not ensure effective implementation unless schools have teachers who can teach competently in Tiv and suitable textbooks and supplementary materials. Teacher-training institutions and education authorities should therefore consider strengthening teachers' linguistic and pedagogical preparation and supporting the development and distribution of Tiv-language resources. In the longer term, a well-supported approach to Tiv-medium instruction may contribute to pupils' learning experiences and help sustain the use of Tiv in education and community life, while maintaining opportunities for English-language development.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings should be interpreted in light of several limitations. First, the study used a cross-sectional survey, with data collected at one point in time; it therefore describes attitudes and perceptions but cannot establish changes over time or causal relationships. Second, the sample comprised 330 parents from seven selected Tiv-speaking Local Government Areas in Zone A of Benue State. The results may not represent all Tiv-speaking communities in Benue State or other language groups in Nigeria.

Third, the comparison of academic performance was based on parents' perceptions of pupils' performance under Tiv- and English-medium instruction, rather than independently verified examination scores or standardized assessments. The results should consequently not be interpreted as definitive evidence that the language of instruction alone caused differences in achievement. Fourth, the questionnaire was researcher-developed. Although the manuscript reports face and content validation and the use of Cronbach's alpha to assess internal consistency, it does not provide the obtained reliability coefficient or detailed psychometric results, limiting readers' ability to assess the instrument's measurement properties. Finally, the study relied on questionnaire responses, which may be affected by recall, social desirability or differing interpretations of the items. These limitations do not negate the findings, but they define the scope of conclusions that can reasonably be drawn from them.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Further studies should examine pupils' actual learning outcomes under Tiv- and English-medium instruction using standardized assessments, school records or carefully designed classroom-based tests. Where feasible, longitudinal or quasi-experimental designs could help determine whether, and under what conditions, mother-tongue instruction is associated with changes in literacy, comprehension, participation and achievement while accounting for relevant differences between pupils and schools.

Future research should extend sampling to additional Tiv-speaking Local Government Areas and, where appropriate, compare public and private schools or urban and rural communities. Researchers could also investigate how parental attitudes relate to educational level, socioeconomic circumstances, school experiences and beliefs about the value of English for further education and employment. Qualitative interviews or focus-group discussions with parents, teachers, head teachers, community leaders and education officials would help explain why some parents favour Tiv while others prefer English. Further instrument-development studies should report reliability coefficients and additional evidence of validity in detail. Finally, implementation studies could evaluate the effectiveness of advocacy campaigns, parent sensitization, stakeholder seminars, teacher professional development and the availability of Tiv-language instructional materials in improving acceptance and classroom practice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the study recommends that:

1. **Tiv Language should be strengthened as a medium of instruction in primary schools in Tiv-speaking areas of Benue State,** given that the majority of parents preferred Tiv to English. Education authorities ensure that the provisions of the National Language Policy on mother-tongue instruction are effectively implemented.

2. **Tiv-medium instruction should be supported with adequate teachers and instructional materials** to enhance pupils' learning. Teacher-training institutions and relevant education authorities should equip teachers with the linguistic and pedagogical competencies required to teach effectively in Tiv and provide appropriate Tiv textbooks and other learning resources.

3. **Sustained advocacy and sensitization of parents should be undertaken** by SUBEB, schools, community leaders and language-education stakeholders. These efforts should emphasize the educational benefits of Tiv, correct misconceptions about indigenous-language instruction, and demonstrate that learning through Tiv can coexist with effective acquisition of English.

4. **Regular seminars and stakeholder engagement should be organized** to involve parents, teachers, school administrators and community leaders in decisions concerning Tiv-medium education. Such engagement should promote an additive bilingual approach in which Tiv is maintained as the foundation for early learning while English is progressively developed as an additional language.

Ethical Approval and Consent to Participate

The study was exempted from full ethical review in accordance with the guidelines of the National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC, 2007), and the Benue State Ministry of Health Research Ethics Committee, as the research was considered to involve minimal risk to participants. Approval was also obtained from the Benue State Ministry of Education and Knowledge Management.

Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, their right to decline participation or withdraw, and how their responses would be handled confidentially.

Consent for Publication

Not applicable. This manuscript does not contain identifiable personal information about individual participants.

Declaration on the Use of AI and AI-Assisted Technologies

During the preparation of this manuscript, ChatGPT, an AI-assisted language tool, was used to support grammatical clarity, improve sentence flow and assist with language editing. The tool was not used as a substitute for the authors' scholarly judgment, data collection, statistical analysis or interpretation of the study findings. The authors reviewed and remain responsible for the accuracy, originality, integrity and final content of the manuscript, including the verification of references and all statements arising from the research.

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