E-ISSN: 1116 - 2619 P-ISSN: 3026-8524
MPRI-JHLAR | INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES, LITERATURE AND ART RESEARCH
VOL. 13 NO. 6 – JULY, 2026

LANGUAGE AS A GATEKEEPER: THE SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS OF MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION FOR MARGINALIZED LEARNERS IN NIGERIA

***MOSES, GIDEON ODIBAH (PhD); **ADEYEMI, ADERINSOLA HELEN (PhD); & ***MOSES, VALENTINA OGU**

*Kogi State College of Education (Technical), Mopa, P.M.B.242, Kabba, Nigeria. gideonodibah@gmail.com
**Kogi State College of Education (Technical), Mopa, P.M.B.242, Kabba, Nigeria. aderinade124@gmail.com
***Kogi State College of Education (Technical), Mopa, P.M.B.242, Kabba, Nigeria. valentinaogu22@gmail.com
DOI: https://doi.org/10.70382/mejhlar.v13i6.0122

Abstract

Language plays a pivotal role in shaping educational access, participation, and success, particularly in multilingual societies where the language of instruction often determines learners' opportunities for academic achievement and social mobility. In Nigeria, the National Policy on Education advocates the use of the mother tongue or the language of the immediate environment during the early years of basic education, followed by a gradual transition to English. However, widespread reliance on English as the dominant medium of instruction has created significant barriers for learners from marginalized linguistic, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds. This paper critically examines how the medium of instruction functions as a gatekeeper that either facilitates or restricts educational opportunities for marginalized learners in Nigeria. Adopting a systematic literature review methodology, the study synthesizes evidence from peer-reviewed journal articles, government policy documents, UNESCO reports, and empirical studies on language-in-education policies. The review reveals that the dominance of English in classroom instruction often disadvantages children from rural communities, minority language groups, nomadic populations, internally displaced communities, and

Keywords: Medium of Instruction; Language Policy; Marginalized Learners; Educational Equity; Mother Tongue Education; Social Inclusion

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

economically disadvantaged households by limiting classroom participation, literacy development, academic achievement, and cultural affirmation. The paper further argues that language is not merely a medium of communication but also a mechanism through which social power, identity, and educational inequality are reproduced. Effective implementation of multilingual and mother tongue-based education is identified as a critical strategy for promoting inclusive, equitable, and sustainable education in line with Sustainable Development Goal 4. The study concludes that achieving educational justice in Nigeria requires stronger implementation of language policy, investment in indigenous language development, enhanced teacher preparation, and sustained stakeholder engagement. These measures will help transform language from a gatekeeping mechanism into an instrument of inclusion, empowerment, and national development.

Introduction

Education is universally recognized as a fundamental human right and a powerful instrument for promoting social transformation, economic development, and national cohesion. The extent to which education fulfills these functions, however, depends largely on the accessibility and inclusiveness of the learning process. Among the numerous factors influencing educational access and quality, the language through which teaching and learning occur occupies a central position. The medium of instruction determines not only how knowledge is transmitted but also who is able to participate meaningfully in classroom activities, construct knowledge, and achieve academic success. Language is more than a communication tool; it is a carrier of culture, identity, history, and social relationships. Within educational settings, language mediates cognitive development, shapes learners' interactions with teachers and peers, and influences their sense of belonging within the school environment. When learners receive instruction in a language they understand, they are more likely to participate actively, develop literacy skills, and achieve higher academic outcomes. Conversely, instruction delivered in an unfamiliar language may create barriers to comprehension, reduce classroom participation, and contribute to educational exclusion.

Nigeria presents a particularly complex case because of its exceptional linguistic diversity. The country is home to more than 500 indigenous languages spoken across numerous ethnic communities. This linguistic richness reflects Nigeria's cultural heritage but also presents significant challenges for educational planning and language policy implementation. Recognizing the importance of learners' linguistic backgrounds, the National Policy on Education recommends that the mother tongue or the language of the immediate environment be used as the medium of instruction during the first three years

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

of primary education, with English introduced gradually as a subject before becoming the principal medium of instruction in later years.

Despite these policy provisions, implementation has remained inconsistent. In many schools, particularly in urban centres and private institutions, English is introduced as the dominant instructional language from the first day of formal schooling. This practice often reflects parental preferences, institutional traditions, and perceptions of English as the language of socioeconomic advancement rather than evidence regarding children's cognitive development and learning needs.

The consequences of this policy-practice gap are particularly severe for marginalized learners. Marginalization in education refers to the systematic exclusion or disadvantage experienced by certain groups due to social, economic, cultural, linguistic, geographic, or political factors. In Nigeria, marginalized learners include children from minority language communities, rural populations, nomadic families, internally displaced communities, children living in poverty, and others whose home languages differ from the dominant language used in school. For many of these learners, English-medium instruction becomes an additional obstacle that compounds existing educational disadvantages.

The concept of language as a gatekeeper provides an important lens through which these challenges can be understood. A gatekeeper is an individual, institution, or mechanism that controls access to opportunities, resources, or social mobility. Within education, the language of instruction may function as such a mechanism by determining which learners can access curriculum content effectively and which learners face barriers to participation and achievement. Learners who possess proficiency in the instructional language are better positioned to succeed academically, while those without such proficiency may struggle despite possessing the intellectual capacity to master the subject matter.

The gatekeeping role of language extends beyond academic achievement. Language policies influence cultural identity, self-esteem, social inclusion, and perceptions of belonging. Educational systems that prioritize dominant or colonial languages at the expense of indigenous languages may inadvertently devalue local cultures and contribute to language loss, cultural alienation, and unequal educational opportunities. These outcomes have profound implications for social justice and national development.

International organizations such as UNESCO have consistently emphasized the importance of mother tongue-based multilingual education as a strategy for improving learning outcomes and reducing educational inequalities. Evidence from Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America demonstrates that children who begin their education in familiar languages develop stronger literacy skills, higher academic achievement, and greater confidence in learning. Such findings suggest that language policies should be viewed not merely as administrative decisions but as central components of inclusive educational systems.

This paper argues that understanding language as a gatekeeper provides valuable insights into the socio-cultural dimensions of educational inequality in Nigeria. Rather than treating language solely as a technical issue of communication, the study examines its broader implications for equity, identity, participation, and sustainable development. By synthesizing theoretical perspectives, empirical evidence, and policy documents, the paper seeks to contribute to ongoing debates regarding language-in-education policy and inclusive education within multilingual societies.

Ultimately, transforming language from a barrier into a bridge requires coordinated efforts involving governments, educational institutions, teacher education programmes, communities, and development partners. Such efforts are essential for ensuring that every learner, regardless of linguistic or socio-economic background, enjoys meaningful access to quality education.

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria's National Policy on Education recognizes the educational importance of using the mother tongue or the language of the immediate environment during the early years of basic education. This policy is consistent with international evidence indicating that children learn more effectively when instructed in languages they understand. However, implementation across the country has remained inconsistent, with English frequently serving as the dominant medium of instruction from the beginning of formal schooling.

This situation has significant implications for marginalized learners whose home languages differ from the instructional language used in schools. Many children enter classrooms without adequate proficiency in English, limiting their ability to comprehend lessons, participate in classroom discussions, demonstrate their knowledge, and develop foundational literacy. Consequently, language becomes an invisible but powerful mechanism of exclusion that reinforces existing social and educational inequalities.

Marginalized learners—including children from minority language communities, rural areas, nomadic populations, internally displaced families, and economically disadvantaged households—often experience multiple forms of disadvantage simultaneously. The use of an unfamiliar instructional language compounds these challenges by creating additional barriers to educational participation and success. Beyond academic performance, such language practices may weaken learners' cultural identities, reduce self-confidence, and contribute to the gradual erosion of indigenous languages and knowledge systems.

Although numerous studies have examined language policy in Nigeria, fewer have explored its broader socio-cultural implications through the lens of language as a gatekeeping mechanism. There remains a need for a comprehensive review that integrates policy analysis, theoretical perspectives, and empirical evidence to explain how

language practices influence educational equity, social inclusion, and sustainable development.

This paper addresses that gap by critically examining the role of the medium of instruction in shaping the educational experiences of marginalized learners in Nigeria and by proposing policy directions capable of promoting more equitable and inclusive language-in-education practices.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to critically examine how the medium of instruction functions as a gatekeeper that shapes the educational experiences of marginalized learners in Nigeria.

The specific objectives are to:

1. examine the concept of language as a gatekeeper within the context of Nigeria's educational system;
2. analyze the provisions of Nigeria's National Policy on Education regarding the medium of instruction;
3. investigate how the medium of instruction affects educational access, participation, and academic achievement among marginalized learners;
4. examine the socio-cultural implications of language choice for learners' identity, inclusion, and social mobility;
5. identify the major challenges affecting the implementation of inclusive language-in-education policies in Nigeria; and
6. propose evidence-based policy recommendations for promoting equitable and sustainable multilingual education.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How does language function as a gatekeeper in Nigeria's education system?
2. What provisions guide the medium of instruction in Nigeria's National Policy on Education?
3. How does the medium of instruction influence the educational experiences of marginalized learners?
4. What socio-cultural implications arise from the dominance of English as the medium of instruction?
5. What factors hinder the effective implementation of inclusive language policies in Nigeria?
6. What policy measures can promote equitable and sustainable language-in-education practices?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study extends to educational policymakers, researchers, teachers, curriculum developers, development partners, and communities concerned with educational equity and language rights.

First, the study contributes to scholarly debates on language policy and educational inequality by demonstrating that language is not merely a medium for communication but also a powerful mechanism through which educational opportunities are distributed. Viewing language as a gatekeeper provides a broader understanding of how linguistic practices can either promote or hinder social justice in education.

Second, the study provides valuable evidence for policymakers responsible for implementing Nigeria's National Policy on Education. Institutions such as the Federal Ministry of Education, the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), and State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs) may use the findings to strengthen language-in-education policies and implementation strategies.

Third, teachers and school administrators will benefit from the study through improved understanding of the educational advantages associated with mother tongue-based multilingual education. The findings encourage learner-centred pedagogical approaches that accommodate linguistic diversity while improving literacy acquisition and classroom participation.

Fourth, curriculum developers will gain insights into the need for culturally responsive instructional materials that reflect Nigeria's multilingual realities. Such materials have the potential to enhance learning among children whose home languages differ from English.

Fifth, the study contributes to the realization of **Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4)**, which seeks to ensure inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all. By highlighting the educational disadvantages experienced by marginalized learners, the paper supports efforts aimed at reducing inequalities and improving access to quality education.

Finally, this review provides a foundation for future research on language policy, multilingual education, linguistic rights, educational planning, and inclusive education in Nigeria and other multilingual societies.

Concept of Language as a Gatekeeper

The concept of a gatekeeper originates from sociology and communication studies, referring to individuals, institutions, or mechanisms that regulate access to resources, opportunities, or information. Within education, language functions as a gatekeeper by determining who can fully participate in teaching and learning processes and who encounters barriers to educational success.

According to Bourdieu (1991), language represents a form of symbolic power. Individuals who possess proficiency in the socially valued language enjoy greater access to education, employment, political participation, and economic opportunities. Conversely, those lacking proficiency may experience exclusion despite possessing equivalent intellectual abilities.

Within Nigeria's educational system, English functions as the dominant language of formal schooling. Although English serves important national and international functions, its dominance can disadvantage children whose first language differs significantly from English. For many learners, especially those from rural communities and minority ethnic groups, the classroom becomes a linguistic environment requiring simultaneous acquisition of subject content and a new language. This dual challenge may reduce comprehension, classroom participation, and confidence.

Language therefore operates as a gatekeeper by influencing:

- access to classroom learning;
- participation in educational activities;
- academic achievement;
- progression through the education system;
- future employment opportunities;
- social mobility;
- cultural recognition.

This perspective highlights that educational inequality often stems not only from economic factors but also from linguistic structures embedded within educational institutions.

Medium of Instruction

The medium of instruction refers to the language used by teachers to facilitate teaching, learning, classroom interaction, assessment, and communication within educational institutions.

UNESCO (2003) defines the medium of instruction as the language employed to teach academic content rather than merely the language taught as a subject.

Educational research consistently demonstrates that the medium of instruction significantly influences children's cognitive development, literacy acquisition, classroom participation, and overall academic performance. Children generally learn concepts more effectively when instruction occurs in languages they already understand.

Several instructional models are commonly identified.

Mother Tongue Instruction

Mother tongue instruction involves using learners' first language during the early years of schooling. Research demonstrates that this approach promotes stronger literacy, improved comprehension, greater classroom participation, and smoother acquisition of additional languages.

Bilingual Education

Bilingual education combines instruction through both the mother tongue and a second language. This model seeks to preserve indigenous languages while developing proficiency in nationally or internationally important languages such as English.

Multilingual Education

Multilingual education accommodates multiple languages within educational settings. UNESCO strongly advocates mother tongue-based multilingual education for multilingual societies because it promotes inclusion while respecting linguistic diversity.

English-Medium Instruction

English-medium instruction dominates many Nigerian schools despite policy provisions encouraging mother tongue instruction during the early years. Although English proficiency remains valuable for higher education and global communication, research indicates that premature English-only instruction may create learning barriers for many children.

Marginalized Learners

Marginalized learners are children whose educational opportunities are constrained by social, economic, cultural, linguistic, geographic, or political circumstances. Marginalization limits access to quality education, participation in learning, and educational achievement.

Within Nigeria, marginalized learners include:

- children from minority language communities;
- rural learners;
- nomadic populations;
- internally displaced children;
- children living in poverty;
- out-of-school children returning to formal education;
- learners in conflict-affected regions;
- children with disabilities who require accessible communication methods;
- ethnic minority groups with limited educational resources.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

These learners often experience multiple forms of disadvantage simultaneously. Language barriers may therefore intensify existing inequalities by restricting access to curriculum content and meaningful classroom interaction.

Educational inclusion requires recognition of these intersecting disadvantages rather than treating all learners as linguistically identical.

Educational Equity

Educational equity refers to fairness in educational opportunities, participation, and outcomes. Unlike equality, which assumes identical treatment for all learners, equity recognizes that different learners require different forms of support to achieve comparable educational outcomes.

Language constitutes one of the most significant dimensions of educational equity within multilingual societies.

When schools employ unfamiliar instructional languages, learners from dominant language communities enjoy advantages unavailable to minority-language learners. Consequently, educational systems may unintentionally reproduce social inequalities.

Mother tongue-based multilingual education promotes equity by reducing linguistic barriers and enabling learners to engage fully from the beginning of formal schooling.

Social Inclusion

Social inclusion involves ensuring that all individuals participate meaningfully in social, economic, cultural, and educational life regardless of their background or identity.

Inclusive education extends beyond school enrolment to encompass active participation, belonging, and educational success.

Language plays a central role in inclusion because classroom interaction depends upon communication. Learners unable to understand instructional language frequently experience isolation, reduced participation, and diminished confidence.

Inclusive language policies therefore contribute to:

- educational participation;
- learner confidence;
- classroom interaction;
- social cohesion;
- respect for diversity.

Language Rights

Language rights refer to the recognition and protection of individuals' ability to use, preserve, and develop their own languages in public and private life, including education. International human rights instruments and UNESCO declarations emphasize that

children should, where practicable, receive education in languages they understand, particularly during the foundational years.

In multilingual countries such as Nigeria, language rights are closely linked to educational justice. When learners are denied opportunities to learn through familiar languages without appropriate support, educational disparities may widen. Respecting language rights does not diminish the importance of English; rather, it seeks to ensure that learners acquire English on a strong foundation while maintaining their linguistic and cultural heritage.

Sustainable Education

Sustainable education refers to educational systems that are inclusive, equitable, culturally responsive, and capable of producing lasting learning outcomes that support individual and societal development.

From a language perspective, sustainability involves balancing national and global communication needs with the preservation of indigenous languages and cultures. A sustainable language-in-education policy equips learners with proficiency in English while also strengthening literacy and learning through their first languages.

Such an approach contributes to:

i. improved foundational literacy;
ii. reduced dropout rates;
iii. preservation of cultural heritage;
iv. lifelong learning;
v. social cohesion; and
vi. national development.

In multilingual societies, sustainable education is therefore inseparable from inclusive language policy.

Transition to the Next Section

The concepts discussed above demonstrate that language is far more than a vehicle for classroom communication. It is deeply connected to power, identity, equity, participation, and educational opportunity. To explain these relationships more fully, the next section examines the theoretical perspectives that underpin this study.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on four complementary theoretical perspectives that explain the relationship between language, education, power, culture, and social inequality. These theories provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how the medium of

instruction can either facilitate educational inclusion or reinforce marginalization among learners in multilingual societies such as Nigeria.

Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Cultural and Linguistic Capital

Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Cultural Capital and Linguistic Capital provides one of the most influential explanations of how language functions as a mechanism of social stratification. Bourdieu (1991) argued that language is not simply a neutral means of communication but a form of symbolic capital that carries varying degrees of social, cultural, and economic value. Individuals who possess the language recognized as legitimate within dominant institutions enjoy greater access to opportunities, whereas those whose linguistic competencies differ from the dominant norm often experience exclusion.

According to Bourdieu, schools do not merely transmit knowledge; they also reproduce existing social inequalities by rewarding the cultural and linguistic resources possessed by socially advantaged groups. Educational institutions tend to recognize and value the dominant language while treating other languages as less prestigious or less useful. Consequently, learners from privileged linguistic backgrounds are more likely to succeed because the language used in school aligns with their existing linguistic capital.

In Nigeria, English occupies this privileged position. It serves as the official language of government, higher education, the judiciary, commerce, and most formal employment. Fluency in English is therefore associated with educational success and upward social mobility. While English proficiency offers undeniable advantages, its dominance within basic education may unintentionally disadvantage children whose first languages are indigenous Nigerian languages.

For marginalized learners, the classroom often becomes a space where their linguistic identities are undervalued. Children who speak minority languages may possess rich cultural knowledge and intellectual abilities, yet their limited proficiency in English can be misinterpreted as low academic ability. This phenomenon illustrates Bourdieu's argument that educational systems reward particular forms of linguistic capital while marginalizing others.

The theory therefore explains why the medium of instruction functions as a gatekeeper. Access to educational success depends not only on learners' cognitive abilities but also on their possession of the linguistic capital valued within the school system. Unless educational institutions recognize and build upon learners' indigenous languages, schools risk reproducing rather than reducing educational inequality.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory emphasizes the central role of language in cognitive development and learning. Vygotsky (1978) argued that knowledge is constructed

through social interaction and that language serves as the primary psychological tool through which learners develop higher-order thinking skills.

According to the theory, learning occurs within the **Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)**, where learners accomplish tasks with guidance from teachers or more knowledgeable peers. Effective communication is therefore essential for meaningful learning.

When classroom instruction is delivered in a language familiar to learners, they can ask questions, express ideas, negotiate meaning, and participate actively in collaborative learning. Such interactions facilitate cognitive growth and conceptual understanding. Conversely, instruction delivered in an unfamiliar language limits communication, reduces participation, and constrains opportunities for intellectual development.

Within Nigeria's multilingual classrooms, many learners enter school with little or no proficiency in English. These children may struggle not because they lack intellectual potential but because they cannot fully access classroom discourse. Teachers may mistakenly interpret silence or hesitation as evidence of poor ability when the underlying challenge is linguistic.

Vygotsky's theory therefore strongly supports the use of mother tongue-based instruction during early childhood education. Familiar languages enable learners to connect new concepts with prior experiences, thereby promoting deeper understanding and more meaningful learning.

The theory also highlights the importance of culturally responsive teaching. Since learning occurs within social and cultural contexts, educational systems should recognize learners' linguistic and cultural backgrounds as valuable resources rather than obstacles to overcome.

Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis

Jim Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis provides further theoretical support for multilingual education. Cummins (1979, 2000) argued that literacy and cognitive skills acquired in one language transfer to additional languages because they share a common underlying proficiency.

According to this hypothesis, children who develop strong literacy in their mother tongue are better prepared to acquire proficiency in a second language such as English. Skills including reading comprehension, problem-solving, vocabulary development, and critical thinking are not confined to one language but transfer across languages.

This perspective challenges the widespread belief that early English-only instruction produces superior English proficiency. Instead, Cummins demonstrated that premature replacement of the mother tongue may actually weaken both first-language development and second-language acquisition.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

The theory distinguishes between Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). While learners may acquire conversational English relatively quickly, mastery of the academic language required for subjects such as science, mathematics, and social studies takes considerably longer. Strong literacy in the first language facilitates the development of this academic proficiency.

In the Nigerian context, the hypothesis suggests that effective implementation of mother tongue-based multilingual education would strengthen rather than weaken learners' English proficiency over time. Indigenous language instruction during the early years provides the cognitive foundation upon which later English learning can build.

For marginalized learners, this theoretical perspective demonstrates that supporting indigenous languages is not incompatible with national development or global competitiveness. Rather, it represents an effective strategy for improving educational outcomes while preserving linguistic diversity.

Critical Language Policy Theory

Critical Language Policy Theory examines how language policies reflect broader relationships of power, ideology, and social inequality. Scholars in this tradition argue that language planning is never politically neutral; instead, it shapes access to education, employment, citizenship, and participation in public life.

Critical language policy scholars distinguish between **language policy as written** and **language policy as practiced**. Governments may adopt progressive multilingual policies while schools continue to implement monolingual practices that privilege dominant languages.

Nigeria illustrates this distinction clearly. Although the National Policy on Education advocates mother tongue instruction during the early years of schooling, implementation often favours English from the beginning of formal education. The resulting gap between policy and practice reflects institutional constraints, societal attitudes, political priorities, and historical legacies.

Critical Language Policy Theory also emphasizes that language choices influence whose knowledge, culture, and identities are recognized within educational systems. Exclusive reliance on English may inadvertently marginalize indigenous knowledge systems and contribute to language shift among minority communities.

Applying this perspective to Nigeria suggests that strengthening multilingual education requires more than policy revision. It demands institutional commitment, adequate funding, teacher preparation, curriculum reform, and community participation to ensure that policy intentions are translated into classroom practice.

Integration of the Theoretical Perspectives

Although each theory emphasizes different dimensions of language and education, together they provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the gatekeeping role of the medium of instruction.

Bourdieu explains how language functions as a form of social and cultural capital that influences educational opportunities.

Vygotsky demonstrates how familiar language facilitates cognitive development through meaningful social interaction.

Cummins shows that strong first-language literacy supports second-language acquisition and long-term academic achievement.

Critical Language Policy Theory explains why progressive language policies often fail during implementation and how language choices may reproduce social inequalities.

Collectively, these theories suggest that language is simultaneously a cognitive resource, a cultural asset, a mechanism of power, and a determinant of educational opportunity. Effective language-in-education policies must therefore address all these dimensions if they are to promote equitable and sustainable education.

Empirical Evidence from Nigeria

Research on language-in-education policy in Nigeria consistently demonstrates that the medium of instruction has profound implications for educational access, learner participation, literacy development, and academic achievement. Despite the progressive provisions of the National Policy on Education, implementation has remained uneven across states and school types.

One of the earliest and most influential empirical studies is the Ife Six-Year Primary Education Project conducted by Fafunwa, Macauley, and Sokoya (1989). This longitudinal experiment compared pupils who received instruction primarily in Yoruba with those taught mainly through English. The findings revealed that children educated through their mother tongue performed significantly better not only in language subjects but also in mathematics, science, and social studies. Furthermore, they demonstrated no disadvantage in acquiring English at later stages of schooling. The study remains a landmark demonstration that mother tongue instruction enhances rather than inhibits educational achievement.

Building on this evidence, Bamgbose (2004) observed that although Nigeria's language policy supports indigenous language instruction during the early years of schooling, implementation has been undermined by inadequate political commitment, shortages of trained teachers, insufficient instructional materials, and societal preference for English. He argued that the resulting policy-practice gap contributes to unequal educational opportunities for learners from non-English-speaking backgrounds.

Similarly, Oyetade (2001) found that many parents perceive English-medium schools as offering superior educational quality and better future employment prospects. This perception exerts considerable pressure on school administrators to introduce English from the first day of schooling, even where such practices conflict with educational research and national policy.

Akinbote and Aladejana (2008) reported that many teachers recognize the pedagogical advantages of mother tongue instruction but lack adequate training, standardized teaching materials, and institutional support to implement multilingual education effectively. Consequently, English remains the dominant classroom language in many schools despite official policy provisions.

Obanya (2004) further argued that meaningful learning depends not only on curriculum quality but also on learners' ability to understand the language through which knowledge is transmitted. He maintained that instructional language should facilitate rather than obstruct children's intellectual development.

Empirical Evidence from Other African Countries

The educational experiences of multilingual African countries provide valuable insights into the relationship between the medium of instruction and educational equity. Although the linguistic contexts differ, a common pattern emerges: learners who begin schooling in familiar languages generally achieve stronger academic outcomes than those taught exclusively through colonial languages.

South Africa

South Africa offers one of the most extensively researched examples of multilingual education. Following the end of apartheid, educational reforms promoted additive bilingualism and recognized eleven official languages. Despite these reforms, many schools continued to transition learners prematurely to English.

Heugh (2011) found that children who received sustained instruction in their home languages during the primary years demonstrated significantly higher literacy levels, improved conceptual understanding, and better long-term academic performance than learners who switched early to English. The study emphasized that effective bilingual education requires a gradual transition rather than abrupt replacement of indigenous languages.

Furthermore, Heugh observed that early English-only instruction disproportionately affected learners from disadvantaged communities, thereby reinforcing historical educational inequalities. The findings support the argument that language policy should be viewed as an issue of social justice rather than merely curriculum organization.

Ethiopia

Ethiopia represents one of Africa's most successful examples of mother tongue-based multilingual education. Educational reforms introduced regional languages as media of instruction during primary education while maintaining Amharic and English as additional languages.

Heugh, Benson, Bogale, and Yohannes (2007) reported that learners instructed through their first languages demonstrated higher achievement in reading, mathematics, and science than those educated primarily through English. The study also found lower repetition rates, improved school retention, and greater classroom participation among pupils receiving mother tongue instruction.

Importantly, the researchers concluded that multilingual education strengthened rather than weakened learners' English proficiency because literacy skills developed in indigenous languages transferred to English during later educational stages.

Ghana

Ghana has implemented various bilingual education policies since independence, alternating between indigenous language instruction and English-medium education.

Research conducted by Ansah (2014) indicated that inconsistent implementation of language policy created confusion among teachers and school administrators. Although official policy encouraged the use of Ghanaian languages during the early grades, many schools adopted English immediately due to parental expectations and examination pressures.

The study found that pupils educated initially through familiar languages demonstrated stronger reading comprehension and greater classroom participation than peers receiving English-only instruction.

Kenya

Kenya's language policy recommends the use of local languages in lower primary education, particularly in rural communities.

However, Muthwii (2004) observed that many urban schools adopted English from the beginning of formal education because of linguistic diversity and parental demand.

The study concluded that inconsistent implementation contributed to unequal educational experiences between rural and urban learners.

Children whose home languages matched classroom instruction generally performed better than those required to learn through unfamiliar languages.

Tanzania

Tanzania provides a distinctive case because Kiswahili functions as the principal medium of instruction throughout primary education.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

Brock-Utne (2000) argued that widespread use of Kiswahili contributed significantly to improved literacy and classroom participation by enabling learners to understand instructional content from the beginning of schooling.

Although challenges remain regarding the transition to English in secondary education, Tanzania demonstrates that national languages can successfully serve as effective instructional media within multilingual societies.

Mozambique and Mali

Benson (2005) examined bilingual education programmes implemented across Mozambique and Mali.

The review found that learners receiving instruction in indigenous languages developed stronger literacy skills, participated more actively in classroom discussions, and demonstrated greater confidence than pupils taught exclusively through Portuguese or French.

The study emphasized that successful multilingual education depends upon:

- well-trained teachers;
- adequate instructional materials;
- supportive language policies;
- community involvement;
- sustained political commitment.

International Empirical Evidence

Beyond Africa, extensive international research confirms that language plays a central role in determining educational success, social inclusion, and cognitive development.

Canada

Canada has long been recognized for its bilingual education programmes.

Cummins (2000) demonstrated that learners who developed strong literacy in their first language acquired additional languages more successfully than learners whose first language was suppressed.

Similarly, Genesee (2004) reported that bilingual education improved learners' cognitive flexibility, problem-solving abilities, and academic achievement while maintaining proficiency in both languages.

These findings challenge assumptions that multilingual education confuses children or delays academic development.

United States

Thomas and Collier (2002) conducted one of the largest longitudinal investigations of bilingual education involving more than 700,000 learners.

The researchers found that students enrolled in well-designed bilingual programmes consistently outperformed learners educated exclusively through English.
The study concluded that:

- strong first-language literacy supports second-language acquisition;
- bilingual education enhances academic achievement across subjects;
- long-term educational outcomes improve when children retain their home language.

These findings have influenced language policy debates internationally.

India

India's multilingual educational system offers another valuable example.
Mohanty (2009) argued that indigenous language instruction promotes educational inclusion among tribal and minority communities while strengthening cultural identity.
Where schools ignored learners' home languages, dropout rates increased and educational participation declined.
The study emphasized that multilingual education contributes to both educational quality and social justice.

Latin America

UNESCO's reviews of bilingual education programmes in Bolivia, Peru, Guatemala, and Mexico similarly demonstrate positive relationships between indigenous language instruction and literacy development.
Children educated through their first languages generally exhibited:

- improved reading skills;
- higher attendance;
- stronger cultural identity;
- increased classroom participation;
- greater educational confidence.

These outcomes reinforce the global consensus supporting mother tongue-based multilingual education.

Synthesis of the Empirical Literature

The literature reviewed across Nigeria, Africa, and other multilingual contexts reveals several recurring themes.

Language Determines Educational Opportunity

The overwhelming majority of studies conclude that language significantly influences educational access, participation, and achievement.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

Children taught through familiar languages consistently demonstrate:

- higher literacy;
- stronger comprehension;
- improved critical thinking;
- greater classroom participation;
- higher academic achievement.

Conversely, unfamiliar instructional languages often reduce learners' educational opportunities despite their intellectual abilities.

Language Reproduces Social Inequality

The reviewed studies consistently support Bourdieu's argument that schools reproduce social inequalities by rewarding dominant linguistic capital.

English proficiency frequently becomes an unofficial prerequisite for educational success.

Consequently, learners from minority-language communities experience disadvantages unrelated to intelligence or motivation.

Language therefore functions as a gatekeeping mechanism controlling educational mobility.

Policy Implementation Remains Weak

Another recurring finding concerns implementation.

Many countries—including Nigeria—possess progressive language policies.

However, implementation remains constrained by:

- inadequate teacher preparation;
- insufficient funding;
- shortage of textbooks;
- weak monitoring;
- inconsistent political commitment;
- parental preference for English;
- multilingual classrooms.

These factors explain why policy intentions often fail to translate into classroom practice.

Language Influences Identity

The literature also demonstrates that language affects learners' cultural identity.

Educational systems relying exclusively upon dominant languages may unintentionally communicate that indigenous languages possess lower social value.

Such perceptions contribute to:

- language loss;
- cultural alienation;
- reduced self-esteem;
- weakening of indigenous knowledge systems.

Mother tongue instruction therefore contributes not only to academic achievement but also to cultural sustainability.

Language Supports Inclusive Education

Inclusive education requires more than school enrolment.
Learners must also participate meaningfully.
Children unable to understand classroom language often remain silent despite possessing valuable ideas.
Mother tongue education increases:

- learner confidence;
- participation;
- interaction;
- collaboration;
- educational belonging.

These outcomes align directly with Sustainable Development Goal Four.

Research Gap

Although extensive literature exists concerning language policy in Nigeria, relatively few studies conceptualize the medium of instruction explicitly as a gatekeeping mechanism affecting marginalized learners.
Most Nigerian studies emphasize policy implementation, literacy outcomes, or bilingual education.
Fewer integrate:

- sociological theories of power;
- cultural identity;
- educational justice;
- language rights;
- social inclusion.

This review therefore contributes by synthesizing these diverse perspectives within a single conceptual framework.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

Research Design

This study adopted a **systematic qualitative literature review**.

A systematic review enables researchers to identify, evaluate, synthesize, and interpret existing evidence using transparent and replicable procedures.

The design is appropriate because the study seeks to examine the socio-cultural implications of the medium of instruction through existing scholarly evidence rather than primary data collection.

Sources of Data

The review drew evidence from:

1. peer-reviewed journal articles;
2. scholarly books;
3. edited book chapters;
4. UNESCO reports;
5. UNICEF publications;
6. World Bank reports;
7. Federal Ministry of Education documents;
8. National Policy on Education;
9. UBEC publications;
10. NERDC documents;
11. doctoral dissertations;
12. master's theses;
13. conference proceedings relevant to multilingual education.

The literature covered publications from approximately **1980–2025**, enabling both historical and contemporary analysis.

Inclusion Criteria

Only literature satisfying the following criteria was included:

1. addressed medium of instruction, multilingual education, language policy, educational equity, or marginalized learners;
2. related directly to educational contexts;
3. published by reputable academic publishers or international organizations;
4. provided empirical, theoretical, or policy evidence relevant to multilingual education;
5. focused on multilingual societies comparable to Nigeria.

Method of Data Analysis

The reviewed literature was analyzed using thematic content analysis.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

Relevant findings were organized according to major themes including:

- language policy;
- educational access;
- marginalization;
- cultural identity;
- educational equity;
- language rights;
- sustainable education;
- policy implementation.

The synthesized evidence formed the basis for the discussion presented in the next section.

Findings and Discussion

This systematic review synthesized evidence from theoretical literature, policy documents, and empirical studies to examine how the medium of instruction functions as a gatekeeper affecting the educational experiences of marginalized learners in Nigeria. The findings reveal that language is not merely a vehicle for communication but a determinant of educational access, social inclusion, identity formation, and academic achievement. Several major themes emerged.

Language as a Mechanism of Educational Inclusion and Exclusion

The review consistently demonstrates that the language of instruction determines learners' ability to participate meaningfully in educational processes. Learners taught in a familiar language show stronger comprehension, greater confidence, and higher academic achievement than those required to learn through an unfamiliar language.

In Nigeria, many children begin formal schooling speaking indigenous languages, while classroom instruction is often delivered predominantly in English. This creates an immediate linguistic barrier that affects concept formation, literacy acquisition, and classroom participation. Consequently, language becomes an invisible mechanism through which educational inequalities are reproduced.

This finding aligns with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which emphasizes that learning occurs through meaningful communication and social interaction. Where learners cannot fully understand instructional language, opportunities for collaborative learning and cognitive development are reduced.

The Dominance of English and Educational Inequality

The review further indicates that English occupies a privileged position within Nigeria's educational system because of its historical, political, and socioeconomic significance. As

the official language of government, commerce, higher education, and international communication, English proficiency is widely associated with educational success and social mobility.

However, this privileged status also produces unintended consequences. Children whose families provide early exposure to English—typically those from urban and economically advantaged backgrounds—enter school with linguistic advantages unavailable to many rural and marginalized learners. The educational system therefore tends to reward prior linguistic exposure rather than intellectual ability alone.

Bourdieu's concept of linguistic capital helps explain this pattern. English functions as a socially valued resource that facilitates access to educational opportunities, while indigenous languages often receive less institutional recognition. As a result, learners from minority-language communities may be disadvantaged despite possessing strong cognitive abilities and rich cultural knowledge.

Policy–Practice Gap

Another significant finding concerns the persistent gap between Nigeria's National Policy on Education and actual classroom practice.

The policy recommends the use of the mother tongue or the language of the immediate environment during the first three years of primary education before transitioning gradually to English. Nevertheless, implementation remains inconsistent.

Several factors contribute to this discrepancy:

1. inadequate teacher preparation;
2. shortage of multilingual instructional materials;
3. insufficient funding;
4. weak policy monitoring;
5. multilingual classroom composition;
6. parental preference for English;
7. examination systems emphasizing English proficiency.

Consequently, many schools introduce English from the first day of formal education, contrary to policy recommendations.

This finding illustrates the importance of Critical Language Policy Theory, which distinguishes between language policy as officially written and language policy as actually implemented.

Language and Cultural Identity

The literature also demonstrates that language plays an important role in shaping learners' cultural identities.

Mother tongue instruction affirms learners' cultural heritage by validating indigenous knowledge, values, and traditions within educational settings. In contrast, exclusive reliance on English may unintentionally communicate that indigenous languages possess limited educational or economic value.

Such perceptions contribute to language shift, declining intergenerational language transmission, and gradual erosion of cultural heritage.

For marginalized learners, educational success should not require abandoning linguistic identity. Rather, multilingual education provides opportunities for learners to develop proficiency in English while maintaining strong connections to their home languages and communities.

Language and Educational Equity

Educational equity emerged as another major theme.

The review demonstrates that equal educational opportunities cannot be achieved simply by enrolling children in school. Learners must also possess meaningful access to instruction.

Instruction delivered in unfamiliar languages reduces opportunities for:

1. classroom participation;
2. collaborative learning;
3. literacy development;
4. critical thinking;
5. academic confidence.

Therefore, educational equity requires recognition of linguistic diversity alongside socioeconomic differences.

Inclusive language policies are particularly important for:

- rural learners;
- minority-language communities;
- nomadic populations;
- internally displaced children;
- learners with disabilities requiring accessible communication;
- economically disadvantaged households.

Language and Sustainable Development

The findings further demonstrate that language policy contributes directly to sustainable development.

Inclusive multilingual education supports Sustainable Development Goal 4 by improving educational quality, reducing inequalities, strengthening literacy, preserving cultural heritage, and promoting lifelong learning.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

Educational sustainability requires systems capable of serving diverse learners rather than privileging only those already proficient in dominant languages.
Consequently, language policy should be viewed as an investment in human capital rather than merely an administrative issue.

Discussion

The findings collectively demonstrate that language occupies a central position within educational systems because it mediates access to knowledge, participation, and opportunity. While English remains essential for national integration and international engagement, evidence reviewed throughout this study indicates that its premature use as the exclusive medium of instruction may unintentionally disadvantage marginalized learners.
The review reinforces Cummins' argument that strong first-language literacy supports rather than hinders second-language acquisition. Learners who establish literacy in familiar languages acquire English more successfully than learners required to develop literacy simultaneously in unfamiliar languages.
Similarly, Bourdieu's theory explains how educational institutions reward dominant linguistic capital while marginalizing learners possessing different linguistic backgrounds. This dynamic contributes to persistent educational inequalities despite official commitments to inclusive education.
The review also highlights an important paradox within Nigerian education. Progressive language policies already exist, yet implementation remains inconsistent. Consequently, improving educational equity depends less upon developing new policies than upon strengthening implementation through teacher education, curriculum reform, instructional material development, community engagement, and institutional accountability.
Ultimately, language should function as a bridge connecting learners to knowledge rather than as a gate restricting educational opportunity.

Policy Implications

The findings have important implications for educational planning and policy in Nigeria.

Strengthening Language Policy Implementation

Government should prioritize implementation of existing language policies through adequate funding, monitoring, and institutional support rather than continual policy revision.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

Teacher Education Reform

Teacher education institutions should strengthen preparation in multilingual pedagogies, bilingual literacy instruction, culturally responsive teaching, and inclusive classroom communication.

Curriculum Development

Curriculum developers should integrate indigenous languages systematically into foundational literacy, numeracy, science, and social studies rather than limiting them to language subjects.

Development of Indigenous Language Resources

Investment should be increased in the production of:

- textbooks;
- children's readers;
- teacher guides;
- dictionaries;
- digital educational resources;
- multilingual assessment tools.

Educational Equity

Language policy should become an integral component of national strategies addressing educational inequality.

Special attention should be directed toward minority-language communities, rural schools, conflict-affected regions, and underserved populations.

Community Participation

Parents, traditional institutions, religious organizations, and civil society should participate actively in language policy implementation.

Public awareness campaigns should communicate research evidence demonstrating that mother tongue education strengthens rather than weakens English acquisition.

Research and Innovation

Government and universities should support research concerning multilingual education, indigenous language development, digital learning technologies, and inclusive language planning.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this review, the following recommendations are proposed:

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

1. Fully implement the language provisions contained in the National Policy on Education.
2. Increase government funding for multilingual education programmes.
3. Review teacher education curricula to include compulsory courses on multilingual pedagogy and inclusive language teaching.
4. Organize continuous professional development programmes for teachers already in service.
5. Produce standardized instructional materials in major Nigerian indigenous languages.
6. Strengthen collaboration among the Federal Ministry of Education, NERDC, UBEC, SUBEBs, universities, language experts, and local communities.
7. Conduct nationwide public enlightenment campaigns addressing misconceptions surrounding mother tongue education.
8. Develop flexible multilingual instructional models suitable for linguistically diverse classrooms.
9. Establish effective monitoring and evaluation systems for language policy implementation.
10. Encourage research documenting minority languages and developing digital educational resources.
11. Integrate language rights into broader educational inclusion policies to ensure that marginalized learners receive equitable learning opportunities.
12. Promote partnerships with international organizations such as UNESCO, UNICEF, and development agencies to strengthen multilingual education initiatives.

Conclusion

This review has demonstrated that the medium of instruction is far more than a technical component of educational administration. It is a powerful determinant of educational opportunity, social inclusion, cultural identity, and academic success. In multilingual societies such as Nigeria, language functions as both a bridge and a barrier. When learners receive instruction in languages they understand, they are more likely to develop literacy, participate actively in classroom interactions, and achieve positive educational outcomes. Conversely, when instruction is delivered in unfamiliar languages without appropriate support, language becomes a gatekeeper that restricts access to learning and reinforces existing inequalities.

The evidence synthesized in this review indicates that Nigeria possesses a progressive language policy that recognizes the educational value of mother tongue instruction during the foundational years of schooling. However, persistent gaps between policy and practice continue to undermine the realization of equitable and inclusive education.

Factors such as inadequate teacher preparation, shortages of instructional materials, weak policy monitoring, societal preference for English, and the practical challenges of multilingual classrooms have limited effective implementation.

The review also demonstrates that language policy is closely linked to broader issues of educational justice and sustainable development. Marginalized learners—including children from minority language communities, rural areas, nomadic populations, internally displaced families, and economically disadvantaged households—are disproportionately affected when instructional language is inaccessible. Ensuring that these learners can engage meaningfully in classroom learning is therefore essential for reducing educational disparities and achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4.

Drawing on Bourdieu's Theory of Cultural and Linguistic Capital, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis, and Critical Language Policy Theory, this paper has shown that effective language-in-education policies require more than legislative provisions. They require sustained political commitment, adequate resources, teacher capacity development, community participation, and continuous evaluation. Transforming language from a gatekeeper into a gateway for learning demands an educational system that values linguistic diversity as a resource rather than an obstacle.

Ultimately, equitable and sustainable education in Nigeria will depend on the country's ability to balance the global importance of English with the educational, cultural, and cognitive benefits of indigenous languages. By embracing inclusive multilingual education, Nigeria can create classrooms in which every learner—regardless of linguistic, cultural, or socioeconomic background—has a genuine opportunity to learn, participate, and thrive.

REFERENCES

Adegbija, E. (1989). The implications of the language of instruction for nationhood: An illustration with Nigeria. *ITL – International Journal of Applied Linguistics, 85–86*, 25–50. https://doi.org/10.1075/itl.85-86.02ade

Akinnaso, F. N. (1991). On the mother tongue education policy in Nigeria. *Educational Review, 43*(1), 89–106. https://doi.org/10.1080/0013191910430108

Alidou, H., Boly, A., Brock-Utne, B., Diallo, Y. S., Heugh, K., & Wolff, H. E. (2006). *Optimizing learning and education in Africa: The language factor*. Association for the Development of Education in Africa.

Baker, C. (2011). *Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism* (5th ed.). Multilingual Matters.

Ball, J. (2011). *Enhancing learning of children from diverse language backgrounds: Mother tongue-based bilingual or multilingual education in the early years*. UNESCO.

Bamgbose, A. (Ed.). (1976). *Mother tongue education: The West African experience*. UNESCO.

Bamgbose, A. (1991). *Language and the nation: The language question in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Edinburgh University Press.

Bamgbose, A. (2004). Language of instruction policy and practice in Africa. UNESCO.

Bamgbose, A. (2011). *African language development and language policy*. CASAS.

Benson, C. (2005). *The importance of mother tongue-based schooling for educational quality*. UNESCO.

Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Harvard University Press.

Brock-Utne, B. (2000). *Whose education for all? The recolonization of the African mind*. Falmer Press.

Cooper, R. L. (1989). *Language planning and social change*. Cambridge University Press.

Cummins, J. (1979). Linguistic interdependence and the educational development of bilingual children. *Review of Educational Research, 49*(2), 222–251.

Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, power and pedagogy: Bilingual children in the crossfire*. Multilingual Matters.

Eberhard, D. M., Simons, G. F., & Fennig, C. D. (Eds.). (2024). *Ethnologue: Languages of the world* (27th ed.). SIL International.

Emenanjo, E. N. (1996). *Languages and the national policy on education: Implications and prospects*. Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council.

Fafunwa, A. B. (1974). *History of education in Nigeria*. George Allen & Unwin.

Fafunwa, A. B., Macauley, J. I., & Sokoya, J. A. F. (1989). *Education in mother tongue: The Ife primary education research project*. University Press PLC.

Federal Republic of Nigeria. (2004). *Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act*. Federal Government Printer.

Federal Republic of Nigeria. (2013). *National policy on education* (6th ed.). Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council.

Genesee, F. (2004). What do we know about bilingual education for majority-language students? In T. K. Bhatia & W. C. Ritchie (Eds.), *The handbook of bilingualism* (pp. 547–576). Blackwell.

Heugh, K. (2011). *Theory and practice: Language education models in Africa*. Association for the Development of Education in Africa.

Heugh, K., Benson, C., Bogale, B., & Yohannes, M. (2007). *Final report: Study on medium of instruction in primary schools in Ethiopia*. Ministry of Education.

Mohanty, A. K. (2009). *Multilingual education: A bridge too far?* In *Social justice through multilingual education*. Multilingual Matters.

Obanya, P. (2004). *The dilemma of education in Africa*. Heinemann.

Obiakor, T. E. (2024). Language of instruction policy in Nigeria: Assessing implementation and literacy achievement in a multilingual environment. *International Journal of Educational Development, 109*, 103108. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2024.103108

Oyetade, S. O. (2001). Language attitudes and language conflict in West Africa. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 22*(2), 89–102.

Ruiz, R. (1984). Orientations in language planning. *NABE Journal, 8*(2), 15–34.

Snyder, H. (2019). Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines. *Journal of Business Research, 104*, 333–339.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

Spolsky, B. (2004). *Language policy*. Cambridge University Press.

Thomas, W. P., & Collier, V. P. (2002). *A national study of school effectiveness for language minority students' long-term academic achievement*. Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence.

United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. United Nations.

UNESCO. (1953). *The use of vernacular languages in education*. UNESCO.

UNESCO. (2003). *Education in a multilingual world*. UNESCO.

UNESCO. (2016). *If you don't understand, how can you learn?* Global Education Monitoring Report Policy Paper 24.

UNESCO. (2023). *Global education monitoring report 2023: Technology in education—A tool on whose terms?* UNESCO.

UNICEF. (2021). *Reimagining girls' education: Solutions to keep girls learning in emergencies*. UNICEF.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.

Williams, E. (1998). *Investigating bilingual literacy: Evidence from Malawi and Zambia*. Department for International Development.

Willans, F., & Leung, C. (2015). Empirical foundations for medium of instruction policies: Approximate replications of Afolayan (1976) and Siegel (1997b). *Language Teaching, 48*(2), 203–223.