



Single Cycle Degree Programme in Language Science

Final Thesis

Title: Bilingual education in the Gambia. “The use of national language in teaching literacy and as a medium of instruction in the early years of education in the Gambia.”

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ABSTRACT

English is the medium of instruction in public education in The Gambia, but most of the population belongs to various ethnic groups with their own unique languages and cultures. Despite the existence of a national language, English continues to be the national and official language. This motivates then present study.

Research has shown that teaching students in their native language increases their enthusiasm, suggesting that “native language education increases student engagement, creating a more inclusive and relevant learning environment” (Ancarno, Bouy, Jeng, 2023) .

To buttress on the topic of discussion, evaluating the practice of using the national language in primary schools, this study employs a mixed method approach based on surveys, questionnaires, interviews with teachers, parents, policy makers, students’ classroom observations, from the six regions. It emphasises the implementation of the most recent National Language Policy to draw attention to the benefits and difficulties of bilingual education in The Gambia.

Key words: bilingual education, national language, mother tongue, language policy, etc.

INTRODUCTION

“If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his own language, that goes to his heart.”

(Nelson Mandela)

Nations, particularly those that have experienced colonisation and cultural domination, still use English as their official language of instruction and communication. One such nation is the former British colony of Gambia, which still employs English in its public education system. Both English and the local language was used alternately as the medium of instruction to teach and aid early grade children learn, especially during the first three years of schooling. The main goal of implementing the local language in the classroom was to increase the literacy levels of the students by instructing them in their already-acquired native tongue. This means that while young children are taught in English, the local vernacular is often used to translate and explain concepts to facilitate teaching and learning activities as they enter formal education. Bilingual education allows students to improve their comprehension abilities in a second language in terms of reading, listening, and writing to achieve complete fluency in their first language.

Although to this approach, national languages has existed for some time, data on national languages are limited, there is no formal language policy, and implementation support for interventions (teacher training and capacity building and content development for teaching materials) is not institutionalized. For example, professional training and teacher postings to schools are not influenced by their competency in the local language, while schools do not have official language designations. This research evaluates the use of indigenous national languages as a medium of instruction for teaching literacy and facilitating learning in the early years of education in the Gambia with the goal of contributing meaningful insights to the discourse on bilingual education.

The study was conducted in basic cycle schools, lower -basic school, and nursery schools to elucidate the functions and effects of bilingual education in the early years of education in the Gambia. Similarly, interviews and survey questionnaires which was handwritten for policy

makers, teachers, and parents as well as students, the study will investigate the language gap between the national languages and the current English-only curriculum.

Chapter 1 presents the use of national languages in teaching literacy in the early years of education in the Gambia, then moves to present the ethnic groups in the Gambia and the linguistic situation in the Gambia.

Chapter two examines the historical development of language policies in the Gambia and their impact on education. Then continues presenting the theories of bilingual education and discussing their relevance to the Gambia. The last two paragraphs present the review on the cognitive, social, and cultural benefits of bilingual education and challenges faced in implementing bilingual education programs, with focus on early education in the Gambia.

Chapter three explains the mixed – method research design employed in the study, the method used for data collection (surveys, interviews, classroom observations) and finally presents data analysis.

Chapter four presents the results of the quantitative data collected from teachers(educators), policy makers, students, and parents.

Chapter five presents the discussion, the limitation of the study, and the recommendation for future research, with some conclusions.

CHAPTER 1: THE USE OF NATIONAL LANGUAGES IN TEACHING LITERACY AS A MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION IN THE EARLY YEARS OF EDUCATION IN THE GAMBIA.

Chapter 1 will present first a general overview of the Gambia territory in paragraph 1.1. Second, the ethnic groups in the Gambia in paragraph 1.2 and the third paragraph 1.3 was linguistic situation in the Gambia

1.1 The Gambia: an overview

The Gambia is the smallest nation on the African continent, consisting of a slender 300-kilometer-long by 30-kilometer-wide area. It is an enclave within Senegal with a total land size of 10,689 square kilometres and a little coastline to the west of the country that opens onto the Atlantic Ocean.

Figure 1 Map of The Gambia



Source: africaguide.com

The Gambia was a crown colony of Britain from the 1840s until October 1963 when self-government was achieved. The Gambia gained its independence in 1965, after gaining independence, the Queen Elizabeth II remained the head of state until 1970. In April 1970, the Gambia was proclaimed a republic and Sir Dawda of the people's progressive party became the president of the country.

However, in 1981 a coup was led by kukoi samba sanyang that disrupted that peace. On July 22nd four lieutenant in the Gambia national army (GNA), identifies as Yaya Jammeh, Edward Singhateh, Saihou sabally, and Saidou hydara overthrow president Jawara in a bloodless military coup.

There has been a major democratic transition in the Gambia since Jammeh's overthrow. Adama Barrow, the opposition candidate won the 2016 presidential contest against Jammeh and was sworn into office on the 19th of January ,2017 and up to date as the president of the Gambia.

1.2 The Ethnic groups in the Gambia

An ethnic group is a group of people who are the same in some or multiple ways. They may all have the same ancestors, speak the same language, or have the same culture, which could sometimes include religion. They often live in the same or surrounding area. Though this is not always the case, almost all citizens of a nation belong to the same ethnic group. Often one country may have several different ethnic groups, or the people of one ethnic group may live in several different countries.

In The Gambia, there are eight major ethnic groups that coexist peacefully with little intertribal conflict. Despite growing intercultural contact and fusion, each group maintains its own language, music, customs, and even caste system. Indeed, the average Gambian will tell you he feels he has more in common with his countrymen than he has with a Senegalese from the same tribe. This by no means suggests that there is a lack of individual identity. While there is growth in multi-ethnic expressions, the search by groups to reaffirm their identities remains. Each of these communities speaks their own language, all of which are classified as part of the Niger-Congo language group and represent a snapshot of Senegambia society.

However, due to widespread migrations and intermarriages over the ages, it is becoming more and more challenging to categorise people based on blood type or ethnic characteristics. Prior to the 1800s, there were some migrations into the Gambia, but after Bathurst (Banjul) was established in 1816, there was a significant increase in this kind of movement. They came from Casamance, Futa Toro, Sierra Leone, Mali, Guinea Bissau, and other West African countries.

The majority ethnic group in the Gambia is made up of the Mandinka, also referred to as the Mandingos, who are an agrarian people with a hereditary nobility. The Futa Jallon Plateau's northern slopes were their home before they moved to the Gambia valley. The country of the Manding is in the Niger Valley.

The Wolof people have a significant presence in Senegambia and the capital city of Banjul. Their language is the lingua franca for Gambia and can be heard being spoken in trading centres and family compounds. In the upriver area of Gambia, they are called the Fanafa.

The group known as the Creoles, or Akus, are Christians descended from freed slaves who arrived in The Gambia from Sierra Leone in 1787 and who rank among the bureaucratic elite as well as being prominent in the private professional classes.

The Foni district of the Western Division is home to the Jola or Kujamat people, who are primarily organised around the cultivation of rice. There is a uniquely segmentary society with no tradition of having a paramount chief. Their traditional location in swamps and deep forests meant that they were among the last people to converge in Islam.

The Fulanis, or Pol Futa, as they are sometimes known, are mainly engaged in herding cattle and running their ubiquitous small corner shops. They are generally of lighter skin than most of the population, and several theories, some of which have proved controversial, have been put forward as to where they originally came from.

Agricultural production, trade, and real estate development are the main activities of the Serahule community. They can be found in their largest numbers in the Basse region and speak in several dialects, including Azer and Kinbakka. They created the Ghana Empire, which encompassed Mauritania to present-day Ghana.

The Serer, who are mostly engaged in fishing, are among the other ethnic groups. Their language and customs are quite like those of the Wolof. The Tukulor women, on the other hand, are primarily involved in agriculture and animal husbandry and have close ties to the Fulani people's history, culture, and customs. There also exists a small community of other groups such as the Lebanese, Europeans, Mansoanka, Bayot, Bambara, Badibunka, Balanta, Hausa, Mankanya, and the Mandjak Christians.

1.3 The linguistic situation

The official language of The Gambia is English, and it is used across all levels of education. However, over 80% of the population speaks at least one of the national languages, which are Mandinka, Wolof, and Fula.

There are 12 languages spoken in the Gambia, seven of which are indigenous and five of which are not. This study concentrates on eight languages. Due to formerly arbitrary colonial borders, these languages are also spoken in adjacent Guinea-Bissau, Mali, and Senegal, illustrating the widespread African phenomenon of trans-boundary languages.

The Gambia's languages are classified as part of the Niger-Congo family, which includes two branches: the Atlantic and Mande languages. Those under the Atlantic are classed as Bak and Senegambia. The Bak languages are Balanta, Jola, and Manjago; the Senegambian languages are Pulaar or Fula, Serer, and Wolof; and the Mande languages are Bambara, Mandinka, and Serahulle, Eberhard. Simon & C. Fed. ed. (2023). *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*. 26th edition. Dallas: SIL International.

Historically, the use of national languages in education has been scarce in The Gambia. The colonial authorities introduced the use of English, which was the language of the colonial power. This became the official language of instruction, and it remained so even after independence. However, the use of English has had several drawbacks, particularly for children from rural areas who do not speak English as their first language endorse the practice and suggest that it is possible to intervene with pedagogical support in the mother tongue.

In response to these challenges, the government of The Gambia has taken steps to promote the use of national languages in the early grades. In 2015, the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education launched a program called the Early Learning Program (ELP), which promotes the use of national languages in kindergartens and primary schools. The program seeks to improve literacy and educational outcomes by teaching children in their native language. This research thesis seeks to assess the effectiveness of the early learning program in promoting literacy and improving academic outcomes in The Gambia.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW ON BILINGUAL EDUCATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD YEARS

Chapter 2 will first present the general overview of previous studies and present studies on the topic of discussion. Then moves to para 2.1 the role of literacy in the Gambia early childhood education, continued to paragraph 2.2 which will present early grade learning, paragraph 2.3 will present the language policy in the Gambia, Paragraph 2.4 will present language and identity, paragraph 2.5 will present the use of English language as a medium of instruction, Paragraph 2.6 will present the theoretical framework, and paragraph 2.7 will present bilingual education in the early childhood years and the last paragraph 2.8 will present existing gap in the literature.

2.1 The role of literacy in the Gambia early childhood education

In the context of The Gambia, teaching literacy in early childhood education using native languages is an important issue. To improve the literacy and numeracy abilities of young students, the multilingual country of The Gambia has realized the value of integrating national languages like Mandinka, Wolof, and Fula into its educational system. In a separate interview with The Standard Newspaper of the Gambia, Sisawo emphasized these themes, stating that his ministry had recruited consultants to work on it, that the language mapping of the nation had already been completed, and that the document was now available for the public to review and add to.

According to Ebrima Sisawo, his ministry will shortly introduce the nation's official languages, including Mandinka, Wolof Fula into the curriculum. We have been using the national languages at the foundation level to support teaching and learning in schools, and studies have indicated that when children are taught in their native tongue, they are more likely to comprehend the fundamental ideas and to develop their literacy and numeracy abilities. Therefore, the ministry's plan is to teach children concepts in their native tongues at that early age. English would be taught as a subject, of course. The children would therefore be taught in English, but they would also be given explanations in their native tongues for other topics, such as scientific and mathematical ideas. Because there are several national languages in the nation, our policy aims to map out the region," he stated. The Permanent Secretary revealed that they would observe which languages are most spoken, where they are most prevalent, and where the majority

of children feel most at ease speaking to them. The children will therefore be able to speak that language as their native tongue. However, since they are all significant and will support inclusivity, we are also considering sign language," he continued. Permanent Secretary Sisawo also revealed that encouraging the use of the national language in the classroom fosters cultural awareness and preserves linguistic diversity in addition to improving language proficiency. It is consistent with our shared commitment to expanding access to high-quality education, promoting linguistic diversity, and raising well-rounded people in a globalized world, he added. "Our language in education policy is the evidence of our commitment to cultural heritage, promoting multilingualism, and nurturing well-rounded individuals who can communicate effectively in a globalized world," he said. He asserts that this approach will support cultural heritage preservation in addition to bolstering the nation's educational system. According to Ancarno, Bouy, and Jeng (2023), this method is based on the knowledge that children learn best when instructed in a language they are already familiar with. According to research, incorporating national languages into early education can greatly enhance kids' understanding and memory of foundational ideas (Ancarno, Bouy & Jeng, 2023)

In addition to improving academic performance, this approach encourages linguistic diversity and cultural understanding (Sisawo, 2023). With assistance from the World Bank, the Gambian government has been putting into practice a language policy that incorporates national languages into the curriculum from the very beginning (World Bank, 2024). While learning English as a topic, the policy is to guarantee that children receive instruction in reading and numeracy in their mother tongue (Sisawo, 2023). In the end, this dual-language strategy should support the nation's educational objectives and preserve its rich cultural legacy by fostering a more effective and inclusive learning environment (Sisawo, 2023).

In conclusion, it is evident from this passage from the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education that the Gambia has made the monumental decision to incorporate the usage of the national language into literacy instruction in the early grades.

2.2 Early grade learning

In the Gambia, the term early grade education refers to the first three (3) years of basic education and schooling, including early childhood development (ECD) education, which covers the first three-year education program provided for children between the ages of 3 and 6.

Under mostly constant and resolute leadership, the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MOBSE) has successfully started a number of national education programs in recent years.

The Early Literacy in National Language (ELINL) program is one of the programs that has contributed to the largest changes to the country's educational system.

Early Literacy in National Language (ELINL) was introduced as a pilot program in 2011. The program's objective was to improve phonemic awareness using national languages (NLs) to prepare students for learning to read in English.

The increasing amount of research in applied linguistics and cognitive psychology that demonstrates how teaching young children to read in a language they speak and understand can enhance their fluency and comprehension served as justification for this approach.

Additionally, the national languages (NLs) are orthographically transparent, which makes it easier to decode and blend them than the orthographically opaque English language. Having mastered the basic reading techniques in their mother tongue would help children read more fluently. (2011), Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education.

In conclusion, early learning facilitates comprehension when teaching topics, allows for interaction between students and teachers, and improves the atmosphere for both parties

2.3 Language policy in the Gambia

The National Language Strategy for the Gambia 2004-2015 was designed to formalise the use of the national language as the medium of instruction for the first three years of basic education (Grades 1-3), but this varies depending on the primary Gambian language in the Gambia and the region where the students live. However, the Gambia National Education Policy 2016-2030 currently provides a policy framework to ensure that the L1 or local language is used as the medium of instruction for Grades 1-3 and as a school subject from Grade 4 onwards.

Furthermore, the recent development of the National Language Policy aims to formalise the use of the national language in the country's education system.

The Gambia's education system is primarily reliant on English, which is taught from an early age. While this strategy tries to prepare students for worldwide involvement, it frequently ignores the relevance of mother-language education, which can boost cognitive development and cultural identity (Ndow, 2013).

In recent years, there has been a growing advocacy for bilingual education that incorporates both English and indigenous languages. This educational model aims to bridge the gap between linguistic heritage and modern educational demands, promoting multilingualism as an asset (Ndow, 2013). The use of the mother tongue in early education is believed to support better learning outcomes and promote cultural identity (Gordon, 2005).

The Gambia government collaborated with MOBSE in 2011 to introduce national languages as a medium of education to children for literacy classes in early childhood and grades one through three, in addition to other English training. The primary goal was to increase children's literacy skills by teaching them the language they already know.

To promote the creation of a long-term plan for sustainable and efficient mainstreaming of the national language approach into the curriculum, a language mapping was done with the World Bank (2024), The Gambia School language mapping Report.

The curriculum for the early grades in the Gambia has made progress in including national languages programs that encourage the use of national languages throughout the first three years of primary education, which have been started by the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MOBSE), the department of education. By the fourth grade (MOBSE), it was said that these programs are meant to have gradually moved children to using English as the primary language of instruction (2018).

The Global Partnership for Education also reported in 2011 that "60%" more children in the Gambia read at age six when they start learning their national language "Since national languages have a more constant link between sounds and letters than English does". Global Partner for Education created a national pilot program called "early learning in national languages"

with the cooperation of the Gambia government and affirm that the national languages, since these are the languages in which the kids think which facilitate their learning, (MOBSE), The Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education,(2011).

The reason the pilot program's results were so encouraging was that first-graders from Gambia who participated "in early learning in national languages " programs outperformed non-participants in terms of letter and sound recognition and simple word reading by a factor of ten. Thus, this motivate Children reading more and participation in class because of this program (MOBSE), The Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education.

2.4 Language and Identity

Language has a significant role in Gambian identity, including ethnicity and cultural origin. Indigenous languages are frequently employed in cultural events, storytelling, and traditional music, strengthening cultural continuity and community bonds. (Bellamy, 2015). The use of language in these circumstances emphasize the close relationship between languages and cultural identity, emphasizing the need for linguistic diversity in preserving Gambia's cultural tapestry (Ndow, 2013). The connection between languages and identity is visible in how various ethnic groups negotiate linguistic boundaries. While English serves as a neutral platform for inter-ethnic communication, indigenous languages remain vital to expressing cultural uniqueness and pride (Lewis,2009).

Despite the Gambia's rich linguistic diversity, several challenges threaten the preservation of indigenous languages. The dominance of English, coupled with urbanisation and globalisation has led to a language shift and in some cases, language endangerment (Gordon, 2005). Young generation increasingly adopt English or Wolof as their primary languages, often at the expense of their ancestral tongues (Ndow,2013). Efforts to preserve linguistic diversity in the Gambia are gaining momentum. Government initiatives and non-governmental organisations are actively working to document and revitalised endangered languages through educational programs and community engagement (Lewis,2009). Language has significant socioeconomic implications in Gambia. Multilingualism is a frequent feature with people speaking multiple languages to traverse different social and economic circumstances. For example, while a Mandinka speaker may use Mandinka at home, they might switch to wolof or English in a setting

to deal with people from other ethnic backgrounds (Bellamy,2015). The capacity to speak in many languages promotes social cohesiveness and economic prospects, especially in trade and tourism, where effective communication is critical to success. (Lewis,2009). Language is more than just a means of communication; it is also tool for connection development and social negotiations (Gordon,2015).

2.5 The use of English language as a medium of Instruction

The policy of using a second language as a medium of instruction in an environment where pupils frequently do not speak that language when they join school can cause teachers to develop their own classroom practices that may or may not follow official policy. These techniques are founded on the teacher's personal ideas and preferences regarding language use in the classroom and in the larger community, they perceived the needs of their pupils and the expression of the instructor's identities.

Furthermore, each teacher's language choices are not always the most predictable or those expected by policymakers in that situation (Cincotta-Segi, 2011,206-207).

However, due to the limitation of employing English alone as the medium of instruction, bilingual education reform is strongly advocated by the post -independence language policy reforms. In the same vein, the 1988 education policy review, which emphasized the value of mother tongue instruction in early schooling. By employing native languages as the primary language of teaching in the early years of schooling and then progressively switching to English, the approach sought to increase the percentage of people who are literate (Bah,2021) The reform was predicted on the idea that teaching in a child's native tongue promotes cognitive growth and comprehension.

The 2004 Education Policy support the dedication to bilingual education by acknowledging its contribution to improving educational equity and access. (Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, 1988).

Its main features are;

a. Mother Tongue Instruction, which emphasises the use of indigenous languages as a medium of instruction in early childhood education.

b. Curriculum creation, which entails creating curriculum and instructional materials in regional tongues while guaranteeing accessibility and cultural relevance.

c. Teacher preparation: providing educators with the tools to effectively teach in multiple languages through training in bilingual education methodologies; and, finally, educating them on the essential elements.

The 2004 education policy and bilingualism strategies aimed to increase comprehension, literacy, and general academic performance by allowing students to learn in their first languages, hence enhancing literacy and learning outcomes.

1. Supporting cultural identity and heritage: It was believed that bilingual education may help to preserve and promote indigenous ways of life while also giving kids a sense of identification and pride.

Improving fairness and accessibility, since the 2004 education strategy seeks to improve these areas, especially for pupils from underprivileged and rural areas where the majority language is spoken (The Education Policy, Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, 2004.)

2.6 Theoretical framework:

2.6.1 The Theory of Social Constructivism in the Framework of Bilingual Education. The theoretical underpinning of this study is based on Lev Vygotsky's social constructivist theory. Social constructivism places a strong emphasis on the role that language, cultural environment, and social interaction have in the creation of knowledge.

This theoretical framework is especially useful for comprehending how the learning process is affected when a national language is used as a medium of instruction in early literacy education.

In addition to reflecting cultural identity, the use of the national language in early school helps pupils build their awareness of the world. This paradigm facilitates a closer link between the curriculum and the students' cultural surroundings by illuminating how they interact with literacy through their language.

Social Constructivist Theory: According to this theory, knowledge is created through interactions with people in a cultural setting, making learning a social process. According to Vygotsky

(1978), learning is more successful when pupils can relate new information to their own language and cultural frameworks. Cognitive development is also strongly linked to social interactions. The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD¹), as proposed by Vygotsky, emphasises the value of supervision and teamwork in assisting students in completing tasks that they are unable to do on their own. The ZPD can be expanded to include how pupils are assisted in learning and becoming literate in their native tongue.

2.6.2: Social constructivist theory's applicability to bilingual education

1. Linguistic and Cultural Context: Social constructivism emphasises how crucial language and culture are to the educational process. The use of the native language as a medium of teaching guarantees that literacy skills are acquired in a familiar linguistic and cultural context for young learners, especially in a multilingual culture like The Gambia. When literacy exercises are presented in a language that they can comprehend and that is ingrained in their social experiences, students are more likely to participate actively. Thus, the national language serves as a tool for meaning-making and knowledge-building in addition to communication.

2. Active Role of Learners: Students are active participants in the learning process rather than passive consumers of knowledge, in accordance with social constructivist ideas. Students are encouraged to apply their past knowledge and ²cultural experiences to help them understand new literacy ideas when education is conducted in the national language. To create a stronger bond with the material being taught, students could, for instance, connect stories, words, or grammar rules to their personal experiences. Their comprehension and retention of literacy skills are improved by this active participation.

3. The Facilitating Role of the Teacher: Teachers are viewed as facilitators of learning rather than merely imparters of knowledge in a social constructivist perspective. Early literacy instruction in the national language requires teachers to scaffold students' learning by assisting

¹ Simply psychology.org

² Neurolaunch.com

them with assignments and promoting group projects. This method is consistent with Vygotsky's theory that social contact and discourse are the primary means of learning. Teachers can help students solve literacy problems together, participate in conversations, and express themselves in a language that is secure and comfortable for them by using the national language.

4. Vygotsky's Theory of Language as a Tool³ for Cognitive Development: This theory is essential to comprehending the function of the national language in literacy instruction. In addition to serving as a communication tool, the national language fosters cognitive growth. In addition to learning to read and write in their native tongues⁴ kids are developing higher-order cognitive skills like classification, recall, and problem-solving. Students build their conceptual framework and organise their ideas through language.

5. Social Interactions in the Learning Environment: Vygotsky's emphasis on social interaction in learning extends to peer interactions in the classroom. In bilingual education settings, students can engage in peer learning, discussing literacy tasks, and helping one another understand new concepts in their national language. This collaborative learning environment aligns with the principles of social constructivism, where learning is viewed as a collective process that thrives on communication, collaboration, and shared meaning-making.

2.6.3 Utilising Social Constructivist Theory to Examine Gambia's Bilingual Education System:

Social constructivist theory directly informs this study on bilingual education and the use of the national language in literacy instruction in The Gambia's early grades. The use of the national language as a medium of instruction promotes cognitive and social development in The Gambia, where children frequently speak one or more local languages in addition to English. This is because it enables students to learn in a language they are acquainted with, which makes it easier for them to participate in literacy tasks.

³ Neurolaunch.com

⁴Yoursmartclass.com

Social constructivism contends that pupils are better equipped to relate abstract literacy ideas to their everyday experiences when they are taught to read and write in a language, they are familiar with, such as their native tongue. Teachers can scaffold learning in a way that respects students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds by using the national language when teaching literacy. This makes learning more effective and meaningful. Moreover, according to the social constructivist learning theory, students can also improve their reading abilities through their interactions with one another in the context of classmates, teachers, and the text being studied. Through the application of the teaching medium of the native language, the Gambian educational institutions have potential to provide dynamic, rich learning environments that directly support the social and cognitive subsystems of literacy development.

In short, social constructivist theory provides a solid framework for understanding how literacy is being taught through the national language in The Gambia early education system.

This theory is ideal for studying how language affects literacy development since it emphasises the social, cultural, and cognitive aspects of language learning. This approach, which uses the national language as the medium of instruction, promotes active, socially constructed learning experiences that aid students in better internalising and relating to literacy concepts.

Through the lens of social constructivism, the study will examine the beneficial and detrimental effects of speaking the national language on the development of early literacy as well as the broader implications for educational practice and policy in The Gambia.

2.7 Bilingual Education in the early childhood years

The use of native languages as a teaching medium for the early grades and for literacy instruction is known as bilingual education in the Gambia. When learning in the national language, a child is more likely to comprehend what is being said, feels more successful in school, and experiences less isolation than when learning in a foreign language (Ramos et al., 1987).

Therefore, if the national languages are used as the medium of education, the kid will grow more flexible and better able to manage the notion as they learn it in two languages (Giles, .1971).

Benefits of bilingual education in the early years include increased self-esteem and easier reading for children. At the same time, it instils in children a respect for their language and culture, as it is taught in schools. Another benefit of adopting the national language to teach literacy in the early years is that it helps youngsters learn letters more easily because the language is familiar (Keisler et al., 1971; Piaget and Inhelder, 1969, Weinreich, 1967).

When it comes to teaching reading, it is easier to learn to read an orthography with a regular phoneme relationship, as stated by most of the vernacular languages that linguists have recorded.

As seen by this 1953 UNESCO declaration, experts long acknowledged the value of the language¹(L1) as an instructional language in schools:

It goes without saying that a child's mother tongue is the most effective teaching medium; In terms of psychology: it is the system of significant indications that his mind uses instinctively to express and comprehend.

In terms of education: he picks things up faster using it than a foreign language medium. Scholars now recognise the relevance of the LI not only as a tool for learning and strengthening reading skills, but also as a way for schools to access and value all aspects of education and the child's understanding and experiences. Teaching children to read and write is a lifelong process that begins before they even enter primary school. Early oral language and social interaction are intrinsically linked to reading and writing since they are founded on clear spoken language. (Pei-Tseng Jenny Hsieh, Momodou, J. (2016).

2.8 Existing gap in literature

Bilingual education has received significant attention in the worldwide discourse on educational research and policy, notably the use of national languages as a medium of instruction in the early grades and for teaching literacy. The integration of national languages like Wolof, Mandinka, and Fula into the educational system brings special potential and challenges in the context of the Gambia, where multilingualism is the norm. Although the potential advantages of bilingual education, such as higher literacy rates and cultural relevance, are becoming more

widely acknowledged, there are still significant gaps in the literature that is specifically related to the Gambia. This thesis seeks to fill in these gaps by highlighting the need for additional study to improve our comprehension and application of bilingual education in this country in west Africa.

Research has consistently demonstrated that early education pupils who are taught in their mother tongue achieve higher reading achievements than those who are taught in a second language. For example, Benson (2004) showed that bilingual schooling increased the literacy rates of youngsters in Mozambique.

In a similar vein, Hughes (2011) noted that South African kids who were instructed in their mother tongue performed better academically. Walter and Dekker (2011) discovered that pupils in mother tongue-based multilingual education programs in the Philippines demonstrated improved literacy and cognitive skills.

Heugh (2011) notes that although rapid gains in literacy are important, long-term gains in a variety of subjects and grade levels are required to support the widespread use of bilingual education. Research that tracks students over multiple years is necessary to evaluate the impact of first national language instruction on students' transition to English and their achievement in both higher education and the workforce.

Another notable issue is the scarcity of research into the role of digital technologies in enabling bilingual education. With increased access to digital tools, there is promise for technology-based national language training, particularly in resource-constrained locations. The substantial advantages and difficulties of teaching literacy in early education through national languages are highlighted in the literature on bilingual education in the Gambia.

Research continuously shows that incorporating national languages into the curriculum helps boost students' cultural identities, increase literacy rates, and improve cognitive development (Global Partnership for Education, 2015). In the early years, teaching in a child's first language creates a more comfortable and encouraging learning environment.

CHAPTER 3: THE STUDY

3.1 The Research Design

The main purpose of this master's thesis research is to assess the effect of use of national languages as medium of instruction for teaching and learning in early grades in the Gambia public education system. This chapter will describe the research design, sampling procedure, data collection methods and instruments, methods of data analysis, and interpretation of the findings.

3.2 The research questions

The first research question was:

RQ1. How does using the national language as a medium of instruction in primary school classrooms facilitate transition to formal education?

The second research question was:

RQ2: What are the consequences of using the native language as a medium of instruction in teaching and learning in the early grades?

3.3 Participants

This research used combination of random selection of participants from the population and purposive sampling or selection of participants based on their characteristics and information they were able to provide.

The population under investigation comprise participants in the public basic education system, including teachers', students, parents, and the different Gambia's administrative and educational regions. The Participants, the first subjects involved are 1,050 students from nursery schools, lower -basic school, and basic cycle schools. The differences between these types of school who are learning the national languages throughout the six regions of the country, the Gambia were grouped into categories: The types of schools.

- Nursery school - age 3 to 4 years beginner class and 6 to 7 years for second and third year before they are enrolled in the primary school. classes are held only in morning.
- Lower -basic school -age 6 to 7 years and the classes are from grade one (1) to six (6).
- Basic cycle schools-covered both the lower and upper levels aged from twelve(12) to fifteen (15) years.

The twelve (12) policy makers who are actively involved in endorsing policies and their point of view about the use of national languages in teaching literacy in early education. The policy makers were advocating for teacher training, curriculum review and resources specifically the school materials to be available. Second, 30 teachers from the six (6) region were involved in research and these teachers were observed whilst teaching the national language in the classes. Finally, Eighteen (18) parents from the six (6) region were interviewed about the use of national languages in the curriculum, and they suggested that teachers should be trained in these languages and the learners informed about the importance of studying their languages. For instance, an excerpt from one (1) parent who has been interviewed concerning the use of Wolof in the school as attested below:

Parent 1: Good morning and thank you for having me. I think it is very important to use Wolof in teaching children to read and write, especially in their early years. Wolof is our mother tongue, and children learn best in a language they understand deeply. When they start learning to read in Wolof, it becomes easier for them to grasp the basics of literacy. I also believe it helps them to connect with their culture and identity in a way that English or French alone cannot.

Interviewer: Do you think using Wolof in schools will affect the children's ability to learn other languages like English?

Parent 1: Not at all. In fact, I think it helps. When children first learn to read and write in their mother tongue, it gives them a solid foundation. Once they are confident in their primary language, learning a second language like English becomes much easier because they have already developed strong literacy skills. It's like building a house on a solid foundation.

In summary, the excerpt indicated that the parent interviewed agreed that Wolof helped the learners to understand the concept they were taught.

Table 1 Participants

| Category of the population | N. | Level of instruction |
|----------------------------|----|----------------------|
| | | |

| | | nursery schools | lower - basic school, and | basic cycle schools, |
|---------------|------|--------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| School | 30 | 1 | 1 | 1 and 2 |
| Policy makers | 12 | 2 | 2 | 3 and 4 |
| Teachers | 30 | 3 | 3 | 5 and 6 |
| Students | 1050 | - | 4 | 6 and 7 |
| Parents | 18 | - | 5 and 6 | 7 and 8 |

3.4 Data collection instruments and administration

The study was conducted using appropriate research instruments and tools for each of the research methods employed. A copy of the survey questionnaires, the interview guide, and classroom observation tools are attached in the appendix.

3.4.1 Data Collection: Instruments

Interviews:

The interviews were designed to be open-ended and flexible, allowing the participants to express their views, experiences, and suggestions regarding the use of national languages in teaching literacy.

The interviews were for the policy makers to fill in the correct answers to the corresponding questions. The questions were ten (10) in number and the questions were about on curriculum inclusion, materials available, teacher training programmes, government support for the teaching of the national languages etc. The interviewee were literate and can read and write because they were principal education officer, senior officers and junior officers in the educational system in the Gambia. The interview were administered in person, and it lasted for thirty (30 mins).

Additionally, three (3) Parents in each region were interviewed using the national language as the medium of communication (the interview is included in the appendix E).

Descriptive survey:

The survey was administered using a standardised survey questionnaire form, which was distributed to randomly selected respondents of learners, teachers, education policymakers, parents, and other relevant stakeholders to gather quantitative data on the effectiveness of bilingual education programs, language proficiency levels, and perceived benefits and challenges of national languages as mediums of instruction. The self-completed survey questionnaire were designed and shared with participant, respondents through email or via WhatsApp whereby digital technology cannot be utilized, a paper-based survey will be applied. The students survey questionnaires were seven (7) in number and the questions were about how do they feel learning the national language, what language were you learning at school, etc and the questions were administered by the help of the teacher, the teacher read the questions to the learners and translated them to the national language the learners can understand so that they tick the correct answers. The survey lasted for 25 mins.

The students survey questionnaires the following questions 2,3,4,6, and 8 the researcher used the Likert-scale to measure survey participants (student) opinion, attitude and motivation. Question 1,5,7, and 9 the researcher used variables to investigate the challenges, resources required to facilitate and encourage national language learning.

In the same vein, the teachers survey questionnaires were ten (10) in number and the questions were closed type that requires a brief answer either “ yes/ no” or another brief answer and such questions can be attested in the following questions 1,2,3 and the rest of the questions required a brief answer by ticking the correct options as in (Appendix B).

The questions were asked based on how long were the teachers teaching the national languages either in the nursery or lower basic schools, whether teachers were trained in the national languages, was the training sufficient to meet the needs of the learners and what specific areas needed to be developed and why? The survey questionnaires were administered in person, and it lasted for 30mins.

Classroom observations:

The study also focused on conducting a teaching and learning classroom observation to assess the use of national language in a teaching and learning setting. The classroom observation was

guided by a set of questions and indicators and was complemented by observational notes. The observation were taken during the lesson and a two (2) adopted observation grid were used to differentiate the level of instruction, one for nursery and the other for the lower basic. The observer adopted the used of a diary to record the observation and it contributes to the fulfilment of the observational comments.

Additionally the aspect that were observed during the lessons were focused on receptive language skills, that is to say how well does the child understand simple words, simple recognitions of the alphabet, fruits, objects in the classroom, etc and can be seen in (figure 1).The participants that were observed were students from nursery schools ranging from aged 2,3,4, 5,6 years because in the early grade learning system they have these three stages before thy can be enrolled in the primary or lower basic schools such as nursery one were for beginners class, nursery two advanced stage bringing in the mathematics, little bit of problem -solving and the last stage nursery three that facilitated the enrolment into primary school or lower basic school.

To sum the observation for the nursery school the observer herself administered the observation as to get first hand experience and the observation lasted for 40 mins. This can be seen in (table 2).

Figure 2: A Screenshot of the learners’ observation tool adopted from cox campus specifically for the nursery schools’ learners aged 2 to 3 years,3 to 4 years,5 to 6 years, 6 -7 years.

Toddler Language and Literacy Observation Tool

| | | |
|--|----------------|-------------|
| Child's Name: | Date of Birth: | Teacher(s): |
| Use this tool to support observations of the toddlers in your classroom in the areas of receptive and expressive language, early reading-related behaviors, and early rhythm and rhyme behaviors. We have provided an age range for when these skills are generally expected to develop; however, all children do not acquire skills at precisely the same time. Use this form frequently, as you play, interact, read books, and engage in routines and activities with the toddlers in your classroom! | | |

| Receptive Language Skills: What does the child understand? | | | |
|--|--|------------|--|
| | Milestones/Skills | Date/Notes | |
| 12 - 24 Months | Responds to simple spoken requests | | |
| | Understands words that name familiar objects and people | | |
| | Understands and follows simple directions without gestures or cues | | |
| | Knows the name of familiar people and body parts | | |
| | Understands simple questions – yes/no, either/or | | |
| | Understands simple prepositions: in, on, under | | |
| 24 - 36 Months | Understands different ideas | | |
| | Understands and follows two-part directions | | |
| | Understands open-ended questions | | |
| | Follow instruction with 2 or 3 steps | | |

1



The observer adopted the above as classroom observation tool for language literacy in the nursery school and observed the following nursery schools. This can be seen in the appendix (Appendix C)

In region 1, these schools were observed:

- Abuko nursery school.
- St. Charles Lwanga nursery school

In region 6:

- Hella Kunda nursery school
-

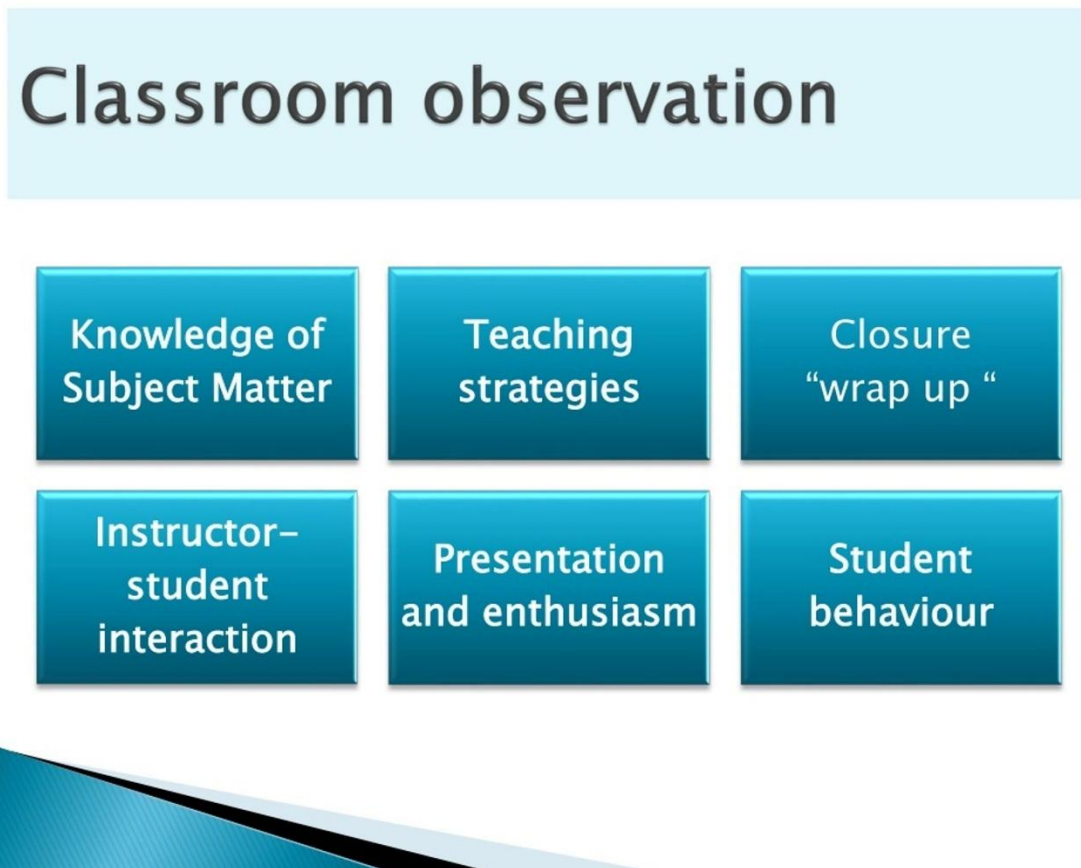
Table 2. Receptive language skills: what can the child understand?

| Aged | Milestones/Skills | Dates | Notes |
|---------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| 36 -48 months 3-4) | Recognition of the alpha- bet letters and sounds in sarahulie | 18 th September,2024 | The students were engaged during the lesson and their partici- pation was ac- tive especially during the pro- nunciation and interactive activ- ities. |
| | Recognise and pronounce and write in sarahulie lan- guage | | |
| 48-72 months 4-6 years | The normal greetings in Mandinka and simple words | 19 th Septem- ber,2024. | The students ac- tively participated in repeating words, an- swering questions and interacting with peers |
| 6-7 | Naming of objects in the classroom in Mandinka and write simple sentences | 19 th September,2024 | The students were engaged during the lesson. The use of repetition, visual and interactive |

| | | | |
|--|--|--|------------------------------------|
| | | | activities kept actively involved. |
|--|--|--|------------------------------------|

As the observation was in two (2) phases, the level of instruction also varied the observer used the first screenshot on (figure1) for the nurse school, whilst lower basic school and basic cycle schools the observer used the classroom observation grid and adopted it to observed the mentioned level of instruction as shown below.

Figure 2 :Screenshot of classroom observation adopted for the lower basic and basic cycle schools



In conclusion, the above-mentioned grid can be seen in the classroom observer comments such as the knowledge of subject matter, teaching strategies, teacher- student interactions, presentation of the lesson, student behaviour, language used. (Appendix C).

3.4.2 Sampling Techniques

Purposive sampling techniques based on educational administrative regions and schools adopted to select the participants and respondents of the survey, interviews, and classroom

observations. participants were selected on the premises that they are subjects of the national languages policy and practice. A two-stage random sample design was used to select the participant sample. The sampling frame was on schools that are implementing the national language policy or that they use national languages in their teaching and learning activities.

Stage 1: Selection of primary sampling units-PSU (Educational regions and schools): The Selection of primary sampling units (PSUs) are the educational administrative regions of the Gambia. The educational administrative regions are listed, using a random table; around 40% of the schools in each education region were randomly selected to constitute a cluster sample for the education administrative region (primary sampling unit).

Stage 2: Selection of secondary sampling units (schools) within the Selection of primary sampling units (PSUs)

The selection of schools in the sampled regions followed a two-stage approach. First by listing schools within each education administrative region (primary sampling unit), then by randomly selecting 40% of schools in each educational administrative region from the sample population of analysis (secondary sampling unit).

Table 3. presentation of data

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|----------|------------------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| Educa- tion re- gion | No of teach- ers | No of pol- icy | No of par- ents | No of school | No of | No of stu- dents | Type of data | No of data | How many surveys in- terview, |
|----------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|----------|------------------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------------------------------|

| | | mak- ers | | | clas- ses | | | col- lected | classroom observa- tions in each region |
|-------------|---|-------------|---|---|--------------|-----|--|-----------------|---|
| Region 1 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 150 | Survey Inter- view, class- room ob- serva- tion. | 170 12 10 | Survey-160 Interview-5 Classroom ob.-5 |
| Region 2 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 150 | Survey Inter- view, class- room ob- serva- tion. | 170 10 10 | Surveys- 160 Interview-5 Class obs-3 |
| Region 3 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 150 | Survey Inter- view, class- room ob- serva- tion. | 170 10 10 | Surveys- 170 Interviews- 5 Class obs-3 |
| Region 4 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 150 | Survey Inter- view, | 170 10 10 | Surveys- 170 Interviews- 5 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------|---|---|---|---|---|-----|--|-----------------|--|
| | | | | | | | class- room ob- serva- tion. | | Classroom obs- 3 |
| Region 5 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 150 | Survey Inter- view, class- room ob- serva- tion. | 170 10 10 | Surveys- 170 Interviews- 5 Class obser- vation- 3 |
| Region 6 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 150 | Survey Inter- view, class- room ob- serva- tion. | 170 10 10 | Surveys- 170 Interviews- 5 Classroom obs-3 |

3.6 Data Analysis

The paragraph explains the methods used to examine the data that was gathered. A mixed method approach was employed to analyse the data since it is thought to provide a proper examination of the subject.

Qualitative data was analysed by transferring the data from the paper version of the teachers' questionnaire to the online version using Excel, then the percentage of each item asked was calculated.

3.6.1 Data to answer research question 1

To answer RQ1 (How does using the national language as a medium of instruction in primary school classrooms facilitates transition to formal education?) it was decided to use data coming from interviews from the policy makers, parents, and classroom observations.

By observing a class where the teacher was teaching Wolof language and literacy and the lesson was conducted entirely in Wolof, with some English used for clarification as the observer observed the class, the students are actively participating, especially when they are asked to interact with each other or come to the board. As the observer observed the lesson the students seem comfortable speaking and writing in Wolof. The use of Wolof throughout the lesson provides immersion in the language, which likely aids comprehension and retention. The use of repetition, visual and interactive kept them actively involved.

By this method the children or students are given opportunities to speak, read, and write in Wolof, which kept them engaged and encourages active learning, with occasional English for clarification.

3.6.2 Data to answer research question 2

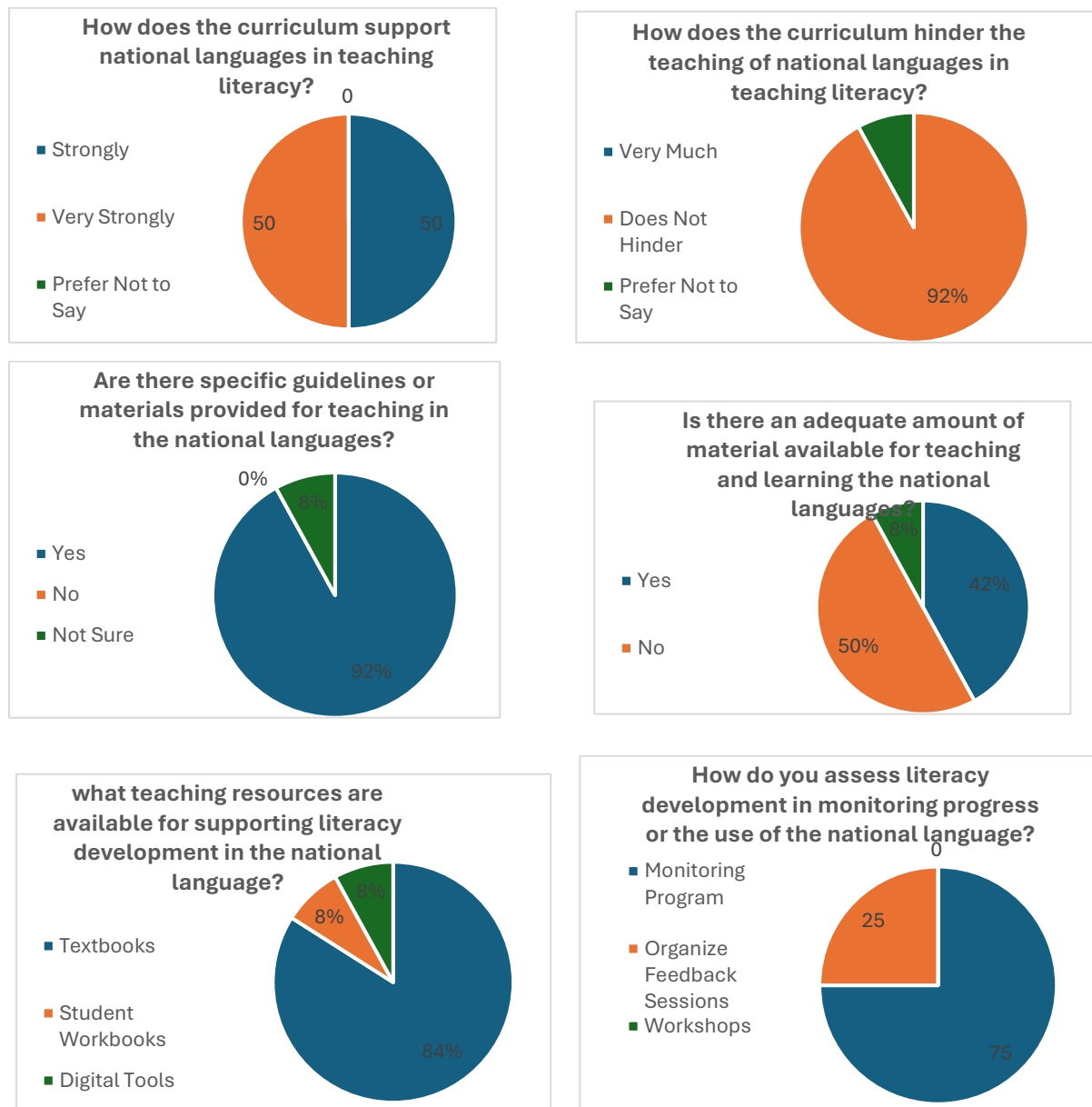
In order to answer RQ2 (what are the consequences of using the native language as a medium of instruction in teaching and learning in the early grades), it was decided to use data coming from descriptive surveys from the students and, teachers.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

To respond to the research questions, this chapter presents the results from the data analysis.

4.1 data from policy makers

Figure 3 Data from Policy Makers



In terms of assessing literacy development in national languages, the most common methods reported were monitoring progress (75%) and organizing feedback sessions (25%).

Policymakers reported several policies in place to support the use of national languages in literacy instruction in early years, including curriculum review (42%), teacher training programs (33%), and resource provision (25%). To ensure the quality of instruction in national languages,

policymakers identified several measures such as monitoring classroom instruction, teacher evaluation and feedback, and professional development opportunities for teachers.

Additionally, policymakers suggested providing equal resources to all schools and ensuring access to digital resources to promote equitable access to education in national languages for all Gambian children.

4.2 Data from parents.

Table 4.data from parents

| Question | Language used for literacy | No of parents interviewed | No of parents who agreed | Regions | Percentage |
|---|----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----------|------------|
| 1.Could you share your thoughts on the use of Wolof, and aku in early literacy education? | Wolof, Mandinka, Aku | 3 | 3 | One (1) | 100% |
| 2 What is your opinion on using Mandinka, Jola manjago, in early education, particularly for teaching literacy? | Mandinka, Jola, manjago | 3 | 3 | Two (2) | 100% |
| 3.Do you think teaching literacy in Mandinka, Serer, Fula could impact children's ability to | Mandinka, Serer, Fula | 3 | 3 | Three (3) | 100% |

| | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------------|---|---|----------|------|
| learn other languages like English or French? Do you have a role to play? Yes, or No? | | | | | |
| 4. Do you believe that teaching literacy in the early years in a language children are familiar with, such as Mandinka, or Fula, is important? Why or why not? | Mandinka and Fula | 3 | 3 | Four (4) | 100% |
| 6. do you think parents have a role in encouraging schools to use Mandinka, Wolof, and Fula in teaching literacy? What can parents do to support this? | Mandinka, Wolof, Fula | 3 | 3 | Five (5) | 100% |
| 7. Do you think the use of Mandinka, Sarahuli, or Fula in schools in your | Mandinka, Sarahulie or Fula | 3 | 3 | Six (6) | 100% |

| | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| <p>area is common, and do you feel schools are doing enough to integrate these languages in early education?</p> | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|

According to the results, all parents in all six areas of Gambia (18 respondents in total) concurred that literacy instruction should be conducted in the country's national languages, which are Wolof, Mandinka, Serer, Jola, Manjago, Fula, and Sarahulie. The inclusion of these languages in the educational policy encouraged literacy among young learners and these parents strongly supported, as seen above in (table 4.) Each region's percentage of agreement was 100%.

The parents in region one (1), 3 parents were interviewed if these languages -Wolof, aku and Mandinka should be taught and the parents agreed 100% that the mentioned languages should be included into the curriculum and students should be encouraged to speak and write in their different ethnicities.

The same opinion was also expressed in region Two (2) where the parents 100% also concur that Mandinka, manjango, Jola these languages in those areas and they agreed that it should be included too in the schools so that students can love their country and not throw their cultural identity away. In region three(3),3 parents were interviewed about their roles in encouraging the use of Mandinka, Serer, Fula in schools and the 3 parents agreed 100% that as parents it was their responsibilities to speak to their own children in Mandinka ,Serer, or Fula and also support the schools by asking the teachers to used the national language more in lessons, the continued to expressed that if they as parents show valued to the national languages , the children will followed too.

Additionally, in region four (4),3parents were interviewed about the used of Mandinka and Fula in improving literacy and they all agreed 100% and believed its important. Mandinka and Fula are widely spoken here in region(four) 4, and they are the languages children speak at

home. If children start learning to read and write in their own language, they can understand better. It also builds their confidence in learning. It's much easier for them to learn new things in a language they already know, especially at a young age. In region five (5), 3 parents were interviewed about their role and how can they support, they all agreed 100% that more teaching hours in the native languages and they can be of helped as mentors to trained those that cannot speak these languages and were posted in these areas to teach their children.

In conclusion, in region Six (6), the parents agreed 100% that the national language in sarahulie, Mandinka, and Fula should be included in the curriculum and government should create learning materials to enhanced performance. Learning to read and write in Sarahuli won't make it harder for children to learn English later. In fact, it can be easier for them to learn a second language once they have mastered their own. They understand the concept of reading and writing, and they can apply that to English. The key was to start with a strong foundation in their own language. Mandinka was used to a certain extent in many schools, the focus was on teaching in English from the start, which can be challenging for children. parents believed there needed to be more effort to incorporate Mandinka in early education. Teachers should be encouraged to use it more regularly in their lessons, especially in the early grades.

4.3 Data from teachers'

Table .5 Teachers' Feedback on National Language Instruction in Literacy

| Questions | Variable | Respondent | | Percentage |
|---|---------------|--------------------|----|------------|
| 1.How long have you been teaching literacy in national languages? | -Kindergarten | -Less than 10years | 10 | 33% |
| | | | 0 | 0% |
| | | | 0 | 0% |
| | | -More than 10years | 20 | 67% |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|---------------------------|
| | - Lower basic School | -Less than 10year s -More than 10year s | | |
| 2. At what level of students? | Kin- dergar- ten Lower basic | 10 20 | | 33% 67% |
| 3. What is the first language (L1) of your students? | Wolof Fula Man- dinka | 9 6 15 | | 30% 20% 50% |
| 4. What kind of training have you received for teaching literacy in the national language? | Formal Non- formal | 17 11 2 | | 57% 37% 6% |

| | | | | |
|--|-------------------------|----|--|-----|
| | Prefer not to say | | | |
| 5. Was this training adequate for addressing the specific needs of the young learners? | Yes | 7 | | 22% |
| | No | 23 | | 78% |
| 6. Do you think there is a need for additional professional development regarding national language instruction? | Yes | 25 | | 83% |
| | No | 1 | | 4% |
| | Prefer not to say | 4 | | 13% |
| 7. Is there a need for additional professional development, what areas should be covered? | -Curriculum instruction | 8 | | 27% |
| | -pedagogy | 22 | | 73% |
| 8. What teaching strategies do you use when teaching the national languages? | -Oral tradition | 6 | | 20% |
| | | 12 | | 40% |
| | -Immersion | 5 | | 17% |
| | | 4 | | |

| | | | | |
|--|--|---------|--|------------|
| | ap- proach | 3 | | 13% |
| | -Role play and drama | | | 10% |
| | -Lan- guages games and puz- zles. | | | |
| | -Group present ation | | | |
| 9. Which teaching strategy best suits your content delivery? | -Oral tradi- tion | 7 13 | | 23% 43% |
| | -Im- mer- sion | 4 3 | | 14% |
| | ap- proach | 3 | | 10% |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|-----|
| | -Role play and drama | | | 10% |
| | -lan- guage games and puz- zles | | | |
| | -Group present ation | | | |

AS results of the teachers' questionnaires, most teachers have less than ten years of experience teaching literacy in national languages, with no teachers having more than ten years of experience. Most students being taught are in lower basic grade levels, with Wolof being the first language for 30% of students, Mandinka being the first language for 48% of students, and Fula being the first language for 22% of students.

When it comes to training, 58% of teachers have received formal training for teaching literacy in national languages, with 34% receiving non-formal training. Additionally, most teachers (78%) believe that their training was not adequate for addressing the specific needs of young learners.

Most teachers (83%) feel there is a need for additional professional development regarding national language instruction, with pedagogy being identified as the area in need of the most coverage. When it comes to teaching strategies, immersion is the most used approach (42%), followed by oral tradition (20%) and role play/drama (16%).

Interestingly, while immersion is the most used approach, oral tradition is identified as the teaching strategy that best suits content delivery (22%). However, overall, most teachers find their current teaching strategies helpful in teaching literacy in national languages (72%).

4.4. Data from students

Table 6: Results from students Questionnaires

| Questions | | Re- spond- ents | Per- cent- age |
|---|-------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. How do you feel about learning in the national languages? | Very Confident | 452 | 43% |
| | Confident | 420 | 40% |
| | | 21 | 2% |
| | Not Confident | 157 | 15 |
| | Prefer not to say | | |
| 2. Do you think learning a second language alongside your national language will benefit you in the future? | Yes | 788 | 75% |
| | | 21 | 2% |
| | No | 157 | 15% |
| | | 84 | 8% |
| | I don't know | | |
| 3. Do you think it is important to learn literacy in your national language? | Yes | 766 | 73 |
| | | 10 | 1% |
| | No | 116 | 11% |
| | | 158 | 15% |
| | I don't know | | |

| | | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| | Prefer not to say | | |
| 4. Have you ever had the opportunity to use the national language outside of school? | Yes, frequently | 504 | 48% |
| | | 262 | 25% |
| | Yes, but not often. | 42 | 4% |
| | | 242 | 23 |
| | No, I have not had the opportunity. | | |
| | Prefer not to say | | |
| 5. How supportive are your teachers in your national language learning process? Question | Extremely supportive | 609 | 58% |
| | | 420 | 40% |
| | Supportive | 0 | 0% |
| | | 21 | 2 |
| | Not supportive | | |
| | Neutral | | |
| Question | Variables | Re- spond- ents | Per- cent- age |
| 6. What national languages do you learn at school? | Wolof | 315 | 30% |
| | | 399 | 38% |
| | Mandinka | 336 | 32% |
| | | 0 | 0% |
| | Fula | | |
| | Other | | |
| 7. What challenges have you faced while learning national languages? while learning national languages? | Difficulty in pronunciation | 273 | 26% |
| | | 735 | 70% |
| | Lack of resources | | |

| | | | |
|--|--|-----|-----|
| | | 10 | 1% |
| | Limited use of the language outside of the school. | 32 | 3% |
| | Other | | |
| 8. What resources would you like to have to aid your national language learning? | Audio recordings | 168 | 16% |
| | | 336 | 32% |
| | Online lessons | 536 | 51% |
| | Books in the national languages | 10 | 1% |
| | Other | | |
| 9. How confident are you to speak in your native/national language to others? | More resource allocation | 441 | 42% |
| | Government support and policies. | 420 | 40% |
| | | 168 | 16% |
| | Exposure to native speakers | 21 | 2% |
| | Other | | |
| | | 410 | 39% |
| | Very confident | 420 | 40% |
| | Confident | 31 | 3% |
| | Not confident | 189 | 18% |
| | Prefer not to say | | |

To begin with, most of the students (38%) reported learning Mandinka as their national language, followed by Wolof (30%) and Fula (32%). This information provides insight into the most common national languages that students are exposed to in the educational system.

Furthermore, most of the students (83%) reported feeling confident or very confident about learning in their national languages, which can be considered as a positive attitude towards language learning. A significant majority of the students (75%) agree that learning a second language alongside their national language can benefit them in the future, indicating a belief in the importance of being multilingual. Most of the students (73%) believe that it is important to learn literacy in their national language. This result highlights the need for investment in improving language education programs to ensure that students can develop literacy skills.

The most reported challenges faced by students in learning national languages are the lack of resources (70%) and the difficulty in pronunciation (26%). These challenges provide insight into areas where improvements can be made to facilitate and enhance language learning; almost half of the students (48%) reported having frequent opportunities to use their national languages outside of school, which can be considered as a positive sign for students' language acquisition. In addition, the top resources requested by students to aid their national language learning are books in the national language (51%), online lessons (32%), and audio recordings (16%), which highlight the importance of incorporating technology in language education programs. Most of the students (98%) perceive their teachers to be supportive or extremely supportive of their national language learning, which underscores the significance of teacher support in students' language acquisition.

4.5 Data from classroom observations

Table 7: languages used in the classroom observations

| Regions | schools | Language used |
|---------|---------|---------------|
| | | |

| | | |
|---|--|---------------------------|
| 1 | Serekunda primary school, bundung lower basic, Abuko nursery school, Latri Kunda lower basic, St. Charles Lwanga nursery school. | Wolof, Mandinka, Jola |
| 2 | Kandonko lower basic school, kabafita basic cycle, new yundum lower basic school. | Mandinka, Wolof, Jola |
| 3 | Kerr alagie Malick lower, kerewan lower basic | Mandinka, Fula |
| 4 | Soma lower basic, sasita lower basic school, bureng lower basic school | Fula, Mandinka, |
| 5 | Yero Beri Kunda basic cycle, Jahally lower basic, Bansang lower basic | Mandinka, Fula, Sarahulie |
| 6 | Sare paten lower basic school, Hella Kunda basic cycle school, | Sarahulie, Mandinka, Fula |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | | |
|--|--|--|

A total of 20 classes in 30 government and government-aided lower basic Schools located throughout the nation's six educational regions were the focus of the classroom observations. The seven primary national languages—Jola, Fula, Serer, Manjago, Mandinka, Sarahullie, and Wolof—were divided into 25 classes each.

Wolof was used during the observation at Serekunda lower basic in grade 2 and another observation was done at Abuko nursery school and St. Charles Lwanga nursery school in region one (1) where Mandinka and Jola were simultaneously taught to the learners.

The observer observed that the students were highly engaged throughout the lesson. They actively participated in repeating words, answering questions, and interacting with their peers. The enthusiasm of the students was evident, and they seemed comfortable using Mandinka in the classroom as seen in this excerpt below.

Classroom Observation at Abuko Nursery School, Region 1, The Gambia: Teaching Mandinka

Date: September 19th, 2024

Location: Abuko Nursery School, Region 1, The Gambia

Teacher: Mr. Sillah

Grade Level: Nursery 2 (Children aged 4-5 years)

Subject: Mandinka Language

Duration of Lesson: 30 minutes

Lesson Overview

In this session, Mr. Sillah is teaching Mandinka to young children at the nursery level. The lesson focuses on introducing basic Mandinka vocabulary, particularly names of common objects, and using them in simple sentences. The aim is to enhance the children's ability to recognize and say simple Mandinka words. Mr. Sillah also plans to introduce basic greetings and classroom expressions in Mandinka to help children feel more comfortable using the language.

Classroom Environment

The classroom at Abuko Nursery School is bright and welcoming, with colourful posters on the walls featuring Mandinka words and images of animals, fruits, and everyday items. The seating arrangement is in a circle, allowing the children to easily see each other and the teacher. There is a small table at the front where Mr. Sillah writes the day's lesson on a chalkboard. The students sit on small wooden chairs, and each child has a notebook and pencil. On the floor, a large mat is placed with flashcards and picture books related to the lesson.

Lesson Flow

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

Mr. Sillah begins the lesson by greeting the students with a warm, “N jaaraama!” (Good morning in Mandinka). The students, in unison, respond with “N jaaraama!”

He briefly explains that today they will learn words for some common objects in Mandinka, including fruits and animals.

“Today, we will learn how to say ‘apple,’ ‘banana,’ and ‘cat’ in Mandinka. Are you ready?”

The students excitedly shout, “Yes!”

2. Vocabulary Introduction (10 minutes)

Step 1: Mandinka Greetings & Simple Words

Mr. Sillah writes the word "apple" on the board and says, “This is an apple. In Mandinka, we say ‘furu.’”

He repeats the word slowly, emphasizing the pronunciation, and the children repeat after him: “Furu.”

Mr. Sillah holds up a picture of an apple and says again, “This is furu. Can you say furu?” The students happily repeat the word.

He asks, “Who likes furu?” One child raises their hand and says, “Me!” Mr. Sillah smiles and continues, “Yes, I like furu too.”

Step 2: Introducing ‘Banana’ and ‘Cat’

Mr. Sillah shows a picture of a banana and says, “This is banana (banana in Mandinka). Can you say banana?” The children repeat, “Banaana!”

Next, he shows a picture of a cat and says, “This is kiti (cat in Mandinka). Let’s say kiti.” The children repeat, “Kiti!”

He continues, asking the children to point to the pictures on the wall, “Where is banana?” The children look at the flashcards and point to the correct image. They enjoy this interactive segment, showing they are engaged and starting to recognize the words.

3. Listening and Repetition Practice (5 minutes)

Mr. Sillah practices the words with the children using flashcards. He holds up a flashcard of an apple and asks, “What is this in Mandinka?”

The children respond, “Furu!”

He does the same with the banana and cat, asking the children to say the Mandinka words aloud each time.

The children are encouraged to say the words in a rhythm, with Mr. Sillah leading, “Furu – banana – kiti” in a sing-song manner. The children follow along happily, clapping their hands as they say the words.

4. Simple Sentences Practice (5 minutes)

Mr. Sillah introduces simple sentences by using the words the children have learned. He writes on the board, “Furu laa” (I have an apple) and says, “This means ‘I have an apple’ in Mandinka. Let’s say it together. Furu laa!”

The children repeat the sentence in unison, “Furu laa.”

He then moves to the next sentence, “Banaana laa” (I have a banana), and the children repeat it after him, “Banaana laa.”

Finally, he says, “Kiti laa” (I have a cat) and the children repeat after him, “Kiti laa.”

5. Interactive Group Activity (5 minutes)

Mr. Sillah asks the students to work in pairs. One student holds a flashcard with a picture (apple, banana, or cat), and the other student will ask, “What is this in Mandinka?”

For example, the student with the apple flashcard says, “I have furu!”

The other student responds by saying the correct word back, “Furu!”

The students work eagerly in pairs, repeating the words and sentences, which helps them practice the vocabulary in a fun and interactive way.

6. Conclusion and Review (5 minutes)

To wrap up the lesson, Mr. Sillah gathers the students together and reviews the words and sentences they learned today. He holds up the flashcards one more time, and asks the children, “What is this?”

For each picture, the children eagerly respond with the correct Mandinka word: “Furu,” “Bannaana,” and “Kiti.”

Mr. Sillah praises the children for their effort, saying, “Very good! You did great today.”

He closes the lesson by teaching the class how to say goodbye in Mandinka: “Kangi ba!” (Goodbye). The children repeat, “Kangi ba!” and wave as they leave.

Reflection and Observations

Student Engagement: The students were highly engaged throughout the lesson. They actively participated in repeating words, answering questions, and interacting with their peers. The enthusiasm of the students was evident, and they seemed comfortable using Mandinka in the classroom.

LESSON (10)

Classroom Observation at St. Charles Lwanga Nursery School, Faji, KMC, The Gambia:
Teaching Mandinka and Jola

Date: September 20th, 2024

Location: St. Charles Lwanga Nursery School, Fajikunda, KMC, The Gambia

Teacher: Mrs. Fanta

Grade Level: Nursery 3 (Children aged 5-6 years)

Subject: Mandinka and Jola Languages

Duration of Lesson: 40 minutes

Lesson Overview

In this classroom, Mrs. Fanta is teaching both Mandinka and Jola languages to young learners. The lesson focuses on familiarizing the children with basic greetings, common objects, and simple sentences in both languages. Mrs. Fanta aims to help the children recognize words in both Mandinka and Jola while encouraging them to speak and use the languages in context. The children are expected to learn basic vocabulary such as greetings, names of objects, and simple sentences in both languages.

Classroom Environment

The classroom at St. Charles Lwanga is well-organized with brightly colored posters on the walls showing Mandinka and Jola words alongside pictures of animals, fruits, and household items. There is a whiteboard at the front, where Mrs. Fanta writes the words in both languages. The children sit in a circle on the floor, making it easy for them to see each other and the teacher. Each student has a small notebook and a pencil for writing practice. A few colourful flashcards are scattered across the floor, and a large poster showing greetings in both Mandinka and Jola is prominently displayed.

Lesson Flow

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

Mrs. Fanta begins the lesson by greeting the students in both Mandinka and Jola. She says, “N jaaraama!” (Good morning in Mandinka) and the students respond, “N jaaraama!” in unison. She then greets the class in Jola: “Njum a be!” (Good morning in Jola), and the students eagerly respond, “Njum a be!”

Mrs. Fanta explains that today they will learn words in both Mandinka and Jola. “We will learn how to say ‘hello,’ ‘thank you,’ and the names of some animals in both languages.” The children nod excitedly.

2. Vocabulary Introduction (10 minutes)

Step 1: Mandinka Greetings & Vocabulary

Mrs. Fanta writes “N jaaraama” on the whiteboard and explains, “This is how we say ‘good morning’ in Mandinka. Let’s say it together, ‘N jaaraama!’” The children repeat after her.

She then introduces the word “Nteh” (thank you in Mandinka), writing it on the board. She says, “When someone gives you something, you say ‘Nteh.’ Let’s say it together, ‘Nteh!’” The children repeat.

Next, she asks, “Who can say ‘thank you’ in Mandinka?” A student responds, “Nteh!” and she praises them, “Well done!”

Step 2: Jola Greetings & Vocabulary

Mrs. Fanta moves to the Jola language, writing “Njum a be!” on the board and saying, “This is how we say ‘good morning’ in Jola. Let’s say it together, ‘Njum a be!’”

The children eagerly repeat, “Njum a be!”

She then writes “Sedeh” (thank you in Jola) on the board and says, “In Jola, when you want to say thank you, you say Sedeh. Let’s say it together, ‘Sedeh!’” The children follow suit, repeating after her.

3. Listening and Repetition Practice (5 minutes)

Mrs. Fanta holds up a flashcard showing an animal, such as a lion, and says, “In Mandinka, we say Sofaa for lion. Let’s say Sofaa!” The students repeat the word together.

She then holds up a similar flashcard for the Jola language and says, “In Jola, we say Kandim for lion. Let’s say Kandim!” The children repeat, “Kandim!”

She continues with other flashcards: “Falu” (dog in Mandinka) and “Fali” (dog in Jola), ensuring that the students can hear and repeat both words in context.

After each flashcard, she asks, “What’s the word for dog in Mandinka?” The students shout, “Falu!”

“And what’s the word for dog in Jola?” The children reply, “Fali!”

4. Simple Sentence Practice (10 minutes)

Mrs. Fanta introduces simple sentences in both languages, focusing on the words they’ve just learned. She writes on the board:

“N jaaraama, falu laa” (Good morning, I have a dog) in Mandinka.

She explains, “This means ‘Good morning, I have a dog.’ Let’s say it together, ‘N jaaraama, falu laa!’”

The students repeat the sentence together. She then moves to the Jola equivalent, writing:

“Njum a be, fali laa” (Good morning, I have a dog).

Again, the students repeat: “Njum a be, fali laa!”

Mrs. Fanta invites a few students to come to the front and practice speaking the sentences with the class. She asks one student, “Can you say the sentence in Mandinka?”

The student responds confidently, “N jaaraama, falu laa!”

She then asks, “Now, who can say the sentence in Jola?” Another student says, “Njum a be, fali laa!”

The rest of the students cheer and clap, encouraging their peers.

5. Interactive Group Activity (5 minutes)

For the final part of the lesson, Mrs. Fanta divides the class into small groups. Each group is given a set of flashcards with animals and common objects. They are asked to form simple sentences in either Mandinka or Jola using the words on the flashcards.

For example, one group might hold up a flashcard with a picture of a cat and say, “N jaaraama, kiti laa!” (Good morning, I have a cat in Mandinka) or “Njum a be, kiti laa!” in Jola.

The groups work together, laughing and practicing the language, which helps reinforce their learning in a fun, collaborative manner.

6. Conclusion and Review (5 minutes)

To conclude, Mrs. Fanta asks the students to stand in a circle. She leads a quick review of the words and sentences from the lesson. “Let’s say N jaaraama! in Mandinka.” The children respond, “N jaaraama!”

She repeats the process with the Jola greeting, “Njum a be!”

“Now, let’s say thank you in Mandinka and Jola. What is ‘thank you’ in Mandinka?” A student responds, “Nteh!”

“And in Jola?” Another student replies, “Sedeh!”

Mrs. Fanta praises the children for their participation, saying, “Great job today! You learned both Mandinka and Jola greetings and words. Tomorrow, we’ll learn more!”

Observer’s Comments

Reflection and Observations

Student Engagement: The students were very engaged throughout the lesson. The use of repetition, visuals, and interactive activities kept them actively involved. The children seemed excited about learning two languages and were eager to participate.

Effective Use of Both Languages: Mrs. Fanta’s approach in teaching both Mandinka and Jola worked well, as the children were familiar with both languages. She was careful to ensure that the children had opportunities to learn both languages equally, making the lesson inclusive for those who may have a stronger grasp of one language over the other.

Cultural Relevance: By teaching both Mandinka and Jola, Mrs. Fanta acknowledged the multilingual nature of the community in Fajikunda, where both languages are spoken. This approach not only fosters language skills but also strengthens the children’s cultural identity.

Classroom Atmosphere: The classroom was warm and inviting. Mrs. Fanta’s positive reinforcement and patient teaching style created an environment where the children felt comfortable and supported in using both languages.

Student Confidence: The children’s confidence in speaking Mandinka and Jola was noticeable. They enjoyed using the languages in context and interacting with their peers in both languages, showing the effectiveness of using their native tongues in the classroom.

Suggestions for Improvement

Increased Practice with Writing: While the lesson focused heavily on speaking and listening, incorporating more writing activities—such as tracing the words in both Mandinka and Jola—could further reinforce the children’s literacy in these

Use of Visuals: Mr. Sillah effectively used flashcards, pictures, and real-life objects to reinforce the vocabulary. The children were able to connect the words to the images, helping them better remember the new Mandinka words.

Cultural Relevance: Teaching Mandinka to young children not only helps them learn the language but also supports their cultural identity. The vocabulary choices—apple, banana, and cat—are everyday items that the children are familiar with, which made the lesson more relatable.

Teacher-Student Interaction: Mr. Sillah’s interactions with the students were positive and supportive. He used encouragement and praise, which helped build the children’s confidence. His patience and clear pronunciation of Mandinka also made it easier for the children to follow along.

Classroom Atmosphere: The classroom atmosphere was lively and nurturing. The children felt comfortable speaking Mandinka, which is a language they are familiar with, but also one they may not often use in formal settings. The lesson effectively created a space for them to practice and learn in a non-threatening environment.

Suggestions for Improvement

Incorporating More Movement: To keep the young students even more engaged, Mr. Sillah could introduce more movement-based activities, like a “Mandinka word hunt” where children physically move to find objects that correspond to the words they are learning.

Increased Use of Songs: Introducing simple Mandinka songs related to the vocabulary could further engage the children and help them remember words in a playful, musical manner.

This observation at Abuko Nursery School highlights how effectively Mandinka is being taught in an early education setting. The use of visuals, interactive activities, and repetition created a dynamic learning experience for the children, helping them to grasp basic vocabulary and simple sentences while reinforcing their cultural connection to the language.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

This master's research thesis tried to provide an overview on the use of national languages in teaching literacy in the Gambia.

The policymakers surveyed believe that the curriculum supports the use of national languages in teaching literacy in the Gambia. Still, they also agreed that there is a potential need for additional resources and training for teachers to improve literacy skills among students. The teachers surveyed delivered national language lessons using various teaching strategies and resources, but the majority expressed that their training was inadequate. The students, on the other hand, demonstrated a positive attitude towards learning national languages but expressed challenges such as a lack of resources and difficulties with pronunciation.

The findings of this research highlight the potential benefits of using national languages in teaching literacy in The Gambia. The positive attitude of students towards learning national languages suggests that such an approach can be effective and appealing to learners.

However, the challenges identified by teachers and students, such as inadequate training and lack of resources, need to be addressed to ensure the success of this approach. Policy makers can use these findings to advocate for additional resources and training for teachers to improve their skills and effectiveness in teaching national languages. Additionally, this research highlights the importance of ensuring that the curriculum is designed to support the use of national languages in teaching literacy. By addressing these challenges and ensuring that the necessary support is in place, language education policy and practice in The Gambia can be improved, leading to better educational outcomes for students.

Advocating for the use of national languages in teaching literacy is crucial to promote language acquisition and education attainment in early grades in the Gambia.

In the Gambia, bilingual education can greatly improve young students' literacy and academic performance. In addition to English, which is the official language, the Gambia is a multilingual country with a number of native languages (Kebbe 2018). Thus, integrating national language instruction can foster an environment that is supportive of kids whose first language is not English.

Similarly, policymakers should prioritise including national languages into the curriculum for early education, which should be the primary area of concentration for policy implications. Creating resources and instructional materials in various languages is necessary to make sure teachers are prepared to provide instruction in an efficient manner. To have a better understanding of children's literacy development, policymakers should also create assessment instruments that test reading proficiency in both English and national languages (Sonko, 2019).

Third, studying the efficacy of bilingual education methods requires constant research and assessment. Studies that examine the effects of national language training on literacy results and pinpoint the most effective implementation strategies should be encouraged by policymakers (Kebbeh, 2018).

Fourth, the most significant consequences for practice include inclusive teaching methods, where teachers use techniques that acknowledge and capitalise on the linguistic diversity of their pupils, collaborative learning, parental participation, and culturally relevant pedagogy. To encourage understanding and participation, teachers may use code-switching, in which they switch between the English and the language (Jobe, 2020).

Finally, the Gambia's early literacy program offers a special chance to encourage literacy and supports an egalitarian educational system by incorporating national.

While this research highlights the potential benefits of bilingualism and multilingualism in education, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study.

One was the delay in getting feedback from respondents. This delayed the collection of data and, ultimately, the conclusions of the study. Additionally, collecting responses from regions one to six proved to be challenging and time-consuming. This limitation resulted in a relatively smaller sample size, which could have affected the overall representation of the population. Furthermore, obtaining the required number of participants in all the regions was a hurdle faced in this research. found it challenging to get enough participation from learners, parents, and education stakeholders across all regions. This limitation may have had an impact on the quality of the data collected.

Lastly, the cost of conducting the research was high due to factors such as travel expenses, data collection materials, and honorariums. As a result, then had to make compromises in certain aspects of the study, which may have inadvertently influenced the research findings.

Based on the findings of this research, future research could explore the practical implementation of bilingualism or multilingual education initiatives in the Gambia's education system. Such research could include a needs assessment to determine the languages to be used, the availability of qualified bilingual/multilingual teachers, and the development of pedagogical approaches and materials. Moreover, longitudinal studies could examine the effectiveness of these initiatives in promoting language acquisition, literacy attainment, and cognitive development.

Further research could also investigate the potential impact of bilingual/multilingual education on social cohesion, economic development, and regional integration. Lastly, researchers could explore the attitudes of parents, students, teachers, and policymakers towards bilingual/multilingual education to ensure their support and participation.

In Conclusion, future research in this area could provide vital insights into the best practices for promoting language diversity and education attainment in the Gambia and other similar contexts.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Consent form: Data collection for master's degree research on literacy in national language learners.

Introduction: The purpose of this consent form is to inform you about the purpose and process of the interview that we will be conducting as a part of my master's degree research on literacy in national language learners. Please read this form carefully and make sure that you understand all the information provided.

Purpose of the Study: The aim of this research is to explore the literacy practices and challenges faced by national language learners. The information gathered from this study will be used to develop strategies to improve literacy levels among national language learners. Interview Process: If you agree to participate in this study, you will be required to participate in a face-to-face interview that will last approximately 30-45 minutes. The interview will be electronically recorded for transcription purposes. The interview will consist of questions related to your personal literacy practices, your perceptions of National language literacy, and the challenges faced in learning National languages.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or negative consequences. You may also choose not to answer any question or terminate the interview at any time.


Confidentiality: All information that you provide will be kept confidential. Personal information such as your name, address, and contact number will not be used in the final report or disclosed to any other party. The recorded interview will be transcribed, stored during the data analysis phase, and then securely destroyed upon completion of the research.

Risks and Benefits: We do not anticipate any risks involved in participating in the study. However, we hope that this study will provide you with insight into your own literacy practices, and the opportunity to share your views and experiences on National language literacy.

Contact Information: If you have any question or concern regarding the study or your participation, please feel free to contact me at (893806@stud.unive.it) or my supervisor at (mene-gale@unive.it), at any time.

Participant Signature: I have read and understand the information provided, and I agree to participate in this study. I am aware that I can withdraw from the study at any time, and my involvement in the study is entirely voluntary.

Participant's Name: Mariama Keita

Participant Signature: 

Date: 25th August 2024

Researcher Signature: _____ Ysey.

Appendix B Survey – Questionnaires

1. Questionnaires

These interview questions are tailored to explore the use of national languages in teaching literacy and learning in the early years in the Gambia.

It is divided into three sections: Section A is for the Policy makers to fill in the right Responses Section B is for the ESL Teachers to fill with regards to curriculum and instruction while Section C is for the Learners to tick the appropriate options if they think is applicable in the use of national languages.

SECTION A: POLICY MAKERS

Please read the questions and tick the appropriate space that you think correspond to your right choice of answer.

1. To what extent does the curriculum support the use of national languages in teaching literacy?

Very strongly

Strongly

prefer not to say

2. How does the curriculum hinder the use of national languages in teaching literacy?

Very much

Does not

Prefer not to say

3. Are there specific guidelines or materials provided for teaching in the national languages?

Yes

No

Not Sure

4. What teaching resources are available for supporting literacy development in the national language?

Textbooks

Student workbooks

Digital tools

5. Are there sufficient materials for the teaching and learning of the national languages?

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

6. How do you assess literacy development in use of the national language?

Monitoring progress through terminal visits to pilot schools

Organize feedback session in the form of workshops for both teachers and learners

7. What policies are in place to support the use of national languages in teaching literacy in the early years?

Inclusion of national languages in the curriculum

Teacher training programs on the use of national languages in teaching literacy

Provision of resources for teaching literacy in the national languages

8. How can the government support the development of teaching resources in the National languages?

Financial support

Provision of materials and infrastructure

Training programs for teachers

9. What measures are in place to ensure the quality of instruction in the national languages?

Monitoring classroom instruction

Regular teacher evaluation and feedback

Provision of professional development opportunities

10. How can the government ensure equitable access to education in the national languages for all Gambian children?

Providing equal resources and support to all schools regardless of location or language

Offering training and support to teachers in remote, underserved areas

Providing access to digital resources and remote learning opportunities

SECTION B: FOR NATIONAL LANGUAGE TEACHERS

1. Have you received any training for teaching literacy in the national language?

a) Yes

b) No

2. Is the training you have received sufficient to meet the specific needs of young learners?

a) Yes

b) No

3. Do you think there is a need for additional professional development regarding

National language instruction?

- a) Yes
- b) No

4. Which specific areas of professional development do you think should be covered for national language instruction?

- a) Curriculum development
- b) Assessment and evaluation
- c) Differentiated instruction
- d) Other (please specify)

5. Which teaching strategies do you use when teaching the national languages?

- a) Direct instruction
- b) Collaborative learning
- c) Inquiry-based learning
- d) Other (please specify)

6. Which teaching strategy do you think best meets your students' learning needs?

- a) Direct instruction
- b) Collaborative learning
- c) Inquiry-based learning
- d) Other (please specify)

7. How often do you use these teaching strategies when teaching literacy in the national languages?

- a) Always
- b) Often
- c) Sometimes
- d) Rarely

8. Have these teaching strategies been helpful in facilitating learning in the national Languages?

- a) Yes
- b) No

9. Can you suggest ways that teaching and learning literacy in the national language
Can be improved?

- a. Provisions of teachers training
- b. Provision of relevant teaching and learning resources
- c. Development of well plan curriculum delivery activities

10. Which specific resources would you find valuable in improving the teaching and
learning of literacy in the national languages?

- a) Curriculum materials
- b) Professional development opportunities
- c) Technology tools
- d) Other (please specify)

SECTION C NATIONAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS

These are for the students in grade 4,5,6 and 7.the teachers read the questions to the students
and translate them into the different languages for understanding.

Instructions: tick the correct options.

1. What national languages do you learn at school?

- a) Wolof
- b) Mandinka
- c) Fula
- d) Jola
- e) Sarahule
- f) Other

2. How do you feel about learning in the national languages?

- a) Very confident
- b) Confident
- c)not confident
- d) Prefer not to say

3. Do you think learning a second language alongside your national language will benefit you in the future?

- a) Yes
- b) no
- c) I don't know
- d) Prefer not to say

4. Do you think it is important to learn literacy in your national language?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) I don't know
- d) Prefer not to say

5. What challenges have you faced while learning national languages?

- a) Difficulty in pronunciation
- b) Lack of resources
- c) Limited use of the language outside of school
- d) Other

6. Have you ever had the opportunity to use the national language(s) outside of school?

- a) Yes, frequently
- b) Yes, but not often
- c) No, I have not had the opportunity
- d) Prefer not to say

7 How supportive are your teachers in your national language learning process?

- a) Extremely supportive
- b) Supportive
- c) Neutral
- d) Not supportive

10. How confident are you in your ability to speak the national languages to others?

- a) Very confident
- b) Confident

- c) Not confident
- d) Prefer not to say

Appendix C.

Classroom Observation.

Mandinka:

LESSON (1)

DATE: 24 AUGUST 2024

TIME: 8:00 TO 9:00

GRADE: 1B

SUBJECT: National Language (Mandinka Class)

SUBTOPIC: Blending Letter

OBJECTIVES: By the end of the lesson pupils should be able to:

i. BLEND THESE LETTERS (a) (b) (i) (m) in National Language
Mandinka class. Ab, im, ba, am.

Introduction: Teacher Recap on the Previous Lesson

I. Kaarandinu Laa Walaa Daa Nig Sayinka

Activities: I. To Show Blend Letter Cards (Ab) (Im) (Am) To Pupils

Karandiirulaa Ye Naataalo Yii Tandii Karangirula

ii. Teacher Blend Of Each of The Letter

Karangbuntodinino Yeekuwo Lu La Foonaa Foo

iii. Pupils Blend The Letters Ab, Im, Am.

Karangbuntodinino Yee Kulwu Ila Jaamaa

Conclusion: Teacher and the Pupils Recap on Blending

Letters Abs, Im, Am.

Karandriilaa Nii Karanbunto Dinino Lu Yee Kuloolu Foo

Nnaa Saayankang

Assessment: Pupils Are Ask to Blend Letter (Ab) (Im) (Am)

Karanbuntodinginolu Yee Kkuloolu La Foonaa

LESSON 2: Classroom Observation - Teaching National Language (Wolof)

Date: November 11, 2024

Time: 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM

Class: Grade 3

Teacher: Mrs. Njie

Subject: Wolof Language and Literacy

Location: Serekunda Primary School, The Gambia

The classroom is bright and well-ventilated, with posters on the walls in both Wolof and English, reflecting the bilingual environment of the school. There are approximately 30 students in the class, aged around 8 to 9 years old. The teacher, Mrs. Ndiaye, is standing at the front, wearing a traditional Gambian dress. She greets the students warmly in Wolof, and they respond enthusiastically. The lesson is being conducted entirely in Wolof, with some English used for clarification.

Lesson Objective:

The lesson focuses on teaching basic literacy skills in Wolof, particularly the reading and writing of simple words and sentences. Today's activity involves identifying family members' names and how they are represented in Wolof, helping students understand vocabulary related to family, kinship, and social relationships. Lesson Flow:

1. Warm-up (10 minutes): Mrs. Ndiaye starts by engaging the students with a brief discussion about their families. She asks, "Nooy na ci jàmm? (How are you today?)", before transitioning into a conversation about family members.

She writes on the board: "Ñuul, Jàngalekat, Maam, Baay, Xale" (Mother, Teacher, Aunt, Father, Child).

As she writes each word, she pronounces it slowly and clearly, encouraging the students to repeat after her.

Mrs. Njie asks individual students to come up to the board and match the words with pictures she has already prepared. A picture of a mother is matched with "Ñuul", a father with "Baay", and so on.

2. Interactive Practice (15 minutes):

Mrs. Njie encourages students to turn to their classmates and ask them about their family members in Wolof. For example, "Naka baay bi? (How is your father?)"

Some students struggle with pronunciation, but Mrs. Ndiaye gently corrects them, repeating the word slowly and getting the class to say it together several times.

She circulates the room, providing individual attention to students who need extra help.

3. Reading Exercise (15 minutes) he teacher writes a simple story on the chalkboard, reading aloud in Wolof:

"Ñuul mi nekk ci mbokk yi. Baay mi jëm ci xale yi. Xale yi la jàng ci xam-xam." (The mother is with the relatives. The father is with the children. The children are learning wisdom.)

She asks the class to read the story together, encouraging them to sound out each word. Students take turns reading aloud, and the teacher provides guidance on proper pronunciation.

Mrs. Njie pauses after each sentence to ask comprehension questions in Wolof, such as:

"Képp ku jàng ci xam-xam? (Who is learning wisdom?)"

"Ñuul bi am na mbokk yi? (Does the mother have relatives?)"

The students seem engaged, with several of them answering confidently in Wolof.

4. Writing Exercise (15 minutes): . Writing Exercise (15 minutes):

Next, Mrs. Njie distributes worksheets with simple sentences for students to copy and complete. The sentences are partially filled in, and the students must write the correct words to complete them.

Example sentences on the board:

"Ñuul mi... (My mother...)"

"Baay mi... (My father...)"

Students fill in the blanks with words like "ñuul" (mother) and "baay" (father).

As students write, Mrs. Njie walks around, checking for correct spelling and offering feedback. Some students need help with the formation of certain letters in the Wolof script, particularly for vowel sounds, but Mrs. Njie is patient and offers constructive corrections.

Closure (5 minutes):

To conclude the lesson, Mrs. Njie invites the class to share a sentence they wrote on the board

One student volunteer, "Ñuul mi jàng ci xam-xam." We are learning wisdom.)

Mrs. Njie praises the student and asks the class to say the sentence together. She emphasizes the importance of family and learning in Wolof, reinforcing the cultural connection to the language.

She closes by reminding the class that they will learn new vocabulary next week and asks them to practice with their families at home.

Observer's comments

Student Engagement: The students are actively participating, especially when they are asked to interact with each other or come up to the board. There's a noticeable energy in the room, and most students seem comfortable speaking and writing in Wolof.

Teacher-Student Interaction: Mrs. Njie creates a supportive atmosphere where students feel comfortable making mistakes. She uses praise and gentle correction to maintain a positive learning environment. **Language Usage:** The teacher uses Wolof as the primary language of instruction, with occasional English for clarification. The students seem at ease with the language, and many are able to respond in Wolof without hesitation.

Cultural Relevance: The use of Wolof not only aids in literacy development but also reinforces the students' connection to their cultural and linguistic heritage. The vocabulary focus on family is highly relevant to the students' lives.

Strengths of the Lesson:

Language Immersion: The use of Wolof throughout the lesson provides immersion in the language, which likely aids comprehension and retention.

Active Participation: Students are given opportunities to speak, read, and write in Wolof, which keeps them engaged and encourages active learning.

Cultural Connection: By focusing on family vocabulary and using Wolof as the medium, the lesson connects language learning to the students' daily lives and cultural identity.

Areas for Improvement:

Resource Availability: Some students struggle with writing the words, particularly with some of the more complex characters in Wolof. More resources, such as printed worksheets or flashcards, could help reinforce correct spelling.

Time Management: The lesson moved smoothly overall, but there was some time lost when certain students needed more help during the writing activity. It might be useful to differentiate tasks for students who grasp the concepts faster.

Language Usage: The teacher uses Wolof as the primary language of instruction, with occasional English for clarification. The students seem at ease with the language, and many are able to respond in Wolof without hesitation.

observers' Notes: Classroom Observation - Teaching National Literacy (Mandinka).

LESSON (3)

Date: August 11, 2024

Time: 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM

Class: Grade 2

Teacher: Mr. Jallow

Subject: Mandinka Language and Literacy

Location: Kerr Alagie Malick Lower Basic School, Region 3, The Gambia.

Introduction and Setting:

The classroom is well-lit with a few educational posters on the walls featuring Mandinka vocabulary, pictures, and simple sentences. There are 25 students, aged around 7 to 8 years old. Mr. Jallow, a middle-aged teacher, greets the class in Mandinka with a friendly, energetic tone: "Ala sowmadaa beh nyadeh?" (Good morning, how are you?). The students respond enthusiastically in unison.

The students appear comfortable, and there's an open, welcoming atmosphere. The lesson today will focus on basic literacy skills in Mandinka, specifically the names of family members, numbers, and simple sentences.

Lesson Objective:

The lesson aims to develop the students' ability to recognize, pronounce, and write basic Mandinka vocabulary related to family members. By the end of the lesson, the students should be able to correctly identify and use terms for family relationships, such as mother, father, and sibling, in simple sentences.

Lesson flow

1. Warm-up (10 minutes): Mr. Jallow begins with a brief review of yesterday's lesson on numbers. He asks the class to count from 1 to 10 in Mandinka, which they do confidently: "Keyli, fuula, sahba naneeh..." (One, two, three, four...)

He praises them for their accuracy and encourages them to continue practicing at home.

After the counting activity, Mr. Jallow transitions into the topic of the day: family. He writes the following words on the board, reading each aloud:

“Kumu” (Mother)

“Ba” (Father)

“Kumba” (Sister)

“Kuno” (Brother)

“Xooro” (Child)

As he writes each word, he asks the students to repeat after him, ensuring they pronounce the words correctly. The students repeat in unison, and a few students volunteer to say the words aloud individually. .

Interactive Practice (15 minutes):

Mr. Jallow now turns to a pair activity. He pairs up students and gives them a set of flashcards with pictures of family members (e.g., a mother, father, sister, brother). One student holds up a flashcard while the other must say the correct word in Mandinka. For example, when the flashcard shows a picture of a mother, the student must say “Kumu”.

Mr Jallow writes a simple sentence on the board in Mandinka:

“Kumu la folo xooro.” (Mother is with the child.)

He reads it aloud, clearly emphasizing each word: “Kumu... la... folo... xooro.”

The students repeat the sentence after him, focusing on the correct pronunciation.

Mr. Jallow then asks a student to come up and point to the words as the class reads them aloud.

After the reading exercise, Mr. Jallow asks comprehension questions in Mandinka:

“Kumu la folo xoro, bano?” (Who is with the child?)

One student answer: “Kumu.”

Mr. Jallow praises the student and asks the class to say the sentence again, this time focusing on fluency.

3. Writing Exercise (15 minutes):

Mr. Jallow now distributes worksheets with simple Mandinka sentences for the students to copy and complete. The sentences are missing one or two words that the students need to fill in.

Examples on the board:

“Ba la folo ____.” (Father is with ____.)

“Kumba la folo ____.” (Sister is with ____.)

Mr. Jallow reminds the students to use the vocabulary they’ve learned, and as they work, he moves around the classroom, helping where needed. Some students need help with spelling, particularly with the vowel sounds in Mandinka, but overall, most students are able to fill in the blanks with words they’ve just learned.

He stops occasionally to address common mistakes, particularly with verb conjugation (like the use of “la” for “is with”).

5. Closure (5 minutes):

As the lesson draws to a close, Mr. Jallow asks the students to share one sentence they wrote during the exercise. Several students raise their hands, and one by one, they say their sentences aloud.

A student says: “Kumu la folo xooro.”

Mr. Jallow responds with encouragement: “Well done! You’re learning Mandinka!”

He wraps up the lesson by reminding students that they’ll learn more vocabulary next week and should practice these family words with their parents at home. He says: “Hanya la buu, kanu la yaafo?” (Please practice with your parents!)

Observer’s Comments

Student Engagement: The students are engaged and participate actively in both speaking and writing exercises. They seem comfortable speaking Mandinka and are enthusiastic about using the language in the classroom **Teacher-Student Interaction:** Mr. Jallow maintains a warm and supportive atmosphere. He is patient with students who make mistakes, correcting them gently and encouraging their efforts. He uses a lot of praise, which boosts the students' confidence.

Language Usage: The lesson is taught entirely in Mandinka, with very few instances of English for clarification. The students appear to be very familiar with the language and follow instructions easily.

Cultural Relevance: The focus on family vocabulary connects the lesson to the students' everyday lives, as family is a central part of their cultural experience. The use of Mandinka reinforces the language's importance as a cultural tool and a medium of instruction.

Strengths of the Lesson:

Active Participation: The students were actively involved in the lesson through speaking, reading, and writing. Pair work and the use of flashcards were especially effective in reinforcing vocabulary.

Cultural Relevance: By teaching family vocabulary, Mr. Jallow used content that is both familiar and meaningful to the students, making the lesson more relatable and engaging.

Positive Classroom Environment: The teacher created an atmosphere where students felt comfortable making mistakes and learning at their own pace.

Areas for Improvement:

Differentiation: While the class was generally engaged, some students struggled with writing and spelling, particularly with more complex words. It might help to provide additional support for those students, such as using visual aids or differentiated worksheets. Time Management:

There was a bit of time spent on pronunciation practice, which could have been shortened to allow more time for the writing activity, where students seemed to need more focused practice.

Overall Impression:

The lesson was well-structured, engaging, and culturally relevant. Mr. Jallow's use of Mandinka throughout the lesson helped students connect with the language, while the interactive activities kept them involved and motivated. The focus on family vocabulary allowed students to relate their learning to their personal lives, reinforcing the importance of their native language. The supportive teaching style and positive classroom environment contributed to a productive and enjoyable learning experience.

LESSON (4): Classroom Observation - Teaching National Literacy (Jola)

Date: August 12, 2024

Time: 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM

Class: Grade 3

Teacher: Ms. Fati

Subject: Jola Language and Literacy

Location: Kandonku Lower Basic School, Region 2, The Gambia

The classroom is relatively small but well-organized, with colourful posters and charts on the walls displaying Jola vocabulary, simple sentences, and community-based imagery. There are about 28 students in the class, aged between 8 to 9 years old. The class is predominantly made up of children from Jola-speaking backgrounds, and they are seated in rows of wooden desks.

Ms. Fati, the teacher, greets the students in Jola with a cheerful "Nuka na?!" (How are you?). The students respond energetically with "Nuka na!", smiling and ready for the lesson. The atmosphere is warm and welcoming, and the students appear comfortable and eager to learn.

Lesson Objectives:

The goal of the lesson is to introduce and reinforce basic literacy in Jola, focusing on vocabulary related to family members and simple sentence construction. By the end of the lesson, students should be able to identify and use basic family-related terms in Jola in context.

Lesson Flow:

1. Warm-up (10 minutes): Ms. Fati starts by reviewing the previous lesson on greetings and introductions in Jola. She calls on individual students to stand up and introduce themselves using phrases like "aw Kah resey [name]"nje kahresey mboob (I am [Binta]) and "Bunu-ka neh?" (How are you?). The students engage actively, with most of them able to recall the vocabulary from the previous lesson. When saying "Kumoo" (Mother) and points to a male student when saying "Baa" (Father). She then transitions into the new topic: family members. She writes the following words on the board:

“Kumoo” (Mother)

“Baa” (Father)

“Sari” (Sister)

“Taaloo” (Brother)

“Xamoo” (Child)

Ms. Fati reads each word slowly, encouraging the students to repeat after her. She uses hand gestures and facial expressions to help the students understand the meanings of the words. For example, she mimics a caring gesture

2. Interactive Practice (15 minutes): After introducing the new vocabulary, Ms. Fati organizes the students into small groups. Each group receives a set of flashcards with pictures of family members (e.g., a picture of a mother, father, sister, etc.). The students take turns holding up a card while the others say the correct word in Jola.

A student holds up a picture of a mother, and the group responds together: “Kumoo!”

Another student holds up a picture of a brother, and the group responds: “Taaloo!”

Ms. Fati circulates the room, offering praise and gentle corrections. When a student struggles to pronounce the word “Sari” (Sister), she repeats it slowly and asks the class to repeat it multiple times.

The activity is lively, with the students working collaboratively, supporting each other in the pronunciation of the words. Ms. Fati encourages the quieter students to participate by asking them to say the words aloud when it’s their turn.

3. Reading Exercise (15 minutes): Ms. Fati moves on to a simple reading activity. She writes the following sentence on the board:

“Kumoo laa baa, sari laa taalo.” (Mother and father, sister and brother.)

She reads the sentence aloud, pointing to each word as she does. The class repeats the sentence with her, focusing on pronunciation. Ms. Fati then asks the students to read the sentence individually.

As each student reads aloud, Ms. Fati praises their efforts, but also gives gentle feedback to help them with any mispronunciations. She provides extra attention to student. As each student reads aloud, Ms. Fati praises their efforts, but also gives gentle feedback to help them with any

mispronunciations. She provides extra attention to students who hesitate with words like “laa” (and) and “taalo” (brother).

After reading, Ms. Fati asks comprehension questions in Jola:

“Iyaa ba kumoo laa baa? (Who is with the mother and father?)”

One student answers: "Kumoo laa baa." (Mother and father.)

Ms. Fati encourages the students to share their thoughts, reinforcing their understanding of the sentence structure in Jola. 4. Writing Exercise (15 minutes): The students now move on to a writing activity. Ms. Fati provides them with worksheets that contain incomplete sentences. The students must fill in the blanks with the correct family terms. For example:

“Kumoo laa ____.” (Mother and ____.)

“____ laa taalo.” (____ and brother.)

The students work individually on their worksheets. Some students finish quickly, while others need a little more time. Ms. Fati moves around the classroom, helping where needed. She helps a few students who are unsure about how to spell certain words in Jola, ensuring they understand the correct spelling and pronunciation.

As students finish their work, Ms. Fati asks volunteers to come to the front and read their completed sentences aloud. One student read: “Kumoo laa baa, sari laa taalo.” (Mother and father, sister and brother.)

Ms. Fati praises the student and asks the class to say the sentence together.

5. Closure (5 minutes): To wrap up the lesson, Ms. Fati invites the students to share what they learned today. She asks:

“Ndeh, kumoo laa baa, sari laa taalo. Iyaa bi?” (So, mother and father, sister and brother. Who are they?)

A few students volunteer answers, showing understanding of the lesson’s content. Ms. Fati reminds them to practice these words with their families at home and promises they will learn more next week.

She closes the lesson with a positive note: “Ayi, na kadi! Tuggay!” (Good job! Well done.

Classroom Dynamics:

Student Engagement: The students are highly engaged throughout the lesson, especially during the interactive practice. They enjoy the group work and seem comfortable with using Jola in class.

Teacher-Student Interaction: Ms. Fati maintains a nurturing and supportive atmosphere, which allows the students to feel confident in using the language. She uses praise and positive reinforcement to encourage participation.

Language Usage: The lesson is conducted entirely in Jola, with very few instances of English for clarification. The students are familiar with Jola and are able to respond easily to instructions in the language.

Cultural Relevance: The focus on family vocabulary is culturally relevant, as family is central to the students' daily lives. The lesson reinforces the importance of their native language and helps build a connection between the students' cultural identity and the learning process.

Observer's Comments

Strengths of the Lesson:

Active Participation: The lesson encourages both individual and group participation, which keeps the students engaged. The flashcard activity allows students to learn in a collaborative and fun manner.

Cultural Relevance: The use of family vocabulary connects the lesson to the students' everyday experiences, making it more meaningful and relatable.

Positive Classroom Environment: Ms. Fati fosters an inclusive and supportive atmosphere, which helps students feel comfortable using Jola in class.

Areas for Improvement:

Differentiation: Some students seemed to grasp the material quickly, while others needed more time, particularly during the writing activity. Providing differentiated worksheets or additional support for slower learners could help ensure that all students can keep up with the lesson.

Time Management: While the lesson flowed well overall, there was a bit of time spent on pronunciation practice. More time could be dedicated to the writing activity, where students seemed to benefit from the focused practice.

Overall Impression:

The lesson was well-structured, engaging, and culturally relevant. Ms. Fati did an excellent job of integrating Jola language and culture into the literacy lesson. The students were actively engaged throughout the session, and the classroom atmosphere was positive and supportive. Ms. Fati's use of repetition, praise, and collaborative activities helped reinforce the vocabulary and sentence structures in Jola. The lesson was effective in fostering both language learning and cultural pride among the students

LESSON (6)

Date: August 13, 2024

Lesson Time: 8:30 AM - 9:30 AM

Class: Grade 4

Teacher: Mr. Bah

Subject: National Literacy (Mandinka, Wolof, Sarahuleh, and Fula)

Location: Bureng Lower Basic School, Region 4, The Gambia

Introduction and Setting:

The classroom is spacious, with educational posters on the walls depicting phrases and vocabulary in Mandinka, Wolof, Sarahuleh, and Fula. There are 32 students in the class, aged between 9 and 10 years old. The classroom is divided by small group seating arrangements, with each group of students speaking different languages at home, making it an excellent environment for multilingual learning.

Mr. Bah, the teacher, is a middle-aged man who speaks all four languages fluently. He greets the class in Wolof with “Naka suba, ñoom?” (Good morning, everyone?), and the students respond in unison with “Naka suba!” He then continues, asking them to greet him back in any of the four languages.

The lesson today aims to help students practice literacy in their national languages: Mandinka, Wolof, Sarahuleh, and Fula. The students are familiar with the four languages in different contexts, and today’s focus is to build their reading and writing skills by exploring key vocabulary in each language, making connections between the languages, and reinforcing the importance of literacy in their national languages.

Lesson Objective:

By the end of the lesson, students should be able to:

1. Recognize and pronounce key vocabulary in Mandinka, Wolof, Sarahuleh, and Fula.
2. Construct basic sentences using the vocabulary.
3. Understand the cultural significance of each language.
4. Practice reading and writing simple sentences in these four languages.

Lesson Flow:

1. Introduction (10 minutes): Mr. Bah starts by explaining the objective of the lesson: to practice the same vocabulary in four different languages. He writes the words for "family" members on the board in each of the four languages:

Mandinka: Kumoo (Mother), Baa (Father), Sari (Sister), Taaloo (Brother)

Wolof: Ndey (Mother), Baay (Father), Ndey-Yaram (Sister), Rakah (Brother)

Sarahuleh: Gàmmu (Mother), Ba (Father), Sári (Sister), Taaló (Brother)

Fula: Yay (Mother), Baa (Father), Ñalé (Sister), Dendé (Brother)

Mr. Bah pronounces each word slowly and clearly, ensuring all students repeat after him. The students enthusiastically participate, repeating the words in unison. He then asks the students if they can think of any other family words in their respective languages.

A student raises their hand and offers: "Baay la fi jëk* (Father is here) in Wolof."

Mr. Bah praises the student and asks the class to try to form a similar sentence in each of the other three languages.

2. Interactive Vocabulary Practice (15 minutes):

Mr. Bah divides the class into four small groups, each representing a different language (Mandinka, Wolof, Sarahuleh, and Fula). He gives each group a set of flashcards with pictures of family members (e.g., mother, father, sister, and brother). The students take turns drawing a card and saying the corresponding word in their assigned language.

As the groups work, Mr. Bah circulates the classroom, providing support where needed. For example, in the Mandinka group, one student struggles with the word “Kumoo” (Mother), so Mr. Bah gently guides them through the pronunciation. He then asks the group to come up with a simple sentence using the word, such as “Kumoo laa taa” (Mother is good).

Each group shares their sentences aloud. The Mandinka group says: “Kumoo laa taa.” The Wolof group responds with: “Ndey la fi jëk.” The Sarahuleh group: “Gàmmu laa koo.” And the Fula group: “Yay laa wé.”

The students are excited to hear how the sentences differ across the languages. Mr. Bah emphasizes that even though the languages are different, they all serve the same purpose of communication. He also encourages the students to notice any similarities between the languages (e.g., “Kumoo” and “Gàmmu” both mean "Mother").

3. Reading Exercise (15 minutes): Mr. Bah introduces a short story on the board that incorporates the family vocabulary in all four languages. The story reads: Mandinka: “Kumoo laa, Baa laa, Sari laa, Taaloo laa.” (Mother is here, Father is here, Sister is here, Brother is here.)

Wolof: “Ndey la, Baay la, Ndey-Yaram la, Rakah la.” (Mother is here, Father is here, Sister is here, Brother is here.)

Sarahuleh: “Gàmmu la, Ba la, Sári la, Taaló la.” (Mother is here, Father is here, Sister is here, Brother is here.)

Fula: “Yay la, Baa la, Ñalé la, Dendé la.” (Mother is here, Father is here, Sister is here, Brother is here.)

Mr. Bah reads the story aloud slowly, and the students follow along. He then asks individual students to read the sentences in their respective language groups. As each student reads, Mr. Bah provides gentle corrections for pronunciation and asks comprehension questions in each language. For example:

“Iyaa baa Kumoo laa, nà Ndey la?” (Who is with Mother?)

A student responds: “Baa laa.” (Father is here.) The students seem engaged, and they enjoy the activity of hearing the same story in different languages. Mr. Bah reinforces the idea that language diversity is valuable and that they should be proud of speaking multiple languages.

4. Writing Exercise (15 minutes): For the writing portion of the lesson, Mr. Bah distributes worksheets where students are asked to match the family members to their corresponding words in the four languages. For example:

Match “Mother” to Kumoo (Mandinka), Ndey (Wolof), Gàmmu (Sarahuleh), Yay (Fula).

Write a simple sentence in each language: “___ laa ___.” (___ is here.)

The students work independently, writing their sentences. Mr. Bah walks around, helping as necessary. A few students are unsure of spelling, but they manage to complete the task with guidance. Some students finish early and help their peers.

After the writing activity, Mr. Bah calls on a few students to share their work. A student from the Wolof group reads: “Ndey la fi jëk.” Another student from the Fula group reads: “Yay laa wé.” Each time, Mr. Bah praises their efforts and asks the class to repeat the sentences in unison.

5. Closure (5 minutes): To conclude the lesson, Mr. Bah invites the students to reflect on what they learned today. He asks:

“What do we learn about language today?”

One student respond: “We learn that all languages are important, and we should know many languages.” Mr. Bah nods and adds, “Exactly! Knowing many languages makes us stronger, and we should be proud of our languages. We speak many languages here, but they all help us to communicate and connect with each other.”

He finishes by reminding the students that next week, they will learn more about how to use these languages to tell stories. He encourages them to practice speaking the words with their families and friends at home.

OBSERVER’S COMMENTS

Classroom Dynamics:

Student Engagement: The students are highly engaged throughout the lesson, participating in all activities, from reading aloud to writing and group work. They seem excited about the multilingual aspect of the lesson and take pride in speaking different languages.

Teacher-Student Interaction: Mr. Bah creates a positive and inclusive classroom environment. He uses praise and encouragement effectively to keep students motivated. He also provides individualized attention, especially to students struggling with pronunciation.

Language Usage: The teacher skilfully integrates all four languages into the lesson. The students are encouraged to use the languages they are most comfortable with while also learning the others. This fosters inclusivity and promotes language appreciation.

Cultural Relevance: The lesson's focus on family vocabulary is highly relevant to the students' daily lives, reinforcing cultural connections through language. Mr. Bah also highlights the cultural value of multilingualism, encouraging students to embrace and respect their linguistic diversity.

strength of the Lesson:

Multilingual Approach: Mr. Bah's ability to integrate multiple languages into one lesson is a great step in integrating the kids and making them to understand the importance of multilingualism.

Observer's Notes: Classroom Observation - Teaching National Literacy (Mandinka, Sarahuleh, and Fula)

LESSON (7)

Date: August 14, 2024

Time: 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM

Class: Grade 3

Teacher: Ms. Sillah

Subject: National Literacy (Mandinka, Sarahuleh, and Fula)

Location: Jahally Pacharr Basic Cycle School, Region 5, The Gambia

Introduction and Setting:

The classroom is well-lit and organized, with simple educational posters on the walls depicting common vocabulary in Mandinka, Sarahuleh, and Fula. The students are seated in rows with a variety of different language backgrounds—some are native speakers of Mandinka, others of Sarahuleh and Fula. There are 30 students in the class, aged 8 to 9 years old.

Ms. Sillah, a young and enthusiastic teacher, greets the class warmly in Mandinka: “Nteh kili, onkoo?” (Good morning, how are you?). The students respond in unison, showing eagerness.

Ms. Sillah is known for creating a lively, supportive atmosphere where students feel comfortable using their home languages.

Lesson Objective:

The aim of the lesson is to practice literacy in Mandinka, Sarahuleh, and Fula by focusing on family-related vocabulary. By the end of the lesson, students should be able to:

1. Recognize and pronounce basic family vocabulary in Mandinka, Sarahuleh, and Fula.
2. Write simple sentences using the vocabulary.
3. Demonstrate understanding by using the family terms in context. Lesson Flow:

1. Warm-up (10 minutes): Ms. Sillah begins the lesson by reviewing the previous topic on greetings. She engages the class with a brief interactive activity, where she greets the students in different languages (Mandinka, Sarahuleh, Fula) and asks the students to respond in the same language.

For example:

In Mandinka: “Nteh kili, onkoo?” (How are you?)

In Sarahuleh: “Aminata, nofala?” (How are you, Aminata?)

In Fula: “A jaama, no tan?” (How are you today?)

The students enthusiastically take turns practicing greetings in the languages they know. After this warm-up, Ms. Sillah introduces the new topic of the day: family members in Mandinka, Sarahuleh, and Fula.

She writes the following vocabulary on the board:

Mandinka: Kumoo (Mother), Baa (Father), Sari (Sister), Taaloo (Brother)

Sarahuleh: Gàmmu (Mother), Ba (Father), Sári (Sister), Taaló (Brother)

Fula: Yay (Mother), Baa (Father), Ñalé (Sister), Dendé (Brother)

Ms. Sillah pronounces each word clearly and asks the students to repeat after her. She uses gestures to illustrate the meaning of the words—pointing to her own face to demonstrate "Mother" (Kumoo), patting a male student on the back for "Father" (Baa), etc.

2. Vocabulary Practice (15 minutes): After introducing the vocabulary, Ms. Sillah divides the class into small groups based on the languages they speak at home: one group for Mandinka

speakers, one for Sarahuleh speakers, and one for Fula speakers. Each group gets a set of flashcards with pictures of family members (mother, father, sister, and brother) and the corresponding word in their language.

The students work together within their groups to practice saying the words and creating simple sentences. For example:

Mandinka group: “Kumoo laa taa” (Mother is here), “Taaloo laa folo” (Brother is playing).

Sarahuleh group: “Gàmmu laa koo” (Mother is good), “Ba laa folo” (Father is playing).

Fula group: “Yay laa wé” (Mother is good), “Baa laa folo” (Father is playing).

Ms. Sillah walks around to monitor the groups, listening to their sentences and providing support where needed. For example, a student in the Sarahuleh group is struggling with the word “Gàmmu” (Mother), so Ms. Sillah gently repeats it with them and encourages the other students to help out.

She praises the groups for their effort and asks each group to share one sentence aloud. The Mandinka group shares “Kumoo laa taa”, the Sarahuleh group says “Gàmmu laa koo”, and the Fula group offers “Yay laa wé.” Ms. Sillah corrects any pronunciation issues and encourages everyone to repeat together to build confidence.

3. Reading Practice (15 minutes): Ms. Sillah now transitions into a short reading activity. She writes a simple story on the board that incorporates the family vocabulary in all three languages. She reads it aloud slowly and points to each word as she does: Mandinka: “Kumoo laa, Baa laa, Taaloo laa, Sari laa.” (Mother is here, Father is here, Brother is here, Sister is here.)

Sarahuleh: “Gàmmu laa, Ba laa, Taaló laa, Sári laa.” (Mother is here, Father is here, Brother is here, Sister is here.)

Fula: “Yay laa, Baa laa, Dendé laa, Ñalé laa.” (Mother is here, Father is here, Brother is here, Sister is here.)

She reads each version of the story in its respective language. After reading, she asks comprehension questions: Who is with Kumoo?” (Mandinka)

“Who is with Gàmmu?” (Sarahuleh)

“Who is with Yay?” (Fula)

A student answers in Mandinka: “Baa laa.”

A student responds in Sarahuleh: “Ba laa.”

Another student answers in Fula: “Baa laa.”

Ms. Sillah praises the answers and highlights how the vocabulary overlaps across the languages, reinforcing the idea that while the languages are different, they are all valuable ways of expressing similar ideas.

4. Writing Exercise (15 minutes): Ms. Sillah now distributes worksheets with family vocabulary in Mandinka, Sarahuleh, and Fula. The students are asked to match each family member to its corresponding word in each language and then complete sentences like:

“__ laa __.” (__ is here.)

The students fill in the blanks with the correct words, such as “Kumoo laa taa” (Mother is here) or “Yay laa wé” (Mother is good).

Ms. Sillah encourages the students to work independently but offers help to those who struggle with spelling or forming sentences. She walks around the room, providing individualized feedback. A few students find it difficult to remember the correct order of words in Fula, so Ms. Sillah helps them break down the sentence structure.

5. Closure (5 minutes): To conclude the lesson, Ms. Sillah gathers the students together and asks them to reflect on what they have learned:

“What did we learn today?” A student from the Mandinka group responds: “We learned how to say family words in different languages.”

Another student from the Fula group adds: “We learned to make sentences in Mandinka, Sarahuleh, and Fula.”

Ms. Sillah smiles and encourages the students, saying: “Great! You’ve all done very well today. Remember, it’s important to speak our languages and be proud of them. Next time, we’ll learn more sentences and practice using them in our daily lives.”

She finishes the lesson by saying: “Practice these words at home and tell your families about what you’ve learned today. Jërëjëf!” (Thank you!)

LESSON(8)

Date: August 14, 2024

Time: 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM

Class: Grade 2

Teacher: Mr. Touray

Subject: National Literacy (Mandinka, Sarahuleh, and Fula)

Location: Sare Primary School, Region 6, The Gambia

Introduction and Setting:

The classroom is spacious, with desks arranged in rows, facing a large chalkboard. The walls are decorated with posters illustrating vocabulary and cultural symbols related to Mandinka, Sarahuleh, and Fula. There are 28 students in the class, aged 10-11 years old, and they represent different linguistic backgrounds. The students are excited and eager to participate in the lesson.

Mr. Touray, an experienced teacher with a friendly demeanor, begins the lesson by greeting the class in Mandinka: “Ala sowmada be nyandeh,?” (Good morning, how are you?). The students respond with enthusiasm, some in Mandinka and others in Sarahuleh and Fula, creating an inclusive environment where all languages are welcomed.

The lesson today focuses on expanding the students' literacy in their national languages, particularly by learning about community vocabulary, such as places and common actions. The objective is to help the students practice recognizing, pronouncing, and using vocabulary in Mandinka, Sarahuleh, and Fula.

Lesson Objective:

1. Recognize and pronounce key vocabulary related to community places (e.g., school, market, home, farm) in Mandinka, Sarahuleh, and Fula.
2. Construct simple sentences using these community-related terms.

3. Understand the cultural importance of these places and vocabulary in the context of their communities.

Lesson Flow:

1. Warm-up (10 minutes): Mr. Touray begins with a quick review of last week's lesson on household items. He asks the students to raise their hands and recall words they learned for objects in the house, such as "table", "chair", and "door". Students respond with words in Mandinka, Sarahuleh, and Fula, and Mr. Touray writes the words on the board as they are mentioned.

After the review, he introduces today's focus on community places. He asks the class in Mandinka: "Iba foloo, yidi nyaa?" (Where is the market?) and waits for a response. Several students shout out answers, and he follows up with: "Nka fo, waaw, duu?" (Where do you go to buy food?). Mr. Touray then transitions into the new vocabulary for the day, writing the following words on the board:

Mandinka: Sutu (Market), Kebba (School), Siran (Farm), Kunda (Home)

Sarahuleh: Sutu (Market), Kebba (School), Jaa (Farm), Kunda (Home)

Fula: Sutu (Market), Kebba (School), Jaan (Farm), Kunda (Home) e repeats each word slowly, asking students to echo after him. The students practice saying each term in unison. Mr. Touray emphasizes the similarities across the three languages, pointing out that while the words might sound different, they all carry similar meanings. The students seem to enjoy the activity and repeat the words enthusiastically.

2. Vocabulary Practice (15 minutes): To practice the vocabulary, Mr. Touray divides the class into small groups based on their language backgrounds. Each group is given a set of flashcards

with pictures of community places (market, school, home, farm) and corresponding words in their language. The students take turns pulling a card and using the word in a sentence. For example:

Mandinka group: One student holds up a card with a picture of a farm and says, “Siran laa taa.” (The farm is there.)

Sarahuleh group: Another student with a card of a school says, “Kebba laa joo.” (The school is big.)

Fula group: A third student holding a market card says, “Sutu laa kono.” (The market is far.)

Mr. Touray circulates the room, providing guidance to each group. He helps the students form correct sentences by encouraging them to use the new vocabulary in context. For example, when a student in the Mandinka group struggles with forming a sentence, Mr. Touray prompts: “Can you say, 'Sutu laa taa?' The market is there, right?” The student then repeats after him, and Mr. Touray praises them for their effort.

The groups continue practicing, and after a few minutes, Mr. Touray asks each group to share one of their sentences with the class. The students enthusiastically share, and the class repeats the sentences together in all three languages.

Reading Exercise (15 minutes): Mr. Touray moves on to a reading exercise. He writes a short story on the board that incorporates the vocabulary for community places in all three languages. The story is as follows:

Mandinka: “Kebba laa, Sutu laa, Kunda laa. Siran laa taa.” (The school is here, the market is there, the home is here, the farm is far.)

Sarahuleh: “Kebba laa, Sutu laa, Kunda laa, Jaa laa joo.” (The school is here, the market is there, the home is here, the farm is big.)

Fula: “Kebba laa, Sutu laa, Kunda laa, Jaan laa wé.” (The school is here, the market is there, the home is here, the farm is good.)

He reads the story aloud in Mandinka first, pointing to each word as he goes. The students follow along. Then, he reads the same story in Sarahuleh and Fula, ensuring that all the students understand the meaning of the sentences. Afterward, he asks the class comprehension questions:

“Where is the school in the story?” (The students respond in unison in their respective languages.)

“What is far in the story?” (The farm.)

“Where is the home?” (The home is close, here.)

Mr. Touray makes sure to clarify any confusion about the vocabulary, offering synonyms in different languages when necessary. The students are attentive, and many of them raise their hands to answer the questions confidently.

4. Writing Exercise (15 minutes): Mr. Touray now asks the students to write sentences using the vocabulary for community places. He hands out worksheets where the students must fill in the blanks. For example:

“___ laa, ___ laa.” (___ is here, ___ is there.)

The students are asked to complete the sentence using words like Kebba (school), Sutu (market), and Siran (farm) in their respective languages.

Some students work quickly, while others need a bit more time. Mr. Touray walks around the classroom, providing individual support. A student in the Sarahuleh group is unsure whether to

use Kebba (school) or Sutu (market), so Mr. Touray asks: “Where do you learn?” The student replies: “Kebba.” Mr. Touray smiles and writes the correct sentence on the board: “Kebba laa.” (The school is here.)

Once the students complete the sentences, Mr. Touray calls on volunteers to read their sentences aloud. Students from each group share their work, and the class repeats the sentences in their languages.

Closure (5 minutes): To close the lesson, Mr. Touray gathers the students and asks for a brief reflection on what they’ve learned. He asks:

“What is the most important thing we learned today?” A student from the Mandinka group answers: “We learned about places in the community, like the school and the market.” Another student from the Fula group adds: “We learned to make sentences with those words.” Mr. Touray praises their responses and reminds them that language is a powerful tool for communication. He encourages the students to practice using the new words at home and in their communities. He says: “Jërëjëf! Keep practicing your languages. Next time, we will learn about actions and verbs.”

classroom Dynamics:

OBSERVER’S COMMENTS

Student Engagement: The students are very engaged throughout the lesson, especially during the interactive vocabulary practice and group activities. They enjoy participating in the small group exercises and are eager to share their sentences with the class.

Teacher-Student Interaction: Mr. Touray creates a supportive environment by offering praise and encouragement. He circulates the room to monitor the groups, providing individualized attention when needed. His use of multiple languages ensures that all students feel comfortable participating.

Language Usage: The lesson successfully integrates all three languages—Mandinka, Sarahuleh, and Fula—into the learning process. Mr. Touray ensures that students learn to express the same concepts in different languages, fostering a sense of belonging.

classroom Observation in Hella Kunda Basic Cycle School, Region 6, The Gambia: Teaching Sarahuli

LESSON (9)

Date: September 18, 2024

Location: Hella Kunda Basic Cycle, Region 6, The Gambia

Teacher: Mrs. Jallow

Grade Level: Early Childhood Education (Nursesey 1)

Subject: Sarahuli Language and Literacy

Duration of Lesson: 40 minutes

Lesson Overview

In this classroom, Mrs. Jallow is teaching Sarahuli as part of the early literacy curriculum. The focus of today's lesson is on the alphabet in Sarahuli, particularly on recognizing the letters, understanding their sounds, and writing the letters correctly. The class consists of 25 students, aged 6 to 7 years, most of whom speak Sarahuli at home, but some may have a basic understanding of the national language, Wolof, as well.

Classroom Environment

The classroom is relatively simple but vibrant. The walls are adorned with colourful posters showing the Sarahuli alphabet, common phrases in Sarahuli, and images of everyday objects. On the teacher's desk is a large notebook, which she uses for writing lessons, and a chalkboard with space for writing letters. The classroom has wooden desks arranged in rows, and each student has a chalkboard slate and piece of chalk to practice writing. There is a sense of calmness, with children eagerly looking at the teacher, showing an interest in the lesson.

Lesson Flow

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

Mrs. Jallow starts the lesson by greeting the students warmly in Sarahuli: “Nii ohiyaa!” (Good morning). The students respond in unison, “Ohiyaa!”

She then briefly reviews what was taught in the previous class: “Yesterday, we learned how to say family words in Sarahuli. Today, we will learn how to write the Sarahuli alphabet.”

Mrs. Jallow points to the Sarahuli alphabet chart on the wall and asks the students if they know some of the letters. Several students enthusiastically raise their hands, identifying letters such as “A” (pronounced “aa”) and “B” (pronounced “bee”).

2. Direct Instruction (15 minutes)

Mrs. Jallow introduces the first few letters of the Sarahuli alphabet. She focuses on the sounds, rather than just the names of the letters.

She writes the first three letters “A,” “B,” and “C” on the chalkboard and demonstrates the correct pronunciation.

For instance, she writes “A” and says, “This is A, we say ‘aa.’ Repeat after me, ‘aa.’”

The students repeat the sound in unison, “aa.”

She uses hand gestures to show how the mouth should move to produce the sound.

After demonstrating each letter, Mrs. Jallow asks students to say the sounds individually. She then shows how each letter is written on the chalkboard, illustrating the proper stroke order.

She moves on to the next set of letters, “D,” “E,” and “F,” and continues with the same approach of writing, pronunciation practice, and asking students to repeat.

As Mrs. Jallow writes, she also invites students to come up to the board one by one to try writing the letters themselves.

3. Guided Practice (10 minutes)

The students are now given their slates and chalk. Mrs. Jallow asks them to practice writing the first three letters they learned: “A,” “B,” and “C.”

As the students write, Mrs. Jallow walks around the classroom, providing individual assistance. One student, Fatou, struggles to form the letter “C” correctly, so Mrs. Jallow gently guides her hand, showing the correct direction for the curve.

The students work quietly, focused on their task, and many smile as they successfully write the letters. Mrs. Jallow praises them, saying, “Well done! You are doing great!”

At the same time, Mrs. Jallow occasionally stops and asks, “Who can tell me what sound ‘B’ makes?” A student answers, “Bee!” and Mrs. Jallow applauds the response, reinforcing their learning.

4. Interactive Activity (5 minutes)

To engage the class further, Mrs. Jallow initiates an interactive game. She points to various objects around the room and asks the students to identify them in Sarahuli.

For example, she points to a book on her desk and says, “What is this in Sarahuli?”

A student answers, “Buk,” which is the Sarahuli word for book.

She then asks, “What letter does ‘Buk’ start with?” A student responds, “B!”

This activity helps the students link the letters they've learned with real-world objects, reinforcing their literacy through context.

5. Independent Practice (5 minutes)

Mrs. Jallow gives each student a worksheet with pictures and corresponding letters. For example, the picture of a ball is matched with the letter "B."

The students are asked to trace the letters next to the pictures. They work individually but are still encouraged to ask for help if needed.

Mrs. Jallow circulates, providing support to those who struggle with the tracing, especially the younger students who are still developing fine motor skills.

6. Conclusion and Review (5 minutes)

As the lesson ends, Mrs. Jallow gathers the students together for a quick review. She points to the letters on the wall again and asks the class to identify and say the sounds for each one.

"Can anyone say the sound of 'A'?" A student replies, "Aa!"

"What about 'C'?" Another student responds, "Cee!"

She praises them and says, "Great job today, everyone. Tomorrow, we will learn more letters and their sounds."

The students cheer, and the lesson ends with Mrs. Jallow saying, "Until tomorrow!" The students respond, "Until tomorrow!"

OBSERVER'S COMMENTS

Reflection and Observations Student Engagement: The students were highly engaged throughout the lesson. Their participation was active, especially during the pronunciation and interactive activities. Most students were comfortable with the material, likely because they speak Sarahuli at home.

Use of Local Language: Teaching in Sarahuli created a familiar environment where students felt confident in their learning. This also helped them better grasp the concepts of letter recognition and sound association.

Differentiation: Mrs. Jallow effectively differentiated her teaching to support students at different levels. She provided additional assistance to those who struggled with writing the letters and was patient in helping them.

Classroom Atmosphere: The classroom was welcoming and supportive. Mrs. Jallow's positive reinforcement created an encouraging learning atmosphere. The students were excited to participate and proud of their achievements, showing that they felt valued and respected.

Suggestions for Improvement

Incorporating Visuals and Stories: To further enhance the learning experience, Mrs. Jallow could integrate more visuals and short stories in Sarahuli to help connect the language to real-life situations. For example, showing a picture of a tree and linking it with the Sarahuli word "Sii" (tree) would deepen students' understanding.

Expanding to Other Skills: The next step in building Sarahuli literacy could involve introducing more vocabulary and simple sentences, helping students transition from individual letter recognition to forming words and phrases.

This classroom observation in Hella Kunda highlights the effective use of Sarahuli as a tool for early literacy in a local Gambian classroom. The teacher's approach creates a supportive environment that respects students' cultural background while fostering important literacy skills.

LESSON(10)

Classroom Observation at Abuko Nursery School, Region 1, The Gambia: Teaching Mandinka

Date: September 19th, 2024

Location: Abuko Nursery School, Region 1, The Gambia

Teacher: Mr. Sillah

Grade Level: Nursery 2 (Children aged 4-5 years)

Subject: Mandinka Language

Duration of Lesson: 30 minutes

Lesson Overview

In this session, Mr. Sillah is teaching Mandinka to young children at the nursery level. The lesson focuses on introducing basic Mandinka vocabulary, particularly names of common objects, and using them in simple sentences. The aim is to enhance the children's ability to recognize and say simple Mandinka words. Mr. Sillah also plans to introduce basic greetings and classroom expressions in Mandinka to help children feel more comfortable using the language.

Classroom Environment

The classroom at Abuko Nursery School is bright and welcoming, with colourful posters on the walls featuring Mandinka words and images of animals, fruits, and everyday items. The seating arrangement is in a circle, allowing the children to easily see each other and the teacher. There is a small table at the front where Mr. Sillah writes the day's lesson on a chalkboard. The students sit on small wooden chairs, and each child has a notebook and pencil. On the floor, a large mat is placed with flashcards and picture books related to the lesson.

Lesson Flow

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

Mr. Sillah begins the lesson by greeting the students with a warm, “N jaaraama!” (Good morning in Mandinka). The students, in unison, respond with “N jaaraama!”

He briefly explains that today they will learn words for some common objects in Mandinka, including fruits and animals.

“Today, we will learn how to say ‘apple,’ ‘banana,’ and ‘cat’ in Mandinka. Are you ready?” The students excitedly shout, “Yes!”

2. Vocabulary Introduction (10 minutes)

Step 1: Mandinka Greetings & Simple Words

Mr. Sillah writes the word "apple" on the board and says, “This is an apple. In Mandinka, we say ‘furu.’”

He repeats the word slowly, emphasizing the pronunciation, and the children repeat after him: “Furu.”

Mr. Sillah holds up a picture of an apple and says again, “This is furu. Can you say furu?” The students happily repeat the word.

He asks, “Who likes furu?” One child raises their hand and says, “Me!” Mr. Sillah smiles and continues, “Yes, I like furu too.”

Step 2: Introducing ‘Banana’ and ‘Cat’

Mr. Sillah shows a picture of a banana and says, “This is banana (banana in Mandinka). Can you say banana?” The children repeat, “Banaana!”

Next, he shows a picture of a cat and says, “This is kiti (cat in Mandinka). Let’s say kiti.” The children repeat, “Kiti!”

He continues, asking the children to point to the pictures on the wall, “Where is banana?” The children look at the flashcards and point to the correct image. They enjoy this interactive segment, showing they are engaged and starting to recognize the words.

3. Listening and Repetition Practice (5 minutes)

Mr. Sillah practices the words with the children using flashcards. He holds up a flashcard of an apple and asks, “What is this in Mandinka?”

The children respond, “Furu!”

He does the same with the banana and cat, asking the children to say the Mandinka words aloud each time.

The children are encouraged to say the words in a rhythm, with Mr. Sillah leading, “Furu – banana – kiti” in a sing-song manner. The children follow along happily, clapping their hands as they say the words.

4. Simple Sentences Practice (5 minutes)

Mr. Sillah introduces simple sentences by using the words the children have learned. He writes on the board, “Furu laa” (I have an apple) and says, “This means ‘I have an apple’ in Mandinka. Let’s say it together. Furu laa!”

The children repeat the sentence in unison, “Furu laa.”

He then moves to the next sentence, “Banaana laa” (I have a banana), and the children repeat it after him, “Banaana laa.”

Finally, he says, “Kiti laa” (I have a cat) and the children repeat after him, “Kiti laa.”

5. Interactive Group Activity (5 minutes)

Mr. Sillah asks the students to work in pairs. One student holds a flashcard with a picture (apple, banana, or cat), and the other student will ask, “What is this in Mandinka?”

For example, the student with the apple flashcard says, “I have furu!”

The other student responds by saying the correct word back, “Furu!”

The students work eagerly in pairs, repeating the words and sentences, which helps them practice the vocabulary in a fun and interactive way.

6. Conclusion and Review (5 minutes)

To wrap up the lesson, Mr. Sillah gathers the students together and reviews the words and sentences they learned today. He holds up the flashcards one more time, and asks the children, “What is this?”

For each picture, the children eagerly respond with the correct Mandinka word: “Furu,” “Bannaana,” and “Kiti.”

Mr. Sillah praises the children for their effort, saying, “Very good! You did great today.”

He closes the lesson by teaching the class how to say goodbye in Mandinka: “Kangi ba!” (Goodbye). The children repeat, “Kangi ba!” and wave as they leave.

Reflection and Observations

Student Engagement: The students were highly engaged throughout the lesson. They actively participated in repeating words, answering questions, and interacting with their peers. The enthusiasm of the students was evident, and they seemed comfortable using Mandinka in the classroom.

LESSON (10)

Classroom Observation at St. Charles Lwanga Nursery School, Faji, KMC, The Gambia:
Teaching Mandinka and Jola

Date: September 20th, 2024

Location: St. Charles Lwanga Nursery School, Fajikunda, KMC, The Gambia

Teacher: Mrs. Fanta

Grade Level: Nursery 3 (Children aged 5-6 years)

Subject: Mandinka and Jola Languages

Duration of Lesson: 40 minutes

Lesson Overview

In this classroom, Mrs. Fanta is teaching both Mandinka and Jola languages to young learners. The lesson focuses on familiarizing the children with basic greetings, common objects, and simple sentences in both languages. Mrs. Fanta aims to help the children recognize words in

both Mandinka and Jola while encouraging them to speak and use the languages in context. The children are expected to learn basic vocabulary such as greetings, names of objects, and simple sentences in both languages.

Classroom Environment

The classroom at St. Charles Lwanga is well-organized with brightly colored posters on the walls showing Mandinka and Jola words alongside pictures of animals, fruits, and household items. There is a whiteboard at the front, where Mrs. Fanta writes the words in both languages. The children sit in a circle on the floor, making it easy for them to see each other and the teacher. Each student has a small notebook and a pencil for writing practice. A few colorful flashcards are scattered across the floor, and a large poster showing greetings in both Mandinka and Jola is prominently displayed.

Lesson Flow

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

Mrs. Fanta begins the lesson by greeting the students in both Mandinka and Jola. She says, “N jaaraama!” (Good morning in Mandinka) and the students respond, “N jaaraama!” in unison. She then greets the class in Jola: “Njum a be!” (Good morning in Jola), and the students eagerly respond, “Njum a be!”

Mrs. Fanta explains that today they will learn words in both Mandinka and Jola. “We will learn how to say ‘hello,’ ‘thank you,’ and the names of some animals in both languages.” The children nod excitedly.

2. Vocabulary Introduction (10 minutes)

Step 1: Mandinka Greetings & Vocabulary

Mrs. Fanta writes “N jaaraama” on the whiteboard and explains, “This is how we say ‘good morning’ in Mandinka. Let’s say it together, ‘N jaaraama!’” The children repeat after her.

She then introduces the word “Nteh” (thank you in Mandinka), writing it on the board. She says, “When someone gives you something, you say ‘Nteh.’ Let’s say it together, ‘Nteh!’” The children repeat.

Next, she asks, “Who can say ‘thank you’ in Mandinka?” A student responds, “Nteh!” and she praises them, “Well done!”

Step 2: Jola Greetings & Vocabulary

Mrs. Fanta moves to the Jola language, writing “Njum a be!” on the board and saying, “This is how we say ‘good morning’ in Jola. Let’s say it together, ‘Njum a be!’”

The children eagerly repeat, “Njum a be!”

She then writes “Sedeh” (thank you in Jola) on the board and says, “In Jola, when you want to say thank you, you say Sedeh. Let’s say it together, ‘Sedeh!’” The children follow suit, repeating after her.

3. Listening and Repetition Practice (5 minutes)

Mrs. Fanta holds up a flashcard showing an animal, such as a lion, and says, “In Mandinka, we say Sofaa for lion. Let’s say Sofaa!” The students repeat the word together.

She then holds up a similar flashcard for the Jola language and says, “In Jola, we say Kandim for lion. Let’s say Kandim!” The children repeat, “Kandim!”

She continues with other flashcards: “Falu” (dog in Mandinka) and “Fali” (dog in Jola), ensuring that the students can hear and repeat both words in context.

After each flashcard, she asks, “What’s the word for dog in Mandinka?” The students shout, “Falu!”

“And what’s the word for dog in Jola?” The children reply, “Fali!”

4. Simple Sentence Practice (10 minutes)

Mrs. Fanta introduces simple sentences in both languages, focusing on the words they’ve just learned. She writes on the board:

“N jaaraama, falu laa” (Good morning, I have a dog) in Mandinka.

She explains, “This means ‘Good morning, I have a dog.’ Let’s say it together, ‘N jaaraama, falu laa!’”

The students repeat the sentence together. She then moves to the Jola equivalent, writing:

“Njum a be, fali laa” (Good morning, I have a dog).

Again, the students repeat: “Njum a be, fali laa!”

Mrs. Fanta invites a few students to come to the front and practice speaking the sentences with the class. She asks one student, “Can you say the sentence in Mandinka?”

The student responds confidently, “N jaaraama, falu laa!”

She then asks, “Now, who can say the sentence in Jola?” Another student says, “Njum a be, fali laa!”

The rest of the students cheer and clap, encouraging their peers.

5. Interactive Group Activity (5 minutes)

For the final part of the lesson, Mrs. Fanta divides the class into small groups. Each group is given a set of flashcards with animals and common objects. They are asked to form simple sentences in either Mandinka or Jola using the words on the flashcards.

For example, one group might hold up a flashcard with a picture of a cat and say, “N jaaraama, kiti laa!” (Good morning, I have a cat in Mandinka) or “Njum a be, kiti laa!” in Jola.

The groups work together, laughing and practicing the language, which helps reinforce their learning in a fun, collaborative manner.

6. Conclusion and Review (5 minutes)

To conclude, Mrs. Fanta asks the students to stand in a circle. She leads a quick review of the words and sentences from the lesson. “Let’s say N jaaraama! in Mandinka.” The children respond, “N jaaraama!”

She repeats the process with the Jola greeting, “Njum a be!”

“Now, let’s say thank you in Mandinka and Jola. What is ‘thank you’ in Mandinka?” A student responds, “Nteh!”

“And in Jola?” Another student replies, “Sedeh!”

Mrs. Fanta praises the children for their participation, saying, “Great job today! You learned both Mandinka and Jola greetings and words. Tomorrow, we’ll learn more!”

Observer’s Comments

Reflection and Observations

Student Engagement: The students were very engaged throughout the lesson. The use of repetition, visuals, and interactive activities kept them actively involved. The children seemed excited about learning two languages and were eager to participate.

Effective Use of Both Languages: Mrs. Fanta’s approach in teaching both Mandinka and Jola worked well, as the children were familiar with both languages. She was careful to ensure that the children had opportunities to learn both languages equally, making the lesson inclusive for those who may have a stronger grasp of one language over the other.

Cultural Relevance: By teaching both Mandinka and Jola, Mrs. Fanta acknowledged the multilingual nature of the community in Fajikunda, where both languages are spoken. This approach not only fosters language skills but also strengthens the children’s cultural identity.

Classroom Atmosphere: The classroom was warm and inviting. Mrs. Fanta’s positive reinforcement and patient teaching style created an environment where the children felt comfortable and supported in using both languages.

Student Confidence: The children’s confidence in speaking Mandinka and Jola was noticeable. They enjoyed using the languages in context and interacting with their peers in both languages, showing the effectiveness of using their native tongues in the classroom.

Suggestions for Improvement

Increased Practice with Writing: While the lesson focused heavily on speaking and listening, incorporating more writing activities—such as tracing the words in both Mandinka and Jola—could further reinforce the children’s literacy in these

Use of Visuals: Mr. Sillah effectively used flashcards, pictures, and real-life objects to reinforce the vocabulary. The children were able to connect the words to the images, helping them better remember the new Mandinka words.

Cultural Relevance: Teaching Mandinka to young children not only helps them learn the language but also supports their cultural identity. The vocabulary choices—apple, banana, and cat—are everyday items that the children are familiar with, which made the lesson more relatable.

Teacher-Student Interaction: Mr. Sillah’s interactions with the students were positive and supportive. He used encouragement and praise, which helped build the children’s confidence. His patience and clear pronunciation of Mandinka also made it easier for the children to follow along.

Classroom Atmosphere: The classroom atmosphere was lively and nurturing. The children felt comfortable speaking Mandinka, which is a language they are familiar with, but also one they may not often use in formal settings. The lesson effectively created a space for them to practice and learn in a non-threatening environment.

Suggestions for Improvement

Incorporating More Movement: To keep the young students even more engaged, Mr. Sillah could introduce more movement-based activities, like a “Mandinka word hunt” where children physically move to find objects that correspond to the words they are learning.

Increased Use of Songs: Introducing simple Mandinka songs related to the vocabulary could further engage the children and help them remember words in a playful, musical manner.

This observation at Abuko Nursery School highlights how effectively Mandinka is being taught in an early education setting. The use of visuals, interactive activities, and repetition created a dynamic learning experience for the children, helping them to grasp basic vocabulary and simple sentences while reinforcing their cultural connection to the language.

Appendix D: Interview Questions for National Language Learners

SECTION C

1. What national languages do you learn at school?
2. How do you feel about learning in the national languages?
3. Do you think learning a second language alongside your national language will benefit you in the future?
4. Do you think it is important to learn literacy in your national language?
5. What challenges have you faced while learning national languages?
6. Have you ever had the opportunity to use the national language(s) outside of school?
7. What resources would you like to have to aid your national language learning?
8. How supportive are your teachers in your national language learning process?
9. In your opinion, what can be done to encourage more students to learn national languages?
10. How confident are you in your ability to teach national languages to others?

List Of School Observed

1st Round Classroom Observation

| N o | Teacher | Lesson Observed | Leve l | School | Region | Date |
|--------|-----------------|--|-----------|---------------------------------------|--------|---------|
| 1 | Mr Jallow | Mandinka Language & Literacy | 2 | Keur Alagie Malick Lower Basic School | 3 | 12/8/24 |
| 2 | Ms Fati | Jola Language: Words (Vocabulary Building) | 3 | Kandongko Lower Basic School | 2 | 12/8/24 |
| 3 | Mr Bah | Wolof, Mandinka & Sarahule: Vocabulary Building | 4 | Bureng Lower Basic School | 4 | 13/8/24 |
| 4 | Mr Sowe | Fula & Mandinka: Alphabets | 1 | Bansang Lower Basic School | 5 | 13/8/24 |
| 5 | Mrs Sillah | Mandinka, Fula & Sarahule: Nouns Number | 3 | Jahalipatcharr Lower Basic School | 5 | 14/8/24 |
| 6 | Mr Touray | Mandinka, Fula & Sarahule: Blending | 2 | Sare Pateh Lower Basic School | 6 | 14/8/24 |
| 7 | Mr Njie | Wolof & Mandinka: Sounding Vowel Sounds | 3 | Serrekunda Proper Lower Basic School | 1 | 27/8/24 |
| 8 | Mrs Mariama Nji | Wolof & Mandinka: Sounding & Blending | 1 | Bundung Lower Basic School | 1 | 27/8/24 |
| 9 | Mr Janko | Fula & Mandinka Vocabulary (List Of Common Objects In The Classroom) | 1 | Yero Beri Kunda Basic Cycle | 5 | 15/8/24 |

2nd Round Classroom Observation

| | | | | | | |
|----|------------------|--|----|--------------------------------------|---|---------|
| 1 | Mrs Jallow | Alphebets In Sarahule | | Helakunda Basic Cycle | 6 | 18/9/24 |
| 2 | Mr Sillah | Vowel Sounds In Aku And Wolof | 1 | Abuko Nursery School | 1 | 19/9/24 |
| 3 | Mrs Fanta | Sounding And Blending Jola, Mandinka & Manjago | 3 | St. Charles Lwanga Nursery School | 1 | 20/9/24 |
| 4 | Ms Mariama Keita | Mandinka: Blending | 1B | Soma Lower Basic | 4 | 24/9/24 |
| 5 | Mrs Fatou Keita | Mandinka & Wolof | 2 | Latrikunda Sabiji Lower Basic School | 1 | 26/9/24 |
| 6 | Mrs Dado Ceesay | Mandinka And Wolof | 1 | Kabafita Basic Cycle | 2 | 27/9/24 |
| 7 | Mrs Fatou Camara | Mandinka, Wolof & Jola | 3 | New Yundum Lower Basic School | 2 | 28/9/24 |
| 8 | Mrs Sanyang | Fula, Mandinka: Nouns | 4 | Kerewan Lower Basic School | 3 | 28/9/24 |
| 9 | Ms Awa Bah | Mandinka: Sounds And Blending Of Words | 2 | Salikenni Basic Cycle | 3 | 29/9/24 |
| 10 | Ms Fatima Sillah | Fula & Mandinka: Sounding Words | 1 | Sasita Lower Basic Sch. | 4 | 30/9/24 |

Appendix E: Interview for parents

Interview 1: Parent from Wolof-speaking community

Interviewer: Good morning! Thank you for taking the time to speak with me. Could you share your thoughts on the use of Wolof in early literacy education?

Parent 1: Good morning and thank you for having me. I think it is very important to use Wolof in teaching children to read and write, especially in their early years. Wolof is our mother tongue, and children learn best in a language they understand deeply. When they start learning to read in Wolof, it becomes easier for them to grasp the basics of literacy. I also believe it helps them to connect with their culture and identity in a way that English or French alone cannot.

Interviewer: Do you think using Wolof in schools will affect the children's ability to learn other languages like English?

Parent 1: Not at all. In fact, I think it helps. When children first learn to read and write in their mother tongue, it gives them a solid foundation. Once they are confident in their primary language, learning a second language like English becomes much easier because they have already developed strong literacy skills. It's like building a house on a solid foundation.

Interview 2: Parent from Mandinka-speaking community

Interviewer: Thank you for joining us. What is your opinion on using Mandinka in early education, particularly for teaching literacy?

Parent 2: Thank you for asking. For me, Mandinka is very important, not only for communication but for understanding our history and traditions.

Parent 2: I believe there's still room for improvement. Some schools are starting to use Mandinka, but I think we need to push for more resources—like textbooks, teachers who are fluent in Mandinka, and support for both children and teachers. If we want our children to truly thrive in both their mother tongue and other languages, it requires a concerted effort from the community and the government.

Interview 3: Parent from Aku-speaking community

Interviewer: It's a pleasure to hear your thoughts today. Could you share your perspective on the importance of Aku in early literacy education?

Parent 3: Thank you for having me. Aku is a very special language in our community, and I believe it should play a role in the education of our children. Early literacy in Aku helps children develop a sense of belonging and pride in their culture. It also fosters a deep connection with the oral traditions and stories that have been passed down through generations. In the early stages, children should be able to read, write, and think in Aku before transitioning to other languages like English or French.

Interviewer: Do you think there is enough recognition of Aku in schools, or is more work needed?

Parent 3: There's still a lot of work to be done. While some schools are beginning to recognize the value of Aku, it's not as widespread as it should be. We need more effort to integrate Aku into the formal education system, such as including it in the curriculum, training teachers, and developing learning materials in Aku. Without that, children miss out on a vital part of their heritage and, more importantly, their literacy development.

Summary of Insights:

Language of Instruction: All three parents emphasized the importance of using their respective national languages—Wolof, Mandinka, and Aku—in early literacy education. They believe it helps children learn better, develop a sense of identity, and connect with their culture.

Bilingual Education: They agree that learning in the mother tongue does not hinder learning other languages like English but rather enhances it by providing a solid foundation for literacy skills.

Current Challenges: While there is some progress in integrating these languages into early education, all three parents feel that more resources, trained teachers, and official curriculum adjustments are needed to fully support the use of national languages in schools.

The interviews illustrate the significant role that national languages play in fostering strong literacy skills and cultural identity in young children.

Interview with three parents from region 2, each discussing the use of national languages such as Manjago, Mandinka, and Jola in early childhood literacy education.

Interview 1: Parent from the Manjago-speaking community

Interviewer: Thank you for speaking with us today. Can you share your thoughts on the use of Manjago in early literacy education?

Parent 1: Thank you for having me. I believe using Manjago in early education is very important. It's the language my child and most children in our community speak at home, so it's the language they feel most comfortable with. When children learn to read and write in their mother tongue, they understand concepts more quickly and more deeply. Manjago is part of who we are, and it connects us to our traditions, history, and culture.

Interviewer: Do you think teaching literacy in Manjago could impact children's ability to learn other languages like English or French?

Parent 1: Not at all. In fact, learning in Manjago first helps build a strong foundation. Once they understand the basics of reading and writing in their own language, they can easily transfer those skills to learn English or French. I believe that bilingualism or even multilingualism is a strength, and it should be nurtured from an early age. If the children start in Manjago, they will be more confident and capable when learning other languages.

Interviewer: Thank you for joining us. How do you feel about the use of Mandinka in early literacy education? Parent 2: There's progress, but I think we still need more support. Many schools are teaching in English or French, and while that's important, Mandinka should not be neglected. I think there should be more materials in Mandinka, such as books, reading resources, and even teacher training programs to ensure that teachers are well-prepared to teach in Mandinka. If we want our children to succeed academically and stay connected to their roots, it's important that Mandinka is part of their education from the start.

Interview 3: Parent from the Jola-speaking community.

Interviewer: We appreciate you taking the time to talk to us. Can you share your perspective on the use of Jola in early literacy education?

Parent 3: Thank you for including me. Jola is very important in my family and in our community. When children are introduced to literacy through Jola, it gives them the confidence they need to learn. It's their first language, and they understand it instinctively. Using Jola in the early years of education allows children to build a solid foundation in literacy, which is essential for learning other languages later. Plus, they feel more at home and more motivated to learn when it's in their own language.

Interviewer: Do you think there's enough emphasis on Jola in early education in your region?

Parent 3: Unfortunately, there's not enough focus on Jola in schools. It's spoken by a large part of the population, but many schools still focus primarily on English or French. I think more effort should be made to incorporate Jola into the curriculum—through textbooks, educational materials, and even teacher training. The government should take steps to ensure that Jola is recognized and used in schools, not just as a cultural language, but as a language of learning too. It will benefit the children's literacy development and help preserve our culture.

Summary of Insights:

Language as a Tool for Learning: All three parents believe that using their respective national languages—Manjago, Mandinka, and Jola—offers a strong foundation for early literacy. They agree that children learn best in their mother tongue and feel more connected to their education and cultural heritage when taught in a language they understand.

Bilingualism: The parents also see the value of learning other languages, like English or French, but emphasize that it should not come at the expense of the national languages. In fact, they believe that literacy in the mother tongue aids the acquisition of other languages.

Need for Support and Resources: There is a shared concern about the lack of educational resources in these languages. Parents feel that schools should provide more learning materials in Manjago, Mandinka, and Jola and should invest in teacher training to support the use of these languages in the classroom.

Cultural Preservation: Using national languages in early literacy education is seen as crucial for cultural preservation. These languages are not just tools for communication but are also integral to the identity and heritage of the communities.

Overall, the interviews reflect a strong desire among parents in region 2 to see their languages valued in the educational system, recognizing both the practical and cultural importance of teaching literacy in Manjago, Mandinka, and Jola.

Task: interview with three parents from Region Three, each discussing the use of national languages such as Wolof, Mandinka, Fula, and Serer in early childhood literacy education.

Interview 1: Parent from the Wolof-speaking community

Interviewer: Thank you for joining us today. Could you share your thoughts on the use of Wolof in early literacy education?

Parent 1: Thank you for having me. I strongly believe that using Wolof in early literacy education is essential. Wolof is the language that children hear and speak at home, so it's the language they feel most comfortable with. When they start learning to read and write in Wolof, they can understand the concepts much more easily because it's familiar to them. I believe that this allows them to build a solid foundation in literacy, which will help them later when they start learning in other languages, like English or French.

Interviewer: Do you think that using Wolof in schools could impact a child's ability to learn other languages?

Parent 1: Not at all. In fact, I think it will help them learn other languages more effectively. Once children have mastered reading and writing in their first language, it gives them the skills and confidence to learn additional languages. Children who are literate in their mother tongue have a better understanding of language structures and can transfer those skills to learning new languages. So, using Wolof in the early years helps them, rather than hinders them. Interview 2: Parent from the Mandinka-speaking community

Interviewer: Thank you for speaking with us today. What are your thoughts on the use of Mandinka in early literacy education?

Parent 2: It's my pleasure. I believe Mandinka should be part of early literacy education because it's the language that children grow up speaking. When children learn to read and write in Mandinka first, it creates a smoother transition to understanding literacy in other languages. I've noticed that when children learn in their own language, they are more confident and engaged. It's important that we maintain our cultural heritage, and language is a key part of that.

Interviewer: Do you think there are enough resources to teach in Mandinka?

Parent 2: Unfortunately, no. There are not enough learning materials or resources in Mandinka. Most schools still rely heavily on English and French, which are important, but I think we need more books, educational materials, and even teacher training in Mandinka. If children are going to succeed in school, they need to feel connected to the language they speak at home, and that requires proper resources in Mandinka.

Interview 3: Parent from the Fula-speaking community

Interviewer: It's great to have you with us today. Could you tell us how you feel about using Fula in early literacy education?

Parent 3: Thank you. For me, Fula is a very important language, and I think it should be used in schools from the start. When children learn to read and write in Fula, they are not only gaining literacy skills but also staying connected to their culture and identity. Fula is a language we speak every day, and when they begin with Fula, they are more motivated and engaged in

their education. It gives them a solid foundation for when they start learning in other languages, like English.

Interviewer: Do you think it's possible to use both Fula and other languages like English or French in early education?

Parent 3: Yes, absolutely. I think it's very important to have bilingual education. When children start with Fula, they already have the literacy skills in place to learn another language. If the foundation is solid in Fula, they will be able to transition to English or French much more easily. In fact, being bilingual or multilingual will only make them stronger academically and culturally.

Summary:

Mother Tongue Literacy: All three parents agree that using national languages like Wolof, Mandinka, and Fula in early literacy education is crucial for children's understanding and development. Children are more likely to succeed in their learning when they start with the language they speak at home, as it helps them grasp basic literacy skills more naturally.

Bilingualism and Multilingualism: The parents are also strong advocates for bilingual or multilingual education. They believe that learning to read and write in their mother tongue does not hinder children from learning other languages like English or French. In fact, it strengthens their literacy skills and prepares them to be more successful in acquiring additional languages.

Resource Gaps: One common concern among the parents is the lack of resources in these national languages. There is a call for more learning materials, textbooks, and teacher training programs in Wolof, Mandinka, and Fula to help improve the quality of early education in these languages.

Cultural Connection: Beyond academic success, parents view the use of national languages in education as essential for preserving their cultural heritage. By teaching literacy in their mother tongue, children are better able to connect with their culture, community, and traditions, ensuring that their language and identity are preserved for future generations.

In conclusion, the parents in Region Three are advocating for an educational system that values their languages as tools for both academic success and cultural preservation. They believe that by incorporating national languages into early literacy education, their children will be better equipped for the future and remain connected to their cultural roots.

Task: interviewing 3 parents from region 4 in the Gambia about the use of Mandinka, and Fula as a national language in teaching literacy in early education.

Interviewer: Good morning and thank you for taking the time to speak with us today. To start, could you tell us a little about yourself and your family?

Parent: Good morning and thank you for having me. I am from region 4, and I have four children, two of whom are in primary school. I'm very interested in education, especially when it comes to how children learn their first language and literacy in school.

Interviewer: That's wonderful. Today, we are discussing the use of Mandinka and Fula as national languages in teaching literacy in early education. Do you believe it is important for children to learn to read and write in a language they are familiar with, like Mandinka or Fula, in the early years?

Parent: Yes, I believe it's important. Mandinka and Fula are widely spoken here in region 4, and they are the languages most children here at home. If children start learning to read and write in their own language, they can understand better. It also builds their confidence in learning. It's much easier for them to learn new things in a language they already know, especially at a young age.

Interviewer: I see. So, you believe starting with Mandinka or Fula would help children understand the concepts more easily. Do you think using these languages in the classroom can improve their literacy skills?

Parent: Yes, absolutely. If children are taught in Mandinka or Fula at the beginning, it makes learning literacy more effective. They are already familiar with the sounds, words, and structure of the language, so they don't need to struggle with understanding the basic concepts of reading

and writing. For example, when they know how to read simple words in Mandinka or Fula, they will later be able to transfer that skill when learning in English. The foundation is strong.

Interviewer: That makes a lot of sense. Some people argue that using local languages like Mandinka or Fula may limit children's ability to learn international languages such as English. How do you feel about this concern? Parent: In some schools, especially in rural areas, I see that teachers are using Mandinka and Fula in their lessons, and it's very effective. But in other schools, there's more focus on English from the start. I think the education system should put more emphasis on using national languages like Mandinka and Fula, especially in the first few years of school. The children will feel more comfortable, and it will help them learn faster. I think the government should create more materials and teacher training to make this possible in every school.

Interviewer: You raise a good point about teacher training and materials. Do you think parents can play a role in encouraging the use of Mandinka or Fula in schools?

Parent: Yes, parents can play a big role. At home, we can speak to our children in Mandinka or Fula and encourage them to practice the language. Parents should also support the schools by asking teachers to use the national language more in lessons. If we show that we value our language, the children will value it too. When parents and teachers work together, it helps the children succeed.

Interviewer: That's very true. Lastly, do you think using Mandinka and Fula as a language of instruction helps preserve the culture and traditions of The Gambia?

Parent: Yes, using Mandinka and Fula in schools helps preserve our culture and language. These languages carry our history, stories, and traditions, and if we stop using them in education, future generations might lose touch with their roots. If we keep teaching our children in these languages, we are also teaching them about their identity and culture. It's important to protect and value our languages because they are part of who we are.

Interviewer: Thank you so much for sharing your thoughts with us today. It's been a pleasure speaking with you.

Parent: Thank you for having me. I hope our conversation helps raise awareness about the importance of using our local languages in education. It's a crucial issue for the future of our children.

Region 5

Interviewer: Good morning and thank you all for agreeing to speak with us today. We're discussing the use of Mandinka, Wolof, and Fula as national languages in teaching literacy in early education. To start, could each of you introduce yourselves and share a little about your family?

Parent 1 (Mandinka speaker): Good morning. My name is Amina, and I'm from Region 5. I have two children, one in primary school and another just starting pre-school. I speak Mandinka at home, and we also try to introduce other languages like English as they get older.

Parent 2 (Wolof speaker): Good morning. I'm Ousman, from region 5. I have three children. I speak Wolof at home, and I believe it's important for children to start their education with a language they're familiar with. My children are still young, but I pay close attention to their early education.

Parent 3 (Fula speaker): Hello, my name is Mariama, and I'm from Region 5 as well. I have four children. We speak Fula at home, and I believe it's crucial that my children learn to read and write in a language they understand first before learning a second or third language.

Interviewer: Thank you all for the introductions. Let's start with a general question. Do you believe that teaching literacy in the early years in a language children are familiar with, such as Mandinka, Wolof, or Fula, is important? Why or why not? Amina (Mandinka): Yes, it's very important. When children start learning in a language they know, like Mandinka, they can better understand what they're being taught. At home, they speak the language every day, so they already know the sounds and structure of the language. This helps them grasp reading and writing much faster. If they start with a language they don't know, like English, it might confuse them.

Ousman (Wolof): I agree. For children who speak Wolof at home, starting their education in Wolof helps them understand the lessons more easily. If they start with a foreign language, they

might struggle in the beginning. Learning literacy in a familiar language allows them to build confidence before switching to other languages, like English.

Mariama (Fula): Yes, I also think it's important. Fula is spoken in my family, and my children feel more confident when they learn in Fula. They understand what they're reading and writing, and that builds a strong foundation. Once they are comfortable with literacy in their mother tongue, it will be easier for them to learn in other languages, like English.

Interviewer: That's a good point. It seems you all agree that starting with a familiar language helps build a foundation. How do you feel about the use of Mandinka, Wolof, and Fula in early education in schools in your area? Do you think schools are doing enough to use these languages in teaching?

Amina (Mandinka): From my experience, I feel that in some schools in region 5, Mandinka is used in the classroom, but not always consistently. In some areas, the focus is more on English right from the start. I think there should be a stronger effort to use Mandinka in the early grades, and perhaps more resources in Mandinka to help teachers. My children have done well when their teachers use Mandinka, so I hope more schools can adopt this.

Ousman (Wolof): In our region, Wolof is widely spoken, but I still see that the education system sometimes prioritizes English. I believe more schools should start with Wolof in the early stages. It's frustrating because if teachers would focus on Wolof in the beginning, the children would build a stronger foundation for literacy before introducing English. Teachers and schools need more support to make this happen.

Mariama (Fula): I agree. Fula is spoken by many people here, but I think there should be more focus on teaching in Fula in the schools. It's important for children to feel at home with the language they speak every day. I've seen schools use Fula to some extent, but there's still a lot of room for improvement. Teachers should be more trained in using Fula in teaching literacy.

interviewer: That's an important observation. Do you think using Mandinka, Wolof, or Fula in early education will affect children's ability to learn English later? Some people worry that it might make learning a second language more difficult.

Amina (Mandinka): I don't think it will make learning English harder. In fact, if children learn in their mother tongue first, they are building the skills needed to learn any language. The structure of learning how to read and write is the same. Once they are comfortable in Mandinka, they will be able to learn English more easily. It's about building confidence first.

Ousman (Wolof): I believe the same. Starting with Wolof won't hurt their ability to learn English. In fact, it will help. Once they understand how literacy works in their own language, learning a second language becomes easier. Children are smart, and once they understand the basics, they can pick up other languages. I've seen it in my own children.

Mariama (Fula): I also believe using Fula first helps. It gives them a strong base in literacy. Learning English later won't be a problem if the children are first taught in a language they understand. They just need time to transition, and with good teachers and support, they can learn both languages.

Interviewer: That's an important observation. Do you think using Mandinka, Wolof, or Fula in early education will affect children's ability to learn English later? Some people worry that it might make learning a second language more difficult.

Amina (Mandinka): I don't think it will make learning English harder. In fact, if children learn in their mother tongue first, they are building the skills needed to learn any language. The structure of learning how to read and write is the same. Once they are comfortable in Mandinka, they will be able to learn English more easily. It's about building confidence first.

Ousman (Wolof): I believe the same. Starting with Wolof won't hurt their ability to learn English. In fact, it will help. Once they understand how literacy works in their own language, learning a second language becomes easier. Children are smart, and once they understand the basics, they can pick up other languages. I've seen it in my own children.

Mariama (Fula): I also believe using Fula first helps. It gives them a strong base in literacy. Learning English later won't be a problem if the children are first taught in a language they understand. They just need time to transition, and with good teachers and support, they can learn both languages.

Interviewer: You've all made great points. Finally, do you think parents have a role in encouraging schools to use Mandinka, Wolof, and Fula in teaching literacy? What can parents do to support this?

Amina (Mandinka): Yes, parents can play a role. We can talk to the school and encourage teachers to use Mandinka more in the classroom. We should also support our children's learning at home by speaking to them in Mandinka and helping them practice reading and writing in the language. If parents show that they value their language, the children will value it too

interviewer: You've all made great points. Finally, do you think parents have a role in encouraging schools to use Mandinka, Wolof, and Fula in teaching literacy? What can parents do to support this?

Amina (Mandinka): Yes, parents can play a role. We can talk to the school and encourage teachers to use Mandinka more in the classroom. We should also support our children's learning at home by speaking to them in Mandinka and helping them practice reading and writing in the language. If parents show that they value their language, the children will value it too.

Ousman (Wolof): Parents can help by supporting the use of Wolof in schools and asking for more resources in Wolof. We should also be role models by speaking Wolof at home and helping our children practice reading and writing in Wolof. The more parents are involved, the more the schools will listen and understand the importance of this.

Mariama (Fula): Parents should be active in their children's education. We need to ask the schools to use Fula more and even provide the teachers with resources to help teach in Fula. At home, we can help by reading Fula books with our children and making sure they're comfortable with their language before they start learning English.

Interviewer: Thank you all for your thoughtful responses today. It's been a pleasure speaking with you and learning about your views on the use of Mandinka, Wolof, and Fula in early education.

Region 6:

Task: interviewing a parent from region 6 in the Gambia about the use of Mandinka, Sarahuli and Fula as a national language in teaching literacy in early education.

Interviewer: Good morning and thank you all for joining us today. We are discussing the use of Mandinka, Sarahuli, and Fula as national languages in teaching literacy in early education in The Gambia. To begin, could each of you please introduce yourselves and share a little about your family?

Parent 1 (Mandinka speaker): Good morning. My name is Kumba, and I'm from Region 6. I have two children in primary school. We speak Mandinka at home, and I'm very passionate about their education, especially in the early years.

Parent 2 (Sarahuli speaker): Good morning. I'm Lamin, and I also come from region 6. I have three children, one of whom is in the early grades of school. At home, we speak Sarahuli, and I believe using our national languages in early education is important for our children's development.

Parent 3 (Fula speaker): Hello, I'm Fatou, and I'm from Region 6 as well. I have four children, and we speak Fula in our home. I strongly support the idea of teaching literacy in Fula during the early education years. Interviewer: Thank you for introducing yourselves. Let's dive into the topic. Do you think it's important for children to learn literacy in a language they are familiar with, such as Mandinka, Sarahuli, or Fula, in the early years of education? Why or why not?

Kumba (Mandinka): Yes, I think it's very important. When children learn in a language they understand, like Mandinka, they can grasp concepts more easily. At home, they speak Mandinka every day, so it's a language they're already comfortable with. If they start learning in their own language, it makes the process of learning to read and write much easier and faster.

Lamin (Sarahuli): I agree. In our community, Sarahuli is widely spoken, and children feel more comfortable when they are taught in their mother tongue. When they can understand the language, they can focus more on learning to read and write, rather than trying to understand a new language at the same time. It makes the learning process smoother and more effective.

Fatou (Fula): Yes, it's essential for children to start learning in a language they know, like Fula. If they're introduced to literacy in a language they don't speak, it could confuse them, especially in the early stages. But if they begin with Fula, they're able to develop their literacy skills more easily and confidently. This foundation will make it easier for them to learn other languages later.

Interviewer: It seems like you all agree that learning in a familiar language is crucial for early literacy development. Do you think the use of Mandinka, Sarahuli, or Fula in schools in your area is common, and do you feel schools are doing enough to integrate these languages in early education?

Kumba (Mandinka): In some schools, Mandinka is used to a certain extent, but not as much as I would like to see. In many schools, the focus is on teaching in English from the start, which can be challenging for children. I believe there needs to be more effort to incorporate Mandinka in early education. Teachers should be encouraged to use it more regularly in their lessons, especially in the early grades.

Lamin (Sarahuli): In our area, Sarahuli is sometimes used in the early years, but there is still a lot of focus on English. I feel that schools could do better in using Sarahuli for teaching literacy. The government and schools should provide more resources in Sarahuli and train teachers to use it effectively. I've seen that when children are taught in Sarahuli, they perform better, but it's not always the case everywhere.

Fatou (Fula): In some schools in our area, Fula is used to teach the children, but it is not widespread enough. I believe Fula should be used more in the early stages of literacy. Teachers should receive proper training to teach literacy in Fula, and schools should have more materials like books and learning tools in Fula. Without this, it's hard for children to learn effectively in their first language.

Interviewer: That's an insightful point about resources and teacher training. Some people worry that if children start learning literacy in their local language, it might make it harder for them to learn English or other languages later. What do you think about this concern?

Kumba (Mandinka): I don't think starting with Mandinka will make it harder for children to learn English. On the contrary, it gives them a strong foundation in literacy. Once they understand the basics of reading and writing in Mandinka, they can easily transfer those skills to learning English. I've seen it with my own children—they were able to pick up English faster after they were comfortable with Mandinka.

Lamin (Sarahuli): I feel the same. Learning to read and write in Sarahuli won't make it harder for children to learn English later. In fact, it can be easier for them to learn a second language once they've mastered their own. They understand the concept of reading and writing, and they can apply that to English. The key is to start with a strong foundation in their own language.

Fatou (Fula): I completely agree. Starting with Fula helps children develop literacy skills that they can apply to other languages, including English. Once they are confident in their first language, learning a second language will be much easier. It's all about building confidence in literacy first and then introducing English as a second language.

Interviewer: It's clear that you all believe that learning in a national language first can help children learn English more easily later. What role do you think parents can play in encouraging the use of Mandinka, Sarahuli, or Fula in early education?

Kumba (Mandinka): Parents can play a big role by speaking Mandinka at home and supporting the schools in using the language. We should also encourage the schools to provide more materials in Mandinka, such as books and educational tools. As parents, we need to show the value of our language and make sure our children feel comfortable using it in their learning.

Lamin (Sarahuli): Parents can help by speaking Sarahuli at home and encouraging their children to practice reading and writing in Sarahuli. We should also work together with teachers and the school to make sure that Sarahuli is used more in the classroom. If parents and teachers work together, it can make a big difference in how children learn.

Fatou (Fula): Parents need to be advocates for Fula in schools. We should encourage schools to use Fula in teaching literacy and help children practice their reading and writing at home. If we, as parents, show the importance of Fula, it will inspire the schools to prioritize it more. It's also important for us to provide books and other resources in Fula for our children.

Interviewer: Thank you all for your valuable insights. It's clear that you believe using national languages like Mandinka, Sarahuli, and Fula in early education is essential for children's literacy development. Before we conclude, do you think using these languages helps preserve our cultural heritage and identity?

Kumba (Mandinka): Yes, absolutely. Teaching children in Mandinka helps them stay connected to their culture and identity. It keeps our language alive and ensures that our traditions are passed on to the next generation. It's important to preserve our languages for future generations.

Lamin (Sarahuli): I agree. If we don't teach our children in Sarahuli, the language could eventually be lost. It's important for them to understand their roots and culture. Using Sarahuli in education helps preserve our heritage and ensures that our children grow up proud of their language and identity.

Fatou (Fula): Yes, teaching children in Fula helps them connect with our culture and traditions. It's essential for preserving the language and ensuring that it doesn't fade away. If we want to keep our identity strong, we must use Fula in education, so our children can grow up with a deep appreciation for their language and culture.

Interviewer: Thank you again for sharing your thoughts today. It's been a pleasure speaking with all of you. Your views on the importance of using national languages like Mandinka, Sarahuli, and Fula in early education will certainly contribute to ongoing conversations about improving literacy and preserving cultural heritage in The Gambia.

