

**THE INFLUENCE OF MOTHER TONGUE ON PRE SCHOOL CHILDREN'S
PERFORMANCE IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN GACHOKA DIVISION,
EMBU COUNTY**

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DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and has not been presented for award of a degree in any other university.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of mother tongue on pre-school children's performance in the English language in Gachoka Division Embu County. The study used a descriptive survey design which used both quantitative and qualitative approaches to collect the data. The participants included headteachers, pre-school teachers and pre-school parents from eight pre-schools. Data was collected using questionnaires for the headteachers and pre-school teachers while interviews were used for pre-school parents. Data was analyzed using percentages and frequencies and presented in tables and charts. The study revealed that mother tongue contributes positively towards the learning of the English language in pre-schools. It further revealed that parents had a negative attitude towards the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction. The study concluded that the language policy should be implemented in pre-schools and that the stakeholders should ensure that there are enough learning materials in pre-schools.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

| | | |
|---------------|---|---|
| ECD | - | Early Childhood Development |
| ECDE | - | Early Childhood Development & Education |
| ECE | - | Early Childhood Education |
| ECEC | - | Early Childhood Education & Care |
| KIE | - | Kenya Institute of Education |
| KICD | - | Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development |
| DICECE | - | District Centre for Early Childhood Education |
| L1 | - | First Language (Mother tongue) |
| L2 | - | Second Language (English) |
| FBO | - | Faith Based Organizations |
| UNESCO | - | United Nations Educations Science & Cultural Organizations |
| MT | - | Mother Tongue |
| EFA | - | Education for All |
| UNHD | - | United Nations Human Development |
| HLE | - | Home Literacy Environment |
| PHLE | - | Passive Home Literacy Environment |
| AHLE | - | Active Home Literacy Environment |
| UNICEF | - | United Nations Children’s Education Fund |
| ZPD | - | Zone of Proximal Development |
| DQASO | - | District Quality Assurance and Standards Officer |
| DEO | - | District Education Officer |
| AEO | - | Area Educational Officer |

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Language is a system of words or signs that people use to express thoughts and feelings to each other. It is a means of communication through which people express their desire, ideas excitements, amusements, disappointments and exchange of information. It is a tool for thinking and concept development in children. Children think and talk in a language that is familiar to them. It is a vehicle for many different kinds of learning. Language development in children is very essential. It is the process by which children come to understand and communicate using language during early childhood.

From birth to age five years, children develop language at very rapid pace. The stages of language development are universal among humans. However, the age and the pace at which a child reaches each milestone of language development in an individual child must be compared with norms rather than with individual children. Mother tongue is very significant in our lives. It is our means of communicating our thoughts and ideas to the rest. It is also a tool for forging friendships, cultural ties as well as economic relationships. Language shapes our thoughts, emotions and determines our perception of reality (Gordon, 2004). He referred to language as the light of the mind.

According to him, language is not just a vehicle for carrying out expressions of thoughts perceptions, sentiments and values but also a representation of fundamental expressions of social identity. He also believed that language helps in maintaining the feelings of cultural relationship. In our day to day living, language aids in developing

and growing one's personality as a whole. With the advent of the concept of globalization, people all over the world communicate with each other and exchange ideas. Understanding of a common language has helped people to communicate, despite being from varied parts of the world.

It is used as major tool of communication between countries, cultural groups, organizations, communities and friends. Language sets humans apart from the rest of the animal's kingdom and knits a strong feeling of kinship among people. In the development pathway or trajectory of a child, mother tongue language plays an important role as it is connected to various aspects of a child growth. Learning a language is directly related to emotional development. Since emotions are expressed by using language, it is also connected to moral development in a child since the child learns right and wrong by listening to what parents and adults authorize them to do.

Learning mother tongue language within the first five years of a child's life is one of the predictors of a child's later performance in school (Cummins, 2000). A child who has no significant speech or language delays has a high likelihood of having trouble with reading, which may continue throughout the school. Children ability to communicate helps them to relate to and reflect upon their daily educational experiences in order to extend their horizon. If children are unable to communicate effectively in school, their academic and intellectual development is hindered.

Buckley (2003) asserts that some children experience a gap between the language they bring to school and the language of the school. In this concept the child's home curriculum becomes meaningless and its language may be out of place in the classroom. This may make many children drop out of school even before completing

lower primary classes. Gordon (1994) asserts that even those children who remain in school, if their social cultural background is somewhat different from that provided by the school; they tend to perform poorer than that of their classmates who's their social cultural background is the same as that of school.

Gordon (1994) asserts that there are two main common language gaps. The first one is when a child has a completely different home language or regional dialect from the one used by the school. Secondly, is when the home and school languages are the same though the child might not be familiar with the more formal literally style of the language used by the teachers during lessons. All children come to school with a basic communication competence, developed through their everyday use of mother tongue language at home. The child's starting point towards learning in school is therefore the spoken and action vocabulary that has developed at home. The school language can be regarded by the child as alien and unfamiliar because it is usually based on the written text and the vocabulary of specific subject content.

He contends that by the time children come to school, they are competent users of their home language or mother tongue and they can label, categorize and describe things. Teachers need to find out and build upon the children's use of the home language in the school context. To do this, they need to be responsive to the action vocabulary the children already have which they can use to engage in class discussions on familiar themes from home such as names of the food eaten, domestic animals, family members among others.

Children spoken language can then be used as a starting point for developing learning. This can be reinforced through writing in class stories and lessons based upon children's experiences at home. Where the child's home language is completely different from that of the school the approach has to be different.

He also contends that wherever possible, teachers should teach young children using their own home language and hence teachers must be familiar with the child's language of the catchment area and also he or she must have skills to develop language competence in children using the most appropriate second language techniques. Failure to achieve literacy in early years of schooling can hold a child back throughout his or her education life. According to Ellis (2010), all children when joining pre-school bring with them rich experiences in various areas and also knowledge of language of their catchment areas which includes other language dialects other than English. He advocates for teachers to make effective provision for those children who are monolingual to access the second language i.e. English which will assist them to learn with ease.

Ellis (2010), laments that it is unfortunate that some schools fail to find out accurate information about their children's language and literacy level as they join pre-school, which they can build on or support those with linguistic skills, thus promoting bilingual and multilingual children. According to Cummins (2000), bilingual and multilingual children achieve more highly in school when they continue to use and develop all of their languages.

According to Kangas (2000) bilingualism which involves mother tongue (L1) and the second language English (L2) has positive effects on children linguistics and educational development. When children develop their abilities in two or more languages as they learn, they gain deeper understanding of language and how to use it effectively. Cummins (2000) asserts that children's knowledge and skills transfer across languages from mother tongue they have learned from their homes (L1) to the school language (L2). Both languages i.e. L1 and L2 nurture each other when educational environment permits children to access both languages. According to Kangas (2000), the level of children's mother tongue is a strong predictor of their second language development. Children who come to school with a solid foundation in their mother tongue language develop strong literacy ability in the school language (English).

On language policy in Kenya according to education session paper number 14 of 2012, all children below eight years should be taught using the language of catchment area. However the policy has elicited different reactions from different stakeholders in education such as Kenya national union of teachers and some parents who argue that the policy is against aims of education. "Daily nation of 27th January 2014" had a sub ending "teachers fight rule on using local languages in classroom", which shows their negativity towards use of mother tongue.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Kenya is among many developing countries in Africa with majority of young children going through education systems that sometimes fail to provide teaching and learning instructions in the language that they speak at home, Kobia (2007). This is the language of the catchment area or mother tongue. According to research by UNESCO (2008) children are better placed to become literate easily when they start learning using their first language L1, than when they try to learn directly using a second language (English or L2).

Pre-school children's performance in English language in Gachoka division Embu county has been below the average for some time according to education division office .This could be linked to failure to use mother tongue as a medium of instruction in pre-school, but instead teachers and parents prefer use of English as medium of instruction in the classroom which probably affects children`s performance in English language. This could be due to lack of transition from the language they know from home that is mother tongue to the new school language, that is English

Kenya education system has a language policy which allows children in pre- schools to be taught or learn using the language of their catchment area and English in later years. The policy is supposedly in effect in some pre- schools in rural areas while in urban areas there is no uniformity in language of instructions, due to language diversity of people and sometimes English is used as a medium of instructions and socialization. It is not unusual in urban areas to find children as young as two years speaking English language fluently, which is widely used as language of instructions in pre-school when learning.

In both rural and urban areas, there is a big challenge of implementing the mother tongue language policy in pre-schools. This is because both pre-school parents and teachers prefer English language being used as medium of instruction because they think it is superior to mother tongue. This has made the pre-school teachers to continue teaching pre-school children using the school second language (L2) that is English so as to fulfill the wishes of pre-schools parents which may have influenced negatively the performance of English language of pre-school children in Gachoka division Embu County. Most of pre-schools in the division are located in rural areas, hence the need for a study to be carried out to identify the exact problem affecting children's performance in the English language in pre-schools, in Gachoka division Embu county

1.3 The purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the role of the mother tongue language on pre- school children `s performance in the English language in Gachoka Division, Embu County.

1.4 Research objectives

The research focused on the following objectives

- i. To establish the influence of home language on pre-school children's performance in the English language in Gachoka division, Embu county.
- ii. To determine the influence of the school language of instruction on pre-school children's performance in the English language in Gachoka division Embu county.

- iii. To examine parents and teachers perception of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction on pre-school children performance in English language in Gachoka Division Embu County.
- iv. To evaluate the implementation of the educational language policy in Kenya on pre-school children performance in the English language in Gachoka division Embu county.

1.5 Research questions

- i. How does the home language influence pre-school children's performance in the English language in Gachoka Division Embu County?
- ii. How does the school language of instruction influence pre-school children's performance in the English language in Gachoka Division Embu County?
- iii. How does the parents and teachers perception of the mother-tongue as medium of instruction influence pre- school children's performance in the English language in Gachoka division Embu county?
- iv. How does the implementation of the educational language policy in Kenya influence pre-school children's performance in the English language in Gachoka division Embu county.

1.6 Significance of the study

The findings of the study will be of benefit to various education stakeholders such as the head teachers of various public and private schools where pre-school centers are located who are to be enlightened on importance of mother tongue based learning and emphasize on the same to pre-school and lower primary teachers. Parents, pre-school teachers and lower primary teachers were to get an insight on the importance of mother tongue in the teaching and learning processes. The community, sponsors and

faith based organizations (FBO) which support education were to be sensitized on the value of mother tongue language based learning and how it influences children's English language learning. Educational policy makers were to be enlightened on the importance of mother tongue as a language in teaching and learning process and emphasize on its implementation by teachers of young children.

1.7 Limitations of the study

Negative attitude of the pre-school parents towards the use of mother tongue in teaching and learning process in the classroom which may have made them give wrong information. The division had very many head teachers who were not Early Childhood Education compliance and so to them the research could not be of any value to education. The location of the study that is Gachoka Division was very vast and to reach some parts even with a motorbike was very difficult especially when it rained. The researcher after sampling may not have got the enlightened parents to give the required data. Time was not enough to carry out the research thoroughly in the whole division since the researcher was also teaching as well as doing the research work.

1.8 Delimitation of the study

The study was conducted to some sampled public pre-schools in Gachoka Division which had a population of thirty six pre-schools. It confined itself to pre-schools' children in public schools, pre-school teachers, parents and head teachers in the division. This was due to constrains of time and money required to carry out the study in the whole Division.

1.9 Basic assumptions

In the above research study, the following assumptions were made. All the respondents were expected to cooperate and provide reliable responses during data collection. All pre-school teachers were familiar with and use NACECE or KICD developed ECDE guidelines and language policy in Kenya. All head teachers from the sampled pre-schools were to grant permission to the researcher to carry out the study in their schools. Pre-school parents from sampled pre-schools were to be positive in giving relevant data required by researcher during the study.

1.10 Definition of key terms used in this study

- Pre-school Child** - a young person age (3-5) years.
- Language** - a systematic means of communicating ideas or feelings
Using signs, gestures and sounds.
- Mother tongue** - language of the child`s catchment area.
- Performance** - activity level of a child (high or low).
- Perception** - apprehending by means of senses or of the mind or views

1.11 Organization of the study.

The study was organized in the following way. On completion of the study the research project was organized in five (5) chapters. Chapter one which is referred to as introduction contain background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, limitations and delimitations of the study, basic assumptions and definitions of key terms. Chapter

two which is referred to as literature review addresses introduction, relevant themes and sub themes related to the objectives of the study, theoretical and conceptual framework. Chapter three which is referred to as research methodology focused on introduction, research design, population, sampling technique and sample size, instruments, validity and reliability, procedure for data collection, data analysis and ethical concerns. Chapter four dealt with data analysis and discussion of the findings, while chapter five dealt with summary of the research findings, conclusions and recommendations. References and appendices were given at the back respectively.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This section of the research project contains the literature review of various scholars who carried out the study on a similar field as the area being studied by the researcher. Both primary and secondary sources of the literature review were used by the researcher. The section dealt with mother tongue as medium of instruction, impact mother tongue on quality of schooling, home language, school language of instruction, parents and teachers' perception of mother tongue as a medium of instruction, educational language policy in Kenya, theoretical framework and conceptual framework which are all related to research objectives.

2.2 Mother tongue as a medium of instruction

While there are many factors involved in delivering quality basic education, language is clearly the key to communication and understanding in the classroom. Many developing countries are characterized by individual as well as society multilingualism, yet continue to allow a single foreign language to dominate the education sector. Instruction through a language that learners do not speak has been called "submersion" (Skutnub and Kangas 2000) because it is analogous to holding learners under water without teaching them how to swim. Compounded by chronic difficulties such as low level of teacher education, poorly designed inappropriate curriculum and lack of adequate facilities, submersion makes both learning and teaching extremely difficult, particularly when the language of instruction is also foreign to the teacher.

Mother tongue based bilingual programs use the learners' first language known as L1 to teach beginning reading and writing skills along with academic content. The second or foreign language, known as the L2, should be taught systematically so that learners can gradually transfer skills from the familiar language (L1) to unfamiliar one (L2). Bilingual models and practices vary as well as their results, but what they have in common is their use of the mother tongue, at least in the early years so that children can acquire and develop literacy skills in addition to understanding and participating in the classroom.

Bilingualism as opposed to monolingual schooling offers significant pedagogical advantages which have been reported consistently in the academic literature (Baker 2001 and Cummins 2000). Some of these advantages are that to teach beginners literacy facilitates an understanding of sound symbols or meaning symbols correspondence. Learning to read is most efficient when children know the language and can employ psychological guessing strategies; learning of new concepts is easier using L1. There is transfer of linguistic and cognitive skills from L1 to L2 e.g. reading and writing that is efficiently transferring the literacy skills they have acquired in the familiar language to unfamiliar one.

Cummins (1991, 1999) interdependence theory. Using L1 children can be assessed easily because they can express themselves easily to tell what they have acquired and not acquired. L1 strengthens child's affective domain, which involves confidence, self-esteem and identity which helps to increase motivation and initiative as well as creativity to the child.

Learners become bilingual and biliterate which encourages them to understand, speak, read and write in more than one language. Bilingual instruction allows teachers and children to interact naturally and negotiate meaning together, creating participatory learning environments that are conducive to cognitive as well as linguistic developments.

2.3 Impacts of mother tongue on quality of schooling

Mother tongue is one of the most important factors influencing quality basic education. It is key to communication and child`s understanding in the classroom. According to many developing countries, Kenya being one of them they are characterized by individual as well as societal multilingualism, yet continues to allow a single foreign language to dominate the education sector. Instructions through a language that learners do not speaks makes both learning and teaching of young children extremely difficult particularly when the language of instructions is also foreign to the teacher (Skutnab and Kangas 2000).

Mother tongue based bilingual educational programme uses the learner`s first language known as L1 or mother tongue to teach beginning reading and writing skills along with academic content. The second foreign language L2 or English should be taught systematically so that the learner can gradually transfer skills from the familiar language (L1) to unfamiliar one (L2).Bilingual as opposed to monolingual schooling offers a significance pedagogical advantage which promotes learning.

Baker (2001) and Cummins (2000) asserts that, use of a familiar language to teach beginning literacy facilitates an understanding of sound symbols or meaning symbols correspondence among young children. Since content area instructions are provided in

L1, learning of new concept becomes easy to children. Transfer of linguistic and cognitive skills is facilitated in bilingual programmes. Once a child have basic literacy skills, in the L1 and communicative skills in L2 they can begin reading and writing in the L2 effectively, transferring the literacy skills they have acquired in their familiar language.

According to Cummins (1999), the pedagogical principles behind this positive transfer of skill are; interdependence theory and concept of communication underlying proficiency where knowledge of language, literacy and concepts learned in the L1 can be accessed and used in the second language once oral L2 skills are developed. Children learning can be accurately assessed in a bilingual classroom. When learners express themselves, teachers can diagnose what has been learned, what remains to be taught and the learners who need further assistance.

The affective domain involving confidence, self-esteem and identity is strengthened by use of the L1, increasing motivation, initiative and creativity. L1 classrooms allows children to be themselves and develop their personalities as well as their intellects unlike in a L2 classroom where children are forced to sit silently, which demotivates them leading to failures and dropout of children in school. Bilingual programs encourage learners to understand, speak, read and write in more than one language unlike L2 which attempt to promote skills in a new language which may limit learner's competence.

Well documented empirical studies of mother tongue based bilingual programs in developing countries began appearing in the 1970`s and still form the basis of what is of the benchmark studies are; Study carried out in the Chiapas highlands of Mexico

found that indigenous children efficiently transferred literacy skills from L1 to the L2 and outperformed monolingual Spanish speakers (Abiri, 1976). A research carried out for six year in Yoruba medium primary project in Nigeria demonstrated unequivocally that a full six year primary education in the mother tongue with the L2 taught as a subject was not only viable but gave better results than all English schooling. The Rivers readers' project also in Nigeria showed how mother tongue materials of reasonable quality could be developed even where resources were scarce. Large scale research on Filipino English bilingual schooling in Philippines, found a positive relationship between achievements in the two languages. In bilingual programmes, children learn to read and write with ease in both languages i.e. L1 and L2.

Recent study done in Nigeria tested bilingual and non-bilingual learners in both L1 and L2, and it clearly demonstrated that those who did best when tested were bilingual children tested in L1, while those who did least were non- bilingual children tested in the L2 (Fafunwa, 1976). In classroom participation bilingual children participate more often and demonstrate greater self-confidence and higher motivation. The L1 allows children to express their full range of knowledge and experience and demonstrate their competence, which pedagogical approaches like those of Piaget and Vygotsky would support for learning.

To conclude what education for or (EFA) means for people in developing countries is access to basic literacy and numeracy as well as other skills that will improve their lives by 2015. Mother tongue based multilingual education not only increase access to skill but also raises the quality of basic education by facilitating classroom interaction and integration of prior knowledge and experiences with new learning.

2.4 Home language

According to United Nations Human Development report (UNHD) 2013, literacy is the ability to read and write. The inability to do so is called illiteracy or analphabetism. Home literacy environment refers to the literacy level of family and other caregivers at home where the child is being reared. The primary sense of literacy still presents a lifelong intellectual process of gaining meaning from a critical interpretation of the written or printed text. The key to all literacy is reading development, a progression of skills that begins with the ability to understand spoken words and decode written words and culminate in the deep understanding of the text.

Reading development involves a range of complex language underpinnings including awareness of speech sounds (phonology), spelling patterns (orthography), words meaning (semantics), grammar (syntax) and a pattern of words formation (morphology), all of which provide a necessary platform for reading fluency and comprehension (Grazzaniger, 1992).

According to United Nations science and cultural organization (UNESCO) literacy enables individuals to achieve their goals, develop their knowledge, potentials and participate fully in their community and wider society. Aunola (2004) contends that young children are increasingly entering academically rigorous school setting where an emphasis on accountability and standards has replaced an emphasis on child development. However many young children join pre-school unprepared for both academic and social expectations.

Research by Aunola et al (2004) revealed that children who enter pre-school are disadvantaged, early gaps in understandings of literacy or other subject activity areas tend to be sustained or widened over time, especially for children from poor social economic background. It is necessary to identify strategies that move young children towards becoming independent and reflective learners to increase the likelihood of their school success in later years. Home literacy environment (HLE) was significantly related to young children`s oral language ability, words decoding ability and phonological sensitivity. Aunola defined the home literacy environment in two ways: passive home literacy environment (PHLE) or those parental activities that expose the children to models of literacy usage e.g. seeing a parent read a newspaper (Hecht, 2002).

Active home literacy environment (AHLE) or those potential efforts that directly engage the child activities designed to foster literacy or language development e.g. rhyming games, shared readings, Leseman and De Jong (1998) found that home literacy environmental factors determine children school literacy achievements. According to them combining exposure to literacy in the home with co-construction opportunities increased the predictive value of home literacy in relation to early literacy achievements which affects Childs academic performance in school.

They contends that creating a home environment where children are exposed to and encouraged to explore literacy materials such as (books, pictures, newspaper etc) with parents can be a predictor of academic success. Mothers who display high level of warmth and encouragements towards children have been established as a predictor of academic success (Hill, 2001).

Such parents display high levels of patience with children, display positive perceptions of their children`s abilities, communicate the expectations that the children will achieve at higher levels, has been established as a predictor of academic success in children

Initiatives focusing on building positive parents – children relationships and enhancing readiness related aspect of the home environment have the potential to influence children`s readiness and later school achievements. According to Stich & McDonald (1990), parents and more so mothers level of education is one of the most important factors influencing child`s reading levels, together with other school achievements. Highly educated mothers have greater success in providing their children with the cognitive and language skills- that contributes to early success in school. Research shows that children of mothers with high level of education stay in school longer than those of mothers with low level of education.

2.5 School language of instruction

The term globalization is never far from the front pages of newspapers these days. It evokes strong positive or negative feelings; depending on individuals. One of the most important aspects of globalization to educators is the increasing movement of people from one country to another. Population mobility is caused by many factors such as desire for better economic conditions, need for labor in many countries experiencing low birth rate, flow of refugees etc. Consequences of population mobility are linguistic, cultural, racial and religious diversity within schools.

The challenge to educators and policy makers is to shape the evolution of national identity in such a way that the right of all citizens including school children are respected and the cultural, linguistic and economic resources of the nation are maximized (Kaugas 2000). Bilingualism has more positive effect on children`s linguistic and educational development.

According to Baker (2000) when children continue to develop their abilities in two or more languages throughout their primary school years, they gain deeper understanding of language and how to use it effectively. They have more practice in processing language, especially when they develop literacy in both and they are able compare and contrast the ways in which the two languages organize reality. Goethe, the German philosopher once said, “The person who knows only one language does not truly know the language.” Research suggests that bilingual children may also develop more flexibility in their thinking as a result of processing information through different languages.

Cummins (2000) assert that the level of children`s mother tongue is a strong predictor of their second language development. Children who come to school with a strong foundation in their mother tongue develop strong literacy abilities in the school language. When parents and other caregivers spend time with their children and tell stories or discuss with them in a way that develops their mother tongue vocabulary and concepts, children come to school well prepared to learn the school language and succeed educationally.

Children knowledge and skill transfers across languages from mother tongue they have learned at home to the school language. From the children`s development point of view, concepts and thinking skills, the two languages are interdependent. Transfer across languages can be two ways: i.e. when the mother tongue is promoted in school (e.g. in a bilingual education programme) the concepts, languages and literacy skills that children are learning in the majority language can be transferred to home language and vice versa. This is to say both languages nurture each other when the educational environment permits children access both languages.

Skutuab (2000) assert that when mother tongue is promoted in the school, it helps to develop not only the mother tongue but also children`s abilities in the majority school language. According to him, bilingual children perform better in schools when the school effectively teaches the mother tongue and where appropriate, develops literacy in that language. By contrast when children are encouraged to reject their mother tongue, its development stagnates their personal and conceptual foundation for learning is undermined. Cummius (2000) contends that spending instructional time using mother tongue language in the school doesn`t affect children`s academic development in the school language. He assert that according to research , findings , well-implemented bilingual programmes can promote literacy and subject matter knowledge in mother tongue language without any negative effect on children`s development in the school language.

According to cummins (2000), within Europe, the Foyer programme in Belgium, which develops children`s speaking and literacy abilities in three languages for example (their mother tongues, Dutch and French) in the primary schools .clearly illustrates the benefits of bilingual and trilingual education .He contends that as

children learn their mother tongue language, they also learn concepts and intellectual skill that are equally relevant to their ability to function in the school language. For instance when the children learn the concept of telling time in their mother tongue (L1) they do not need to re-learn the concept of telling time using school language (L2) but only need to acquire new labels for an intellectual skill they have already learned to tell time.

At a more advanced stage, there is transfer across language in academic and literacy skills such as knowing how to distinguish the main ideas from the supporting details of a written passage or story identify causes and effects, etc. According to Baker (2000), children`s mother tongues are fragile and easily lost in the early years of the school, especially where mother tongue is not used extensively in the community outside the school. They may retain receptive or understanding skill in the language but use the school language or majority language in speaking with peers, siblings and parents. To reduce the extent L1 loss, parents should established a strong home language policy and provide ample time for children to expand the functions for which they use L1 e.g. reading and writing.

According to Cummins (2000) to reject a child`s language in the school is to reject the child. Messages such as “leave your language and culture at the school gate”, children also leave a central part of who they are i.e. their identity at the school gate which make them to feel rejected, are less likely to participate actively and confidently in classroom instructions. Teachers need to accept children`s linguistic and cultural diversity in the school.

They need to be encouraged to write in their L1 in addition to L2 of the school. Teachers need to create an instructional climate where linguistic and cultural experiences of the child are accepted and validated. A multilingual child has an enormous contribution to make to their societies and to the interactional global community if educators put into practice what they believe is true for all children. The cultural, linguistic and intellectual resources of our societies will increase when we stop seeing cultural and linguistically diverse children as “ a problem to be solved “ but instead to open our eyes to the linguistic , cultural and intellectual resources they bring from their homes to our societies. According to Ellis (2010), all children when joining school bring with them rich experiences in various areas and knowledge of language of their catchment areas and knowledge of language of their dialects other than English. They need to be assisted to acquire second language (L2) i.e. English, since it is essential for their learning.

2.6 Parents and teachers` perception of mother tongue as medium of instruction

Children bring all what they know to the school in their home language and they need to be able to use this strength to learn another language as well as other new knowledge and skills. Unless conditions are appropriate, it is very difficult to learn a foreign language well enough to learn through it.” states Carol Bloch “(image media club South Africa) as a marker of identity, mother tongue language education is considered to be of great importance. It is seen as every one`s right and secondly it is said that children perform better at school if they are taught in their mother tongue (Kangas 1995).

From a holistic approach of language attitude, parent's attitude towards mother tongue education in Uganda is negative. The outcome of the evaluation of the performance of Ugandan pupils initiated a pilot programme in Uganda to enforce mother tongue education in primary school. The project introduced Mother tongue education in primary schools and Mother tongue was introduced as the language of instruction for the first three years of schooling. Many parents did not appreciate the concept. They regarded use of Mother tongue as means of hindering their children from progress and career. This is because most parents see English as a language of power and success. Mother tongue is considered to be a marker of ethnic identity. In school it is regarded as way of preventing their children's progress. It makes the children to remain backward, according to many parents.

The religious missionaries and colonial foundations of education in most of African countries largely explains most of the present inadequacies in the public schools, of great concern is the neglect of indigenous languages "in the curriculum and the current difficult in implementing the mother tongue medium of instruction in the school, despite evidence on its potency of promoting children's learning. Teachers and parents as the major stakeholders of the child's education have different perceptions or views on use of Mother tongue in primary school and more so as a medium of instructions. In Nigeria, according to Abiri (1976), colonial education was imported and imposed on the African native using English as it was designed to suit the interests of the providers.

Fafunwa (1976) view colonial education as educating people out of their environment. Emphasis on English language in school system did not only serve the need of the colonial administrators, foreign traders and missionaries, but it also projected the assumed superiority of the colonial masters' culture.

Abiri (1976) assert that lack of attention paid to indigenous languages in the curriculum, did not only undermine social cultural context of the curriculum, but also tried to dismantle the existing social cultural infrastructure and heritage which are fundamental to human existence. Though Mother tongue medium of instruction policy is viewed as a major revolution in African countries education, opinions remain divided on the wisdom of this policy in highly multilingual societies in which English is seen as an official language.

According to research carried out in Nigeria on parents and teacher's perception on the use of mother tongue as medium of instructions, it was noted that parents and teachers were of the opinion that education using mother tongue is a way of promoting our cultural heritage, bridge the school and home gap, children learn best using their mother tongue. It lays a solid foundation for children's psycho-social development, makes school less traumatic, makes it possible for illiterate parents to support their children's learning at home, help the child to understand his / her environment, helps to integrate ethnocentric and eco-centric values and traditional norms into the curriculum, makes learning easier to children and also it exposes children to a wider scope of experience which support learning through a foreign language later in life.

On the other hand some teachers and parents had different opinion on the implementation of mother tongue in school which would be hindered by various factors such as :- lack of trained teachers in mother tongue education, instructional materials in the indigenous language e.g. text book, curriculum materials on various subjects written in indigenous languages, pupils in school especially cosmopolitan urban areas where there is linguistic heterogeneity among children, teachers not enthusiastic to use indigenous language as a medium of instruction, parental indisposition to their children being taught in mother tongue and the push for a language of wider communication unlike mother tongue. Mohanlal (2001) assert that popularization of mother tongue medium of instruction is both demanding and expensive. It entails a lot of resources to produce teaching and learning materials and training of teachers.

2.7 Educational language policy in Kenya

Kenya and other African countries has a majority of its children going through an education system that sometimes fails to provide instructions in the language they speak at home which they understand better. This may have contributed to illiteracy and results in people joining work force with inadequate skills. According to research by (UNESCO), children are better placed to become literate when they start learning using their first language (Mother tongue or L1) and then gradually move to the second language (L2 or English). Studies conducted by United Nations educational scientific and cultural organizations have shown that children who receive basic education using (L1) perform better than those who are educated using only (L2).

Kenya has a language policy in education which recommends children in pre- schools and lower primary to be taught in their mother tongue. In later years of primary education, secondary and university, English to be used as a language of instruction in schools. According to Mary Njoroge (2006), director of basic education in the ministry of education, the policy is supposedly in effect in rural areas. In urban areas, there is no uniformity in the use of the mother tongue of instructions as a language of instructions. She assert that it is not unusual to find as young as two years old children speaking English which is widely used as a language of instruction in most urban schools. In most primary schools, there is not as much emphasis in Kiswahili (Kenya national language) as there is in English,” say Francis Ng`ang`a previous secretary general of Kenya national union of teachers (KNUT, 2006).

Promotion of mother tongue learning requires broad support. Parents need to be sensitized to make them understand why it is important for children to be taught using mother tongue, said Njoroge. English remains superior language for the educated. The campaign to have mother tongue learning intensified also enjoy support of the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF).

According to Kenyan Daily Nation of March 3rd 2014, on use of local languages, Education Cabinet secretary Jacob Kaimenyi, insisted that all primary schools in Kenya must start teaching using the local languages in pre-school and lower classes that classes one to three. He insisted that under the new language policy, teaching and learning in formative stages of child has to be done using the language of the catchment area (mother tongue).

Professor Kaimenyi education secretary in Kenya asserts that, learning theories backed by research indicate that the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction in the formative years of a child, offers many advantages because it ensures smooth transition from home to the school environment for first time school goers; The session paper no.(14 of 2012) by the ministry of education says that the language of the catchment area i.e. Mother tongue (L1) shall be used for child care, pre-primary and lower primary children education In spite of this, the language policy in Kenya continues to be tilted in favor of English (L2) and to some extent Kiswahili at the expense of mother tongue, Kobia (2007).

The important of mother tongue in cognitive, linguistic, personal and educational development of children cannot be overemphasized. It was out of this recognition that the UNESCO declared the year 2006 the year of African languages. Mother tongue as defined by UNESCO (1953:46). Is the language which a child acquires in early years and which normally becomes their instrument of thought and communication. Kenya institutes of education (2000:117) i.e. the present KICD, defines mother tongue as the first language a child is expected to use or the language of the school catchment area.

According to UNESCO, (1968:698) mother tongue education is Education which uses its medium of instruction using a person's mother tongue i.e. the language a person/child has acquired in early years and which normally has become his/her natural instrument of thought and communication (Kobia, 2007).

Although the session paper NO.14 of 2012 on language policy was rolled out by the cabinet secretary professor Jacob Kaimenyi in March 2013 to emphasize more on use of mother tongue in child care centers, pre-schools and lower primary i.e. the first

8years of Childs education, to date mother tongue instructions are mainly being used in rural public schools but rarely takes place in urban schools because of language diversity. Kenya News Daily 31/1/2014KNS

2.8. Theoretical framework

Lev Vygotsky`s social constructivists theory of language development

Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) was the proponent of this theory. He was best known for being an educational psychologist with a social cultural theory, which suggests that social interaction leads to continuous step by step changes in children thought and behavior, which can greatly vary from culture to culture (Woolfolk, 1998).

Vygotsky theory suggests that language development depends on interaction with people and the tools that the culture provides to help children from their view of the world. He suggested three ways a cultural tool can be passed from one individual to another. The first one is imitative learning, where one person tries to imitate or copy another. The second way is by instructed learning which involves remembering the instructions of the teachers, parents or care giver and then using these instructions to self-regulate. The third way that cultural tools are passed to others is through collaborative learning which involves a group of peers who strive to understand each other and work together to learn a specific skill.

Vygotsky`s theory combines social environment and cognition. He asserts that children will acquire the ways of thinking and behavior that make up a culture by interacting with a more knowledgeable person. He believed that social interaction will lead to ongoing changes in a child thought and behavior, which would vary between cultures (Berks, 1994). The four basic principles underlying the Vygotskian

framework are:- Children construct their knowledge, Language development cannot be separated from social context, Learning can lead to development and Language plays a central role in mental development.

His social cultural theory of development consists of several elements to help implement it. They include private speech where children speak to themselves to plan or guide their own behavior. This is common among preschoolers who have not yet learned proper social skills. They use private speech when a task becomes too difficult for them and they don't know how to proceed. This helps them to accomplish a task. The second element in the social cultural theory is the zone of proximal development (ZPD).

According to Vygotsky, ZPD is the difference between the actual developmental level as determined by individual problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or collaboration with more knowledgeable peers (scaffolding). The result in this process is children become more socialized in the dominant culture and it induces cognitive development.

Moll (1994) and Hanniger, (1999) asserts that language is a crucial tool for learning because it is used to communicate and interact with others. It also helps in social interaction and in the thinking process.

2.9 Conceptual framework

A conceptual framework is diagrammatic presentation showing and explaining how independent and dependent variables interact or relate in a research study. It also shows how those variables influence each other. The below conceptual frame work shows how variables of the above research study relates and influence each other.

Figure 2.1: Conceptual framework

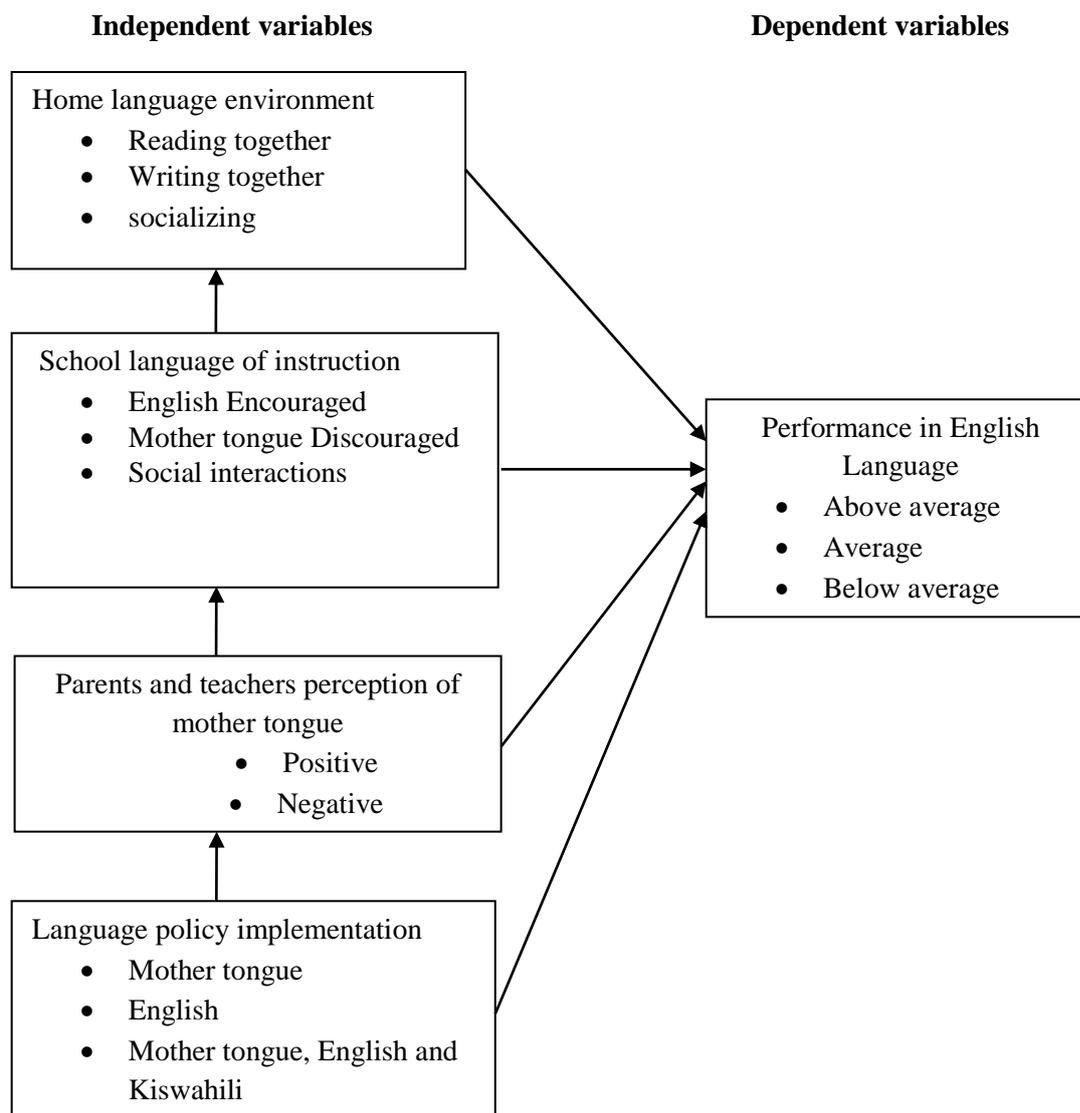


Figure 2.1 shows the relationship between pre-school children`s mother tongue language and their performance in English language. It represents the relationship between independent and dependent variables of the study in a diagrammatic form. Independent variables are: Home language environment, School language of instructions, parents and teachers perception and language policy implementation which all influence dependent variables either positively or negatively among pre-school children`s performance in the English language.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Research methodology refers to the process which was used by the researcher to collect the information or data for the purposes of solving the underlying research problem. It gave various sub-sections involved in carrying out the research which includes; the research design population, sampling procedure and sample size, instruments used, validity and reliability, procedure for data collection, data analysis and ethical concerns.

3.2 Research design

Research design refers to the overall strategy which was used by the researcher to integrate the different components of the study in a coherent and logical way when carrying out the research study, (Mugenda and Mugenda 2003). In this study the researcher used descriptive survey research design to carry out the study. The design used both quantitative and qualitative approaches to collect data from the respondent and it dealt with opinion from them in a descriptive way.

The design allowed the researcher to collect data from a relatively large population through use of closed ended questions. The researcher used the design to collect the data on the influence of mother tongue on pre-school children`s performance in the English language. The advantages of this design were that the information collected can be statistically inferred on the target population.

The design helped to define the opinions, altitude and behavior held by a group of people on a given subject and in this case the influence of mother tongue on pre-school children performance in English language.

3.3 Population

According to Orodho (2003) all the items or people under study in any field are called target population. In this research the target population of the study was all the thirty six public pre-school in Gachoka division, Embu County, which had an enrolment of about seven hundred and twenty children thirty six head teachers and pre-school teachers together with pre-school parents. The rationale for selecting this population is that for quite a long period, the performance of pre-school children in English language in the division had remained low, which could be as a result of language of instruction in pre-schools. The researcher also intended to use that population because it could be able to provide the relevant data to the study. A sample was drawn from the population which was used to provide the required data.

3.4 Sampling technique and sample size

Sampling techniques and sample size was a process of identifying those to take part in the research study from the target population. In this study, the researcher used simple random sampling procedure to draw the research sample from the target population. Begi (2009), contended that the technique ensures that each and every member of the population had an equal and independent chance of being selected. It also ensures that the population was represented well and the result could be generalized on the target population after the research study. The researcher used raffle process of simple random sampling, where the names of all the thirty six pre-schools were written on pieces of paper, folded and then mixed together in a small box, then twenty percent of

the pre- school were picked randomly Mugenda and Mugenda (1999). Eight pre-schools, one head teacher, one pre-school teacher and one parent from each sampled school were be used to provide the necessary data.

3.5 Instruments

These were the tools which were used by the researcher to collect data from the sampled respondents who included; head teachers, pre-school teachers and parents. Research instrument are measurement tools designed to obtain data from a sampled population on a topic of interest from research subjects, (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). The researcher used various instruments to collect data from the respondents which included; interviews and questionnaires

3.5.1 Interview schedules

According to Kothari (2004) interview schedule is a research methodology technique which allows probing and helps to get in depth information to answer research questions.

The researcher used interviews to collect data from the sampled parents in each sampled pre-school in the division. The method was used to collect the data from the parents on the language used at home by the pre-school children and the parent's perception of mother tongue as a language of instruction in pre-schools.

3.5.2 Questionnaires

Questionnaires were used by the researcher to collect the data from head teachers and pre-school teachers from the sampled pre-schools. Head teachers provided data on the school language of instruction, role of mother tongue as a medium of instructions in school while pre-school teachers provided data on language of instructions used in

and out of class and their perception of mother tongue as a language of instruction in the classroom. The advantage of using this method was that as the researcher administered the questionnaires had an opportunity to establish a rapport and also explained to the respondent the aim of the research. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) urged that questionnaires are better used to measure perceptions values and behaviour of people. The researcher employed closed-headed questionnaires to collect the data from both pre-school teachers and head teachers of the sampled schools.

3.6 Validity and reliability

Validity refers to how well a test tool measures what is supposed to measure while reliability is the degree to which an assessment tool produces stable and consisted results, Mugenda and Mugenda (1999).

Validity and reliability required piloting of research instrument to test their workability before the researcher went to the field to collect the data using them.

3.6.1 Validity

Validity refers to how well test tools measures what they were expected to measure while reliability referred to the technical soundness of a research, Orodho (2003) it is the degree to which obtained results from analysis of the data actually represents phenomenon under study. It tried to establish whether the results obtained meet all the requirement of the scientific research method.

It included instruments validity, which referred to the extent to which an instrument was supposed to measure. In this study, the researcher piloted the instruments before administration them to the respondents using test re-test method using a few sampled pre-schools to test their workability.

On internal validity which involved truthfulness or falseness of the findings, the researcher ensured that items in the research instruments reflected research questions.

The researcher compared the objectives of the study with the questionnaires and the interview schedule to ensure that they answer the research questions. The site of the study was well identified, proper research designs used and data collection procedure well followed. On external validity which refers to the extent to which the research findings can be generalized, the researcher ensured that the internal validity is observed which will result into expected good external validity. Mugenda and Mugenda (1999)

3.6.2 Reliability

It refers to the degree of consistency between two or more instruments addressing the same problem. That means, other researchers can be able to carry out the same study under the same conditions and generate the same results (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). To maintain reliability in this study the researcher used test -retest technique where the researcher used instruments under the same conditions to collect data from a few respondents twice after an interval of one week and then compare the findings of the first and second administering. If the findings agree, then the instrument was taken as reliable. The researcher calculated correlation co-efficiency of the two administrations to test reliability (Orodho, 1998).

3.7 Procedure for data collection

After preparing the research instruments, the researcher sought permit from the national council of research, science and technology through introductory letter from the University of Nairobi. Then a clearance to carry out the research study was obtained from the sub county district commissioner's. Permission from the relevant authorities which includes Embu county educational office, Mbeere south educational office, DICECE office, District staffing office, Area educational office and Head teachers from my school and the sampled schools. Then after getting permission the researcher visited all the sampled pre-schools to deliver the questionnaires to head teachers and pre-school teachers due for collection on the agreed date after they had filled the necessary data, as well as booking interview schedules for the sampled parents in various schools. Then as the researcher delivered the questionnaires, he elaborated to the respondent the aim of the research and also answered the question which respondent had.

3.8 Data analysis

This is deriving meaning from the data collected by the researcher. It included sorting, editing, coding, processing and cleaning the collected data. The data collected was organized along research objectives so as to attach themes to it. Both percentages and frequencies procedures were used to analyze the data. The researcher used tables and figures to provide interpretation of data quantitatively and attach meaning to the data as he presented the results qualitatively.

3.9 Ethical concerns

Before the researcher started carrying out the study, he sought permission from relevant offices. He assured the respondents and those involved such as the DEO, AEO, DICECE officers, Head teachers and parents that the research is purely educational and assured them confidentiality and protection of all the participants. He assured them that all the data collected was to be kept confidentially and considerations were to be made to protect human rights and ensure that the participants suffer no harm from the research process or the outcomes. The responses and the identity of respondent were held with confidentiality and they were not allowed to write their names on the questionnaires. The filled in questionnaires will be locked in a briefcase and only researcher was able to access them.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data analysis of the research findings. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and presented in frequencies, percentages and in a tabular form. The study findings were broken down into various sub-themes which included questionnaires respondents return rate, interview schedules accessible rate from pre-school parents, results from head teachers and pre-school teachers as recorded on the questionnaires based on research objectives or research questions. Results from pre-school parents interview schedules which were also based on research objectives as presented in chapter one are given in tabular form as presented in chapter one.

4.2 Questionnaires response rate

The target population of the study was thirty six public pre-schools with an enrolment of seven hundred and twenty children. The researcher took 20% of the target population to come up with the sample size which was (7.2%) or 8 pre-schools. During data collection, 8 head teachers, 8 pre-school teachers managed to fill the questionnaires whereby a response of 100% was attained. Eight (8) parents from the eight sampled pre-schools were interviewed by the researcher and a response rate of 100% was attained. That means that the response rate of 100% for the study was attained which was enough for data analysis and interpretation.

4.3 Background information of the participants

a) Table 4.1 presents the percentage of the respondent's in terms of gender

Table 4.1: Gender of respondents

| Category | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Male | 9 | 37.5 |
| Female | 15 | 62.5 |
| Total | 24 | 100 |

The data presented in Table 4.1 shows the gender of respondents. Based on the analysis of the findings, it is evident that majority of the participants were females who accounted for 62.5% (n=15), while the male were 37.5% (n=9). Hence it was concluded that majority of those who participated in providing the data were females.

b) Table 4.2 presents the age brackets of the respondents.

Table 4.2: Respondents' age brackets

| Category | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| 18-25 | 2 | 9.3 |
| 26-30 | 9 | 37.5 |
| 31-35 | 4 | 16.7 |
| 35-40 | 1 | 4.2 |
| Above 40 | 8 | 33.3 |
| Total | 24 | 100 |

The analysis in table 4.2 shows the age brackets of the respondents. According to the analysis of the findings majority of the respondents 37.5%, (n =9), were aged between (26-30) years, while 4.2% (n=1) were (35-40) years who had the least percentage. From the findings of the study it was concluded that majority of the respondents were aged between (26-30) years.

c) Table 4.3 Presents data on the academic background of the respondents

Table 4.3: Respondents' highest academic level

| Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Below KCSE | 5 | 20.8 |
| KCSE certificate | 9 | 37.5 |
| Diploma | 7 | 29.2 |
| Degree | 3 | 12.5 |
| Total | 24 | 100 |

The data presented in the table 4.3 shows that the majority of the respondents 37.5%, (n=9), had the highest academic level of KCSE certificate. They were followed closely by 29.2%, (n=7), who had a Diploma as their highest academic level while 12.5%, (n=3) had attained degree level of education.

4.4 Data presentation and interpretation

The findings of the study were presented as per each objective of the study.

4.4.1 Objective number one sought to establish the influence of the home language on pre-school children’s performance in the English language in Gachoka Division Embu County. The findings are presented in tables 4.4, 4.4 and 4.6

Table 4.4: Home language environment: Headteachers responses

| Category | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly disagree | 0 | 0 |
| Disagree | 1 | 12.5 |
| Neutral | 0 | 0 |
| Agree | 4 | 50 |
| Strongly agree | 3 | 37.5 |
| Total | 8 | 100 |

The analysis presented in the table 4.4 shows that majority of respondents that is Headteachers 50%, (n=4) and 37.5, (n=3) agreed that home language or mother tongue contributes positively towards acquisition of the English language which later on help to improve the performance of the pre-school children’s English language. According to Aunola et al (2004), home language environment is significantly related to young children’s oral language ability and words decoding. Creating home language environment where children are exposed to and encouraged to explore literacy materials with parents can be a predictor of academic success.

Table 4.5: Home language environment: Pre-school teacher's responses

| Category | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly disagree | 0 | 0 |
| Disagree | 1 | 12.5 |
| Neutral | 0 | 0 |
| Agree | 5 | 62.5 |
| Strongly agree | 2 | 25 |
| Total | 8 | 100 |

The analysis presented in the Table 4.5 shows that majority of the respondents 62.5% (n=5) and 25%, (n= 2) agreed that as children join pre-school, they are fluent in home language and therefore teaching and learning should be done in pre-schools using that home language rather than English. According to Hill (2001), initiatives focusing on building positive parent-child relationship and enhancing readiness related aspects of home environment influence child's achievement in language acquisition.

Table 4.6 presents pre-school parents responses on home language environment of pre-school children.

Table 4.6: Home language environment: Pre-school parents response

| Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Yes | 6 | 75 |
| No | 2 | 25 |
| Total | 8 | 100 |

The analysis presented in the table 4.6 shows that the majority of the pre-school parents 75%, (n=6) agreed that as children join pre-school, they are fluent in mother tongue, since it is the language of their catchment area. According to Leseman (1998), home literacy environment factors determine children’s school literacy achievements.

Combining expose to a good home literacy environment with co-construction opportunities in home language influences child academic performance in pre-schools. He contends that creating a home environment where children are exposed to and encouraged to explore literacy materials with parents can be a predictor of academic success, especially, in English. Initiatives focusing on building positive parents- child relationships and enhancing readiness related aspects of the home environment have the potential to influence children’s readiness and later school achievements especially in English language.

4.4.2 Objective number two sought to determine the influence of the school language of instructions on pre-school children’s performance in the English language in Gachoka Division Embu County. The findings are presented in form of tables and charts.

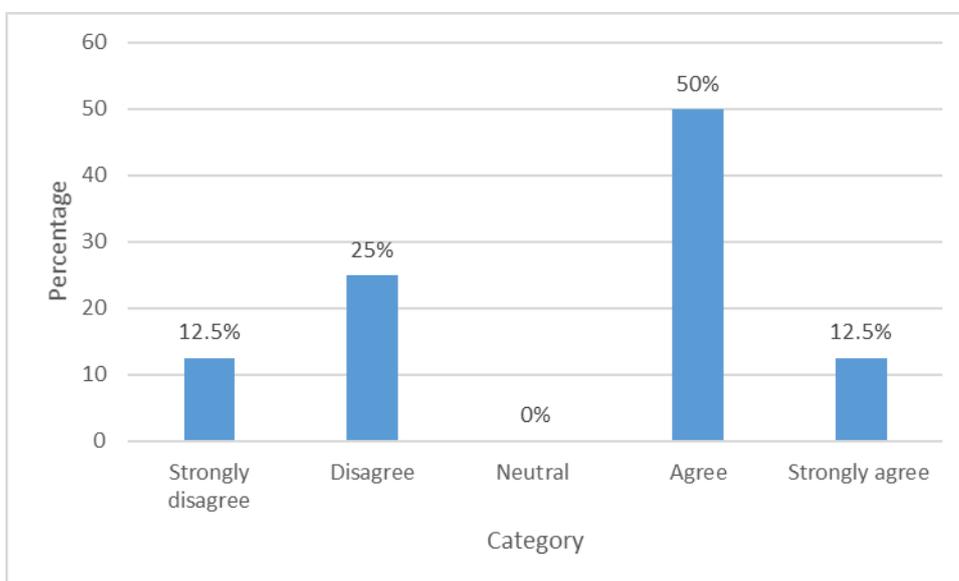
Table 4.7: Language of instructions: Head-teachers’ responses

| Category | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly disagree | 1 | 12.5 |
| Disagree | 2 | 25 |
| Neutral | 0 | 0 |
| Agree | 4 | 50 |
| Strongly agree | 1 | 12.5 |
| Total | 8 | 100 |

The analysis presented on the table 4.7 shows that the majority of respondents agreed 50% (n=4) and strongly agreed 12.5% (n=1), which totals to 62.5%, (n=5). That means majority of respondents agreed that use of mother tongue in pre-schools help children to acquire and perform better in the English Language.

Cummins (2000) asserts that children who come to school with a strong foundation in their mother tongue develop strong literacy abilities in the school language. When parents and other caregivers participate in developing children’s mother tongue at home, children come to school well prepared to learn school language since their knowledge and skills transfer across the two languages. Both languages nurture each other.

Figure 4.1: Language of instructions: Pre-school teachers’ responses



The analysis presented on the Figure 4.1 shows that majority of the respondents 50% (n=24) agreed that English is emphasized in schools as a language of instructions which may impact negatively on pre-school children’s performance in the English language.

According to Ellis (2010), as children join pre-school, they bring with them rich experiences in various areas and knowledge of language of their catchment area other than English. Therefore they need to be assisted to acquire English since it is the school language of instruction in the school.

Table 4.8: Language of instructions responses: Pre-school parents' responses

| Category | Frequency | percentages |
|-----------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Mother tongue | 1 | 12.5 |
| English | 6 | 75 |
| L1 and L2 | 1 | 12.5 |
| Total | 8 | 100 |

The data presented in Table 4.8 shows that the majority of the parents 75%, (n=6) prefer English being used as a language of instructions in pre-school classroom. According to Baker, (2000), when children continue to develop their abilities in two or more languages, it helps them gain deeper understanding of language and how to use it effectively. Cummius (2000) asserts that the level of child's mother tongue is a strong predictor of their second language development. Skutnub (2000) asserts that it helps to develop not only the mother tongue but also child's ability in the school language i.e. English. Both languages are interdependent. They nurture each other when educational environment permits children to access both languages. Cummius (2000) asserts that teachers need to encourage pre-school children to use mother tongue in addition to English while in the school. According to him, rejecting a child's language in the school is to reject the child.

4.4.3 Objective number three sought to examine parents and teachers perception of the mother tongue as a medium of instructions on pre-school children's performance in the English language in Gachoka Division Embu County. The findings are presented in the Table 4.9, 4.10, 4.11 and Figure 4.2.

Table 4.9(a): Teachers perception of mother tongue: Head teacher's responses

| Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Strongly disagree | 0 | 0 |
| Disagree | 2 | 25 |
| Neutral | 0 | 0 |
| Agree | 4 | 50 |
| Strongly agree | 2 | 25 |
| Total | 8 | 100 |

The analysis presented in the Table 4.9(a) shows that the majority of teachers 50%, (n=4) agreed that English should be used in pre-schools as a language of instructions. They believed that English is superior to mother tongue as a medium of instructions. That means that teachers perception of mother tongue as a language of instructions in pre-schools is negative.

According to Kangas 91995), children perform better whenr taught in mother tongue, although majority of teachers have a negative attitude towards it. According to research by UNESCO, children are better placed to become literate when they first start learning using mother tongue.

Table 4.9(b): Parents' perception of mother tongue: Head teacher's responses

| Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| Positive | 2 | 25 |
| Neutral | 1 | 12.5 |
| Positive | 5 | 62.5 |
| Total | 8 | 100 |

The analysis in Table 4.9(b) shows that majority of pre-school parents 62.5% (n=5) have a negative perception of mother tongue as a language of instruction in pre-schools. According to Abiri (1976), use of mother tongue as a language of instruction in schools promotes cultural heritage, bridge the school and home gap and children learn best using it though most of parents' perception is negative.

Table 4.10(a): Parents perception of mother tongue: Pre-school teacher's responses

| Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 0 | 0 |
| Disagree | 1 | 12.5 |
| Neutral | 0 | 0 |
| Agree | 4 | 50 |
| Strongly agree | 3 | 37.5 |
| Total | 8 | 100 |

The analysis presented in Table 4.10(a) shows that majority of respondents agreed 50% (n=4) and strongly agreed 37.5% (n=3) that most parents prefer English being used as a language of instructions in pre-schools and their perception of mother tongue is negative. Majority of teachers and parents believed that use of mother tongue limits Childs learning horizon and hinders them exposure to the outside world.

Parents' regard use of mother as a means of hindering their children from progress and career (Ellis, 2010). Mother tongue is considered as a marker of ethnic identity and in the school and it makes children to remain backwards academically.

Table 4.10(b): Teachers' perception of mother tongue: Pre-school teachers responses

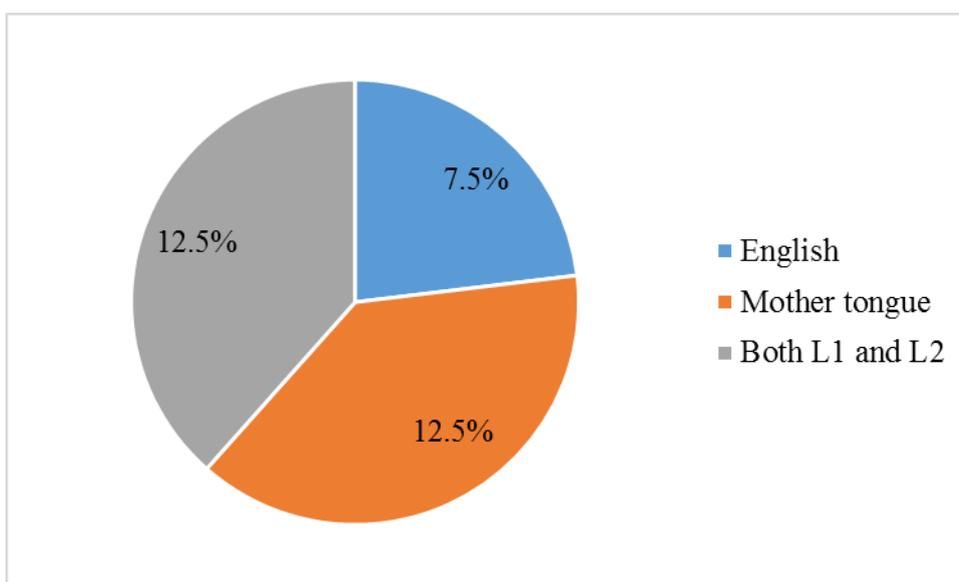
| Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Positive | 3 | 37.5 |
| Negative | 4 | 50 |
| Both | 1 | 12.5 |
| Total | 8 | 100 |

The analysis presented on Table 4.10(b) shows that majority of respondents 50% (n=4) had a negative perception of mother tongue as language of instructions. They argued that it limits child learning horizon and more so in the universal language of instruction that is English. Research by Abiri (1976) in Nigeria found that parents prefer their children be taught in English since it is a language of wider communication unlike mother tongue.

Table 4.11: Preschool parent’s perception of mother tongue responses

| Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------|-----------|------------|
| English | 6 | 7.5 |
| Mother tongue | 1 | 12.5 |
| Both L1 and L2 | 1 | 12.5 |
| Total | 8 | 100 |

Figure 4.2: Preschool parents’ perception of mother tongue responses



The analysis presented in Table 4.11 and Figure 4.2 shows that majority of pre-school parents perception of mother tongue 75%, (n=6) is negative. The majority of them prefer English being used as a language of instruction in pre-school. They argued that use of mother tongue limit child’s learning horizon and hinders them exposure to the outside world.

According to Abiri (1976), colonial education was imposed on the African natives using English to suit the interests of the providers. Fafunwa (1976) viewed colonial education using English as educating people out of their environment in terms of language of instructions. Abiri (1976) contends that use of mother tongue as a language of instruction in Pre-schools Bridge the school and the home gap. Children learn best using their Mother tongue. It makes child's learning easier and exposes him or her to a wider scope of experiences which support learning through a foreign language (English) faster in life. Mohanlal (2001) asserts that use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction is both demanding and expensive. It requires a lot of resources written in mother tongue and trained teachers, which mostly are not there since those available are written in English.

4.4.4 Objective number four sought to evaluate the implementation of the educational language policy in Kenya on pre-school children's performance in the English language in Gachoka Division Embu County

The findings are presented in tables 4.12, 4.13 and 14.

Table 4.12: Language policy in Kenya: Head teachers' responses

| Category | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly disagree | 0 | 0 |
| Disagree | 1 | 12.5 |
| Neutral | 0 | 0 |
| Agree | 4 | 50 |
| Strongly agree | 3 | 37.5 |
| Totals | 8 | 100 |

The findings presented in Table 4.12 indicate that the majority of the respondents 50% (n=4) and 37.5% (n=3) agreed and strongly agreed that head-teachers in Gachoka Division are aware of the educational language policy in Kenya. They also agreed that most of the educational stakeholders in the division are not aware of the language policy. They agreed that the language policy is not well implemented in the division.

According to Session Paper No.14 of 2012 by the Ministry of Education (Kenya), language of catchment area, mother tongue should be used for child care, pre-primary and lower primary education.

Table 4.13: Language policy in Kenya: Pre-school teachers' responses

| Category | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly disagree | 0 | 0 |
| Disagree | 2 | 25 |
| Neutral | 0 | 0 |
| Agree | 4 | 50 |
| Strongly agree | 2 | 25 |
| Totals | 8 | 100 |

The analysis in Table 4.13 shows that the majority of the respondents agreed 50% (n=4) and strongly agreed 25%, (n=2) that they were aware of the educational language policy in Kenya which recommends mother tongue to be used as a language of instruction in pre-schools. They agreed that the policy is tilted in some pre-schools in the division in favour of English as a language of instructions and also due to language diversity especially in some cosmopolitan areas within the division.

Kobia (2007) argues that mother tongue is important in cognitive, linguistic personal and educational development of a child. According to UNESCO (1953:46), mother tongue is a child's instrument of thought and communication and so need to be used as a language of instruction in formative years of a child.

Table 4.14: Language policy in Kenya: Parents' responses

| Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Yes | 2 | 25 |
| No | 6 | 75 |
| Total | 8 | 100 |

The analysis presented in Table 4.14 shows that the majority of the respondents 75%, (n=6) agreed that they were not aware of the educational language policy in pre-schools in Kenya. They preferred English being used as a language of instructions rather than mother tongue in pre-schools.

On parents' interview, they were very positive towards answering the questions. They were of the opinion that by the time children join pre-school, they are competent in the language of their catchment area. They were also of the opinion that English should be used a language of instruction and they had a negative perception of mother tongue being used as a language of instruction in pre-schools. They also agreed that they were not aware of the educational language policy in Kenya and they need to be sensitized about it.

According to UNESCO (2008), children are better placed to become literate easily when they start learning using their first language (L1) mother tongue and then gradually move to the second language policy (L2) or English. Kenya educational language policy recommends children in pre-schools being taught using the language of their catchment area (Njoroge, 2006).

According to the session paper no. (14 of 2012) by the ministry of education in Kenya says that the language of the catchment area that is mother tongue should be used for child care, pre-primary and lower primary children's education. In spite of that, language policy in Kenya continues to be tilted in favour of English, Kabia (2007).

According to professor Kaimenyi (2013), education cabinet secretary in Kenya, teaching and learning in formative years of a child should be done using the language of the catchment area i.e. Mother tongue, which helps to ensure smooth transition from home to the school environment for the first time school goers.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter gives the summary of the findings generated from the data analyzed, based on objectives of the study. It also presents the conclusions drawn from the data analysis and also gives recommendations for different stakeholders on what they can do to improve the educational outcomes of pre-school children in terms of performance in the English language in the division. Further research was also given which indicated the areas of the problems which require further investigations which were not covered in the study.

5.2 Summary of the findings

The summary of the findings summarizes in brief the outcomes of the data analysis which cuts across all the four objectives of the study. According to the data analyzed the researcher found that:

As children join pre-school, they are competent in the language of the catchment area for example mother tongue or L1. Teachers agreed that mother tongue contributes positively towards acquisitions of English language. They also agreed that teaching and learning is best done in pre-schools using mother tongue, skills gained using mother tongue can be transferred to English. Both languages that is mother tongue (L1) and English (L2) nurture each other. L1 boost children's self-esteem and confidence. Combining L1 and L2 produces best performance in the English language among pre-schools children. Most pre-school parents argued that English should be used as a language of instructions in pre-schools. They also believe that L2 is superior

to L1 and so should be used when teaching pre-school children. Majority of pre-school teachers and parents have a negative attitude towards use of L1 as a language of instructions. They were of the opinion that L1 limits child's learning horizon and hinders children's exposure to the rest of the world. Majority of teachers were aware of pre-school children's language policy in Kenya while parents, community and other educational stakeholders were not aware of the education language policy in Kenya. Language policy is not well implemented in Gachoka Division, Embu County.

5.3 Conclusions

Home language or mother tongue (L1) should be used when teaching and learning is taking place in pre-schools because it helps the children to acquire and understand various skills easily. It helps them to learn English language easily since skills gained using L1 can be transferred to L2 since both languages, that is L1 and L2 nurture each other. The main language of instruction in pre-schools is mother tongue together with a bit of English. This helps children to learn English easily and combining of L1 and L2 produces best performance in the pre-school children performance in the English language. There are no teaching and learning resources in pre-schools written in L1 and majority of parents like L2 to be used as a school language of instructions.

On perception of L1 as a language of instructions both teachers and parents have a negative attitude towards use of L1. They prefer L2 which they argue that it is superior to L1 which limits child's learning horizon and hinders them from exposure to the rest of the world since most of the learning resources are written in English or L2. On education language policy majority of teachers are aware about it unlike parents, community and other education stakeholders who are not aware about it.

The policy is not fully implemented in the Division due to lack of resources written in L1 and negative attitude towards L1 by pre-school teachers, parents and other educational stakeholders.

5.4 Recommendations for different stakeholders

- a) Parents should use grammatically correct mother tongue as they socialize with their children when at home. They should be reading story books to children written in mother tongue, expose children to reading materials when at home, ensure children use the language they familiar with when at home or at school, ensure children command the home language before joining pre-schools to have a positive attitude towards use of mother tongue by children whether at home or in the school. Buy learning resources for their children written in mother tongue. Use one common language when at home if there are any ethnic language differences among the parents to avoid confusing the children.
- b) Pre-school teachers should ensure mother tongue is used when teaching and learning is taking place in pre-schools. Be familiar with the educational language policy in Kenya. Labeling of teaching and learning resources be written in both mother tongue and English. Have a positive attitude towards use of mother tongue as a language of instructions in the pre-schools. Sensitize parents on educational language policy in Kenya and it importance. Ensure the language used in teaching and learning in the classroom all the pre-school children are familiar in it.

- c) The Head teachers should ensure mother tongue is used when teaching and learning is taking place in pre-schools and lower primary. Sensitize parents and other educational stakeholders on importance of mother tongue. Be familiar with the educational language policy in Kenya. Ensure there are teaching and learning resources written in mother tongue. Instill positive attitude towards use of mother tongue in pre-schools to pre-school teachers, parents and other educational stakeholders. Sensitize parents and other educational stakeholders on education language policy in Kenya.
- d) The ministry of education should ensure that there is proper monitoring in pre-schools on the implementation of the educational language policy in Kenya. Create awareness to other educational stakeholders on educational language policy in Kenya. Mother tongue should be taught as a subject in the whole primary school system. Sensitize head teachers, teachers, parents and other educational stakeholders on the importance of mother tongue as a language of instructions in pre-schools. Ensure that all pre-schools in Kenya have educational language policy guidelines. Prepare forums to sensitize teachers and other educational stakeholders on educational language policy in Kenya. Prepare teaching and learning resources written in mother tongue depending on the child's catchment area.

5.5 Further research

According to the researcher, areas of the research study which may require further investigations because they were not covered in this study were that:

- Investigations need to be made on why some pre-school teachers are not competent in mother tongue and how they can be assisted to acquire the skills of teaching that language. Children's attitude towards use of L1 and L2 needs to be investigated and recommendation given.
- Lack of teaching and learning resources written in mother tongue in pre-school and the policy recommends L1 to be used as a language of instruction in pre-schools.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Questionnaire for headteachers

This questionnaire is designed to collect data on influence of mother tongue on pre-school children's performance in the English language in Gachoka Division Embu County. You are kindly requested to mark the appropriate response to the best of your ability. Your name and that of the school should not appear anywhere on this questionnaire. The information you will give will be confidential and will only be used for the purpose of this study.

Please tick the number that best describes your feelings on home language, school language of instruction, parents and teacher's perception of mother tongue and school language policy in Kenya on preschool children's performance in English language in Gachoka Division Embu county. The number represents the following response

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

| | Home language (mother tongue) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Home language (mother tongue) make child to be fluent in speaking | | | | | |
| 2 | Home language assist child to acquire English and other skills easily in school | | | | | |
| 3 | Home language contribute positively towards acquisition of L2 | | | | | |
| 4 | Language skills acquired in L1 by a child can be used to acquire L2 easily | | | | | |
| 5 | Use of L1 in school makes children more competent in school | | | | | |
| | School language of instructions | | | | | |
| 6 | English as a language of instruction is better than mother tongue in pre-schools | | | | | |
| 7 | Children in school prefer using L2 as they play | | | | | |
| 8 | Language of instruction in the school is L2 | | | | | |
| 9 | Teachers prefer using L2 than L1 when teaching in the classroom | | | | | |
| 10 | Use of L2 help children to learn and acquire skills easily | | | | | |
| 11 | Children perform better in school when they use both L1 and L2 when learning | | | | | |
| | <u>Teachers and parents perception of mother tongue as a language of instruction</u> | | | | | |
| 12 | Most parents prefer L1 being used as a medium of instructions | | | | | |
| 13 | Most parents prefer L2 being used as a medium of instructions | | | | | |
| 14 | Parents and teachers think L2 is superior to L1 and should be used as a medium of instruction | | | | | |
| 15 | Parents prefer their children being taught using L2 | | | | | |
| 16 | Most parents think use of L2 depict superiority of colonial masters culture | | | | | |
| 17 | Most teachers are not competent in L1 and so prefer teaching | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|----|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | using L2 | | | | | |
| | <u>Educational language policy in Kenya</u> | | | | | |
| 18 | Head teachers are familiar with education language policy in Kenya | | | | | |
| 19 | Most pre-school teachers are not aware about language policy in pre-schools | | | | | |
| 20 | Most of parents are not aware of language policy in schools | | | | | |
| 21 | Community and most educational stakeholders in the Division are not familiar with education language policy in Kenya | | | | | |
| 23 | Education language policy is not well implemented in pre-schools in Gachoka Division Embu county. | | | | | |

NB: L1 – Mother tongue

L2- English language

Appendix II: Questionnaire for pre-school teachers

This questionnaire is meant to give information on relationship between pre-school children`s mother tongue and their performance in English language in Gachoka Division Embu County.

Please answer the questions below to the best of your ability. Tick where applicable.

Please tick the number that best describe your feelings on home language environment, school language of instructions, Teachers and parents perception of mother tongue as language of instructions and Educational language policy in Kenya.

The numbers represent the following responses.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

| | Home language environment | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|----|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | As children join pre-school they are fluent in mother tongue | | | | | |
| 2. | Pre-school parents prefer talking to their children using mother tongue at home | | | | | |
| 3. | Teaching and learning is best done in pre-schools using mother tongue | | | | | |
| 4. | Teachers prefer using English when teaching pre-school children | | | | | |
| 5. | Mother tongue strengthen's pre-school child self – esteem and confidence | | | | | |
| 6. | Skills gained using L1 and can be transferred to L2 languages | | | | | |
| 7. | Both L1 and L2 languages nurture each other in school | | | | | |
| 8. | Children prefer doing activities in school using L1 | | | | | |
| | School language of instruction | | | | | |
| 9 | L2 is emphasized in school than L1 as a medium of instructions | | | | | |
| 10 | There are no T/L resources in school written using L1 | | | | | |
| 11 | Using L1 and L2 in class produces better performance in class | | | | | |
| 12 | Children prefer using L1 than L2 when playing and socializing | | | | | |
| 13 | Pre-school parents prefer English to be used as a language of instruction in pre-schools | | | | | |
| 14 | Pre-schools teachers use L2 when labeling learning materials | | | | | |
| | Teachers and parents perception of mother tongue as a language of instruction | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|----|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 15 | Parents view L2 as a language of power and success to their children's future life | | | | | |
| 16 | Most parents and teachers have a negative attitude towards use of L1 as a medium of instructions in pre-schools | | | | | |
| 17 | Most parents and teachers think L2 is superior to L1 | | | | | |
| 18 | Use of L1 limits child's learning horizon | | | | | |
| 19 | Use of mother tongue hinders child from exposure to the rest of the world | | | | | |
| 20 | Most education stakeholders have a negative attitude towards L1 | | | | | |
| | Education language policy | | | | | |
| 21 | Education language policy in Kenya prefer L1 being used as a language of instructions in pre-schools | | | | | |
| 22 | Most pre-school teachers are aware of language policy | | | | | |
| 23 | Most of the parents are not aware of pre-school language policy | | | | | |
| 24 | Language policy in Kenya is tilted in favour of L2 in most pre-schools | | | | | |
| 25 | Implementation of educational language policy in Kenya is a challenge due to language diversity in cosmopolitan areas | | | | | |

NB: L1 – Mother tongue

L2- English language

Appendix III: Interview schedule for the parents

This interview schedule is meant to give information on the role of mother tongue on pre-school children`s performance in English Language in Gachoka Division Embu County.

Please answer the questions to the best of your ability and the information you will give will not be disclosed and it will be highly confidential

1. Does your child play activities at home? Give examples
.....
.....
2. What language does he/she use when performing those activities
.....
3. In your opinion, does your child command that language?
.....
.....
4. As a parent what language do you normally use when at home?
.....
5. Do you exchange views with your child at home?
.....
6. What language do you use?
7. Do you read at home?
8. What language do you use?
9. According to you between mother tongue and English language which one would you prefer being used as a language of instruction in the classroom?

.....
.....

10. As children do various activities in school, what language would you prefer to be used?

.....

11. In your opinion which language would you prefer to be used when doing various activities in schools?

.....

12. What are some of the common activities pre-school children involve themselves in while at home which require use of languages?

.....

.....

13. In your opinion which language do you think most of the pre-school parents would prefer being used in the classroom or pre-school as a language of instructions?

.....

.....

14. Are you aware of education language policy in Kenya?

.....

15. If yes, what does it state?

.....

.....

16. Do you expose your children to learning materials at home?

.....

.....
.....

17. Which language is commonly used to write them

.....

18. Do you think it assist children to acquire English language?

.....
.....
.....