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Impact Of Teaching Kuteb Word Categories On Pupils' Reading And Writing Skills In Takum Education Zone, Taraba State

***AMBASHAK, Musa Jeremiah & Prof. HASSAN, Garba**

Department of Art Education
Faculty of Education
Taraba State University, Jalingo, Taraba State, Nigeria
***jeremiahmusajp@gmail.com**

ABSTRACT
This study investigates the impact of teaching Kuteb word categories on the reading and writing skills of primary school pupils in Takum Education Zone, Taraba State. Recognizing the linguistic diversity and cultural specificity of the region, the study explores how structured instruction in Kuteb grammatical categories specifically RINYI (noun), KUTUNN RINYI (pronoun) TITINDE (verb), RIFUFA IRA (adjective), and KOTUB TITINDE (adverb), TITATSO UWOG (preposition), REN IRA (conjunction) and TITISKIB (interjection) affects pupils' literacy development. A quasi-experimental research design was employed, involving 80 Primary Four pupils purposively selected from two comparable public primary schools. The experimental group was exposed to Kuteb word category's instruction over a six-week period, (Ambashak 2025 and Robert Koops 2009), while the control group received conventional grammar instruction in English only. Data were collected using pre- and post-tests in reading comprehension and writing tasks and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that the experimental group recorded significant improvements in both reading and writing scores, with mean gain scores of over 30 points in each area, while the control group recorded minimal gains of less than 3 points. The results affirm Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis, demonstrating that foundational literacy developed in the first language can be transferred to second-language contexts. The findings also support Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, emphasizing that language learning is most effective when situated within a familiar cultural and linguistic framework. The study concludes that teaching indigenous grammatical structures in Kuteb enhances pupils' literacy performance and fosters inclusive, culturally responsive education. It recommends the integration of Kuteb grammar into the early primary curriculum, teacher training in indigenous language pedagogy, and the development of culturally relevant teaching materials to support improved learning outcomes in rural Nigerian communities.
Keywords: Teaching, Kuteb word categories, reading, writing skills

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Language serves as the foundation for all learning processes and is central to the development of literacy skills among early learners. In multilingual societies like Nigeria, the medium of instruction often influences pupils' comprehension, participation, and overall academic performance. While English remains the official language of instruction in Nigerian schools, it is not the first language for many pupils, especially those in rural communities. This discrepancy between the language spoken at home and the language used in the classroom often results in cognitive dissonance, low comprehension, and poor academic performance, particularly in reading and writing. Scholars such as Bamgbose (2019) have argued that the use of English as a medium of instruction from the early stages of education alienates learners from their linguistic environment and hinders effective learning.

The Nigerian National Policy on Education (2013) recognizes the importance of mother tongue in early education and advocates for the use of the learner's native language or the language of the immediate environment in the first three years of primary education. However, despite this policy directive, implementation has remained weak, particularly in linguistically diverse areas such as Taraba State. Kuteb, a prominent indigenous language spoken predominantly in Takum Local Government Area, has rich linguistic features including phonology, morphology, and syntax, which can be harnessed for pedagogical purposes. However, Kuteb is rarely used in classroom instruction, and its grammatical structures are largely neglected in formal educational contexts. This failure to integrate the language of the immediate environment into the curriculum undermines the potential benefits of indigenous language-based instruction (Obanya, 2021).

Several studies have underscored the role of mother tongue instruction in enhancing early literacy development. According to Uzoigwe (2020), the use of indigenous languages in teaching facilitates better comprehension and fosters cognitive development in learners. Children tend to relate more effectively with instructional content when taught in a language they understand, particularly at the early stages of education. Teaching grammatical concepts such as word categories in the mother tongue equips learners with the tools for sentence construction, vocabulary usage, and text comprehension, which are foundational for both reading and writing. Adegbite and Olateju (2021) emphasize that when pupils are taught the structural elements of their native language, such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs, they are more likely to develop syntactic awareness and narrative competence.

Despite these scholarly affirmations, there is a noticeable gap in empirical studies that explore how the teaching of word categories in indigenous languages like Kuteb impacts literacy skills among early learners. Most existing research has focused on general language use in education without examining specific grammatical structures and their cognitive implications. This gap becomes particularly pronounced in regions like Takum Education Zone, where the dominant indigenous language is sidelined in classroom instruction. Given the growing evidence in support of mother tongue instruction, this study seeks to examine the impact of teaching Kuteb word categories on the reading and writing skills of primary school pupils in Takum. The study posits that a structured approach to teaching grammar in Kuteb will significantly improve pupils' literacy outcomes by enabling them to process language more effectively, construct meaningful sentences, and engage with written texts in both Kuteb and English.

Thus, this study is timely and significant as it offers practical insights into the pedagogical advantages of using indigenous grammatical structures in early literacy instruction. By focusing on Kuteb word categories, the study aims to contribute to the growing body of literature advocating for mother tongue education, while also addressing a critical gap in language pedagogy in Taraba State. Ultimately, the findings of this study are expected to influence policy formulation and curriculum development towards the inclusion of indigenous language grammar instruction in early grade education across Nigeria.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to assess the impact of teaching Kuteb word categories on the development of reading and writing skills among primary school pupils in Takum Education Zone, Taraba State.

Specific Objectives

The study seeks to achieve the following specific objectives:

1. To assess the effect of teaching Kuteb word categories on pupils' reading comprehension.
2. To evaluate how teaching Kuteb word categories influences pupils' writing performance.
3. To compare the literacy outcomes of pupils exposed to Kuteb grammar instruction with those taught using only English.

3. Research Questions

The study will be guided by the following research questions:

1. How does teaching Kuteb word categories influence pupils' reading skills?
2. What effect does Kuteb grammar instruction have on pupils' writing skills?
3. Is there a significant difference in literacy performance between pupils taught with Kuteb and those taught with English only?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Clarifications

This section presents and explains two key concepts central to this study: Kuteb Word Categories and Pupils' Literacy Skills. These terms are examined in the context of their relevance to language education and foundational literacy development, particularly among early-grade learners in indigenous language settings such as Takum Education Zone.

2.1.1 Kuteb Word Categories

Word categories, also referred to as parts of speech, are fundamental building blocks of grammar in any language. They categorize words according to their syntactic functions within sentences, including how they relate to other words. Common word categories include nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and pronouns. In the context of this study, focus is placed on four foundational categories— RINYI (noun), TITINDE (verb), RIFUFA IRA (adjective), and KOTUB TITINDE (adverb) —which are essential for constructing meaning in both spoken and written language.

Kuteb, a member of the Niger-Congo language family, has a rich morphological and syntactic system that enables the identification and classification of word categories. The language employs tone, affixation, and vowel harmony to mark grammatical categories. For instance, RINYI (noun) formation in Kuteb often involves the use of specific prefixes or tone shifts that distinguish animate from inanimate subjects. TITINDE (verbs) are typically inflected to indicate tense, aspect, and mood, while RIFUFA IRA (adjectives) and KOTUB TITINDE (adverbs) can be derived from nominal or verbal roots using regular patterns (Blench, 2019). These structural features make Kuteb a viable language for formal grammar instruction.

The teaching of Kuteb word categories involves explicit instruction in how different words function in sentence formation. This includes identifying the role of RINYI (nouns) as naming words, TITINDE (verbs) as action indicators, RIFUFA IRA (adjectives) as descriptors, and KOTUB TITINDE (adverbs) as modifiers of TITINDE (verbs) or other RIFUFA IRA (adjectives). By understanding these functions in Kuteb, pupils gain metalinguistic awareness—the ability to think about and manipulate language which supports reading comprehension and written expression (Adegbite & Olateju, 2021).

In this study, Kuteb word categories refer to the structured grammar lessons delivered to primary school pupils in their native language, focusing on the identification and use of core parts of speech. The concept goes beyond informal use of Kuteb in classroom conversations; it involves systematic instruction aimed at improving pupils' understanding of sentence structure, vocabulary usage, and grammatical coherence. The assumption is that proficiency in Kuteb grammar, especially in the use of word categories, can significantly contribute to the development of foundational literacy skills.

2.1.2 Pupils' Literacy Skills

Literacy is broadly defined as the ability to read and write effectively in a given language. In the context of early childhood education, literacy comprises a range of interrelated skills, including letter recognition, phonemic awareness, vocabulary development, reading fluency, comprehension, and written communication. According to UNESCO (2016), literacy is not merely the mechanical ability to decode symbols but also involves comprehension, interpretation, and meaningful production of written texts. Literacy development at the foundational level is critical for academic success and lifelong learning.

In this study, pupils' literacy skills are operationalized through two primary dimensions: reading comprehension and writing performance. Reading comprehension refers to the ability of pupils to understand, interpret, and respond to written texts in a coherent manner. This includes decoding text, identifying main ideas, understanding vocabulary in context, and drawing inferences. Writing performance, on the other hand, involves the ability to construct grammatically correct, semantically meaningful, and logically organized sentences and paragraphs to communicate ideas effectively.

The development of literacy skills is influenced by several factors, including the language of instruction, the quality of teaching, availability of instructional materials, and the learner's linguistic background. Pupils who are taught in a language they understand are more likely to develop confidence in reading and writing activities. According to Cummins (2000), foundational skills learned in the first language (L1) are transferable to second language (L2) contexts. Therefore, pupils

who understand how to construct sentences in Kuteb are more likely to perform better in English literacy tasks because they already possess a mental framework for grammar and syntax.

In this study, pupils' literacy skills are assessed through pre- and post-tests in reading comprehension and writing tasks administered in a quasi-experimental design. The study aims to measure changes in performance as a result of the intervention—namely, the teaching of Kuteb word categories. Improvement in literacy is expected to manifest in increased test scores, more coherent written texts, and greater ability to identify and apply grammatical structures. Thus, pupils' literacy skills serve both as the dependent variable and the key outcome measure for evaluating the impact of the Kuteb grammar instruction.

2.1.3 The Role of Indigenous Language in Literacy Development

Language serves as the primary tool for human communication and cognitive processing, and it plays a critical role in learning and literacy acquisition. In the context of education, literacy involves the development of skills in reading and writing, both of which are shaped by a learner's linguistic environment. There is substantial evidence that initial literacy instruction in a child's mother tongue facilitates comprehension, encourages active participation, and improves academic performance. According to UNESCO (2016), using the mother tongue in early education enhances pupils' understanding of key concepts and promotes cognitive flexibility. This perspective is supported by Bamgbose (2019), who contends that indigenous languages are not just tools of communication but are also repositories of cultural knowledge and expressions that children bring into the classroom.

In Nigeria, the National Policy on Education (2013) mandates the use of the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community for instruction at the early stages of education. However, implementation of this policy remains limited, particularly in rural areas such as Takum in Taraba State. Despite the dominance of Kuteb in the region, its formal use in classrooms is rare. This neglect undermines pupils' potential for improved literacy performance, especially considering that language comprehension precedes and facilitates reading and writing proficiency. Children taught in a language they understand are more likely to engage with texts, construct meaningful sentences, and demonstrate creativity in their written expressions (Obanya, 2021).

Uzoigwe (2020) examined the impact of using mother tongue in instruction and found that students taught in their first language performed significantly better in reading comprehension tests than those taught in a second language. The study further indicated that when pupils are allowed to think and express themselves in a familiar language, they exhibit increased confidence and motivation to learn. These findings are relevant for communities like Takum, where the use of English-only instruction may serve as a barrier to learning. Incorporating Kuteb into the classroom, particularly for grammar instruction, could bridge this gap and create a more inclusive and effective learning environment.

2.1.4 Teaching Grammar and Word Categories in Early Literacy

Grammar instruction forms the foundation of language education, especially in early literacy development. One of the core aspects of grammar is the teaching of word categories, also known as parts of speech, which include nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Mastery of these categories enables learners to construct meaningful sentences, comprehend written texts, and write with clarity and purpose. According to Adegbite and Olateju (2021), understanding word categories improves pupils' syntactic awareness—their ability to understand sentence structure and how words function within a sentence. This understanding is critical for both decoding texts (reading) and encoding thoughts (writing).

Despite its importance, grammar instruction is often delivered exclusively in English, which may pose challenges for learners who are not yet proficient in the language. This is particularly true for pupils in rural Nigeria, who may have minimal exposure to English outside the school environment. Research by Oyetade (2021) revealed that pupils perform better when grammar is taught in a language they understand. The study demonstrated that pupils who learned parts of speech in their native language showed increased sentence construction ability and a more robust vocabulary, both of which are essential for literacy development.

In the case of Kuteb, a Niger-Congo language with a distinct morphological system, its grammatical structure can be strategically leveraged for teaching reading and writing skills. Kuteb distinguishes between different word categories using prefixes, suffixes, and tonal patterns, providing a rich framework for formal grammar instruction. Unfortunately, the pedagogical use of Kuteb grammar has not been explored widely, leaving a gap in both linguistic education and cultural preservation. By

focusing on teaching Kuteb word categories, this study responds to the call by linguists such as Blench (2019), who emphasized the need for indigenous language grammars to be incorporated into early childhood education curricula.

2.1.5 Indigenous Grammar Instruction and Literacy Outcomes

There is a growing body of empirical literature highlighting the positive correlation between indigenous grammar instruction and literacy outcomes. Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis (2000) posits that proficiency in a first language provides a foundation upon which additional languages can be acquired. Therefore, pupils who learn grammatical rules in Kuteb are likely to transfer this knowledge to English, thereby enhancing their overall linguistic competence. This cross-linguistic transfer occurs because foundational cognitive and metalinguistic skills are not language-specific but are transferable across languages. For instance, understanding how to identify a noun in Kuteb can help pupils identify and use nouns effectively in English.

A study by Akinnaso (2020) on Yoruba-speaking pupils revealed that those who received structured grammar instruction in Yoruba outperformed their peers in English reading and writing assessments. The study emphasized that teaching word categories in the mother tongue enables learners to internalize the rules of sentence formation, which facilitates literacy acquisition across multiple languages. The implication is that Kuteb-speaking pupils in Takum could achieve similar literacy gains if exposed to structured grammar instruction in their native language.

Moreover, indigenous grammar instruction contributes to cultural affirmation and linguistic pride, which are essential for identity formation and academic self-efficacy. Pupils who see their language validated in formal education are more likely to participate actively and value their schooling experience. This aligns with the findings of Obanya (2021), who argues that neglecting indigenous languages in education alienates learners and undermines their sense of belonging. In contrast, integrating local languages fosters inclusivity, preserves cultural heritage, and improves educational outcomes.

Despite these benefits, few studies have focused specifically on teaching word categories in Kuteb or similar minority languages in Northern Nigeria. Most research has examined mother tongue instruction in more widely spoken languages like Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa. This study addresses this gap by evaluating how the teaching of Kuteb word categories affects literacy development among primary school pupils. The findings are expected to provide evidence-based recommendations for educational stakeholders, including curriculum developers, language policy makers, and teacher training institutions.

2.1.6 Challenges and Gaps in Implementation

While the theoretical and empirical foundations for mother tongue instruction are robust, practical implementation faces several challenges. These include lack of instructional materials, inadequate teacher training, and societal attitudes that prioritize English over indigenous languages. Many teachers in rural areas are not adequately trained to teach using the local language or are themselves products of English-only education systems. Additionally, there is a shortage of textbooks and teaching aids written in indigenous languages such as Kuteb.

Blench (2019) notes that despite the linguistic richness of Nigerian communities, language planning has failed to include minority languages in educational policy implementation. This is further exacerbated by the lack of government investment in the documentation and standardization of such languages for pedagogical use. Until these structural barriers are addressed, the full potential of mother tongue education will remain unrealized.

Nonetheless, the success stories from regions that have implemented mother tongue education effectively offer hope. Countries like Ethiopia and Mozambique have recorded improved literacy rates following the adoption of indigenous languages as media of instruction in early education. Nigeria, with its diverse linguistic landscape, stands to benefit greatly from similar reforms. The present study on Kuteb language instruction represents a step in this direction, providing empirical insight into how structured indigenous grammar teaching can improve pupils' reading and writing performance.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation of this study rests on two well-established theories in language education and cognitive development: Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Cognitive Development. These theories collectively provide insight into how

the use of Kuteb word categories as a medium of instruction can enhance pupils' reading and writing skills by building on their linguistic, social, and cognitive experiences.

Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis

Cummins' (1981, 2000) Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis asserts that there is an underlying cognitive and academic proficiency that is common across languages, and that skills acquired in one language can be transferred to another. This theory is particularly relevant in bilingual or multilingual contexts where learners are expected to function in more than one language, as is the case in Nigerian classrooms.

According to Cummins, once a child has developed a sufficient level of literacy in their first language (L1), they can transfer those skills such as vocabulary knowledge, syntactic awareness, and metalinguistic skills to a second language (L2). This transfer occurs because literacy is not merely a function of language-specific input, but of broader cognitive-linguistic skills that are applicable across languages. For example, understanding how nouns and verbs function in Kuteb can help pupils apply similar grammatical understanding when learning to read and write in English.

In the context of this study, Cummins' theory supports the idea that teaching Kuteb word categories will strengthen the linguistic competence of pupils in a familiar language, which in turn can facilitate better performance in English reading and writing tasks. This hypothesis underlies the rationale for using Kuteb a language pupils are fluent in at home as a scaffold for developing academic literacy. The implication is that mother tongue instruction is not an obstacle to learning English, but rather a bridge that enhances it.

Research by Uzoigwe (2020) and Akinnaso (2020) reinforces this theoretical position, showing that pupils who begin their education in their first language tend to outperform their peers in literacy development when they eventually transition to English. This suggests that the linguistic foundation laid through the teaching of Kuteb grammar, especially word categories, can serve as a catalyst for broader academic success.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Cognitive Development

Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) emphasizes the fundamental role of social interaction and language in the development of higher-order cognitive functions. Vygotsky viewed learning as a socially mediated process, wherein knowledge is constructed through interaction with more knowledgeable others such as teachers, peers, and parents and through the internalization of culturally relevant tools, chief among them being language.

Language, in Vygotsky's framework, is not just a means of communication but also a tool for thinking and problem-solving. He introduced the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which refers to the range of tasks a learner can perform with guidance but not yet independently. Through scaffolding temporary support provided by teachers or more competent peers learners can move from what they already know to new levels of understanding.

In applying this theory to the present study, the use of Kuteb word categories in instruction aligns with Vygotsky's emphasis on the social and cultural context of learning. Teaching grammar in the pupils' native language provides culturally relevant scaffolding that makes abstract concepts like parts of speech more accessible and relatable. When learners are taught using the linguistic tools they are already familiar with, they are better able to internalize new information and apply it in meaningful ways.

Moreover, Vygotsky's theory supports the integration of indigenous languages into formal education as a way of validating the learners' cultural background and promoting active engagement. Children are more likely to participate in classroom activities and retain what they learn when instruction reflects their everyday linguistic realities. The teaching of Kuteb word categories therefore serves not only an academic function but also a developmental one, fostering self-confidence, identity formation, and metacognitive growth.

The theory also highlights the collaborative nature of learning. Through peer interactions and guided practice in Kuteb grammar lessons, pupils construct shared meanings and deepen their understanding of grammatical concepts. As they gain proficiency in reading and writing in Kuteb, these competencies can then be extended to English and other languages, in line with the notion of transferable cognitive structures.

Integrative Justification

Together, Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how language instruction in Kuteb affects pupils' literacy development. Cummins provides the linguistic justification for the effectiveness of L1 instruction, while Vygotsky provides the socio-cultural and developmental rationale, emphasizing the role of culturally meaningful interaction and scaffolding in learning.

By grounding this study in these theories, the research acknowledges the complex, multidimensional nature of literacy acquisition. It recognizes that language learning is not only about acquiring vocabulary and grammar rules but also about developing the cognitive and social skills necessary for lifelong learning. The teaching of Kuteb word categories is, therefore, a pedagogical strategy rooted in both linguistic science and socio-cultural relevance.

3. Methodology

This study adopted a quasi-experimental research design to assess the impact of teaching Kuteb word categories on pupils' reading and writing skills in Takum Education Zone, Taraba State. The design involved the selection of two intact categories from two comparable public primary schools one serving as the experimental group and the other as the control group. The population of the study consisted of all Primary Four pupils in selected government primary schools within the zone, with an estimated population of over 1,500 pupils. From this population, a purposive sample of 80 pupils was selected 40 pupils each for the experimental and control groups. The experimental group received structured instruction on Kuteb word categories (nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) for a period of six weeks, while the control group continued with conventional English-based grammar instruction. Data were collected using teacher-constructed pre- and post-tests in reading comprehension and writing, and results were analyzed using descriptive statistics to compare mean performance across groups, supported by t-tests to determine the statistical significance of observed differences. The design ensured that any measurable improvement in literacy performance could be attributed to the instructional intervention in Kuteb grammar.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the analysis of data collected from the experimental and control groups using pre-test and post-test scores in reading and writing. The aim was to determine whether the teaching of Kuteb word categories had a measurable impact on pupils' literacy performance. Descriptive statistics and comparison of means were used to interpret the results.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Pre-test and Post-test Scores

Group	Pre-test Reading (Mean ± SD)	Post-test Reading (Mean ± SD)	Pre-test Writing (Mean ± SD)	Post-test Writing (Mean ± SD)
Experimental	43.91 ± 4.76	74.85 ± 4.82	40.91 ± 4.76	72.85 ± 4.82
Control	44.05 ± 4.31	45.84 ± 4.90	42.05 ± 4.31	44.84 ± 4.90

The results from Table 1 show a clear distinction in performance improvement between the experimental and control groups. The experimental group, which was taught Kuteb word categories, had a pre-test mean reading score of 43.91, which increased substantially to 74.85 after the intervention a gain of approximately 31 points. Similarly, their writing score rose from 40.91 to 72.85, marking a gain of 32 points.

In contrast, the control group who were taught using conventional English-only instruction had negligible improvement. Their reading scores increased slightly from 44.05 to 45.84, and writing scores rose from 42.05 to 44.84, reflecting minimal improvement of just about 2 points in both domains.

These findings suggest that structured grammar instruction using Kuteb significantly enhances pupils' ability to comprehend reading texts and express themselves effectively in writing. The large gains in the experimental group affirm that literacy instruction rooted in the learners' mother tongue enables them to grasp grammatical structures and apply them in both oral and written communication.

Table 2: Literacy Gain Scores (Post-test – Pre-test)

Group	Reading Gain Score	Writing Gain Score
Experimental	+30.94	+31.94
Control	+1.79	+2.79

Table 2 shows the computed gain scores, which are the differences between post-test and pre-test scores. The experimental group recorded a reading gain of 30.94 points and a writing gain of 31.94 points, while the control group recorded only 1.79 points in reading and 2.79 points in writing. These results demonstrate a significant improvement in the literacy skills of pupils taught Kuteb word categories, confirming the effectiveness of the intervention.

These findings support the theoretical framework underpinning the study. Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis explains that literacy skills acquired in the first language (Kuteb) can transfer to second-language contexts (English), enabling improved comprehension and writing. Likewise, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory suggests that teaching within a culturally relevant linguistic context supports cognitive development, leading to better academic outcomes.

4.2 DISCUSSION OF MAJOR FINDINGS

The findings from this study clearly demonstrate that structured instruction in Kuteb word categories significantly enhances pupils' reading comprehension and writing performance in Takum Education Zone. Pupils in the experimental group, who were taught the grammatical categories of Kuteb such as RINYI (nouns), TITINDE (verbs), RIFUFA IRA (adjectives), and KOTUB TITINDE (adverbs), exhibited substantial improvement in literacy skills compared to their peers in the control group. This section discusses these findings in light of existing literature and theoretical perspectives to validate and contextualize the results.

First, the improvement in reading scores among pupils taught using Kuteb word categories confirms the long-held view that mother-tongue instruction enhances literacy acquisition. The experimental group recorded a mean gain of over 30 points in reading, a finding that echoes the conclusions of Bamgbose (2019), who noted that children learn best in languages they understand. Bamgbose argued that comprehension is deeply tied to the language of thought, and when instruction is carried out in a familiar linguistic medium, learners engage more effectively with textual materials. This finding aligns with the assertion by UNESCO (2016) that using the first language for initial reading instruction facilitates better decoding and interpretation of texts, especially among early-grade learners.

Secondly, the improvement in writing performance among the experimental group also aligns with existing scholarship. The study found a gain of approximately 32 points in writing tasks, suggesting that instruction in Kuteb grammar facilitated pupils' ability to construct coherent and grammatically correct sentences. This supports the work of Adegbite and Olateju (2021), who concluded that teaching word categories helps learners internalize sentence structures, improve vocabulary application, and achieve better syntactic control. When children understand how words function within a sentence such as the use of nouns for subjects, verbs for actions, and adjectives for description they are better positioned to produce written texts that are not only grammatically accurate but also semantically meaningful. The instruction in Kuteb word categories provided the cognitive scaffolding needed for such development.

Moreover, the findings are consistent with the theoretical propositions of Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis (2000), which posits that proficiency in a first language can support second language development. By learning word categories and their syntactic arrangements in Kuteb, the pupils were able to transfer this knowledge to English writing and reading tasks. This transferability confirms Cummins' argument that cognitive and academic skills are interdependent across languages, provided a solid foundation is established in the learner's native tongue. As such, the instruction in Kuteb not only improved literacy in that language but also enhanced broader academic competencies.

Furthermore, the results affirm Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Cognitive Development, which emphasizes the role of cultural and linguistic context in learning. According to Vygotsky (1978), children develop higher cognitive functions through social interaction and culturally mediated tools

chief among them being language. The use of Kuteb in the classroom, a language that resonates with pupils' daily experiences, created an inclusive and familiar learning environment that fostered participation, dialogue, and cognitive engagement. This cultural alignment enabled pupils to grasp abstract grammatical concepts more easily and apply them in practical tasks such as reading comprehension and writing exercises.

The minimal improvement recorded by the control group also reinforces the argument that English-only instruction may be inadequate for early-grade learners in linguistically homogenous settings like Takum. Despite receiving similar teaching time and content (though in English), the control group's reading and writing scores increased by less than 3 points. This limited improvement may be attributed to learners' low proficiency in English, which acts as a barrier to understanding grammar rules and applying them effectively. Obanya (2021) has critiqued the continued dominance of English as the language of instruction in Nigerian schools, asserting that it contributes to poor literacy outcomes by ignoring the linguistic realities of learners. This study's findings add empirical weight to that critique and highlight the urgent need to reform language-in-education policy implementation.

The major findings of this study—substantial literacy gains through Kuteb word class instruction—support a large body of existing literature and theoretical arguments on the benefits of mother tongue education. These results indicate that formalizing indigenous language instruction, particularly through grammar-based teaching, holds immense potential for improving literacy outcomes in rural and multilingual communities.

5.1 CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the impact of teaching Kuteb word categories on the reading and writing skills of primary school pupils in Takum Education Zone, Taraba State. The findings provide compelling evidence that integrating indigenous language instruction, specifically grammar-based teaching in Kuteb, significantly improves literacy outcomes. Pupils exposed to structured lessons on Kuteb word categories {RINYI (nouns), TITINDE (verbs), RIFUFA IRA (adjectives), and KOTUB TITINDE (adverbs)} demonstrated marked improvements in reading comprehension and writing performance compared to those taught using conventional English-only methods. This confirms that mother tongue instruction not only enhances cognitive processing but also facilitates deeper understanding of grammatical structures, sentence construction, and vocabulary use.

The study further affirmed the theoretical assumptions of Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, demonstrating that learners transfer skills acquired in their first language to second-language contexts, and that meaningful learning occurs when instruction is culturally and linguistically relevant. The minimal improvement among the control group reinforces the limitation of English-only instruction in early-grade literacy, especially in linguistically homogenous and rural contexts like Takum.

In light of these findings, the study concludes that the deliberate teaching of indigenous grammar particularly Kuteb word categories is not only pedagogically effective but also culturally affirming. It offers a viable strategy for improving foundational literacy, enhancing learner engagement, and promoting inclusive education. Therefore, there is a strong case for the systematic incorporation of indigenous language instruction into Nigeria's basic education curriculum.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. **Integrate Kuteb Grammar Instruction into Early Primary Education**: Given the significant improvement in literacy skills among pupils taught using Kuteb word categories, it is recommended that Kuteb grammatical instruction especially in parts of speech such as RINYI (nouns), TITINDE (verbs), RIFUFA IRA (adjectives), and KOTUB TITINDE (adverbs) be formally integrated into the early primary school curriculum in Takum Education Zone. This integration should align with the National Policy on Education which advocates the use of the mother tongue as the language of instruction in the early years.
2. **Provide Specialized Teacher Training in Indigenous Language Pedagogy**: To ensure effective delivery of indigenous grammar instruction, teachers in Kuteb-speaking communities should undergo targeted training in the use of Kuteb as a medium of instruction. This includes training in grammatical structures, instructional methodologies, and the

development of learner-centered activities that utilize Kuteb to teach foundational literacy concepts.

3. **Develop and Distribute Culturally Relevant Learning Materials in Kuteb**: The success of mother tongue instruction depends on the availability of appropriate teaching and learning materials. Educational stakeholders such as state education boards, NGOs, and local government authorities should collaborate to produce primers, textbooks, and reading passages in Kuteb. These materials should be designed to support the teaching of word categories and other grammar-based literacy components.

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