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## Assessing on the Challenges and opportunities to use ‘Tsamaako’ as a medium of instruction in the primary School in Bena Tsemay Wereda, South Omo Zone

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**Abstract:** The main purpose of the study was to assess on the challenges and opportunities to use ‘Tsamaako’ as a medium of instruction in the primary school in Bena Tsemay wereda, south omo zone. The study was employed survey research design. The researchers have used probability and non-probability sampling techniques for students, teachers, parents, school directors and woreda education experts to select them as respondents for the study. Specifically, simple random sampling technique was used to select students and teachers, and purposive sampling technique was used to select parents, school directors and woreda education experts as respondents. The total sample size is one hundred twenty eight (128) respondents that incorporate: students, teachers, parents, school directors and woreda education experts. The study used three types of data collection instruments: questionnaire and interview and FGD. The procedure of data collection was performed in the following steps: questionnaire was conducted at first stage and followed by interview and FGD for the target participants. After the data has been collected through different tools, it was analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. The study result revealed that lack of understanding, absence of a clear policy that obliged the use of mother tongue education and the hegemonic position of Amharic language hinders the use of Tsamaako as a medium of instruction. In so doing, parents disregard the role of mother tongue education in favor of second language medium. The study recommended that parents should be encouraged to choose their own language for their children and others should also appreciate their choices. All stakeholders and educational practitioners should pay attention to the promotion of the language. Zonal and Woreda education offices should prepare and deliver enough textbooks and other educational materials to schools in Bena Tsemay woreda. Also highly trained and pedagogically equipped teachers should participate into the teaching learning process in order to correct the misconceptions held towards mother tongue instruction. Furthermore, preparation of well-developed dictionary and vocabularies, and general reading materials are worth enough to use Tsamaako as a medium of instruction.

**Keywords:** ‘Tsamaako’; Challenges; Medium of instruction; Opportunities

### 1. Introduction

Language is a crucial factor for the academic achievement of minority people. Speaking the mother tongue in school increases self-confidence and thinking skills, and conveys freedom of speech. Mother tongue is an inseparable element of his or her culture and that everyone has the right to learn his or her

mother tongue. The main aim of this research is to assess challenges and opportunities to introduce ‘Tsamaako’ as a medium of instruction in the primary School in Bena Tsemay Wereda, South Omo Zone. UNESCO (2000) supported education in the mother tongue: It is axiomatic that the best medium for

teaching a child is his mother tongue. Psychologically, it is the system of meaningful signs that in his mind works automatically for expression and understanding. Sociologically, it is a means of identification among the members of the community to which he belongs. Educationally, he learns more quickly through it than through an unfamiliar linguistic medium. It is quite sure that language is the most important element in the teaching learning process as it plays a very vital role in terms of providing clear and transparent instruction. According to different studies, (Heugh, et al., 2017), the language of instruction is one of the problematic areas in educational centers, because of the language of instruction can directly affect the teaching learning process in particular and its success in general. Instructional language therefore should be selected with much care and consideration. When it comes to the choice of instructional language, mother tongue is believed to be the best. Many scholars recognize the fact that mother tongue has a paramount advantage in the acquisition of knowledge and skill in schools. According to these scholars, the language of instruction can determine the nature and quality of education.

Active learning and teaching process and appropriate educational system are closely related in nature with the process of actively developing the potential capacity of the students. This educational process is more active when done with the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction than unfamiliar medium of instruction. According to (Heugh, et al., 2017), the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction is at the heart of education with the mission of enabling the learners to develop all their potentials to the full and to realize their creative capacities. The role of mother tongue in educational process is important because the effectiveness of the learning process is dependent on the existence of effective communication between teacher and learners.

In Ethiopia, the current Education and Training Policy formulated in 1994 recognizes that primary school curriculum programs must be related to the actual local condition and anticipate the needs of the learners. The huge changes in the schooling since then necessitated parallel changes in education both in terms of curriculum, in terms of medium of instruction and method of instruction. These all changes have occurred because of the dissatisfaction with the formerly existing educational system characterized by high students' dropout rate, low enrollment rate, gender disparity and unequal distribution of schools between urban and rural. This has led to a shift in educational philosophy from teacher centered to student centered. Thus, among the key issues that needs to be addressed to realize the achievement of national educational goals and targets with regard to primary education. The current policy (MoE, 2001) has given strategic priority to the introduction of local language as a medium of instruction to facilitate children's learning, curriculum development, promote the development of foreign specific textbooks, teacher guide and instructional materials using regional or local languages.

The benefit of using the local language for the child is an individual ease, speed of expression, greater self-esteem, greater freedom of thought, greater creativity, firm grasp and longer retention of the subject matter. The central concern of the study is to investigate the challenges and opportunities that affect introducing 'Tsamaako' as a medium of instruction and to promote the use of mother tongue as in the teaching learning process has paramount pedagogical, social, political, economic and psychological advantages.

### 1.1. Statement of the Problem

The role of language as a medium of instruction in promoting an effective teaching and learning is an issue that has occupied many scholars all over the world for many years (Heugh, et al., 2017). At present, Mother

tongue instruction is well recognized internationally and nationally due to its impact on learners' academic performance and even in their second language learning. When students learn in their home language, they will not face the challenge of learning medium; rather it shortens their pace of comprehending the content of the subject and reinforces their creativity.

The current Education and Training Policy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (1994) declares that the right of nations and nationalities to use their mother tongue or nationality languages as language of instruction in the primary schools. As the result of the attention given to nations and nationalities to use their local languages as medium of instruction in primary schools more than 38 of the 84 indigenous languages started serving as media of instruction in the country.

Many studies have already revealed that teaching using the mother tongue in the early grades enhances children's ability to learn better compared to the use of a second or foreign language (Rai, et al., 2011). Research that has been conducted on language education has also shown that children are quicker to learn, to read, and to acquire other academic skills when instructed in the language that they speak at home rather than taught in an unfamiliar language (UNICEF, 1999).

By considering the importance of mother tongue for instruction, the researchers came to recognize that the use of 'Tsamaako' as medium of instruction, initiated to find out the problems that the nation faces to introduce the language. In general, the researchers are initiated in order to investigate the challenges that affect using 'Tsamaako' as a medium of instruction and how the will be implemented as medium of instruction and what opportunities are there to introduce it as medium of instruction.

### 1.2. Objectives of the Study

Generally, there were two objectives of the study. These were mentioned as follow:

#### 1.2.1. General Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study was to assess challenges and opportunities to use Tsamaako as a medium of instruction in the primary School in Bena Tsemay Wereda, South Omo Zone and to provide possible solutions for the problems after gathering and analyzing necessary data.

#### 1.2.2. Specific Objectives

- To examine the hindrances that Bena Tsemay people face to use 'Tsamaako' as a medium of instruction in the primary schools.
- To assess the attempts that contributes to promote 'Tsamaako' as a medium of instruction in the primary schools.
- To point out the supporting system that helps to use 'Tsamaako' as a medium instruction in the primary schools.
- To identify the attitudes of parents and teachers to use 'Tsamaako' as a medium of instruction.

#### 1.4. Basic Research Questions

- 1) What were the hindrances that Bena Tsemay people face to use 'Tsamaako' as a medium of instruction in the primary schools?
- 2) What were the attempts that contribute to promote 'Tsamaako' as a medium of instruction in the primary schools?
- 3) What were the supporting system that helps to introduce 'Tsamaako' as a medium instruction in the primary schools?
- 4) What were the attitudes of parents and teachers to introduce 'Tsamaako' as a medium of instruction?

#### 1.5. Significance of the Study

- ❖ Policy makers, curriculum designers and the educational officials at different

levels may use the study to take some measures to solve the problems identified.

- ❖ The study may provide great understanding for Bena Tsemay people about their mother tongue importance of using as a medium of instruction at primary school level.
- ❖ The study may help teachers and concerned bodies to be conscious of the problems that affect using of 'Tsamaako' as a medium of instruction and may motivate them to tackle the problems.
- ❖ It may provide valuable inputs and information for the effectiveness of introducing 'Tsamaako' as a mother tongue education in general.
- ❖ The study may encourage other researchers to carry out further studies.

#### 1.6.Scope of the Study

The study was delimited to assess challenges and opportunities to use 'Tsamaako' as a medium of instruction in the primary School in Bena Tsemay Wereda, South Omo Zone. The area of study was broad and comprehensive. It is tiresome to cover each and every nation mother tongue to assess once its challenges and opportunities to introduce schools and individuals as well as the components under this study. Due to shortage of time and access to all ethno languages at all level of education in schools the investigation was delimited only to 'Tsamaako' in South Omo Zone, Bena Tsemay Wereda on the population of targeted language group.

#### 1.7.Benefits and Beneficiaries

*Benefits and beneficiaries of this study are mentioned as follows: it contributes for policy makers, curriculum designers and the educational officials at different levels. It can provide great understanding for Bena Tsemay community about their mother tongue importance of using 'Tsamaako' as a medium of instruction at primary school level. It can*

*open the gate to other researchers to carry out further studies.*

#### 1.8.Dissemination of the Outputs

The output of this study will be disseminated on the Jinka University Web Site. It also can be disseminated through presentation on either national or international research conferences of any possible situation and places. In addition to this, its hard and soft copy will be disseminated to worada and zonal education bureau as input.

#### 1.9.Operational Definitions of Key Terms

- **Challenge:** Refers to condition that would confront during the implementation process of 'Tsamaako' as a medium of instruction.
- **Indigenous and Native Language:** term that is used in specific areas by the people born or originating in that area.
- **International Language:** is a language spoken in several countries; often spread by different cases for example by colonial, by tread, by education and so.
- **Local Language:** language spoken in the immediate community, Sometimes refers to as language that is not yet fully developed in written form.
- **Medium of Instruction:** is the language in which education is conducted in schools; it is the means, by which skills and knowledge are transferred and is the medium through which the production and reproduction of knowledge is made.
- **Mother Tongue:** is the language of initial socialization used in the family and community before a child enters to school.
- **National Language:** is the language used nationwide, chosen by the government for a certain official functioning.
- **Opportunities:** refers to conditions that would promote the use of mother tongue education as a medium of instruction.

- **Tsamaako:** Refers to a language that is spoken by Tsemay People in southern Ethiopia, South Omo Zone.

## 2. Research Design and Methodology

This chapter discusses about the research design and methodology, the sample of population and sampling techniques of the study, the sources of data and data gathering tools, and it also explains the method of data analysis and interpretation.

### 2.1. Research Design

The main purpose of this study was to assess challenges and opportunities that affect use of 'Tsamaako' as a medium of instruction in lower primary schools in Bena Tsemay Wereda in South Omo Zone. In this study, mixed research approach will be included the combined deployment of quantitative and qualitative method. This combination allowed the triangulation of the qualitative and quantitative data in order to reach on the result. As Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) stated mixed methods, research can answer research questions that the other methodologies cannot answer separately. The basic rationale for using this approach is that one-method strengths used to offset the weaknesses of the other and a more complete understanding of research problem results from collecting both quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell, 2011). For the purpose of this study, survey research design will be employed on the assumption that it could help to reveal challenges and opportunities that affect use of 'Tsamaako' as a medium of instruction in primary schools of South Omo Zone, Bena Tsemay Wereda. Survey research is used to answer questions that have been raised, to solve problems that have been posed or observed, to assess needs and set goals, to determine whether or not specific objectives have been met, to establish baselines against which future comparisons can be made, to analyze trends across time, and generally, to describe what exists, in what amount, and in what context (Isaac & Michael, 1997). Surveys can also be

used to assess needs, evaluate demand, and examine. Surveys are conducted to gather information that reflects population's attitudes, behaviors, opinions and beliefs that cannot be observed directly.

### 2.2. Sources of Data

For the purpose and objectives of this study, primary data sources were used. Based on this, the primary sources of data were Bena Tsemay wereda parents of language speakers, teachers who are teaching in this wereda, Woreda education bureau experts and Benna Tsemay and SOZ Culture, Language and Tourism bureau experts.

### 2.3. Samples and Sampling Techniques

The population of the study includes Bena Tsemay wereda Bena Tsemay wereda parents of language speakers, students, teachers who are teaching in this wereda, Woreda education bureau experts and Benna Tsemay and SOZ Culture, Language and Tourism bureau experts. The total participants of this study were one hundred twenty eight (128). Therefore, about 80 students' of parent language speakers, 25 primary school teachers of some selected schools, 2 Woreda and Zonal Education Office Experts, and 20 parents were served as source of data. Non probability sampling techniques was used to select the participants. Therefore, 80 students' of parent language speakers were selected purposively, 25 primary school teachers of some selected schools were also selected purposively, 2 Woreda and Zonal Education Office Experts, and 20 parents were selected purposively. In Benna Tsemay wereda there are 37 primary schools. Therefore, three primary schools (Argo, Luka and Keyafer) were selected as study site.

### 2.4. Data Gathering Tools

To obtain and collect relevant and reliable data for the study, both qualitative and quantitative data gathering tools was employed. So, the study was conducted using descriptive survey research design. To this end, data-gathering instruments used for the study includes

questionnaire, interview and focus group discussion.

#### 2.4.1. Questionnaire

The questionnaire was as the main data gathering tool for this study. Both open-ended and close-ended questionnaire were designed for teachers and students to get necessary data from respondents for this study. Five-point Likert-Scale type and Rating-Scale questions were developed for teachers and students. The designed questionnaire for teachers' contained nineteen (19) statements, so this enables the researchers to collect large amount of data from the participants through questionnaire. As well, the questionnaire designed for students contained 10 closed-ended questions. In teachers' questionnaire, it contains 16 close-ended questions and 3 open-ended questions only. The close-ended questions had (2-5) options which varied according to the question type. On the other hand, the open-ended questions have no option and therefore, the participants have an option to provide their opinion. As Wallimar (2011), questionnaires are an obvious method of collecting both quantitative and qualitative information from the people. It is a particularly suitable tool for giving quantitative data but can also be used for qualitative data. Large amount of questionnaires was close-ended format questions because they are quick to answer, easy to code and require no special writing skill from the respondents. To negotiate the limitations of the response the researchers were provide three open-ended questions out of thirty questions because they are free to answer in context of respondents and style that permit freedom of expression and allow the respondents to qualify their respondents.

#### 2.4.2. Interview

Interview is employed in need of securing in-depth information about the problems related to the research. Interview is one of the most powerful and most common ways that researchers use to understand their participants views. Therefore, the same semi-structured interview guide was employed for education bureau expert of Benna Tseamy woeda and South Omo Zone; and culture, language and

tourism office experts of Bena Tsemay Woreda and South Omo Zone.

#### 2.4.3. Focus Group Discussion

Focus group discussion is one of the commonly used instruments for collecting qualitative data.

It is also preferable to collect first-hand information and can be useful to fill the information gaps which could be created by other types of tools particularly questionnaire. Due to this, the researchers used focus group discussion to collect all valuable information to get extra information. The participants were student's parents of some selected primary schools in Bena Tsemay wereda. Totally, there were two focus group from some selected schools each consisting of ten (10) participants in a group. The researchers took notes and sound/video record during the discussion.

#### 2.5. *Methods of Data Analysis*

Both qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques were employed. The information collected from respondents through responses rating scales questions, interview and focus group discussion were structured, organized and firmed to make the information conformable to analysis and interpret. Based on the qualitative and quantitative nature of the data collected, qualitative and quantitative data analysis methods were used. Then quantitative data were tabulated, and changed into frequency and percentage; and finally, it was interpreted to textually. The qualitative information gathered through open-ended questionnaires, interview and focus group discussion were written in explanation form and interpreted to strengthen the quantitative data and give elaborated information. The analysis was made using statistical package for social science version 20 (SPSS).

#### 2.6. *Procedures of the Study*

After the topic has been selected and basic research questions which should answered by the research were clearly stated, the researchers reviewed the literature according to different

scholars perspective. Next, tools (questionnaire, interview and focus group discussion) were formulated focusing on the basic research questions and principles of mother tongue language learning discussed in the literature review. Then, to reduce the ambiguity of instruments items, the researchers tried to clearly define and state the meaning of words, phrase or sentence level, to as the right question and use items that sample significant aspect of the purpose of the study. The students and teachers questionnaire were translated in to Amharic in order to help the students and teachers to read, understand and answer easily. The semi structured interview questions was prepared for parents, teachers and Bena Tsemay wereda education bureau experts. After this, the researchers were administered the prepared questionnaire for the teachers at their school level and then, the data were collected. By using the collected data, the researchers were made it detail description, analysis, summary, conclusion and recommendation.

### 2.7. Ethical Considerations

Participants of this research were informed, regarding to the objectives of the study and their answers were kept as confidentially, it is used only for academic and for this research purpose. In addition to this, the researchers were tried to create and maintain a comfortable

or conducive environment for the respondents during the data collection.

## 3. Data Presentations and Discussion

This chapter presents the data gained from students' and teachers' through questionnaire, and from Language, Culture and Tourism Bureau experts in Benna Tsemay Woreda and South Omo Zone, Education Bureau expert of Benna Tsemay Woreda interview; and from parents through FGD. Questionnaire, interview and FGD were used for the study because it was hoped that the results obtained through them would be valid for the study. Under this chapter, the collected data findings are organized into four main sections. The first section presents the results obtained from students' questionnaire. The second section discussed on the teachers' response of the questionnaire. The third part presents the results of interview that was obtained from Language, Culture and Tourism Bureau experts in Benna Tsemay Woreda and South Omo Zone, Education Bureau expert of Benna Tsemay Woreda. The final section presents the results of parents Focused Group Discussion (FGD).

### 3.1. Discussion of students' Questionnaire

This is the part where the findings of the students' questionnaire are discussed based on the collected data.

**Table1. Demographic data of students' respondent**

Item										
Statistical information	<b>Ethnic group</b>	Tsema y	Benna	Konso	Amhar a	Gidole	Wolay ta	Gamo	Ari	Total
	Frequency	66	2	3	5	1	3	-	-	80
	Percentage	82.5%	2.5%	3.75%	6.25%	1.25%	3.75%	-	-	100%
	<b>Student' mother Tongue</b>									
	Frequency	66	2	3	5	1	3	-	-	80
	Percentage	82.5%	2.5%	3.75%	6.25%	1.25%	3.75%	-	-	100%

Table.2: Students' response on the questionnaire and its discussion.

s/ n	Items	Response		Total	
		Yes	No		
1	Are you happy to learn your primary education in 'Tsamaako'?	Freq.	76	4	80
		%	95	5	100%
2	Do you think that learning primary school level in 'Tsamaako' will give you confidence in your future education?	Freq.	72	8	80
		%	90	10	100
3	Do you think learning in 'Tsamaako' will help you to discuss some issues with your parents at home?	Freq.	71	9	80
		%	88.75	11.25	100
4	Do you think it is a good idea to learn all the subjects in the primary schools in 'Tsamaako'?	Freq.	50	30	80
		%	62.5	37.5	100
5	Do you think that learning and teaching all the subjects in elementary school level in 'Tsamaako' develops your self-confidence?	Freq.	54	26	80
		%	67.5	32.5	100
6	Do you think that learning and teaching in 'Tsamaako' in the primary school level will increase your academic success?	Freq.	60	20	80
		%	75	25	100
7	Would it be a good idea to offer 'Tsamaako' as a only one subject in the primary school?	Freq.	21	59	80
		%	26.25	73.75	100
8	Do you think that learning in your own language in primary school limits your understanding and knowledge?	Freq.	26	54	80
		%	32.5	67.5	100
9	Do you think that learning in 'Tsamaako' will increase your participation in the classroom?	Freq.	70	10	80
		%	87.5	22.5	100
10	Do you think that learning in 'Tsamaako' will increase your classroom relationship with your teacher?	Freq.	69	11	80
		%	86.25	13.75	100

As can be noticed from the table above, 76 (95 %) of students responded that they are happy to learn their primary education in 'Tsamaako'. On the contrary, only 4 (5%) of the samples responded that they are not happy. Their response proves that the majority of the students have high interest to learn in mother tongue in schools. The next question aimed to know whether learning in 'Tsamaako' gives them confidence in their future education. Thus, 72 (90%) of them responded by saying 'Yes' showing that they believe mother tongue instruction builds their confidence and the rest 8 (10%) took the reverse. According to the results above, it could be said that most of the students benefit from learning in 'Tsamaako'. From this finding one can conclude that teaching subjects in the language most familiar the students help them to be successful in learning.

In continuation of this, a question was provided to students to reflect if learning in 'Tsamaako' enables them to discuss some issues with their parents at home. Among them the majority 88.75% of the samples responded positively while the rest 11.25% answered negatively. Based on the presentation in the above figure, it

could be said that most of the students in the schools where mother tongue is thought benefit from learning it as it boosts their communication skills. Moreover, samples were also asked about learning all the school subjects in 'Tsamaako'. More than half per cent 62.5% of the samples responded by saying 'Yes' expressing that they agree to have all school subjects in vernacular language. On the other hand, 37.5% of them responded by saying 'No' showing that they disagree to learn all subjects in mother tongue. This indicates that if the use of mother tongue is implemented as the language of instruction in lower primary classes, without a doubt most children will have the opportunity to understand core concepts. In addition to this, most of the samples also believe that learning in their home language at school boosts their self-confidence and facilitates the learning process and increases their academic success.

With regard to the question of offering 'Tsamaako' as only one subject in the school, 21(26.25%) of the subjects reflect it will not be a good idea to offer 'Tsamaako' as only one subject. On the other hand, the majority 59(73.75%) of the subjects oppose the idea of

having mother tongue as only one subject in school in point. From this finding, we may tend into a sense that students know the purpose of mother tongue use for instruction in lower grades. Speaking broadly, the current education policies mandate the use of vernacular in linguistically homogeneous areas for the first three years of school, and there is continued concern over the role of indigenous languages in education.

As indicated in the table above, students were asked whether learning in 'Tsamaako' will increase their participation in the classroom. Thus, 70(87.5%) of the subjects responded by saying 'Yes' and the remaining 10(22.5%) of the subjects took the reverse position. From this finding, we may tend into the fact that most of the students are in favour of mother tongue use for instruction. This finding may be surprising for it assures that learning in vernacular can promote students participation in the classroom. In the same questionnaire, subjects were asked about classroom relationship with their teachers during mother tongue classes. Regardless of the difference in degree of responses, 69(86.25%) of the subjects believe that they have rapport relationship with their teachers whereas the

remaining 11(13.75%) believe that they are not comfortable with teachers during mother tongue classes. From this finding, it could be fair to arrive at a conclusion that most of the students are motivated and feel free to in mother tongue classes and identify themselves active participants. However, others identify themselves de-motivated and passive recipients of information due to some reasons.

Virtually, mother tongue is the first language that a person learned. It is generally accepted that in teaching and learning processes, the child's mother tongue is of utmost importance. Local languages play an important role in transmitting cultures, and traditional knowledge. That is, it exposes the child to names of objects, ideas, and attributes. This no doubt will go a long way to foster proper and adequate communication between teachers and students, and further promote learning as the child feels more comfortable to express himself in a language he/she understands and can identify with.

### 3.2. Discussion on Teachers' Questionnaire

This is the part where the findings of the teachers' questionnaire are discussed based on the collected data.

Table 3: Demographic data of teachers' respondent

Item	Demographic data of teachers' respondent and their linguistic background									
Statistical information	<b>Ethnic group</b>	Tsemay	Benna	Konso	Amhara	Gidole	Wolayta	Gamo	Ari	Total
	Frequency	17	-	3	-	-	1	3	1	25
	Percentage	68%		12%	-	-	4%	12%	4%	100%
	<b>Teachers' mother Tongue</b>									
	Frequency	17	-	3	-	-	1	3	1	25
	Percentage	68%		12%	-	-	4%	12%	4%	100%

Table.4: **Attitudinal questions:** Teachers' response on the questions are discussed in this table

s/n	Items	Responses						Total
		Very low	Low	Medi	High	Very High		
1	What is the attitude of parents towards the teaching and learning of the 'Tsamaako' language in primary schools level?	Freq.	-	-	1	6	18	25
		%	-	-	4	24	72	100%
2	What is the general view of the local community regarding the teaching and learning in 'Tsamaako' language in primary schools level?	Freq.	1	-	1	7	16	25
		%	4	-	4	28	64	100%
3	What is the attitude of the school principals in teaching and teaching in 'Tsamaako' language in primary schools level?	Freq.	-	1	4	9	11	25
		%	-	4	16	36	44	100%
4	What is the general attitude of the school community to learn and teach in the 'Tsamaako' language in primary schools level?	Freq.	1	1	2	8	13	25
		%	4	4	8	32	52	100%

As indicated in the above table, a question was forwarded to teachers to reflect on the attitude of parents towards the teaching and learning of 'Tsamaako' at primary schools level. Surprisingly, 18(72%) of the samples reflect that they have very high attitude, 6(24%) have high attitude and 1(4%) respondent has medium attitude. From this finding, apart from one respondent, it seems true that almost all of the school parents have the necessary awareness on the importance of teaching and learning of vernacular language. This is basically evident to parents who claim to have benefitted from mother tongue instruction and are more concerned with the end product. Another important point to note is that the use of indigenous language for instruction promotes culture and identity of people facilitates the integration of culture into the school curriculum and develops a positive perception of culture. More importantly, this ensures that the parents involvement in the school activities make the school part of the community. Hence, cultural transmission is best performed through indigenous languages as the media of instruction.

In the same questionnaire, sample teachers were asked to indicate the general view of the local community regarding the teaching and learning in 'Tsamaako' language at primary schools level. Despite the differences in degree of perception, we may be able to understand from Table 2 that 16(64%) of the samples believe to have very high perception, and 7(28%) of them to high perception while the remaining 1(4%) has medium and 1(4%) claims to have very low perception. From the responses above, we may be able to understand that the local community at large have positive attitudes towards mother tongue use for instruction and appreciate the fact that children will show greater interest in learning when lessons are conducted in local language.

Similarly teachers were asked to show the attitude of the school principals in teaching and learning in 'Tsamaako' language at the schools level in point. As depicted in the table, 11(44%) of the samples have very high interest and 9(36%) have high interest and the rest 4(16%) and 1(4%) have medium and low interest respectively. From their response, we may be able to understand that school principals do not have objections to teaching and learning of the language in point at primary schools.

The last question aimed to know the general attitude of the school community to learn and teach in the 'Tsamaako' language at primary schools level. Providing the difference in degree of perception, 21(84%) of the subjects do have positive attitude towards the mother tongue instruction, and 2(8%) are of medium and the rest 2(8%) take the reverse position. From this finding, we may point out that there are school principals who consider mother tongue instruction as less important, in one hand, and school principals who appreciate it, in another hand. It is obvious that one can conclude that different school principals have different views towards the use of mother tongue as the language of instruction at lower primary school. However, the majority of the participants indicate that the use of a familiar language or

vernacular for instruction reduces dropouts, improves student teacher communication, and facilitates parental and community support for education.

Table.5: **Awareness questions:** Teachers' response on the questions are discussed in this table

s/n	Items	Responses						Total
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree		
5	It is a good idea to teach and learn all subjects in the elementary schools level in 'Tsamaako'.	Freq.	2	3	2	6	12	25
		%	8	12	8	24	48	100%
6	Teaching and learning all subjects in 'Tsamaako' in the elementary schools level allows students to be confident in their learning.	Freq.	3	2	4	5	11	25
		%	12	8	16	20	44	100%
7	Teaching and learning in mother tongue/in 'Tsamaako' increases student achievement in primary schools.	Freq.	-	3	2	6	14	25
		%	-	12	8	24	56	100%
8	'Tsamaako' language should only be offered in elementary schools level as a form of one subject.	Freq.	6	3	2	6	8	25
		%	24	12	8	24	32	100%
9	Teaching and learning in one's own language in elementary schools level limits students' comprehension and knowledge.	Freq.	10	6	-	5	4	25
		%	40	24	-	20	16	100%
10	Teaching and learning in mother tongue in the primary schools level increases students participation in the classroom.	Freq.	4	-	1	6	14	25
		%	16	-	4	24	56	100%
11	Teaching and learning in the mother tongue in elementary schools allows the children to learn more languages.	Freq.	-	1	1	10	13	25
		%	-	4	4	40	52	100%
12	Discontinuation/dropout rates can be reduced due to our use of mother tongue/ in 'Tsamaako' in the primary schools level.	Freq.	-	-	2	6	17	25
		%	-	-	8	24	68	100%
13	It is possible to minimize the repetition rate by using own mother tongue/ in 'Tsamaako' in the primary schools level.	Freq.	1	2	-	4	18	25
		%	4	8	-	16	72	100%
14	There is no advantage in teaching all subjects in mother tongue/in 'Tsamaako' in the elementary schools.	Freq.	19	4	1	1	-	25
		%	76	16	4	4	-	100%
15	Primary education in English/Amharic is much better than in 'Tsamaako'.	Freq.	15	9	-	1	-	25
		%	60	36	-	4	-	100%
16	In general, instruction in the mother tongue impedes the achievement of primary, secondary and tertiary education.	Freq.	16	4	-	2	3	25
		%	64	16	-	8	12	100%

As one can see from Table 3 a total of 25 teachers were answering the questionnaire. Around 48% and 24% of the teachers strongly agreed and agreed that it is a good idea to teach and learn all subjects in the elementary schools level in 'Tsamaako' and the remaining 12% and 8% of the samples disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. However, still, 8% of them are not certain about teaching all school subjects in 'Tsamaako'. From this finding, we may tend into the fact that most of the teachers seem interested to have all the subjects learned in local language. Yet, it is still worthwhile bothering about the rest teachers (20%) who are uninterested.

In the same questionnaire, sample teachers were asked to reflect whether teaching and learning all subjects in 'Tsamaako' at the elementary schools level builds students' confidence in their learning. As indicated above, though a difference in degree of response, 16(64%) of the subjects agree that most students become confident in their learning in mother tongue classes, and 5(20%) of them reject the above and agree on the reverse while the remaining 4(16%) responded by saying 'Not sure'. From the responses above, we may be able to understand that the majority of the respondents believe that the students will have more confidence in their learning when they are taught with a

familiar language. Put it another way, more than half of the sample agreed that the students will have increased opportunities to demonstrate mastery of the material.

Similarly, a question was forwarded to respondent teachers to indicate their agreement on offering 'Tsamaako' language as one subject at elementary schools level. Thus, 14(56%) of the teachers agreed that they want 'Tsamaako' to be given as one subject or language in the school level in point and 9(36%) of them disagreed on the issue while the remaining 2(8%) indicated their uncertainty. From the responses above, we may understand that more than half of the informants agree to have 'Tsamaako' being taught as one subject in elementary schools.

Furthermore, teachers were asked to point out if teaching and learning in mother tongue in the primary schools increases students' participation in the classroom. Providing the difference in degree of responses, as Table 3 shows, 20(80%) of the subjects agreed 4(16%) of them strongly disagreed and the remaining 1(4%) being not sure about the idea raised. From this finding it may be possible to conclude that nearly all of the teachers believe that there is difference in the learning abilities of the children exposed to the instructions in their mother tongue. The teachers are in favor of mother tongue use for instruction because it gives children the opportunity to learn concepts primarily in a familiar language, which in turn increases students' motivation and participation in the classroom. Likewise, respondents were asked to indicate whether teaching and learning in the mother tongue in elementary schools allows the children to learn more languages. Their responses show that 23(92%) of the teachers agree that mother tongue use for instruction gives a chance to children to learn in their vernacular as well as the target language.

The next question aimed at whether teaching and learning in mother tongue or 'Tsamaako' reduces dropout rates in the primary schools level. Regardless of the difference in degree of response, as the Table above depicts, apart from 2(8%) respondents who are not sure about the idea raised, the majority 23(92%) of the subjects agree that the use of mother tongue for instruction reduces students' dropout rates. From the responses above, we may understand that most of the teachers are in support of mother tongue in instruction as a means to reduce dropout rates.

By the same token, teachers were provided with a question concerning reduction of retention rate in the schools in point. Among them 22(88%) of the samples agreed that the use of 'Tsamaako' in the primary schools level minimizes the retention rate whereas the remaining 3(12%) of them took the reverse position. From this finding, it seems true that the use of mother tongue promotes learners' language skills in their home language that further develops for use in formal academic contexts. This enables them to be successful in their learning. Teachers who participated in this study noticed that students in mother tongue classes feel free to communicate with their teachers and ask questions without hesitating.

With regard to the question of benefits of teaching all subjects in mother tongue or in 'Tsamaako' in the elementary schools, 23(92%) of the samples disagreed with the idea provided, 1(4%) responded by saying 'Not sure' and the rest 1(4%) took the reverse position. From this response, we may be able to understand that most of the teachers believe that teaching all subjects in mother tongue will have a great advantage for learners in general. This supports the idea of the current education policy which mandates the use of vernacular in linguistically homogenous areas for the first three years of school.

### **3.3. Discussion on Teachers' Open-ended Questions**

Item 18 stresses on "Explain from your point of view the major problems observed in primary schools in terms of teaching and learning." For this question, the respondents replied the following key issues:

Students are learning by new language (Amharic), this hinders students' performance and their effective classroom communication with teachers. As a result this increases dropout rate, attrition rate and misunderstanding of concepts due to learning out of their mother tongue. Therefore education in mother tongue is very important to minimize aforementioned problems. But to implement this, there were different challenges. From the challenges few of them are: The first one is inadequacy of trained teachers in mother tongue. In the implementation of mother-tongue education, positive language policy alone is not adequate. It needs support of all stakeholders with appropriate human and material resources without which education through mother tongue could not be feasible. The second one is lack of teaching-learning materials as challenges to mother-tongue education. The teachers' responses to close and open-ended questions responded that there is no well- prepared dictionaries, students reading books, teachers' guides, syllabi and curriculum were not adequately prepared to introduce 'Tsamaako' as medium of instruction in primary schools in Benna Tsema woreda in South omo Zone.

Item 19 focuses on 18. "In general, what language do you prefer to teach and learn all subjects in primary schools and why?" a) English b) 'Tsamaako' c) Amharic d) others (explain) why?" For this question, the teachers respondents answer is explained in the following table.

Item	Teachers' teaching-learning language preferences					
	Languages	a. English	b. 'Tsamaako'	c. Amharic	d. Others	Total
Statistical information	Frequency	1	18	6	-	25
	Percentage	4%	64%	22%	-	100%

As indicated in the table above, majority of teachers 18 (64%) of them preferred 'Tsamaako' to be as a medium of instruction in the primary schools in Bena Tsema woreda. As well as 6(22%) of teacher respondents suggested that Amharic to be as medium of instruction in the primary schools in Bena Tsema woreda. Conversely 1(4%) of respondents forwarded their opinion English to be as a medium of instruction. Therefore, majority of respondents agreed 'Tsamaako' to be as medium of instruction in the primary schools in Bena Tsema woreda in South Omo Zone. For the reason why they preferd 'Tsamaako' as medium of instruction is explained as follows. According to above statistical information, the majority of the teachers preferred 'Tsamaako' as a medium of instruction. For this they pointed out their reasons why they preferred the use of 'Tsamaako' as a medium of instruction as follows: The importance of using 'Tsamaako' as a sychological, cognitive and pedagogical reasons: a medium of instruction through 'Tsamaako' helps learners understand and conceptualize their learning activities. High potential to learn other languages: once children mastered their basic skills and confidence in learning through their home language, they have no difficulties learning subjects in English at high schools. Therefore, they can be successful in their general academy in high schools and beyond.

Item 19 stresses on "in your opinion, all subjects should be taught in English in primary schools, to what grade should it continue? a)1-4 b)1-6 c)1-8 d)1-12 e) others(explain)" This item focused on teachers' preference regarding grade levels to be taught through 'Tsamaako' For this question, the teachers' respondents answer is explained in the following table.

Item	Teachers' selection of Grade level to be taught through 'Tsamaako'						
	Grade levels	a. 1-4	b. 1-6	c. 1-8	d. 1-12	e. Others	Total
Statistical information	Frequency	9	13	2		1	25
	Percentage	36%	52%	8%	-	4%	100

As seen in the above table statistical information, it is clear that the majority of the teachers interested to use 'Tsamaako' as a medium of instruction from the first to sixth grades. Specifically, 9(36%) preferred 'Tsamaako' as a language of teaching and learning starting from grade one to four. Conversely, 13(52%) of them wanted the use of 'Tsamaako' as a medium of instruction from grade one up to six. Out of this, 2(8%) of the suggested the grade level one to up to eight. Therefore, according to the above statistical data that is displayed on the above table, majority of teachers preferred education through 'Tsamaako' in primary schools. Teachers those who responded to the questionnaire reported that the education through 'Tsamaako' should start from grade one to grade six. This clearly shows that, majority of teachers supported the idea of using 'Tsamaako' as medium of instruction from grade one up to six. To sum up, this view is in line with current language policy that says primary education should be in the child's mother tongue starting from grade one to four or six is preferable.

### 3.4. Analysis of Data Gained from Interview

This section focuses on the interviews conducted with different concerned officers with Amharic; so that, its transcriptions were presented in the following sections. The interview questions were held with Zone and Benna Tsemay woreda Education Bureau Experts; and Benna Tsemay Woreda and South Omo Zone Sport, Culture and Tourism experts were interviewed. Their responses to the interviews were transcribed and presented below.

The first interview question stresses on "What arrangements have been made to use the 'Tsamaako' language as a medium of instruction in the primary schools? How far?"

For this idea, the interviewee replied that there are few arrangements made to introduce 'Tsamaako' as medium of instruction. These are: preparation of orthography was finished, tri-lingual (Tsamaay-English-Amharic) dictionary was prepared, some reading materials were prepared, grammar of the language was prepared and adult education was started in 2014 E. C. as a pilot.

The second question focuses on "What is the attitude of the students if they learn in their own language?" the interviewee replied that students have high motivation to learn through 'Tsamaako' but we haven't got opportunity to teach our students through mother tongue. If we teach them through mother tongue, it has different importance. For instance, teachers who could understand children's home language can play a great role in children's academic achievements. If the teachers understand children's language and cultures, they can help them build confidence in their learning. They can also assist children in developing their socialization and interactivity with their peers and others both in and outside schools. The skills and experiences that children obtained from their peers through their mother tongue in classrooms could shape their social communication, knowledge and feelings. Therefore, for students, for teachers and all community as whole, they have positive attitude toward learning through 'Tsamaako' in primary school if it is implemented. This is evident that, adult education was started in 'Tsamaako' as pilot. Therefore those adult learners reflect that they are highly satisfied through learning in 'Tsamaako' in Bena Tsemay woreda.

The third question is about "What is the attitude of teachers, students and parents in the use of English in primary school?" For this, the interviewee replied that the teachers, studenta as school community of Bena

Tsemay have awareness about the importance of using 'Tsamaako' in education, but they have some negative attitudes towards its use in primary education thinking that the language has no continuation in future education. For this reason, they think that the use of English as a medium of instruction in primary schools is preferable to enhance their proficiency in English from the start.

The fourth interview question focuses on "What were the challenges of using 'Tsamaako' language as a language of instruction?" The interviewee replied that there are different challenges that hinder to use or implement 'Tsamaako' as medium of instruction in primary schools in Bena Tsemay Woreda. From those challenges man power who can teach the language is the first one. On other one is materials related factor, like: students reading books, teachers guide, grammar and others are not published well but they are developed by experts. Lastly, more focus is not given from government to implement the language as medium of in instruction in the primary school.

### *3.5. Analysis of Interview with South Omo Zone and Woreda Sport, Culture and Tourism experts*

The first interview question focuses on "Do you think that the use of mother tongue facilitates effective teaching-learning for students and teachers?" The interviewee replied that, educational in mother-tongue policy was inadequate unless the implementation of mother-tongue education matched with practical work on the ground. The interviewee held the view that practical considerations of other societal factors that language planners and policy makers took into accounts in the implementation of mother-tongue education were also very vital. The interviewee also added that opportunities and challenges should be considered carefully during its implementation. One of the key challenges that limit implementation of 'Tsamaako' in the primary school are:

people's lack of awareness about the advantages of mother tongue; material related factors; lack/shortage of trained man power; lack of collaboration among stakeholders, intellectuals and elites; limitation of community involvements in the enhancement of schools. The interviewee also emphasized that the problems called for the involvement of all communities, the local government and other concerned bodies to minimize constraints that affected the development of education through 'Tsamaako' (mother tongue). The interviewee added that to tackle these challenges, all the stakeholders and concerned bodies had immense responsibilities to work collaboratively on awareness raising activities, mobilization of human and material resources. The interviewee also stressed that effective and efficient support is needed in the implementation of mother-tongue education. During its implementation, the processes also need monitoring and its outcomes should be evaluated at the end of the programme to check its progresses. In general, implementation of education through 'Tsamaako' in primary schools required strong support from the entire communities, the government and experts. More involvements and support are required to advance its development in all domains of the community.

## **4. Conclusion**

This study attempted to investigate challenges and opportunities to use 'Tsamaako' as a medium of instruction in primary schools of Bena Tsemay woreda, and teachers', students' and parents attitude towards their local language. The readiness of head teachers and woreda education experts to support the use of mother tongue as a language of instruction was assessed. The data obtained from all data collection instruments revealed that majority of the respondents assured using 'Tsamaako' as a medium of instruction can help for better learning of the students and to ensure a smooth transition of children from home to school.

However, the following conclusions are drawn on the basis of detailed analysis of the data.

As the data from all tools suggested that most of the teachers understand the benefits of mother tongue but some parents do not understand. Mother tongue is not being used as the medium of instruction in lower primary schools because: Teachers have not been trained on how to use mother tongue as a medium of instruction; in-service training are not organised to orient teachers about the policy; and there is lack of textbooks and other culturally-relevant educational materials, inadequacy of vocabulary and problem of writing system or orthography. Lack of balanced view about the use of the language as a medium of instruction is another obstacle that hinders the use of mother tongue as a language of instruction. The other factors hindering the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction are Woreda and Zonal education officers do not support the use of mother tongue as a language of instruction; language policy in schools discourages the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction; and some parents have negative attitudes towards mother tongue.

The current language policy of Ethiopia dictates the use of the mother tongue as MOI throughout primary education, from grade 1 through 4. Accordingly, all the participants of the present study positively view and appear to agree with the policy. Therefore, the pedagogical, political, social and psychological advantages of the policy were identified by the participants.

Educational institutions will create or improve the orthography of the language, develop terminologies, design teaching materials, translate reference materials, to promote the language etc.

The data obtained from key informants revealed that parents' choice of MOI inclined to Amharic and English language. Therefore, the teams would conclude that, although the choice of most parents was in accordance with

the language use policy, the choice of some parents was found to be inconsistent.

The study result revealed the following influences at play on language choice of parents: lack of understanding, absence of a clear policy that obliged the use of mother tongue education, and the hegemonic position of Amharic language. In so doing, parents disregard the role of mother tongue education in favour of second language medium for their children. Therefore, this action of parents will maintain the dominance of Amharic and it is contradictory to what the government of Ethiopia is trying to promote, multilingualism.

### *5. Recommendations*

To alleviate some of the challenges that hinder to use 'Tsemaako' as a medium of instruction in the lower primary schools in Bena Tsemay woreda, the researchers intended to suggest some possible recommendations based on the aforementioned discussions and conclusions:

One of the major reasons for some parents to prefer their children to learn in second language medium (Amharic) was lack of understanding and misconception as perceived by the study participants. Therefore, without associating the choices of parents with historical and political issues parents should be encouraged to choose their own language for their children by rendering counselling services and others should also appreciate their choices. Thus, parents should be sensitized on the benefits of mother tongue.

It would be advisable for educators, curriculum designers, counsellors, family and the society at large to bear in mind that affective factors like attitude and motivation had significant importance in influencing students' academic achievement as cognitive factors do. Individuals with low attitude and motivation towards their mother tongue seem to be impeded in performing their vernacular language achievement and even the performance of other subjects since it was used as a medium of instruction. Therefore, teachers

and school practitioners should pay attention to students' attitude and motivation towards medium of instruction, as they are important predictors of academic performance.

Teacher Training Institutions should help teacher trainees to understand the benefits of mother tongue; and train teachers on how to design and develop culturally relevant instructional materials.

It would be suggested that Bena Tsemay woreda education office should encourage teachers' in-service training to get professionally trained and pedagogically equipped teachers to participate into the teaching learning process in order to correct the misconceptions held towards "Teamaako" language as a medium of instruction.

The Ministry of Education should ensure that schools should comply with language of instruction policy which states that mother tongue or language of the catchment area should be the medium of instruction in lower primary schools; organize workshops for writing and publication of culturally-relevant educational materials in all local languages; ensure that culturally-relevant learning materials are produced to promote culturally-relevant teaching-learning; and ensure that the language policy is fully implemented.

The implementation of language policy requires that the syllabus, textbooks, teachers' guides and other culturally-relevant educational materials be developed and delivered in schools for use before the implementation starts. Curriculum and writing system or orthography need to be developed well. Therefore, the zone administration and education office should prepare and deliver enough textbooks and other educational materials to schools in Bena Tsemay Woreda. In addition, producing fiction, short story, poetry and other general reading materials in order to have ample reading materials would be necessary. Furthermore, preparation of dictionary and developing vocabularies in the grade level (1-4/6) in all subject areas to satisfy the need of the modern

science and technology are worth the effort. The development of the local language requires the development of more educational materials and implementing new ways of instructional delivery. Thus, the education office of Bena Tsemay should equip lower primary schools with adequate and relevant learning materials so as to maximize the pedagogical advantage of the language policy, and mother tongue should be included in the school curriculum.

Above all, attention should be given from all stakeholders and the community to support the use of Tsamaako' language as a medium of instruction in primary schools. Further investigation should be done on the challenges and opportunities to promote the development and use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction.

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