

Webinar 4: Handout 12

Assessing teachers' language and literacy skills

Teachers' knowledge, skill level and beliefs with respect to language are important issues that should inform the design and development of early grade reading program, including content and materials, teacher professional development, teacher placement, and advocacy and awareness raising that may need to be conducted. As such, during the program design phase, programs should conduct a survey of teachers to understand these issues. Care should be taken to do so in a sensitive and appropriate manner. This includes developing an appropriate language assessment tool (piloting is highly recommended), making sure that all stakeholders are aware of the purpose of the assessment and how results will (and will not) be used, and maintaining teachers' anonymity. Below is a summary of some early grade reading programs' efforts to assess teachers' language skills, knowledge and beliefs.

Ghana

Under the USAID Partnership for Education: Ghana *Testing* activity, a teacher questionnaire was included in the 2015 national EGRA/EGMA survey in Ghana. This was in response to the 2013 EGRA/EGMA pupil data, which raised questions about how both pupils and their teachers experienced the language of instruction (LOI) policy, which stipulates that pupils should be taught in the Ghanaian language of the local area in the early grades and transition to English by P4. In an effort to learn more about how the LOI policy is implemented in schools, this teacher questionnaire was added in 2015 to collect more information about teacher preparation and instructional practices related to language use. The questionnaire was administered to 671 Primary 2 teachers. Major findings from the teacher survey were: many teachers appear to be posted to schools where they do not speak the language of instruction; many teachers did not study the language for which they must now provide instruction; and some languages have an "oversupply" of teachers, while others face a shortage vis-à-vis the number of schools where a given language is spoken. A complete summary of the results and the instruments can be found here: <https://shared.rti.org/content/ghana-teacher-questionnaire>

A follow-up survey conducted as part of the USAID Partnership for Education: Ghana *Learning* early grade literacy program further explored teacher language skills as part of a larger survey aimed at identifying the degree to which the Ghanaian language assigned to be used as the language of instruction matched the languages spoken by pupils, teachers and used in teaching and learning materials. The survey was conducted in more than 7,000 schools in 100 districts where the program is implemented. The result is a typology of school "language match" conditions. Complete survey results and instruments can be found here:

FHI 360. (2018). Ghana *Learning* Language Mapping Study: Analysis Report. Available at https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00T4QS.pdf

Mozambique

To inform various aspects of the USAID-supported *Vamos Ler!* Program, a qualitative analysis of teachers' instruction was conducted in tandem with an assessment of student language and literacy skills. The survey found that the majority of sampled teachers used both a mother tongue (MT) language and Portuguese to teach in monolingual Portuguese LOI schools. A survey of teachers' beliefs further found that teachers believed that "the impact on student learning in Portuguese was higher when they used both the MT and Portuguese in the classroom." The findings indicate that schools LOI policies are not necessarily being implemented as intended by teachers who find it necessary to provide some instruction in MT languages. The full report and a summary presentation are available here:

Nakamura, P., Carson, K.; Davis, D. Rai, N. & Todd, A. (2018). Language mapping study in Mozambique. Produced by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) for Creative Associates International, on behalf of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Available at https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pa00n7sd.pdf

Nakamura, P., Rai, N., Davis, D., Carson, K. & Blankenbeckler, C. (2018). "Are you bilingual? Unpacking 'language' in language mapping in Mozambique." Presentation at the annual conference of the Comparative International Education Society (CIES). Mexico City, Mexico. Available at <https://globalreadingnetwork.net/resources/are-you-bilingual-unpacking-language-language-mapping-mozambique>

Nigeria

To inform materials development and teacher PD, the Nigeria Research and Access Reading Activity (RARA) conducted a simple assessment of grade 2 teachers' phonics, fluency and comprehension skills for the Hausa language. Teachers' knowledge of early grade reading pedagogy and practice, including language-specific issues, as well as their attitudes about teaching in the L1, were also surveyed. The language assessment indicated that teachers had a basic understanding of the relationship between letters and sounds but needed training to teach this skill. The assessment further indicated that teachers' oral reading fluency was suitable for reading aloud to students, and that they would be able to read a teacher's guide provided in Hausa. Instruments and results can be found here:

RTI International (2014). Nigeria Reading and Access Research Activity (RARA): Results of the 2014 baseline data collection in government primary schools in Bauchi and Sokoto states. Prepared for USAID under the EdData II project, Task Order No. AID-620-BC-14-00002 (RTI Task 26). Research Triangle Park, NC: RTI. Retrieved from http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00KM2J.pdf



RTI International (2016c). Nigeria Reading and Access Research Activity (RARA): Results of an approach to improve early grade reading in Hausa in Bauchi and Sokoto states. Prepared for USAID under the EdData II project, Task Order No. AID-620-BC-14-00002 (RTI Task 26). Research Triangle Park, NC: RTI. Retrieved from http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00KVM1.pdf