

CULTURAL COGNITIVE STRATEGIES AND THEIR EFFECT ON CREATIVITY AMONG BAHOUAN CHILDREN (8-11 YEARS) IN THE HAUT PLATEAUX DIVISION THE WEST REGION OF CAMEROON

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Abstract: This study investigated how Cultural Cognitive Strategies affect the Creativity of Bahouan children 8-11 years in the Hauts Plateaux Division in the West Region of Cameroon. The theories that inform this work are Jean Piaget's cognitive development theory (1936), Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of human learning (1978), and the Mediated Mutual Reciprocity theory of Tchombe (2019). The objective of this paper is to examine the extent to which local language (Ghomala) affects the creativity of Bahouan children in the Haut Plateaux Division. The design used was a concurrent nested mixed methods design. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 302 children and a criterion-based purposive sampling technique was used to select 10 parents from all the seven quarters of Bahouan village who participated in the data collection process. The instruments used to collect data was questionnaire, observation checklist, and interview guide. Data was analysed quantitatively using descriptive and inferential statistics while qualitative data was analysed using Discourse analysis. Finding showed that there was a moderate positive relationship between local language and creativity among Bahouan children ($P= 0.030, < 0.05$). R-Square for the overall model is 0.002 which shows the children's adjustment scheme and the estimated values of local language with an adjusted R of 0.002.

From the findings, it can be stated that local language plays a crucial role in stimulating and enhancing the creative capacities of children aged 8-11 in Bahouan village. This strategy foster imagination, problem-solving, originality, and confidence, making culture a powerful driver of creativity in childhood development. Conclusively, this research enriches the understanding of creativity by providing empirical, African-based evidence that situates creative development within culturally mediated practices. It underscores the importance of recognizing local language and traditional cultural forms as powerful vehicles for nurturing imagination and innovation. This piece of work recommended that teachers should receive training on how to harness cultural cognitive strategies to nurture creativity. Also, professional development programs can focus on integrating local language, local games, storytelling and traditional music into pedagogy, as well as on fostering an inclusive environment where all children can participate confidently in creative activities. Moreso, educational policymakers should recognize the value of cultural cognitive strategies as vehicles for creativity.

Key words: Cultural Cognitive Strategies, Creativity Bahouan Children.

Introduction

Humans share fundamental brain structures, cognitive processes, and universal developmental experiences such as familial relationships and life stages; however, the manifestation of these experiences is shaped by the distinct and context-specific circumstances of each individual.

Humans possess shared biological and neurological foundations, including common brain structures and cognitive processes that underpin perception, memory, language, and social behavior (Gazzaniga, Ivry, & Mangun, 2018). Likewise, across cultures, individuals typically undergo similar developmental milestones such as attachment to caregivers, identity formation in adolescence, and the formation of

social relationships highlighting a universal pattern of human growth and interaction (Erikson, 1968; Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

However, despite these commonalities, the expression, interpretation, and outcomes of these experiences vary significantly due to each individual's cultural, social, and personal context. For example, Vygotsky (1978) emphasized the role of sociocultural factors in shaping cognitive development, arguing that mental functions develop through interactions with more knowledgeable members of society within specific cultural settings. Similarly, Rogoff (2003) described development as a process of "guided participation" that is embedded within local practices and values, showing that what children learn and how they express their abilities are deeply influenced by the cultural tools and interactions available to them.

Furthermore, cross-cultural psychological research shows that emotional expression, problem-solving strategies, and even definitions of creativity and intelligence differ across cultural contexts (Nisbett & norenzayan, 2002; Sternberg, 2001). For instance, a child raised in a collectivist culture such as that of the Bahouan community in Cameroon may develop creativity through oral storytelling, communal games, and ritual practices, whereas a child in an individualistic context might engage in solitary play or structured school-based problem-solving activities.

Awasom (2014) defines cultural cognitive strategies as the mental processes people use to understand and interpret cultural information. In the African context, cultural cognitive strategies are shaped by many factors such as religion, social norms, history, language, music, games, and storytelling. Cultural cognitive strategies are linked to abilities that enable people especially children to think imaginatively or metaphorically, to challenge the conventional way of thinking and doing things and to allow the development of a new vision or idea. Children live in a wide range of cultural context which is a diversity that attests to the adaptability and creativity of humans. Rogoff (2003) postulated that cultural cognitive strategies contribute to cognitive development by providing children with structured, meaningful, and motivating opportunities to acquire, practice, refine, and extend their understanding of their culture and improve their creativity skills. Participating in everyday activities support and extend children's thinking and creativity. Much of human social and biological life is structured by culture, so the general propensity for children in a given community to think and be creative in the same manner. While Spencer (2012) explains that the cognitive strategies of every culture should be relevant to all the people within that culture, she went ahead to say that these strategies will be relevant in different degrees for different people because of the way they see it as being an important factor towards creativity. Some important cultural cognitive strategies are mentioned below which also contributes immensely to the creativity of children. These strategies are: Artifact, cultural values and beliefs, religion, local cuisine, local language, local games, storytelling and traditional music. While cultural cognitive strategies are varied, this study focuses on one of them which is local language.

Cultural values and beliefs shape children's attention and perception, what children attend to and how they interpret the information. It also impacts on how they encode and retrieve memories, and how they process and make sense of new information. Values are a culture's standard for discerning what is good and just in society. Beliefs are the tenet or convictions that people hold to be true. Individuals in a society have specific beliefs, but they also share collective values.

According to Jalal (2005), Local language, culture and creativity are deeply interlocked. We see, hear and experience what we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation (Xu & John, 2021). Local language is an expression of human cognitive processes and cognition makes creativity possible. The artful use of local language is central to children's emotional, cognitive and creative skills development as well as communication in general. Tannen (2007) opines that children pursue creative activity through local language, using it for practicing social roles, speculative thinking, and intellectual exploration. Older children and teenagers also use local language creatively in their engagement with culture and peer groups (Teresa & Janet, 2013). Language appears thus to be a mediation tool for the lea. The artful use of language is central to children's emotional, cognitive and social development. Children use local language for subversion,

resistance and critique which is a developmental story as children progressively extend their forms and use of language, but researchers have also stressed the sophistication and complexity of young children's spontaneous creativity in the use of local language right from the early years as they learn to talk through imitation (Cook, 2000). In addition to this, linguists and psychologists have also documented how, from the early stages, children use local language for imaginative reflection as they think on how to solve their problems and doing teamwork.

Engel (2005) argues that when children around the age of six use local language to weave their symbolic play into a narrative, it opens up an alternative symbolic world in which the child can explore and embellish different kinds of scenarios, reality and spheres of experience. Their manipulation of perspective, imagery and form facilitates experimentation with speculative thinking and the rearrangement of the real world. It is important to note that these early local language creative practices are clearly culturally shaped and some verbal dexterity and imaginative activity may not translate easily into school practices. However, Cremin and Maybin (2013) found that emphasis on oral culture or local language and on the skills of imaginative embellishment of reality, and performing and interacting with an audience or peers were not transferable in the school classroom. (These are social skills that enhance children creativity and can only be acquired during interaction with more knowledgeable others in the community). This is because by the time children reached the stage of schooling, their creative and imaginative use of local language would have been valued, and many of them had already been alienated through the initial emphasis on skilling and drilling by their parents and care givers through imitation and repetition as they spend time together. This underline the important point that cultures vary both in terms of the amount and type of creativity which are acceptable in different social contexts, and in relation to what is seen as appropriate in terms of the aesthetics and ethics of creative activity. Creativity through local language is not simply innovation, but a recognizable variation, guided by culturally specific aesthetic, practical and moral values, from an expected pattern (Dornyui, 2005). To put it differently, children are socialized into specific forms of creativity which are valorized by their society, and innovation which cannot be linked to existing cultural patterns is seen as inappropriate, or remains unrecognized.

Linguistic ethnographic research has emphasized the sociocultural functions of children's creativity through local language. Local language creativity thus plays an important simultaneous role in linguistic dexterity, sociability and socialization. Children are frequently creative both in play within local language, and in using it creatively to pursue particular purposes, which may or may not align with the purposes of other adults (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015). In the past century and stretching back even further, the topic of creativity has tended to be seen and investigated largely as a matter of mind and cognition. Kaufman and Sternberg (2006) have helped us to better understand the relationship between the human mind and its production of language and creativity. language provide the framework for thought and the mind influencing how people see the world while creativity requires cognitive effort to overcome prior knowledge and push thinking in new direction.

How we understand creativity and its role in language is deeply tied up with how we understand language and the impact this way of understanding language can have on children's identity. Most considerations of local language and its creativity aspects have taken place within the framework of dominant monolingual ideologies that see local language as discrete and abstract code, separate from one another and from the messy social context in which they are used (Jones, 2020). A potent antidote of describing local language and creativity in the context of language learning by children according to Swains (2006) is a process of languaging, a word she came up with in her quest for a way to highlight the importance for local language. Her focus was on language use rather than just language. Chomsky (1968) view of language was replaced with a model of language based on people's need to get along and to get things done in a social world. Within this model, meaning is not something that is conveyed through language. It is something that people make as they use language. Meanings do not exist in textbooks or dictionaries, meaning of words are revealed base on the context and the time in which the words are used. They emerge within concrete, situated moments of communication that are contextually grounded and offer a more robust and enduring solution (Jones, 2020). From this

perspective, Tin (2013) postulated that local language and creativity involve resisting the idea that meanings are already 'known' and that, it is the job of children to simply reproducing them.

Swain, (2006) notion of languaging has its roots in the work of Lev Vygotsky, whose sociocultural perspective on learning is more of a social than cognitive affair, a process of working things out with others using the various cultural tools available in the child's social environment. Rather than passive vessels for knowledge, children are active agents who learn by operating with whatever mediational means they have at hand (Jones, 2016). What this means when it comes to local language and creativity is not just that children learn local language through using the local language, but that they learn local language through using the local language to learn about other things and to operate upon the world around them in meaningful ways. In this way, local language is not just a residue of thought; it is a means which thoughts and experiences are transformed (Jones, 2020).

Phipps and Gonzalez (2004), argue that languaging is at its core a question of individuals accumulating powers and understandings to enable them to become actively critical social beings. Benso and Voller (2014) assert that the whole point of using language is to engage in the struggle to become the author of one's own world, to be able to create one's own meanings, to pursue cultural alternatives amid the cultural politics of everyday life. Jorgensen et al (2011), also emphasize on the transformational power of local language. Humankind is a languaging species, meaning that, as human beings, we use language to achieve our goals. Every time children use language, they change the world a little in their minds because a step in creativity has been taken. Related to this focus on transformation is the argument that languaging is also a central to self-knowledge and identity formation. If through language we can create and change our world, it is therefore a means by which we create and change ourselves. In relation to this work, the more children master a local language, it does not only enrich their vocabulary but enhances the ability for them to manipulate and reconfigure words and concepts in new ways, and they can easily switch between different thoughts quickly and effectively which is essential for creativity.

It is a fact that learning is a creative process because learning itself is full of creativity and requires creativity. So does local language learning (Afolayan, 2021). The aspect of local language and creativity cannot be bargained because the form of creativity in local language is employed in the form of exercises and tasks to make language learners accustomed to using the language. Local language learning shows creativity in listening which is reflected in form of an activity in which children process not only what they hear but also connect it to other information they already know (Helgesen, 2003). In addition, children can show creativity in local language by imitating the way the native speaker pronounces any word. Therefore, they are always required to show creativity in local language in listening activity, especially when they should respond in what they are listening to. Secondly, local language and creativity is also reflected in speaking skills. Richard and Renandy (2002) uphold that there are many ways children can do to master speaking skills such as having conversation with parents and friends every day. The creativity appearing in conversation is that children will do their best to make their utterances understandable (their pronunciation and sentences should be correct) and they also have to understand ideas uttered to them. Local language plays a central role in shaping the cognitive and creative development of children, particularly within indigenous and minority cultures. Among the Bahouan people of the Haut Plateau Division in Cameroon, the local language is not merely a means of communication, but a vessel for cultural knowledge, traditional wisdom, and unique modes of thought. Studies have shown that the language spoken by children influences how they categorize objects, solve problems, and interpret their world (Cole & Hatano, 2007).

The Bahouan language, like many indigenous languages in Cameroon, encodes culturally specific metaphors, idioms, and proverbs that reflect traditional values and worldviews. These linguistic elements are often deeply intertwined with storytelling, local games, and everyday interactions, all of which contribute to the cognitive flexibility and divergent thinking skills associated with creativity (Nsamenang, 2005). For instance, the use of local proverbs to teach moral lessons enables children to engage in abstract thinking and metaphorical reasoning which are cognitive processes closely linked to creativity (Omolewa, 2007). Moreover, language socialization practices within Bahouan households

and communities reinforce certain cognitive strategies that differ from those typically emphasized in Western schooling. These strategies include observational learning, narrative reasoning, and contextual problem-solving, which are often transmitted in the local language during daily activities such as farming, storytelling, and rituals (Serpell, 2008). This cultural mediation enhances children's ability to think innovatively within their sociocultural framework.

Research in African contexts has highlighted the importance of linguistic relativity in fostering unique cognitive schemas. Children who grow up speaking indigenous languages often display higher levels of contextual and ecological intelligence, which contribute to culturally relevant forms of creativity (Catharine & Marte, 2015). The Bahouan children's exposure to their local language thus plays a formative role in the development of culturally grounded creative expression, particularly through oral traditions such as riddles, folktales, and songs. However, the erosion of local languages due to globalization and formal education policies that prioritize French or English poses a threat to the transmission of these culturally embedded cognitive strategies. As UNESCO (2003) warns, language loss is closely linked to the loss of cultural identity and traditional knowledge systems. In conclusion, the local language among Bahouan children serves not only as a communicative tool but as a critical indicator of cognitive strategies and creative potential. Its use in everyday life, educational settings, and cultural practices fosters culturally situated thinking patterns that support creative development.

Theoretically, three theories underpin this work. The theories are: Jean Piaget's cognitive development theory (1936), Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of human learning (1978), and the Mediated Mutual Reciprocity theory of Tchombe (2019)

Angu (2019) investigated how mother tongue-based bilingual education affects concept formation in children in Bafut (North-West Region of Cameroon) argues for more balanced and culturally sustaining bilingual education in Cameroon to foster both linguistic and cognitive development. Gauvain, (2009) aimed to determine how linguistic maturity affects creativity. The results suggest that there is a relationship between creativity and language, especially with linguistic maturity in terms of semantic ability, as measured by text production. Simonton, (2000) explored how mother tongue (local language) usage influences cognitive abilities and second-language acquisition in early childhood. The researchers found that children using their native language exhibited enhanced cognitive flexibility and superior performance in learning a second language.

Statement of the problem

Children acquire creative knowledge through active involvement in the life of families and communities. Creativity is a skill that develops in children as they grow. Unfortunately, this researcher has observed that Bahouan children do not have enough creative skills. The use of local language among children is rapidly declining due to increasing exposure to dominant languages and reduced engagement in traditional cultural practices. This shift limits children's opportunities to interact in culturally meaningful ways that stimulate imagination, problem-solving, and other creative abilities rooted in indigenous knowledge systems. As a result, the potential contribution of local use to enhancing children's creativity remains underexplored and insufficiently supported. With this problem in mind, the researchers sought to provide answer to one research question which is: How does local language affect creativity of Bahouan children in the Haut Plateaux Division West Region of Cameroon?

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a concurrent nested mixed methods design in which the quantitative approach served as the primary method, while qualitative data were nested to provide contextual and cultural insights. Both data sets were collected during the same phase of the research to ensure that the findings from each method could inform and enrich one another.

This design was chosen to gain more comprehensive understanding of creativity as it emerges within the cultural context of the Bahouan community, combining the strengths of both methodological

paradigms. The integration of both methods aimed to produce a deeper, more nuanced account of how indigenous cognitive practices influence creative development in late childhood.

The village is bordered by Bandjou, Bamenjou, Bameka, and Baham. Bahouan is part of the Bamenjou council and consists of seven quarters Hiala, Mohie, Mbou, Deuntcha, Tchave, Djeugo, and Togheu. This is a Grassfield Bamileke community known for its rich cultural heritage, strong communal life, and active use of traditional practices in daily living. These environmental and cultural features create an ideal context for children to develop creativity, problem-solving skills, and cultural cognition. The local language spoken is Ghomala and the community is culturally rich, with long-standing traditions in oral storytelling, traditional games, initiated festivals (such as the Nkaing Festival), and music and dance.

Economically, the people of Bahouan are predominantly engaged in agriculture, with crops such as maize, beans, groundnuts, cassava, and plantains forming the backbone of subsistence farming. Small-scale animal husbandry (goats, pigs, poultry) and trade in local markets also contribute to household income. In addition, artisanal activities such as weaving, wood carving, and pottery remain common, providing both economic support and avenues for creative expression within the community.

Population of the study

The population of the study was all the children of age 8-11 years old living in Bahouan village and the parents of the children, but because of the vastness of the village, it was narrowed only to some quarters. The researcher worked with children and parents from five selected Quarters in the Bahouan village. The target population of children according to each quarter was distributed as follow Hiala 284 children, Mohie 297 children, Mbou 304 children, Deuntcha 260 children, and Djeugo 291 children. The accessible population of children was determined to be both adequate and representative of the target population. The accessible population was distributed as follow Hiala 271 children, Mohie 274 children, Mbou 281 children, Deuntcha 291 children, and Djeugo with 283 children.

The Sample was made up of 302 children. The study employed a combination of sampling techniques to select participants. The purposive sampling technique was used to select Bahouan village as the study site due to its rich cultural heritage and active practices in local language, storytelling and traditional music. This made the community an ideal environment for investigating the role of cultural cognitive strategies in fostering creativity among children.

Within the village, a simple random sampling technique was used to select 302 children aged 8 to 11 years as the main participants. This method ensured that each child in the accessible population had an equal chance of being selected, thereby enhancing the representativeness of the sample.

In addition, a judgmental (purposive) sampling technique was used to select 10 parents for interviews.

The sample size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size table, which indicates that for an accessible population of 1,400, the appropriate sample size is 302 participants.

The instruments used for this study were a structured questionnaire with close ended questions for children to answer with a yes or no responses, an interview guide with open ended questions for parents to give their opinions on the effect of local language and creativity of children, and an observation checklist guide which has 10 guiding questions, with the same observations for seven days which the researchers used to observed how children communicate in the local language.

Method of data analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed. For inferential statistics, regression analysis was employed to determine the linear relationship between local language and creativity among Bahouan children. Regression was chosen because it goes beyond simply showing associations; it helps to measure the extent to which variations in cultural cognitive strategies (independent variables) can predict or explain changes in creativity (dependent variable). This makes it suitable for testing the predictive effect and strength of the relationship between the study variables. The researchers used

discourse analyses to examine the spoken responses, expressions, and narratives provided by parents regarding children's involvement in local language practices and creativity related activities.

Finding of this study are done based on the research question under investigation

Table 1: Distribution of respondents in relation to local language and its effect of creativity among Bahouan children

S/N	Items on Local language	Responses YES	NO	Mean	STDEV	Ranking
1	I invent new words when speaking my dialect	296 (98.0%)	6 (2.0%)	1.98	0.13	7
2	My dialect has helped me to solve different problems.	227(75.2%)	75(24.8%)	1.75	0.48	5
3	I act in local dramas better because of my dialect	297 (98.3%)	5 (1.7%)	1.98	0.12	8
4	My dialect has helped me to narrate stories	297 (98.3%)	5 (1.7%)	1.98	0.12	8
5	I draw pictures based on words in my dialect	235 (77.8%)	67 (22.2%)	1.78	0.41	6
6	My dialect helps me think of different ways to do things	301 (99.7%)	1 (0.3%)	1.997	0.00	9
7	My dialect has helped me to interact well in my community	276(91.3%)	26(8.7%)	1.91	0.37	1
8	The more I master my dialect, it enriches my vocabulary.	253(83.8%)	49(16.2%)	1.84	0.46	3
9	My dialect has improved my ability to learn new things	247(81.8%)	55(18.2%)	1.82	0.48	4
10	My dialect helps me imagine and act out local tales	231(76.5%)	71(23.5%)	1.77	0.46	2
Total average		266.1 (88.0)	36.0 (11.9)	1.88	3.03	

Table 1 above represents respondents' views on the role of local language in enhancing children's creativity. Each item was analyzed using frequencies, percentages, mean scores, standard deviations, and ranking.

An overwhelming 98.0% of the respondents accepted that they invent new words when speaking their dialect, while only 2.0% rejected the idea. This was reflected in the mean of 1.98 with a standard deviation of 0.13, giving a ranking position of 7. This indicates that the majority of children acknowledge their ability to invent new words when speaking the dialect. Similarly, 75.2% of respondents agreed that their dialect has helped them to solve different problems with their friends, while 24.8% opposed this view. The mean score was 1.75 with a standard deviation of 0.48, and the ranking positions was 4. This shows that dialect plays an important role in problem solving. With respect to drama, 98.3% of respondents indicated that they act better in local dramas because of their dialect, while 1.7% disagreed. This was supported by the mean of 1.98 and a standard deviation of 0.49, with a ranking of 6. This finding highlights that local language strengthens children's ability to express themselves in drama and role play. In addition, 98.3% of respondents agreed that their dialect has helped them to narrate stories, while only 1.7% rejected this option. The mean was 1.98 with a standard deviation of 0.12. This shows that local language has a positive effect on children's creativity. Furthermore, 90.7% of respondents indicated that they draw pictures based on words in their dialect, whereas 9.3% disagreed. The mean value was 1.78 with a standard deviation of 0.48, ranking 8th. This suggests that children are able to translate dialect expressions into visual images, which enhances their creative imagination.

A majority of 99.7% of the respondents accepted that their dialect helps them think of different ways to do things, while only 0.3% rejected this opinion. This item recorded a mean of 1.997 with a standard deviation of 0.00, and a ranking position of 9. This finding strongly supports the idea that dialect stimulates divergent thinking. Also, 91.3% of respondents agreed that their dialect has helped them to interact well in their community, while 8.7% disagreed. The mean score was 1.91 with a standard deviation of 0.37, ranking 3rd. This demonstrates that dialect is an important tool for social interaction and collaboration. In relation to vocabulary, 83.8% of the respondents agreed that the more they master their dialect, the more it enriches their vocabulary, while 16.2% opposed the view. The mean was 1.84 with a standard deviation of 0.46, ranking 5th. This finding shows that language mastery builds verbal creativity. Regarding learning, 81.8% of respondents indicated that their dialect has improved their ability to learn new things, while 18.2% rejected this idea. This was shown in the mean of 1.82 with a standard deviation of 0.48, with a ranking of 8. This implies that dialect contributes to learning and creativity.

Finally, 76.5% of the respondents affirmed that their dialect helps them imagine and act out local tales, while 23.5% disagreed. This had a mean of 1.77 and a standard deviation of 0.46, with a ranking of 2. This indicates that dialect plays a key role in imagination and dramatization, which are vital elements of creativity. Overall, the total average mean across the items was 1.88 with a standard deviation of 0.33. this shows that respondents generally agreed that dialect significantly contributes to children's creativity, particularly in areas such as problem solving, dramatization, vocabulary enrichment, imagination, and social interaction.

Analysis of check list on Local Language

In order to assess how the use of local language influences children's creativity in Bahouan village, a seven-days observational checklist was administered to children aged between 8 and 11 years. The checklist focused on communication in the local language with special indicators such as participation in local drama, inventing new words, playing games in the dialect, and problem-solving through the local dialect. These indicators were observed daily across a period of one week to identify patterns in the children's creative engagement when using their native language. the purpose was to generate empirical evidence on the role of local language in enhancing children's imaginative, social, and problem-solving abilities.

The checklist was administered to 10 children in Bahouan village over a period of 7 days. The purpose of the checklist was to systematically observe the children's participation in local language practices. This guide consisted of observable behaviors that reflected the children's engagement in local language practices. For every child, a tick was placed whenever the behavior was observed to occur naturally within the context of their daily activities. This method ensured that the data captured the frequency and consistency of each behavior across the observation period.

In order to assess how the use of local language influences children's creativity in Bahouan village, a seven-days observational checklist was administered to children aged between 8 and 11 years. The checklist focused on communication in the local language with special indicators such as participation in local drama, inventing new words, playing games in the dialect, and problem-solving through the local dialect. These indicators were observed daily across a period of one week to identify patterns in the children's creative engagement when using their native language. the purpose was to generate empirical evidence on the role of local language in enhancing children's imaginative, social, and problem-solving abilities. If all the 10 children validate the first question on the checklist in day 1, it is rated 10 with 100%, same with day 2 and the other days. But if only some of them participated, it is rated according to the number that participated in a particular day and the percentage calculated accordingly.

Table 2: Analysis of observational checklist on local language and its effects on children's creativity

S/N	Items on local language	DAY 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Child communicates in local language at home and with friends	10 (100%)	10 (100%)	10 (100%)	10 (100%)	10 (100%)	10 (100%)	10 (100%)
2	Child acts in local dramas better thanks to his dialect	10 (100%)	8 (80%)	8 (80%)	10 (100%)	8 (80%)	8 (80%)	9 (90%)
3	Child invents new words when speaking the dialect	10 (100%)	10 (100%)	10 (100%)	10 (100%)	10 (100%)	10 (100%)	10 (100%)
4	Child plays games better when speaking the dialect	10 (100%)	10 (100%)	10 (100%)	10 (100%)	10 (100%)	10 (100%)	10 (100%)
5	Child's dialect helps him to solve problems in creative ways	10 (100%)	7 (70%)	7 (70%)	8 (80%)	7 (70%)	6 (60%)	8 (80%)
	Total average	10.0	9.0	9.0	9.4	9.3	8.8	9.4

The results from table 2 above reveal that children consistently communicate in their local language at home and with friends, with all 10 participants doing so across the seven days of observation. This demonstrates the centrality of the dialect in daily interactions and confirms its role as a strong foundation for social and creative expression. Children also showed a high tendency to act in local dramas using their dialect, though the percentages varied slightly between 89 and 100%. The minor fluctuations suggest that while the dialect strongly supports expressive creativity, the level of participation may be influenced by children's individual interests or situational focus.

Another striking observation was that children consistently invented new words while speaking the dialect, with all participants demonstrating this behavior every day for the seven days. This inventiveness reflects a natural form of linguistic creativity that is nurtured through constant engagement with the dialect. Similarly, play activities carried out in the local language were reported at 100% throughout the week, indicating that the dialect enhances interaction during games and allows children to express themselves freely, negotiate rules, and engage actively in creative play.

The responses on problem-solving showed slightly lower percentages compared to other areas, ranging between 60% and 80%. Although the dialect was found to help children address challenges in creative ways, the variations suggest that problem-solving requires additional cognitive strategies beyond local language alone. Nevertheless, the relatively high proportions indicate that the dialect still provides a useful framework for approaching tasks with originality and flexibility.

The overall mean scores, which ranged between 9.0 and 9.4, point to a generally high level of engagement with the local language across all indicators. These results confirm that the use of the dialect is not limited to communication but also serve as a medium through which children's creativity is fostered. By enabling expressive performance, linguistic inventiveness, interactive play, and problem-solving, the local language plays a crucial role in shaping the creative development of Bahouan children.

Discourse analysis on local language and its effects on children's creativity

The interview with parents revealed important insights into how the local language influences children's creativity.

On the first question, how important is it for your children to always communicate in their local language? the dominant theme that emerged was the use of the dialect in helping with privacy and discussing confidential information. Out of the ten parents interviewed, seven (70%) emphasized that speaking the dialect allows their children to protect family matters, especially in public or multicultural settings where others may not understand the language. For instance, one parent noted that, "When my children use our dialect, they can share private issues without outsiders knowing what they are

saying.” Another parent explained, “The dialect is very important because it allows us to discuss family secrets freely.” These responses suggest that parents perceive the local language as a protective cultural tool that fosters identity, belonging, and confidence in communication.

In response to the second question, how does the dialect help your children to be creative? parents highlighted the theme of helping in interaction with other children. Eight out of ten parents (80%) mentioned that the dialect facilitates socialization, which in turn nurtures creativity. They explained that when children communicate in their dialect during play, they are able to invent new games, coin words, tell riddles, and compose songs. For example, one parent observed that, “When children play using our dialect, they invent new games and songs together.” Another added, “Through speaking the dialect, they learn to create riddles, jokes, and stories.” These perspectives show that parents view the dialect as an interactive medium that stimulates cooperation, storytelling, and imaginative play which are key elements of creative development.

Overall, the findings indicate that the local language contributes to children’s creativity in two main ways: firstly, by safeguarding privacy and confidentiality within the family (70%), and secondly, by enhancing peer interaction and collaborative play (80%). These results directly align with the study’s

Verification of hypothesis one

To test Hypothesis One (Ho1), which stated that “There is no significant effect of local language on creativity among Bahouan children in the Hauts Plateaux Division,” a statistical analysis was carried out. Specifically, regression analysis and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were employed to examine the relationship between the independent variable (local language) and the dependent variable (creativity).

The level of significance was set at 0.05 (5%), which is the conventional threshold used to determine whether an observed effect is statistically significant. The regression coefficients and ANOVA results were used to assess the strength, direction, and significance of the relationship between local language and creativity.

Table 3: Model Summary of local language

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.044 ^a	.002	.002	.44059

The model summary table 3 shows a moderate positive relationship ($R = 0.044$) that exists between: local language and creativity among Bahouan children. Furthermore, R-Square for the overall model is 0.002 which shows the children’s adjustment scheme and the estimated values of local language with an adjusted R of 0.002.

Table 4: Coefficient of local language

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error			
1	(Constant)	1.679	.028		60.640	.000
	creativity among Bahouan children	.046	.021	.044	2.175	.030

The regression results show that the relationship can be expressed as: Creativity among Bahouan children = $1.679 + 0.46 \times \text{Local Language}$. This means that, even without the influence of local language, the baseline level of creativity among Bahouan children is 1.679. However, for every one-unit increase in the use of local language, creativity among Bahouan children increases by 0.46. This positive increase is statistically significant, as indicated by the p-value of 0.030.

To further examine the relationship between local language and creativity among Bahouan children, an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted. The ANOVA test helps to determine whether the

observed relationship between the independent variable (local language) and the dependent variable (creativity) is statistically significant.

Table 4: ANOVA of local language

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.918	.918	4.730	.030 ^b
	Residual	468.603	.194		
	Total	469.522			

The ANOVA results show an F-value of 4.730 with a corresponding p-value of 0.030. Since the p-value is less than the 0.05 level of significance, this indicates that the effect is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0), which stated that local language has no significant effect on creativity among Bahouan children, was rejected. The alternative hypothesis (H_1) was accepted, leading to the conclusion that local language has a significant and positive impact on the creativity of Bahouan children.

Research question 2: To what extent does local games affect creativity among Bahouan children in the Hauts Plateaux Division?

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study were discussed in relation to the research question and hypotheses.

The findings of this study indicate that the use of the local language (Ghomala) has a significant and positive effect on the creative development of children between the ages of 8–11 in the Haut Plateaux Division of the West Region of Cameroon. This finding is consistent with the view of many authors. These findings agree with Vygotsky (1978), who argues that language is a fundamental cultural tool that shapes children's thinking, imagination, and creative expression. When children use their local language, they draw from culturally grounded symbols, stories, and meanings which enrich their cognitive flexibility and originality. Similarly, the findings are consistent with Piaget's view that children construct knowledge through active interaction with their environment. When children use local language in daily conversations or during games, they engage in symbolic thinking which is an essential component of creative development. Local language provides concepts and expressions that help children interpret their world creatively. The findings also align with Tchombe's (2019) theory of mutual reciprocity, which emphasizes that learning is enriched when children's cultural knowledge is recognized and reinforced. Using local language in play, storytelling, and even music, children negotiate meaning with their cultural context, promoting creative exploration and problem-solving. Cassidy (2004) also notes that proficiency in the mother tongue strengthens cognitive flexibility and metalinguistic awareness, both essential for nurturing creativity. Baker (2011) contends that without balanced bilingual or multilingual exposure, children's creative potential could remain rooted mainly in familiar cultural frameworks, restricting their ability to draw from wider intellectual resources. Agreeing to the fact that local language enhance children's creative abilities.

While several scholars argue that local language use can support cognitive development and creativity, other research offers a more cautious view. Several large reviews and empirical studies have failed to find a reliable positive relationship between local language and creativity. According to Phillips & Gonzalez, (2024), the study shows that mother-tongue instruction can correlate with low foundational academic outcomes, especially in early cohorts promoting questions about whether a local language always support learning. This study challenges the assumption that local language exposure automatically enhances cognition or creativity and suggests that contextual factors may weaken the benefits. Biloa, (2004) suggests that the effectiveness of a local language on children's creativity depends heavily on wider educational system type; being in a colonial or decolonial or transition system. He also disagrees by saying that mother tongue instruction is not a guaranteed advantage in all context. These findings suggest that using a local language does not guarantee improved creative thinking. Creativity may rely more on interaction quality, guided practice, and peer collaboration rather

than simply the language medium. Again, Weinstein et al (2000) disagree by saying that children who learn to read in a second language can perform as well or in some contexts better than expected. It challenges the universal assumption that first language literacy is always superior. This study weakens the claim that local language inherently promotes creativity. It shows that context, motivation, and opportunities to use language creatively might matter more than the specific language spoken. Tuite (2006) argue for a bilingual advantage for creativity but also underscore that such advantages depend strongly on proficiency level, context, and flexibility of language use. That complexity suggests that simply having a mother tongue does not automatically yield creativity gains, other conditions must be met.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the local language in Bahouan serves as a powerful medium for fostering creativity. It enables children to connect deeply with their cultural roots while developing essential creative competencies such as divergent thinking, symbolic representation, and narrative innovation. Therefore, the preservation and active promotion of the Bahouan dialect within both home and school contexts is critical not only for cultural continuity but also for nurturing the creative potential of the next generation. Children within the target age group (8–11 years) are situated in the concrete operational stage, where they develop logical thinking, mental representation, and the ability to manipulate symbols and language in more sophisticated ways (Piaget, 1952). This stage is characterized by increased abilities in classification, seriation, perspective-taking, and understanding cause-and-effect relationships. Language, in Piaget's view, is both a product of cognitive development and a tool for further cognitive advancement.

In this study, children who engaged actively with the local Bahouan language demonstrated stronger abilities in symbolic manipulation, abstract reasoning, and divergent thinking hallmarks of creative cognition. The dialect, rich in metaphors, proverbs, riddles, and folktales, provides children with opportunities to practice mental operations such as analogy, transformation, and representation, which are foundational cognitive skills for creativity. As Piaget (1962) argued, play and symbolic activity using language allow children to internalize and restructure their experiences, thereby fostering imagination. Moreover, the use of local language in storytelling and games supports assimilation and accommodation, two critical processes in Piaget's model of cognitive adaptation. Children assimilate new cultural knowledge through familiar linguistic patterns and accommodate this knowledge by modifying existing cognitive schemas. For example, a child might hear a traditional story in Bahouan dialect and later reimagine it with new characters or settings, thereby demonstrating creative reconstruction based on personal experience which is a clear instance of cognitive flexibility. The study also found that children exposed to the Bahouan dialect were more likely to engage in sociodramatic play, creating scenarios, characters, and dialogues that reflect both traditional and invented narratives. This supports Piaget's belief that such symbolic play is a form of intellectual development where children "practice their future roles and thought structures" (Piaget, 1962).

In contrast, children with limited exposure to their local language showed less spontaneous creative behaviour, relying instead on repetition and mimicry. This aligns with Piaget's emphasis on the importance of self-directed discovery and cultural engagement in fostering higher-order thinking. If linguistic interaction is restricted or devalued especially one so embedded in cultural meanings then the child's ability to internalize complex cognitive structures may be hindered. The findings of this study equally support the idea that the use of the Bahouan local language significantly enhances the development of creativity in children aged 8–11. When viewed through the lens of Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Human Development (1978), these findings reveal how language and culture are deeply intertwined in shaping cognitive and creative capacities.

Recommendations

Parents should be sensitized on the importance of speaking the local language with children during daily routines. Parent workshops or village meetings can help caregivers understand how language rich interactions at home promote children's imaginations, narrative skills, and creativity.

Local councils, schools, and NGOs should invest in developing reading materials, games, songs, and visual aids in the Bahouan language. Availability of such resources increases practice and strengthens children's creative engagement.

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