

English and Shona in Schools

English translation:

A: Do you, um, study and read mostly in English, or Shona, or is it half-and-half?

B: So English is the official language in Zimbabwe. So all the teaching is in English. All of our textbooks are in English, for the different subjects. The only thing that is in Shona are Shona novels and Shona textbooks. And at my school, usually in schools they encourage students to speak in English all the time, also for the sake of practice, because we speak Shona at home, and that's the language of comfort, and you would want to speak in Shona all the time. But they always ask us to speak in English in school all the time, asking questions in English to get the practice. Um, but also in Shona classes, that's where we speak Shona, and also sometimes for teachers to really explain to students, they sometimes use Shona, um, but it's usually English. We understand learning in English, we learn Science in English, everything is in English. We start learning English, um, when we go on to first grade, but I remember sometimes in *crèche*, um, during the first two years of nursery school, you learn some English, you learn to say "How are you?", um, those basic "hello" or greetings in English, and also it depends with family sometimes. There are some parents who want their children to have really good English, so they start them early. Like, for example, um, they go to a nursery school that speaks in English only, even though they speak Shona at home. So it depends with families but everybody learns English in school from form one—from grade one until Ordinary Level, so at 'A' Level, that's when you choose to do English or not. Um, but all this time everybody learns it when they are young.

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