

LANGUAGE POLICY IN AFRICA

INAUGURAL ISSUE



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Editorial: The Relevance of *Language Policy in Africa*

As an editorial team, we proudly present this inaugural issue of *Language Policy in Africa*. We are pleased with all the good that is in this issue – but equally aware of its possible limitations. We believe that, together, they point the way for future developments in the field. Before we turn to a brief discussion of what this issue holds in store, we also want to devote a few words to the origins of our initiative and its relevance as we see it. We end the editorial with a few pointers to what we would like to publish in future and a few words of gratitude to those who were instrumental in bringing this issue about.

Origins

In the beginning, there was the European Conference on African Studies that took place in Edinburgh back in 2019. There, a little-visited panel in one of the Friday morning “graveyard slots” of the Conference was the occasion for a few like-minded people to meet. These were all activists of one type or another, interested in the use and promotion of African languages. All felt isolated – lone voices in their countries and academic communities. They decided to start an informal network, the [Edinburgh Circle on the Promotion of African Languages](#). This network grew organically and presently has over 100 members, who all share the basic belief that more use of African languages is unavoidable and that African languages are key to development on the continent. Over the years, the circle coordinated the networking of members at various conferences and organised a successful series of webinars. In 2023, the idea to start a journal was born. This was discussed in the circle’s steering committee and was first shared with circle members in August 2023. Right from the start, the feeling was that, for such a journal to be relevant for Africa-based scholars and others, it should be published open access, and should be free of any article processing charges. In addition, it should adhere to the accepted strict criteria of double-blind peer review and subscribe to high standards of academic and ethical integrity.

Circle members greeted the initiative with enthusiasm, thus making it possible to establish an editorial board, a group of five editors, three editorial assistants and two book review editors. Fortunately, the University of Bern (Switzerland) agreed to host the journal through

its *Bern Open Publishing* platform. The editorial board was able to meet in January 2024, and took a number of important decisions, both on the name of the journal and its mission and vision.

Several calls, both via the circle and various electronic media, led to a number of submissions, giving the editorial team the difficult task of deciding which submissions were good enough to go into peer review and then of organising the peer review process. As editors, we made the conscious choice to involve as many Africa-based scientists and peer reviewers as possible. This also had a downside: Africa-based scholars are often overstretched, overcommitted and underfunded – leading to longer review times than would have been desirable. We held monthly video meetings, and had regular contact in-between via email and instant messaging. It was wonderful that we were able to hold the team together – we all are volunteers. Many of us had to do this work in addition to our regular demanding jobs and faced life-changing events, both happy and unfortunate ones. But we managed. Therefore – yes, we are proud. Nevertheless, the question still deserves to be answered: *why did we decide to go through all this trouble? For what?*

Relevance

In colonial and postcolonial Africa, arguments have been made that using local African and indigenous languages would be divisive and undermining of national unity (Mazrui, 1966). Others argue that it would be hugely expensive, isolate countries from the rest of the world, run contrary to the wishes of the citizenry, and prove unworkable in highly multilingual urban settings (Clayton, 1998). Moreover, it is deemed unnecessary because children can learn an additional language and can be taught in such a language. In several African contexts, nation-states are often seen as weak, and policies, including language policies, are often no more than pious statements that bear little or no resemblance to what happens on the ground (Bamgbose, 2000).

To counter these arguments, others have argued that education in the “mother tongue” – the language(s) children learn at a very early age – works best. It is not only more efficient but also better for preserving local knowledge and maintaining cultural identities (Ouane & Glanz, 2010). Using local languages in formal and informal domains is also seen as a basic human right (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2013).

Unfortunately, the state of the debate does not seem to have changed much over the years. The same arguments have been repeated over and over again over the past decades, with no resolution in sight and little visible change on the ground. So why, then, take the trouble to

start a separate journal devoted to language policy in Africa? The reasons are both practical and theoretical. We want to start with the theoretical first.

Prah (2010, p. 8) already underlined the importance of language and literacy for (economic) development stating, “The real launch-pad is literacy....every society that ‘takes off’ may be seen to have crossed, some decades earlier, the decisive literacy threshold of 50% of the population or – still more decisive – 70% of young people aged 15–25.” Prah further asserted:

literacy in the colonial language refers to literacy for $\pm 10\%$ of our populations. On that statistical basis it is impossible to move a society forward. If one also, for the sake of argument, imagines that the task is to make our populations literate and work in French, English or Portuguese, we must realize that that day will never come... (p. 9)

In other words, language is central to development – therefore, also, having the right language policy in place and implemented is a necessary (though not a sufficient) condition for achieving (economic) development. Recently, the mirror image of this argument has also been presented, for example, by Oloruntoba-Oju and Van Pinxteren (2023). That basically states that giving youngsters a sufficient level of proficiency in the former colonial language will gradually become an impossible task for African educational systems. This will happen when there are further increases in enrolment in tertiary education, especially when approaching levels as seen in the global North. In other words, it is not only the case that literacy (in African languages) leads to development. The reverse is also true: development will lead to an increased need for literacy (in African languages). What Oloruntoba-Oju and Van Pinxteren also show is how a transition to an increased use of African languages is possible and thinkable, even in a linguistically diverse country such as Nigeria, using a more limited set of languages than the over 500 currently listed for the country.

In their discussion of the relationship between language use in Africa and the consequences of language policies on the continent, Diallo and Bearth (2022) recall that the UN Agenda 2030, although pretending “to leave no one behind”, will not include the large majority of African citizens if African languages are not taken in consideration. They recall that language is an instrument of social inequality, inclusion, exclusion and marginalisation. It sets up the conditions for economic production, distribution of resources, as well as access to health and social services, and is central in the process of governance, specifically on the African continent. Tackling these questions requires suitable language policies in African

states. Our journal seeks to contribute to this conversation and invites academics, experts as well as practitioners to join it and share insights on this central topic.

These insights make an analysis of enrolment trends in tertiary education a new key element when considering language policies and their implementation. They also lead to a possible way out of the stalemate described above. The debate will move from the purely academic into the field of the real economy since it is the economy (and the related need for educated manpower) that will make changes a necessity. They also mean that a journal devoted to language policy in Africa is now more relevant than ever. A transition to using African languages more in formal domains on the continent, though necessary, will take time and will not be easy to achieve. Mistaken policies or implementation can easily set a country back and lead to unfortunate policy reversals. Thus, a discussion of what works and what does not work and of why and in which countries what choices are available is now more needed than ever.

The area of (tertiary) education is not the only domain of interest here. Fields such as acquisition planning, digitisation, terminology development, and language use studies have important contributions to make. We invite scholars in those fields to submit their works, insofar as they relate to language policy.

On the practical side, we recognise that existing journals devoted to language planning and language policy could play a useful role here.¹ However, we see that currently, contributions on Africa are few and far between in such journals, are more oriented towards linguistics than to language policy, are spread over different journals and are often not available in open access. Thus, providing a forum such as this journal seems relevant. This does not mean that we cannot learn from other contexts (South Asia, for example), or that others cannot learn from what is happening in Africa. That is why this journal also encourages comparisons with situations in other parts of the world. We hope it will find a wide readership, within and beyond the continent.

In this issue

This inaugural issue contains several interesting submissions that speak to the points raised above. The first is the opinion piece by Professor Salikoko Mufwene, who gives a broad overview of the origins of the current diglossic situation in Africa. We highly

¹ See, for example, <https://link.springer.com/journal/10993>, <https://www.jbe-platform.com/content/journals/15699889> and <https://www.tandfonline.com/journals/rall20>

recommend reading this paper because the author points out how the allegedly unifying function of using former colonial languages such as English, French or Portuguese in practice serves rather to divide and to marginalise large groups in society. In his view, it is sound economic policy, rather than using one “unifying” language, that will bring about peace and prosperity.

Van Pinxteren looks at enrolment trends in higher education in East Africa, showing that current language policies in the region will no longer be sustainable in the future. He concludes that for Tanzania, using Swahili as a medium of instruction in higher education would be a feasible option, although special attention should be given to speakers of non-Bantu minority languages. For Kenya and Uganda, such a solution will not be sufficient: several languages will have to be chosen for use as mediums of instruction in higher education.

Other articles in this issue discuss language policy-related issues considering specific countries. For instance, Boussagui and El Allame give an overview of the situation in Morocco, with a special focus on the position of the Amazigh language. Morocco, a country with high participation in higher education compared to the rest of Africa, has seen a constant debate on whether – and how – to introduce Arabic as a medium of instruction instead of French. In the process, the position of Amazigh has not become stronger, although the language has a higher level of institutional protection than most other African languages.

On the other side of the continent, Chebanne and Mogara examine the situation in Botswana, where speakers of Khoi-San languages face even greater challenges. They discuss how sound policies could help address the marginalisation of these minority languages.

This issue also features articles that explore more specific concerns. Oborlah charts the language policies of two Nigerian radio stations and recommend better training and collaboration with language experts. Dankwa-Apawu et al examine the limitations to translanguaging in an area of Ghana where speakers of the Santrokofi (Selee) minority language are systematically put at a disadvantage. Thango addresses the (lack of) appropriate language policy in banks in South Africa. Story investigates how the diglossic situation in Nigeria is reflected in the language policies of the Church of the Latter-day Saints. A unique feature of the journal is that many of the articles have abstracts in African languages, ranging from Arabic to Zulu.

The future

Over the coming months, we will be working to get the journal indexed in all relevant places, so that its reputation will grow. This also depends on *you*, our first readers: if you think what we are publishing is relevant, do use the means at your disposal to promote the journal and its contents! That way, we hope to receive an increasing number of contributions.

After this issue, articles will be published online first as soon as they have been accepted and finalised – and then they will be grouped into issues and volumes. Our thinking now is that we may be able to publish two issues a year, but this will depend on the quality and volume of contributions and also on the speed with which we will be able to manage the review process. For the time being, we accept submissions in English and French; moreover, scientific publications in African languages are also encouraged. However, this will only be possible if we find experts who are committed to a double-blind academic peer review process in these languages.

There is space in the Journal for review and research articles, as well as book reviews and opinion pieces (in our *Forum* section). We hope to become part of a dynamic process, which can only grow in importance, as outlined in our theoretical and practical considerations above. We invite you to be part of it!

A bit of thanks

This Journal would not have been possible without the support of the people at [Bern Open Publishing](#), the editorial board, our loyal and tireless editorial assistants (Cosmas Rai Amenorvi, Caroline Story and Ignatius Usar), our book review editors, our authors and of course those who worked anonymously to carry out the peer reviews. A big thank-you to all!

Djouroukoro Diallo

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Language Practices in “Francophone Africa”¹: A Legacy of European Colonialism

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My appointment to the *Chaire annuelle Mondes francophones 2023-24* at the *Collège de France* and the public lectures I gave there in spring 2024 have prompted me to think harder about the coexistence of French with autochthonous languages in Africa since the late 19th century. I focus here on the period following the “Scramble for Africa” conference (1884-85) in Berlin, when the continent was divided among European powers into multiple exploitation colonies, where they would extract raw materials to fuel the European Industrial Revolution. The colonizers superposed their national languages over African ones as *lingua francas* of governance and

taught them to autochthonous colonial auxiliaries, who generally interfaced between them and the masses of the colonized populations (Mufwene, 2022). This was the beginning of what has been described as diglossia or, when taking into account the *autochthonous lingua francas* sandwiched between the European and African ethnic languages (see below), triglossia.

The auxiliaries functioned as elementary school teachers, clerks at the lower levels of the colonial administration and at the lower courts of justice, petty officers in the army and police force, assistants to medical doctors, and secretaries of mercantile companies, among other junior administrative positions in the colonial administration. They are also known in history of colonization as go-betweens and intermediaries; and they spared their European bosses the “burden” of learning autochthonous languages, although, to be sure, some of the latter in junior rank, along with missionaries, did learn some of the languages. As a matter of fact, some of these administrators and missionaries are the ones that started African linguistics, for instance, Carl Meinhof (1857-1944), William Bleek (1827-1875), Clement Doke (1893-1980), W. Holman Bentley (1855-1905), and Maurice Delafosse (1870-1926).

¹ This label begs the question because on average French is a minority language in the relevant African polities, (based on the statistics of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie’s 2023 report—see more on this below, in the main text) and is primarily used as a lingua franca. The label “eclipses” the significance of autochthonous languages used as vernaculars and, for some of them, also as regional lingua francas. In Francophone Europe, French is used typically as a vernacular, though its standard varieties have specialized for formal or official functions.

Missionaries have often also been blamed for defining language boundaries in ways consistent with their proselytization endeavors, disregarding how the Natives had defined their own ethnolinguistic affiliations. More specifically, the missionaries sometimes lumped several languages (from the perspective of heritage speakers) into single larger ones whose boundaries corresponded to their administrative divisions of the land, as in the case of *Ewe*, *Fon*, *Fulfulde*, *KiKongo*, *Khoe*, and *San*, each of which is actually a language cluster. That is, the traditional languages were stipulated as dialects of the new ones. On the other hand, they also turned what heritage speakers considered dialects of the same language into separate languages, as in the division of *ChiShona* in Zimbabwe into *ChiManyika*, *ChiZezuru*, and *ChiKaranga* (Makoni et al., 2006).

Given the relative prestige enjoyed by the colonial auxiliaries, especially because they were also housed in buffer zones between the residential quarters of the European administrators and the Natives' neighborhoods, the Native languages were increasingly subordinated to those of the Europeans. The auxiliaries' capacity to interface between their bosses and the other Natives underscored the value of the little schooling that was available then and that of bilingualism in the European and African languages, especially major ones that would be promoted to the status of *lingua francas* for interethnic communication among the Natives. The latter category of languages facilitated the colonial enterprise because several auxiliaries were not Native to the regions where they found employment and simply had to know the relevant *lingua francas* instead of all the ethnic languages. These major languages also evolved into urban vernaculars for the Natives who relocated to the emergent colonial cities, homes of extensive language contact where societal multilingualism became the norm, unlike in traditional villages, which were typically monolingual.

These urban varieties, such as *Urban Wolof*, *Urban Sango*, *Urban Lingala*, *Urban Swahili*, and *Urban Bemba* then started to index modernity, which they still do today in popular culture, in contrast with the ethnic languages spoken in rural areas and the European languages still considered foreign. They have been used in the blue-collar sector of the formal economy (introduced by the colonizers), another index of modern life, though the colonial industry was developed more for the economic development of the European metropolises than for that of the colonies. Commenting on this situation, Walter Rodney (1972) observed that Africa paid for its

own underdevelopment, especially since the wages of the Natives were derisory compared with the contribution of their labor to the growth of the metropolises' economies.

This evolutionary scenario introduced not only the socioeconomic stratification within the Native population but also of their languages (as noted above), elevating the urban vernaculars to a level above the ethnic languages. To borrow from the terminology of *creolistics*, the European colonial languages, functioning as languages of both power and exclusion, became the acrolects, while the ethnic vernaculars became the basilects (obviously in multitude), and the urban vernaculars, which include more words borrowed from the European languages (especially in the mouths of the elite), occupy the middle position. Relative to the ethnic languages that the colonial system coopted as urban vernaculars, they correspond to creole mesolects. One can detect some coloniality in the fact that, except in villages, the less schooled Natives do not fuss over this borrowing of words from the European languages, which index urban modernity. Yet, mixing a European language with elements from autochthonous languages indexed inadequate command of the former and was/is derided! For their competence in the European languages, the colonial auxiliaries occupied the social category of *évolués* ('evolved') in French colonies, putatively individuals who had evolved from the condition of savagery to that of civilized, consistent with what the French called *mission civilisatrice* (the counterpart of "the White man's burden" among the British) and invoked to justify colonization. The rare Africans who had studied in Europe and returned to the colonies were appointed to the best positions that the Natives could occupy in the colonial system, but they were also considered as threats to the colonial world order. Their better command of the colonial languages was of course well appreciated.

Salient on my mind, and at the center of my lectures at the *Collège de France*, has been the question of the extent to which the language situation has (not) changed since Independence (in the 1960s for most countries). The European languages have acquired the status of official languages (rarely that of co-official language), and those who command them well are automatically also considered more intelligent and competent, therefore more suitable for the (postcolonial) world order, especially if they also enjoy special connections with more established people in the system. As noted above, the urban vernaculars index African modernity and are vibrant in popular culture as well as in the blue-collar sector of the little-developed formal economy and in urban informal or vernacular economy.

By contrast, the ethnic languages still function as vernaculars and thrive in rural areas, the conservative homes of the population majorities. They also function as the media of intimate communication or ethnic solidarity among the economically disenfranchised adults in urban centers, especially the first-generation in-migrants. Many of those who are disenchanted with or discouraged by life in the city and return to the village speak the ethnic languages with a vengeance, partly to prove how little they have changed culturally. Adult urbanites still use them for communication with relatives from the rural areas who visit them or when they visit the latter in the village. They are also the languages the elite use to seek help from members of the same ethnic groups when they are stuck or need to bargain the price down during commercial transactions. Thus, there are so many different reasons why most ethnic languages are far from being endangered in Africa, though natural disasters causing populations to relocate can lead to language endangerment among ethnic languages in rural areas (see, e.g., Tosco, 1998, Dimmendaal & Voeltz, 2007).

I submit that the main reason is that the formal economic sector functioning in the European official languages has hardly grown since Independence. The state of affairs provides little incentives for investing in them as *lingua francas*, let alone as vernaculars, at the expense of autochthonous ones. The fact that much of the little formal economy inherited mostly from the colonial period involves manual labor, for which the wages are derisory, has discouraged those in rural areas from adopting them as vernaculars for modernity. Traditional subsistence economic practices, which have helped villagers survive, exert no pressure on them to change vernaculars. Overall, this raises the question of why Africa is still so wedded to European colonial languages that benefit primarily the privileged minorities in power.

Beginning with Independence, the former colonial auxiliaries stepped in the shoes of the colonizers typically rivalling each other for the best positions in the government; and now their children or grandchildren have replaced them. They have all maintained the colonial world order to the point where one can say that only the faces of the colonizers have changed complexion, but the colonial socioeconomic structure continues. In other words, colonization from without has been replaced by colonization from within, as the autochthonous rulers have moved in the quarters of the former colonizers and use their languages to both exploit their fellow citizens and to serve the European economic development at the expense of that of their respective countries. Thus, the European languages, retained as official languages, function as tools of exclusion and

marginalization for the majorities of the national populations. Yet, the official languages had been chosen to be inclusive and help unify the citizenry! Autochthonous languages have been avoided allegedly to prevent interethnic conflicts! I return to this topic below.

Many who experienced the colonial period feel they are worse off now than then, as they have less buying power and schooling has not improved the living conditions of their children (and grandchildren), owing to little economic development relative to population's rapid growth and more competition in limited job markets. For many, if not the majority, both the official language and the autochthonous languages used by the army and the police are tools of disenfranchisement. Hope for the improvement of living conditions thanks to adequate competence in the European languages has generally become elusive. Everything suggests that it is high time to revisit current language policies and economic development. Since the latter have fostered more exclusion from than inclusion in national welfare and politics, shouldn't especially Sub-Saharan language policies and practices be oriented more to within the nation-states than outside (Mufwene, 2021)? Shouldn't they become more inclusive? And shouldn't the languages for these facets of national lives be autochthonous rather than European and therefore foreign? Shouldn't language practices favor the Natives over the foreign world?

Why is Africa trapped in the paranoia of being cut off from the outside world if the official languages were autochthonous? Why do we keep thinking that Sub-Saharan African languages are not yet suited for imparting scientific and technological knowledge adequately beyond the elementary school?² They won't be unless we start and work to adapt them to modern science. As a matter of fact, curricula must be updated too, to include African specificities in and contributions to science as knowledge construction in any domain. Experts in specific disciplines should be encouraged to start sharing their expertise in autochthonous languages, as challenging as the endeavor may be at the beginning. And they should be highly rewarded and compensated for doing so, just like administrators and executives too who do the same in their domains of employment. The financial incentive will speed up the process of decolonizing language practices and formal education in Sub-Saharan Africa. The same goes for health care providers! They should be able to communicate directly with their patients in autochthonous languages

² I leave North Africa out, because Arabic has already proved itself as very capable of my wish. In part of the Middle Ages, it was the language of scholarship and governance in Iberia, present-day Portugal and Spain. And Arabic is used in formal education in North African countries and the Middle East.

rather than through interpreters in the official languages. The days of colonial auxiliaries should be a thing of the past by now.

Why do African leaders stick to the Western *one-nation-one-language* ideology when it has failed to prevent ethnic and regional conflicts? It appears that, rather than language, it is inclusive governance and economic development that unify a nation-state, when it empowers the population, rather than only the elite class, economically. Language policies should be less disconnected from economic development. Politics such as Switzerland and Belgium show that countries can function reasonably well with multiple official languages, as long as their economies are prosperous, and the political systems do not discriminate against particular ethnic groups. And the histories of countries such as Somalia, Burundi, and Rwanda show that ethnic conflicts may endure even if the populations are united by the same national language. They show that the root causes of the conflicts are not linguistic but must apparently be sought in how equitable and inclusive governance is and how the pie of the economic returns or profits is distributed within the population. And problems typically also include the kinds of relations African countries maintain with the former metropolises or international organizations whose financial aids are more in the interest of the capitalist powers of the Global North than of populations of the Global South. Check how high the interest rates are, while the volumes of national debts keep growing. One cannot help noticing that economic growth, which is often reported by the World Bank does not entail economic development, as this famous financial institution sees it in terms of quantities of raw materials produced and sold to nations of the Global North.

What is evident is that discussions of language policies and practices in Africa should not be disconnected from those of economic development. This proceeds with fewer difficulties and if the economy functions in languages that the employees understand well, even if they do not speak them (well enough); these are typically the autochthonous ones, even when they are not their mother tongues. Economies function and make progress more effectively if communication is not a problem from the top to the bottom of the structure.

Let me now focus on “Francophone Africa.” Curiously, this part of the continent is exhorted by the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie* (OIF) to “combat” the spread of English around the world because this endangers linguistic and cultural diversity. It ignores the fact that regular speakers of French in the majority of its member States are demographic minorities,

though they enjoy disproportionate economic power relative to the marginalized majority—a situation that is so odd. In any case, if English should be considered as a “killer language” dangerous to African languages, so is French as an imperial language. A chameleon remains one regardless of its color! What the OIF is really worrying about is that the spread of English diminishes the importance of French as an imperial language. After all, there is no evidence suggesting that French as the vernacular of Francophone Europe (viz., France, Belgium, Switzerland, and Luxembourg, although only France is overwhelmingly francophone) is endangered by the fact that more and more of its speakers are learning English too. African languages do not appear to be endangered by the fact that the elite are using European languages as their *lingua franca*s. Being plurilingual does not necessarily favor one language at the expense of the others. For many plurilingual Africans residing in Africa, this is not necessarily the case.

Above, I used *Francophone Africa* between quotation marks precisely because French functions more as a *lingua franca* than as a vernacular in this part of the Continent and it remains a minority’s additional language in most of the relevant nation-states. A problem is that the minority elite using French as an emblem of their success are endowed with an economic and political clout that is disproportionate to their demographic size, especially the subset of it in the government. The fact that it is spoken on average by no more than 40% of the national population (according to the OIF’s own apparently inflated statistics³) after over sixty years of functioning as the medium of formal education in high school and higher education shows that the investment in time, efforts, and money (typically inadequate) has not been profitable from an economic perspective. The official language has created greater inequities than should be expected of a language that should be more inclusive in the politics and economic development of the relevant nation-states. The socioeconomic structure in which it is used is a continuation of the colonial regime, which was exploitative and profitable to European metropolises. One must wonder what the meaning of Independence is when the colonial socioeconomic structure is maintained.

The logical choice would have been for an autochthonous language, which may be easier for the Natives to learn (van Pinxteren, 2022) through casual interactions with others, as we have

³ Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, accessed 19 March 2025, *Langue française et diversité linguistique : Qui parle français dans le monde ?* <https://observatoire.francophonie.org/qui-parle-francais-dans-lemonde/>

traditionally done in Africa. Facing pervasive multilingualism, we could even have given up the Western *one-nation-one-language* ideology, especially since it has failed to guarantee, or at least facilitate, the national unity that advocates of a European language as the official language have invoked to justify its choice. As noted above, inclusive economic development does a better job of uniting a national population than an official language which serves the needs of the former metropole first. For instance, it is economic development that drove English as the dominant language of the United States, whereas its constitution has no mention of it as the official language.

Note that because the language of the former metropole continues to be used in the former colony, its citizens who visit feel no pressure to learn at least one of the autochthonous *lingua francas*, even when researchers come to do fieldwork (which is then conducted through interpreters).⁴ The situation creates an asymmetrical social relation in which European cultural practices are preferred to those of Africa. The exception to this general observation consists of the economically disempowered citizens, the majority who are mostly rural and are overlooked in most, if not all, economic development plans. Generally, urban demographic growth, largely an outcome of rural exodus, has produced neighborhoods that are mega-villages that lack urban infrastructure with residents relying on family ties or ethnic solidarity to survive. These are precisely the places where one can realize that ethnic languages are not endangered by either the European official languages or the autochthonous urban vernaculars. The language of solidarity for these disenfranchised is ethnic.

The vernaculars of these disenfranchised majorities have generally been treated as unfit for the modern world order. Socioeconomic exclusion and political disenfranchisement are what have kept them alive. The prejudice that holds them as inferior languages is a legacy of European colonization which favored European languages over autochthonous ones, then considered as primitive and less evolved, just like their speakers. It simply made life easier for the colonizers, sparing them the challenge of learning the local ones in regions where they operated. It is one of

⁴ This practice, followed by other visitors from the Global North who also stay or settle in affluent neighborhoods that used to be restricted to Europeans during the colonial period, is in contrast with that of Chinese small business owners. The latter reside in less affluent neighborhoods, learn autochthonous languages, and operate their businesses in them, setting themselves in competition with Native small business owners.

the reasons why little investment has been made for developing education systems that can operate fully in autochthonous languages after elementary school.

I think that the fact that Africa has produced several outstanding scholars speaks against the colonial prejudice. It is outrageous that African leaders have kept in place an educational system that promotes measuring the success of its graduates according to metrics inherited from Europe. Pretending that African languages are unfit for formal education because they are putatively not equipped for discussing science and technology is unwarranted. To my knowledge, it is practice that will make the autochthonous languages adapted for this function, not prejudice about their suitability. As a matter of fact, this prejudice was also true of the European languages themselves that replaced *Classical Latin* as the language of scholarship; and the use of African languages will prove that they can be adapted to impart academic and technical knowledge. It is the mind and commitment that will adapt autochthonous languages as adequate media of education. The present prejudice against them conjures up the label *évolué* used for the Native elite before

Independence, mostly because they could speak French in “Francophone Africa.”

In its combative campaign against the increasing hegemony of English over French at international organizations, such the *United Nations*, the headquarters of the *European Union*, and the *World Health Organization*, the *OIF* encourages representatives of its member States to use French instead of English. One would think that, because it promotes linguistic diversity, it would encourage them to use major languages of their respective countries instead. I see here a recruitment of the leaderships of the member States to fight a language war that is not theirs nor in the interest of the populations they represent. It is reminiscent of African troops being drafted during the 20th-century *World Wars* to fight for what were essentially European wars and not at all in the interest of their homelands. Then it took several decades before the “tirailleurs sénégalais,” associated with a fictional rudimentary “français tirailleur” that they didn’t actually

speak,⁵ were compensated for their service to France! France hardly honored the promise of making them its citizens, showing to what extent they had been exploited.

In another vein, instead of thinking about the root causes for the rejection of France's control over "Francophone countries" by the Sahel (especially Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger), the *OIF* intensifies the teaching of and in French in "Francophone Africa." It still claims that the former metropole's language unites the remaining countries and they should continue celebrating the prestigious culture associated with French. To be sure, one can say that the OIF is doing its job of promoting the superiority of French over the putatively less prestigious languages and other cultural practices of the member States where French is not spoken primarily as a vernacular. Ironically, the relevant Sahel countries maintain French as "langue de travail" ('working language'). It looks like everybody is confused and the rulers antagonistic to France's imperialism are still mentally colonized! If they were working for their peoples, they would give up French and use major autochthonous languages for inclusive governance and public administration.

Paradoxically, instead of developing more self-reliance, the countries are turning to alternative colonizers, Russia and China, which exploit them the same way as France, except with less colonial guilt and without imposing their foreign languages. They just create demand for them, thought they are not encouraging the relevant Sahel countries to also reject French as "langue de travail." They don't care and are not encouraging them to resort to their respective major autochthonous languages either. Instead, they are happy that the Sahel countries are "francophone" and use it for their transactions with them. All this makes fewer languages for the Chinese and Russians to learn for their economic imperial ventures!

One important reason for this evolution of things is the weak economies of the Sahel, like of other Sub-Saharan countries. After over sixty years of national political corruption and economic exploitation by the Global North, these countries have not spared the financial resources needed to pay for their economic developments. The latter entail their populations' welfare and sound

⁵ The first term designates 'African infantrymen in the French colonial army' (recruited first from Senegal but later from other colonies too); and the second term is used in reference to the "broken French" that the troops allegedly spoke.

formal education, in addition to building the requisite infrastructures. They cannot fund adequate formal education, which implies funding the requisite work to shift to African languages as media of education. Nobody pays attention to the big elephant in the room: When will Africa emancipate itself linguistically? Attempts by Presidents Bassirou Diomaye Faye of Senegal and Félix Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to address their peoples in Wolof and Lingala respectively are still timid. Aside from the fact that the *OIF* is worried about this, there's also the fear that the Native elite harbor against losing the emblem of their status, as, in addition to their fortunes, language is what separates them from the disenfranchised majority populations. The elite are happy to maintain the socioeconomic structure inherited from colonization and securing their privileges, as well as, alas, supporting the economic development of former metropolises where they save their money and buy expensive retirement homes. It is also where their children receive their education and remain protected from potential political overthrows. They are not in the least embarrassed by the economic gap between them and the disenfranchised majority.

I hope I have made it obvious that the official language problem in Africa is not the multitude of languages. Burundi and Rwanda, where one autochthonous language is spoken as a vernacular by the two ethnic groups, cannot invoke societal multilingualism as an excuse. The use of a European language as the official one is part of the socioeconomic structure inherited from the colonial period, which should be replaced with a new, (more) inclusive world order. It is a global problem in the sense of being interconnected with various other aspects of the relevant societies, and it calls for a global solution in which multiple facets of the problem are attended to concurrently. I hope that those who offer solutions will bear this reality in mind and contemplate the option of a global socioeconomic revolution and think it through. This is not a call for more wars! The message is to educate the political leadership into realizing that the proposed change, rather than investment in weapons of oppression, may bring peace to Africa sooner. We must start measuring our individual successes by national metrics rather than foreign ones, governing inclusively rather than exclusively, investing within rather than outside, and empowering autochthonous languages economically.

I wish all the best to the new journal, which I strongly support, hoping that contributions to it will be more innovative than those in current journals of language policy and planning.

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The concepts of discerned and designed languages and their relevance for East Africa

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Abstract

This article starts with a dream: the dream that one day, the countries of East Africa will be middle- to high-income countries, with an education system to match that status. What would that mean for the medium of instruction in tertiary education? Using Estonia as a benchmark, and comparing that with data from Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, I show that in future, it will be impossible to keep English as medium of instruction. Local languages will have to be used. However, how can that be done in a practical way? In order to discuss that, the article introduces the concepts of *discerned* and *designed* languages, inspired by the earlier concepts of ‘Abstand’ and ‘Ausbau’ languages as introduced by Heinz Kloss (1967). The concept of discerned languages is a more linguistic concept. The concept of designed languages is more sociological and is similar to that of intellectualized languages. Using these two concepts points to the social and political nature of how languages are classified and to the possibility that one designed language can serve as a formalized language for speakers of a number of related discerned languages. This is of great relevance to East Africa. The article proposes five principles for rational designed language choices. It expands on one of these – the importance of looking at ease of language learning and teaching when making rational choices. The article then ends with a number of policy recommendations, slightly different for each country.

Keywords: *Tertiary education, Medium of Instruction, indigenous languages, ease of language learning, language policy, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda*

1. Introduction: let’s dream...

Let’s suppose for a moment that poverty in East Africa is not here to stay – let’s assume that one day, the region will be able to boast a modest level of affluence. The region will make use of its fair share of natural resources for its own benefits, staying within planetary limits. This will enable it, one day, to eliminate the high poverty levels still found today and give all its citizens a good standard of wealth. Institutions like the World Bank and the IMF (if they still exist in that future) would then classify the countries in the region as upper-middle to high-income countries.¹

¹ The World Bank currently shows Kenya and Tanzania as ‘lower-middle income countries’, Uganda as ‘low income’ – see <https://datatopics.worldbank.org/world-development-indicators/the-world-by-income-and-region.html> accessed 10 July 2024.



We hold that for this to happen, one thing will be essential: the region's brain power will need to be fully utilized. In other words, it will be necessary to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goal number four, which calls on countries to 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.' (United Nations, 2015). What will that mean for medium of instruction in tertiary education? In the region, the current policy is to use English as the medium of instruction, starting either after the first few years of primary education (Kenya, Uganda) or at the start of secondary education (Tanzania). In tertiary education, English is the single medium of instruction in all countries. However, is this a sustainable policy, that one could maintain also into the rosy future evoked above? How do other countries handle this? That will be the topic of this article. Spoiler alert: at some point, things will have to change. It is a fiction to think that African education systems will be able to expand indefinitely using English as the (sole) medium of instruction.

In order to make the case, section two starts with a discussion of the conceptual distinction between language as *discerned* and language as *designed*, taken from the theoretical framework developed by van Pinxteren (2022). It makes the claim that one *designed* language can serve the needs of speakers of several related *discerned* languages in formal domains (such as higher education).

Section three reviews how well the region's educational systems are currently performing in giving students the English-language skills they need in order to enable them to take tertiary education in that language. It compares that with current enrolment levels to check if currently, there are any deficits in this area. It then compares the educational systems of East Africa with one of the best-performing educational systems in the world, that of Estonia. This section will argue why, at some point, a transition to using other languages than English will become necessary.

Section four then discusses how equitable choices for medium of instruction can be made and zooms in on one under-researched domain, the issue of how easy or difficult it is to teach and learn a certain language for speakers of a given other language and what that means for language choices in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. This will illustrate how choices can be made that are rational, equitable, as well as practical.

Section five ends the article with some conclusions and policy recommendations for each one of the three countries.

2 The theory of language as *discerned* and language as *designed*

The theoretical approach used for investigating the relationship between educational systems and medium of instruction is taken from van Pinxteren (2022). A first clarification that this calls for is precisely what is meant by ‘medium of instruction’. A medium of instruction is a language that is used for giving oral instruction, but also the language that is used in teaching materials (written material) and, significantly, in carrying out assessments and exams. In general, these categories represent diminishing degrees of variation and freedom: in class, teachers and students can and often do use whatever speech registers are available to them. This may include using dialectal variants, code-switching, translanguaging, in-class translation, etc. However, the teaching materials and exams are usually in some form of standardized or intellectualized language. Furthermore, at the primary level, more freedom in how to speak and how to test is generally allowed as compared to secondary and tertiary education.

Van Pinxteren (2022, p. 40), inspired by earlier work by Kloss (1967), has proposed to distinguish between language as *designed* and language as *discerned*. Kloss used the terms ‘*Ausbau*’ and ‘*Abstand*’ languages; van Pinxteren has proposed the terms of ‘designed’ versus ‘discerned’ languages as English approximations. The term ‘discerned’ (or *Abstand*) languages is, according to Kloss, a *linguistic* concept that refers to all languages, whether they have a developed writing system and grammar or not. He assumed at the time that linguists have a way of determining the ‘intrinsic distance’ between languages and deciding on the borders between languages using those criteria (p. 30).² The concept of ‘designed’ (or *Ausbau*) languages, on the other hand, is not a linguistic concept: it is *sociological*. It refers only to those languages that have been deliberately shaped and built to become standardised vehicles of literary and scientific expression (which could include oral cultures). The way Kloss describes his concept of *Ausbau* languages is similar to the concept of ‘intellectualisation.’ Prah (2017, p. 216) quotes the definition of Sibayan from 1999: an intellectualised language is a ‘language which can be used for educating a person in any field of knowledge from kindergarten to the university and beyond.’ This terminology is also used by Kaschula and Nkomo (2019, p. 604), who see intellectualisation of languages ‘as a counterhegemonic process that seeks to empower

² Kloss was wrong about this – there seems to be no objective way of teasing out what different ‘languages’ are within a given dialect continuum – see Gooskens (2013).



communities through language’ (p. 606). I agree with this approach, but prefer the terminology of ‘discerned’ and ‘designed’ languages. The term ‘intellectualisation’ could imply a value judgement on those languages that have not been ‘intellectualised’ and does not help our understanding of the importance of distinguishing between the linguistic and the sociological aspects of language.

Kloss points out that there is a degree of freedom here: forming of designed languages is a historical process that can be sped up or indeed reversed as a result of either shifts in power relationships or changes in policy or (as will most often be the case) both. Djité (2008, p. x) asks: ‘[I]sn’t it the case that some languages have simply not been *allowed* to develop as others have? Isn’t it the case that evidence of literacy tradition in some languages has intentionally been destroyed [...], forbidden [...] or ignored [...]?’ Kaschula and Nkomo (2019, p. 607) also make this point:

The arrival of foreign traders, explorers, missionaries, and colonial settlers resulted in cross-cultural encounters and the transformation of economic, cultural, religious, and political domains, which devalued indigenous knowledge and African thought systems. This not only alienated indigenous people from the socioeconomic and political organizational structures of the new societies, but also de-intellectualized their languages.

Kloss stresses that a certain amount of formalised learning is always required to master a designed language. This is what Lo Bianco (2008, p. 114) refers to as ‘secondary lingual socialization.’ It also helps to explain why, in countries that use an indigenous language as medium of instruction, this language is also taught as a subject in its own right, usually up to the end of secondary school. Kloss gives the example of German (p. 35): speakers of several German-like languages, such as lower Saxon (*Plattdeutsch*), Swabian (*Schwäbisch*) and Ripuarian all use standard written German (*Hochdeutsch*) as their common ‘designed’ language, but this standardised version is different from the spoken languages and requires learning in order to master it. However, learning standard written German is easier for speakers of Ripuarian and of lower Saxon than it would be for speakers of, for example, French.

This situation – where speakers of several discerned languages are served by one related designed language - is in fact not specific to Germany. It is common the world over, in countries

as diverse as China, Indonesia, Italy or Turkey, to name a few. This insight is key also for East Africa, as will become clear in section four below.

In this article, when reference is made to ‘language’ or to ‘medium of instruction’, we mean the formalized, intellectualized or designed form of language that often serves speakers of several related *discerned* languages. In most countries, the ‘mother tongue’, the speech register the child acquires before going to school, will be in some ways different from what is taught in school.

Still, children whose mother tongue is closely related to the designed language taught in schools are usually considered to be ‘monolingual’. However, many children learn to use more than one speech register before they enter school and these registers may be considerably different from one another. This may be the case for children who have parents with two different first languages (and who each use their first language with the children) or for children raised in extended family settings, such as prevalent in some parts of Africa. These multilingual children can effectively acquire more than one ‘mother tongue’.

It does not always work: in some situations, parents or other caretakers may not have a good command of the standard *designed* language. If these parents nevertheless choose to use that standard language with their children, this may in fact have adverse consequences, with children entering school with low proficiency in *any* language (Barac and Byalistok, 2012). In general, it seems that raising children bi- or multilingually from birth is possible and generally beneficial for them, but only if those that use the different speech registers with the children are themselves highly proficient users of those registers.

With this in mind, we can now investigate how well the education systems in East Africa fare in giving their youngsters the skills they need in order to take tertiary education in the designed form of English that is used in the region.

3 How many students learn enough English for taking tertiary education in that language?

Teaching students in a language they do not understand well enough is bound to be inefficient and frustrate all involved: it means that students may be intellectually able in principle to understand what is being taught (for example in a field such as engineering), but if they lack the required language skills they may still fail. Therefore, institutions of tertiary education that

accept students from abroad generally specify a minimum proficiency level. For English, this can be established through a minimum score on the well-known IELTS test.³ In Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, Universities equally have English language-related entrance requirements. For our discussion, we assume that the minimum proficiency level that is required for tertiary education in English corresponds to a C+ grade on the examination at the end of senior secondary school in Kenya, a C in Tanzania, and the ‘University level admission grade’ in Uganda. We also assume that this is roughly equivalent to the ‘B2’ level of proficiency as specified in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.⁴ It would be important to do research into whether or not these assumptions are correct – in Ghana, Stoffelsma and De Jong (2015) found that only 48 percent of first-year students for a Bachelor of Education had a B2 level in English reading proficiency, even though there, a ‘credit pass’ is a requirement for admittance. Therefore, one might expect that all students have the B2 level – yet Stoffelsma and De Jong found this not to be the case.

If we multiply the percentage of students who obtain at least this grade by the completion rate in senior secondary education as published by UNESCO,⁵ we obtain an estimate of the proportion of youngsters that education systems can give the minimum level of proficiency in English that is needed to take tertiary education in that language. We can then compare this to the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in tertiary education (as also published by UNESCO), to get an approximate idea of how well education systems are doing in comparison to the current needs of their tertiary education systems.

In order to give a comparison with one of the better-performing educational systems in the North, we also provide data on Estonia from 2012, taken from an EU-commissioned survey of a number of EU countries (European Commission, 2012).⁶ The significance of this is further explained below.

The figures are given in table 1 below.

³ <https://www.ielts.org/>

⁴ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/table-1-cefr-3.3-common-reference-levels-global-scale> accessed 10 July 2024.

⁵ <http://sdg4-data.uis.unesco.org/> - the completion rate is indicator 4.1.2.

⁶ For Estonia, we give the percentage of secondary school students with at least a ‘B2’ level of proficiency in English, according to the survey.



Country	Completion rate in %, (year)	% obtaining minimum score (year)	% of youngsters with minimum score	GER in tertiary education (year)
Kenya	58.86 (2022)	22.27 (2023) ⁷	13.11	20.48 (2022)
Tanzania	11.50 (2019)	99.23 (2018) ⁸	11.41	7.51 (2020)
Uganda	15.68 (2019)	70.30 (2022) ⁹	11.02	4.76 (2016)
Estonia	83.01 (2012)	41 (2012) ¹⁰	34.03	72.94 (2012)

Table 1: English proficiency levels and tertiary education GER, selected countries

The table reveals some striking facts. The first is that many more children complete senior secondary education and enroll in tertiary education in Kenya¹¹, as compared to Tanzania and Uganda. However, even the Kenyan figure is far below that of Estonia. By contrast, the percentage of students obtaining a minimum level of proficiency in English is much lower in Kenya compared to either Tanzania or Uganda. The result is that in all three countries, a small minority of around 12% of youngsters achieve a level of proficiency in English that is high enough for them to take tertiary education in that language. For Tanzania and Uganda, this is currently not a problem: tertiary education places are currently available to fewer than 10% of all youngsters. For Kenya, there is a problem: tertiary education institutions now seem to admit students who do not have the minimum required level of English proficiency. This must be putting undue strain on the system and be a cause of frustration for students and their parents.

The situation must be worse for children entering technical and vocational training and education (TVET). Those children will typically have obtained lower grades in English than their peers who are destined to go on to University. Providing TVET education in English is bound to cause undue strain on the system, thus unnecessarily frustrating parents, teachers, and children.

⁷ <https://www.knec.ac.ke/2024/01/08/2023-kcse-results-essential-statistics/> accessed 11 July 2024

⁸ https://assets.globalpartnership.org/s3fs-public/document/file/2020-05-Tanzania%20Mainland-ESP-IR_0.pdf?VersionId=J5Ua3bLZCMGrCU1Dd7gu4qvqIOMGkaRX accessed 11 July 2022

⁹ <https://uneb.ac.ug/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2022-UACE-STATEMENT-OF-RELEASE-OF-RESULTS-ED.pdf> accessed 11 July 2024.

¹⁰ Taken from the First European Survey on Language Competence.

¹¹ Note that the GER in tertiary education in Kenya has almost doubled compared to 2019.



There is a huge contrast between the countries of East Africa and a high-performing educational system such as that of Estonia. Estonia roundly outperforms East Africa when it comes to giving a good level of English to its youngsters: it manages to give around a third of its adolescents such a level, compared to only one in ten in East Africa. Note that this does not mean that English is the medium of instruction in Estonia! Instead, English is taught as a subject; the medium of instruction is Estonian (Santiago et al., 2016).¹² Clearly, teaching English as a subject can be at least as efficient, if not more efficient, than using it as medium of instruction. However, using English as medium of instruction in tertiary education in Estonia would be a recipe for disaster, because, even though one in three of all adolescents has a good enough level in the language, tertiary education is actually offered to three in four of all Estonians! The Estonian education system would have to give more than twice as many youngsters a good enough level in English in order to be able to use English as medium of instruction in tertiary education.

The same situation actually prevails in all countries of the global North.¹³ In theory, given unlimited resources, it might be possible to give almost all youngsters a good enough level of knowledge in English. However, in practice, resources are never unlimited. Therefore, in order to know what is practically possible in the real world, the reference point should be the best-performing educational systems that currently exist. If we take that reference point, one conclusion becomes abundantly clear: if the dream referred to in the introduction is to become a reality, changes in the medium of instruction will become unavoidable.

However, how could such a change become practically possible? What would be the principles underlying rational language choices? That is the topic of the next section.

4 Rational designed language choices

According to the *Ethnologue* (Eberhard et al., 2023), Kenya currently has 60 living languages (plus the Kenyan sign language), Tanzania has 120 and Uganda has 40.¹⁴ Clearly, it is not feasible to offer tertiary education in such a high number of languages. However, as the

¹² Note also that Estonian (approximately 1.2 million native speakers) belongs to the Uralic language family and is very different from English; the significance of this will be explained further down in this article.

¹³ There is one exception: Singapore. There are reasons for this related to the specific situation of the country, but discussing those would fall outside the scope of this article.

¹⁴ Estonia has two, Standard Estonian and Võro.

discussion in section two above has shown, this is not necessary: as is the case elsewhere, a more limited number of *designed* languages could serve the needs of speakers of several related languages as *discerned* by the Ethnologue or others. Van Pinxteren (2022, p. 213) has proposed five principles on which a rational choice could be made:

- 1) ‘Develop a limited number of designed languages for education
- 2) Designed languages should be chosen in such a way that they are easy to learn for as many speakers of discerned languages as possible.
- 3) Strive for inclusivity: choose designed languages in such a way that all have to exert a relatively low but relatively equal effort to learn them.
- 4) Make use of existing bilingualism as a resource.
- 5) Build incentives for linguistic collaboration, especially for related linguistic communities.’

One of the key elements of this is the ease of language learning (and teaching) – it means that designed languages should be closely related to the discerned languages whose speakers they serve, although they do not need to be mutually intelligible in the strict sense of the word: they need to be learned and taught. In very general terms, teaching a *designed* language that is close to what children already know is easier and more efficient than teaching one that is very different from what children already know. This is an area that is under-researched, but van Pinxteren (2022, p. 94) gives information from US research, to the effect that teaching a very different language takes around four times as much time and effort as teaching a closely related language. In the following subsections, we will examine what this might mean for Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, given the different language ecologies of these countries.

4.1 Kenya

Kenya is a linguistically very diverse country, with millions of speakers of languages belonging to three different language families: the (narrow) Bantu family, including languages such as Kiswahili and Kikuyu; the Nilotic languages, including languages such as Dholuo and Maasai; and the Cushitic languages, of which Somali is the most important. These language families are

each very different. It means that the future of Kenya will have to be multilingual: an equitable solution will require that at least one language will have to be chosen from each one of these families for use as a designed language for the related speech communities. Some have argued that Swahili should be developed as Kenya's national language (Kanana, 2013). For speakers of Bantu languages, this might be a solution. However, for others, it will not do: learning Swahili is just about as difficult for them as learning English. If speakers of Nilotic or Cushitic languages have to invest their energies in acquiring a difficult language, most will prefer English due to its higher worldwide possibilities for use, and only a minority will want to use Swahili. Introducing Swahili as the single national language for use in tertiary education would certainly lead to massive resistance by speakers of the Nilotic and Cushitic languages. Therefore, in future, tertiary education in Kenya will have to be delivered in at least three languages, possibly in addition to English.

4.2 Tanzania

The language ecology of Tanzania is different from that of Kenya, in that more than 98% of all speakers speak one of the many Bantu languages in the country. There are historical explanations for the fact that Swahili has higher status in Tanzania, as compared to Kenya, related for example to a different colonial history and to the role of the first president, Julius Nyerere (Temu, 1998). However, the linguistic ecology of Tanzania provides an additional explanation for the success of Swahili: in contrast to Kenya, Swahili is an easy language to learn for the great majority of all Tanzanians.

Van Pinxteren (2022) has used the Automated Similarity Judgement Programme (ASJP) and database¹⁵ in order to develop an approximation of which language pairs form easier or more difficult combinations. He has proposed five groups, ranging from 'very easy' to 'very difficult', based on Normalized Edit Distances.¹⁶ For selected Tanzanian languages, this leads to graph 1 below (adapted from van Pinxteren 2022, p. 137).

¹⁵ <https://asjp.clld.org/>

¹⁶ This is also known as the Levenshtein Distance. For an explanation of the ASJP and how it computes Levenshtein Distances, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Automated_Similarity_Judgment_Program accessed 7 July 2023.



2 SYNONYMS, AT LEAST 28 WORDS														
LOANWORDS EXCLUDED														
LDND	HADZA	SUKUMA	ISANZU	MBUGWE	MWINI	NILAMBA	RIMI	SWAHILI	VALU					
										ASJP distance score	Category			
										< 60	Very easy			
										≥ 60, < 90	Easy			
										≥ 90, ≤ 95	Medium			
										> 95, < 100	Difficult			
										≥ 100	Very difficult			
HADZA	0													
SUKUMA	97	0												
ISANZU	94	65	0											
MBUGWE	91	77	71	0										
MWINI	95	70	65	79										
NILAMBA	96	62	51	65	67	0								
RIMI	92	75	47	74	75	68	0							
SWAHILI	95	73	71	76	62	60	75	0						
VALANGI	92	77	71	57	83	68	76	68	0					
DATOOGA	98	101	102	99	101	99	105	101	101	0				
MAASAI	96	97	96	95	96	97	98	98	98	96	0			
ALAGWA	98	102	100	102	101	101	101	98	99	97	100	0		
IRAQW	98	97	96	98	95	97	99	94	98	95	98	53	0	
ENGLISH	97	96	100	99	97	101	100	97	100	100	98	100	100	0
	HADZA	SUKUMA	ISANZU	MBUGWE	MWINI	NILAMBA	RIMI	SWAHILI	VALANGI	DATOOGA	MAASAI	ALAGWE	IRAQW	ENGLISH

Graph 1: Distance between selected Tanzanian languages

As can be seen from the graph, the Bantu languages (Sukuma, Swahili, Mbugwe and others) all form ‘easy’ or ‘very easy’ combinations. Almost all other languages (Alagwa, Datooga, English, Hadza, and Iraqw) form difficult or very difficult combinations. That means that, like in Kenya, for a speaker of, for example, Maasai, Swahili is not easier to learn than English would be. However, speaker numbers in the non-Bantu languages are far lower than in Kenya. Many of these speakers may be bilingual or near-bilingual from birth. This makes Swahili a much more feasible national language in Tanzania than it would be in Kenya.

4.3 Uganda

The situation in Uganda is more similar to that of Kenya than to Tanzania. Even though most Ugandans speak one of the Bantu languages (Luganda being the largest), there are large minorities of speakers of Nilotic languages such as Acholi and Karamojong, as well as of Central Sudanic languages such as Lugbara. There are smaller speaker groups of Kuliak languages, notably Ik. This means that, like in Kenya, introducing Swahili or one of the other Bantu languages as a single language for use in tertiary education would not be an equitable option.

Like in Kenya, in Uganda, in future, tertiary education will have to be delivered in a number of languages, possibly in addition to English.

5 Conclusions and Recommendations

This article set out to examine the question of what a continued expansion of education in the region would mean for medium of instruction policies. In order to do that, it first introduced the distinction between language as *discerned* and language as *designed*. It argued how, in many countries all over the world, speakers of several related discerned languages can be served by one common designed language and it suggested that this might also provide a practical way forward for East Africa.

It then tried to answer whether or not the educational systems in East Africa currently manage to give all the students that want to take tertiary education in English the required language skills. The data shows that currently, Uganda and Tanzania seem to manage to give enough youngsters the required language skills; for Kenya, this may not be the case. This means that there is no pressing need at the moment to change the current medium of instruction policies. The comparison of the region with a country like Estonia shows that in future, the current model will no longer be sustainable. Estonia does much better than any of the East African educational systems in teaching English to its youngsters. However, it does even better in providing tertiary education to its youth. Therefore, using English as medium of instruction would not be possible in Estonia; instead, one of the two Estonian-like languages spoken in the country is used.

If we accept that in future things will have to change, what would be the principles upon which to base rational and equitable choices for indigenous designed languages? Section four outlined five basic principles. Key in those principles is to choose languages that are relatively easy to learn (and to teach) for speakers of as many related discerned languages as possible. For Kenya and Uganda, that means a multilingual future, due to the very diverse language ecologies in those countries. For Tanzania, Swahili would seem to be an acceptable candidate, although special attention would be needed for the relatively small numbers of speakers of minority languages in the country.



This then leads to a number of recommendations, some that can be applied across the board, some that are country specific. In general, it is important to stress that a transition of this type can easily go wrong, as has been documented in the literature (for Uganda, see for example Altinyelken et al., 2014). It is impossible within the framework of this article to provide a concrete scenario or blueprint, but it is clear that long-term commitment and long-term planning will both be essential. Prestige planning may have to be part of that (Kamwangamalu, 2016; Brock-Utne, 2017). Mufwene (2022) discusses a number of relative successes and failures and points to two key factors that may influence the success of a language policy. One of these is that policies should be consistent with existing language practices that are already in place.

Languages that already have currency as a ‘lingua franca’ should be used, not in their ‘pure’ or pristine form, but in a form that is close to the actual usage people already make of it. The other important factor is economic. People should derive tangible benefits from the effort required for learning any language, ‘including being able to attend adequate schools in a language they speak fluently or can learn well in a short time, having access to adequate health care in the same language, being able to interact with their nation’s administration and security systems without the mediation of interpreters, and, among others, not being automatically disqualified from some jobs for which they are academically qualified for not speaking the official language or (regional) lingua franca of employment.’

Any transition would probably have to be based on a broad societal debate, informed by sound linguistic expertise and knowledge. It would probably have to lead to a discussion and decision in Parliament.

One important move would be to start teaching one another’s languages. Those who are gifted enough in language to take for example French or Arabic could also take Acholi or Kikuyu in secondary school. A multilingual future is going to require greater numbers of translators and interpreters; therefore, teaching and studying African languages should receive more attention and prominence than is the case at present. In general, linguistic knowledge is bound to become more important in the region and the role and expertise of African linguists will increase – this also means they should prepare themselves for a greater role in the public debate and should engage with policy issues more than is currently the case.

For the individual countries, some specific recommendations could be formulated:

5.1 Kenya

- Already at present, the method of teaching English by using it as medium of instruction seems to be approaching its limits; change to more efficient teaching methods, in which English is taught as a subject instead of used as medium of instruction, is to be considered; this would be immediately beneficial to the country.
- Swahili is a good candidate for medium of instruction in Kenya for speakers of the Bantu languages; for others, alternative languages will be needed as well.
- In order to ensure an orderly and well-prepared transition to introducing a limited number of indigenous languages as medium of instruction in higher education, preparing strategies and plans would need to start as soon as possible.

5.2 Tanzania

For Tanzania, Swahili seems the obvious choice as medium of instruction in higher education. However, it would be important to pay more attention to other languages, in two ways:

- Even though Swahili is ‘easy’ or ‘very easy’ to learn for speakers of all other Bantu languages spoken in the country, it does not seem to be the same for all. Specific attention to the difficulties experienced by speakers of individual languages would probably help to make teaching more efficient.
- Special attention and more research are needed into the position of speakers of minority non-Bantu languages. Introducing these languages as medium of instruction in (parts of) primary education would probably help children also in acquiring a higher level of Swahili later on; bilingualism from a very early age should be encouraged and could probably be helped through pre-school offers.

5.3 Uganda

The recommendations for Uganda are similar to those for Kenya, with the exception that the situation in Uganda seems to be less urgent than that of Kenya. Also, Swahili is not an indigenous language of Uganda; therefore, it might be feasible to choose one of the Bantu

languages indigenous to the country in tertiary education, although from the point of view of ease of learning Swahili could be used as well. Like in Kenya, it would be necessary to also develop several other languages for tertiary education.

A future in which all East Africans receive an education that is appropriate to their intellectual abilities is not an impossible dream. The brainpower of all its people will be needed if the region wants to eradicate poverty and overcome the challenges it is currently facing in a sustainable manner. It is necessary to be conscious of what this means for medium of instruction. This article has argued that it is a fiction to think that African educational systems will be able to expand indefinitely using the current medium of instruction policies. A gradual transition to using designed African languages in higher education is going to be inevitable. It is also a practical possibility. If that is so, then research and planning with that objective in mind should start now.

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Language Policy and Power Dynamics in Post-Independence Morocco: A Critical Analysis

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Abstract

Morocco is a multilingual society where national, official, and foreign languages coexist and are used daily. Their functions and domains of use reveal their status and the processes by which they are classified into dominant and dominated languages. Most of the former studies on language policy in Morocco have mainly focused on policy formulation and decisions as an apolitical endeavor. The present study, however, aims to investigate the crucial role language policy plays in structuring power and inequality in the country. It argues that language policy is a political act with educational, linguistic, social, and economic ramifications. The national language policy formulated after Morocco's 1956 independence adopted the European model of 'one language, one nation' without considering the country's specific realities. The present paper involves a critical review of the literature and the legal documents, including the Moroccan New Constitution, and an extensive inquiry into the institutional reform efforts and directions in an attempt to answer the research questions related to (i) the status of mother tongues, official languages, and foreign languages in Morocco, more than six decades after its independence; (ii) the state of the Arabization process, the officialization of Amazigh, its teaching, and standardization; and (iii) what governs Moroccan language policy, and what the educational policies in Morocco reveal about the State's language policy.

Keywords: *Language policy, Educational policies, Modern Standard Arabic, Amazigh, Foreign languages*

ملخص: السياسة اللغوية وتوازنات القوة في المغرب بعد الاستقلال: تحليل نقدي

تتسم السوق اللغوية المغربية بتنوع اللغات وتنافسيتها. وتكشف مجالات استعمالها عن العلاقات التنافسية التي تحدد وضعيتها في إطار ترتيب لغوي تمارس فيها اللغات القوية ضغطا شديدا على اللغات الوطنية. بخلاف الدراسات السابقة التي تركز على الجانب التقني والأكاديمي للسياسات اللغوية، تحاول هذه الدراسة التركيز على البعد السياسي والإيديولوجي الذي غالبا ما يكون المحدد الرئيس للاختيارات اللغوية لأي دولة. وتهدف الدراسة إلى الكشف عن الدور المحوري الذي تؤديه السياسة اللغوية في استمرار الفوارق الاجتماعية والاقتصادية، مؤكدة أن السياسة اللغوية هي عمل سياسي ي بامتياز بتداعيات تعليمية، لغوية، اجتماعية واقتصادية. ففي المغرب مثلا، اعتمدت السياسة اللغوية التي صيغت بعد الاستقلال عام 1956 النموذج الأيديولوجي الأوروبي 'لغة واحدة، وطن واحد' دون مراعاة للوضعية اللغوية المتنوعة للبلاد. وتقوم الدراسة بتحليل نقدي للأدبيات والوثائق القانونية، بما في ذلك الدستور المغربي الجديد، مستعرضة الإصلاحات المبذولة في محاولة للإجابة على الأسئلة البحثية التالية: 1) ماهي وضعية اللغات الأم واللغات الرسمية واللغات الأجنبية في المغرب، بعد أكثر من ستة عقود من استقلاله؟ 2) أين وصلت عملية التعريب، وتزويل الطابع الرسمي للغة الأمازيغية، وتعليمها، وتوحيدها؟ 3) ما الذي يحكم السياسة اللغوية المغربية، وماذا تكشفه السياسات التعليمية في المغرب عن الاتجاهات العامة للدولة؟

الكلمات المفتاحية: السياسة اللغوية، السياسات التعليمية، العربية الفصحى، الأمازيغية، اللغات الأجنبية



1. Introduction

Morocco's strategic location at the crossroads between Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, and Africa encouraged interaction between various ethnolinguistic groups, languages, and cultures. The current linguistic state of the country is the result of colonial and post-colonial language and educational policies, which reflect power dynamics between the languages spoken and the impact of language on social stratification. The hierarchical relations between the different languages or varieties of languages are a reflection of historically evolved relations of domination and subjugation between speakers of relevant varieties and/or languages. This linguistic context reflects the evolution of dominance and subordination relations throughout history. The language debate in Morocco is fascinating, multifaceted (Ennaji, 2005), and reflective of various facets of society, from human rights and social justice to education, development, and democracy. The linguistic landscape includes national, official, and foreign languages, where the speakers' education, socioeconomic status, age, domain of use, and interlocutors determine their patterns of use of these languages.

Moroccan linguistic diversity cannot rival in number with some other countries in Africa; yet, the languages spoken by Moroccans are all used daily by a portion of the population and have clearly defined societal roles. The navigation between languages is not simply controlled by a desire to facilitate understanding but is driven by numerous historical, cultural, and political factors.

Moroccan linguistic diversity results in a complex sociolinguistic setting where in addition to mother tongues, namely Darija, Amazigh, and Hassania, Classical Arabic (CA) and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) are important due to their religious and official roles. Amazigh, the indigenous language of North Africa in general and Morocco in particular acquired the status of official language in July 2011. Foreign languages mainly French, English, and Spanish are commonly used, but to different degrees. Given the interactions between all these languages, Morocco is categorized as a multilingual society with citizens ranging from monolingual speakers of Amazigh, Darija and/or Hassania, to multilingual individuals proficient in up to six languages, including native, national, official, and foreign.

This section introduces the status of mother tongues, official languages, and foreign languages in Morocco and discusses their domains of use and functions to highlight the complexity of the linguistic situation. It also refers to the effect of globalization and the use of digital tools and media on Moroccan society. Each of these languages is discussed in turn.

Arabic was introduced to North Africa in general and Morocco in particular with “the arrival of Arabs in the seventh and eighth centuries” (Ennaji, 2002). It is a cover term that includes Classical Arabic (CA), Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), Darija or Moroccan/Dialectal Arabic, and Middle Moroccan Arabic (MMA). CA is reserved mainly for religious domains (Ennaji, 1991, p. 2002). Its association with Islam makes it a prestigious language venerated by both Amazighs and Arabs.

Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), the official language of Morocco, is mainly associated with the State-Building process and the Arabization policy is a symbol of Morocco’s cultural independence. It possesses historicity but lacks the vitality of Darija, the mother tongue of both Arabs and Amazighs. MSA is learned through formal instruction at schools. It is a codified and standardized variety that has increasingly benefited from the Arabization policy (Ennaji, 1991; Boukous, 2011). It is perceived as a high and prestigious variety of Arabic (Marley, 2005) because it is the medium of instruction according to the National Charter of Education (2000). MSA is in high competition with French (Boukous, 2011; Chakrani, 2020), which has invaded its domains of use. Despite its official and prestigious status tied to religion and cultural identity, MSA is used mainly in domains such as education, media, and political and administrative public institutions, mainly in written forms (Sadiqi, 2006). The language is rarely used in spontaneous oral communication. Though it is the official language of Morocco, a number of the State’s institutions, e.g. the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tourism, and Finance, etc, do not make use of it and rather resort to French.

Amazigh, widely known as Berber, is the indigenous language of North Africa and the mother tongue of the Amazigh people. It extends from eastern Libya and even western Egypt (Siwa) to the Atlantic Ocean, and from the Mediterranean Sea to as far south as the Sahara Desert, and northern Saharan regions of Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso. Amazigh in Morocco is classified into three main language varieties: Tarifit, in the North and North-Eastern part and Rif area, Tamazight, in the central part and the Atlas region, and Tashelhit in the South and Souss region. This division, however, does not make unanimity among Moroccan scholars as it is geographically based and does not include some varieties that do not fall in any of these language areas (El Kirat, 2004). The language was excluded from the identity component of the independent state during the State-building process and was banned from all public domains, and marginalized, and stigmatized for decades. It is difficult to provide an exact estimate of the number and percentage of Amazighs in Morocco, particularly in urban centers, as censuses have never included this dimension.

The Moroccan authorities' attitudes towards Amazigh started to change progressively from repression to neutrality and finally to support and official recognition starting from August 1994. The Amazigh Royal Institute for the Amazigh Culture (IRCAM) was created in 2001. This was followed by the introduction of Amazigh at school in September 2003 but as an instructed language and not a language of instruction, taught in principle to both Amazigh and non-Amazigh pupils. The focus was, however, on underprivileged schools and regions. The language has been undergoing since then a standardization process to overcome the lack of mutual intelligibility between the different language varieties. Amazigh was finally recognized as a second official language alongside MSA in the New Constitution on July 1st, 2011. The real implementation of Amazigh as an official language is obstructed as the Amazigh issue in Morocco is more political than linguistic. This is discussed further in the section devoted to Amazigh language policy.

Moroccan Dialectal/Colloquial Arabic, known as Darija in Morocco, lacks formal recognition and a standardized language. Unlike CA and MSA, Darija is the mother tongue and the language of everyday communication of the majority of Moroccans. It is also the lingua franca (Sadiqi, 2006) that facilitates communication not only between Arabs and Amazighs but also among Amazighs whose varieties are not mutually intelligible. Although it is not standardized or codified, Darija has served as the vehicle of a rich tradition of oral popular literature. It is widely used on social media for texting messages in both Arabic and Latin scripts by all age groups and all levels of education. It has also been used for writing plays, texts, or informal letters. Recently, after the privatization of the Media sector, new radio stations have adopted Darija as the main language of the stations for even the presentation of the news. Darija is also increasingly used in new domains such as TV commercials and billboards (Alalou, 2017). Darija is also not much valued and is considered a corrupt form of MSA by Arabist nationalists who consider it a threat to MSA as it is being used even in the education sector, due to the learners' low proficiency in MSA (Alalou, 2017). Due to Morocco's high illiteracy rates and the lack of mastery of MSA by a large portion of the population, a new variety, Moroccan Median/Middle Arabic (MMA), has been developing, which stands between Darija and MSA. It includes the MSA lexicon and the non-vocalized spoken form of Darija. It is predominantly used by the educated elite for official and formal purposes (Youssi, 1995) and is considered more 'refined' than Darija. Darija is also considered the “killer” language of Amazigh (El Kirat, 2004) as it is invading the latter's most private domain of use, the home. It is referred to as Arabic by the majority of Amazighs and Arabs alike in Morocco. Such confusion between Darija and other Arabic varieties may in

part justify people's preference for Darija over Amazigh (Boussagui, 2019). Darija is currently viewed as the main marker of Moroccan identity on social media and popular culture, especially among those who call for the promotion of Moroccan citizenship.

Hassania, a variety of Arabic spoken by tribes in the south regions of Agadir and the Moroccan Sahara and surrounding regions, has historical ties to both Amazigh and Arabic. It is used daily in southern Morocco and has a media presence through specific TV and radio channels. Despite the constitutional recognition of Hassania¹, there is still no substantial policy that aims to promote the language and stop the shift to Darija the southern communities are undergoing, especially among the young generations as a result of the presence of large numbers of Darija speakers in the region, and under the effect of school and media. Hassania is the vehicle of a very rich cultural heritage, e.g. literature, proverbs, poetry, songs, tales, etc.

French, the most prestigious language in Morocco more than six decades after independence, was introduced in 1907 with the arrival of the French army in Casablanca, marking the beginning of its association with the colonial era. During the first years of post-independence, the masses viewed French negatively due to its colonial ties, while the elite considered it a symbol of power and prestige. French is the first foreign language in Morocco and a de facto official language which is still often preferred in diverse official domains such as commerce, finance, science, technology, tourism, and education. It is also the most prestigious language and an essential requirement in the job market, especially in the private sector. It is predominant in the private sector and transactions with Europe and Africa and is used by educated people and elites in their everyday lives. It is highly valued because it is generally associated with the upper class.

French has been viewed as the language of opening on the modern world and an essential tool for social mobility, offering more job prospects in Morocco. It is the only medium of instruction of scientific and technological subjects (e.g. Physics, Medicine, engineering, etc.) at all levels and is widely used in administration, banking, and economic sectors in general (media and official and formal speeches, etc...), though less recently. However, only elites, older generations educated before Arabization, or those educated in private systems, demonstrate fluency in French. Observations reveal that fluency in French is confined to prestigious districts, while in popular areas, French is often code-mixed with local varieties. Despite decades of Arabization, French was reinstated in 2019 as the medium of instruction for scientific subjects from primary school onwards in both public and private institutions.

¹ The 2011 Moroccan Constitution recognizes Hassania Arabic as an integral part of the unified Moroccan linguistic and cultural identity.

This change, alongside the rise of English, is detailed in the section on the return to French and the spread of English.

Spanish has historical roots in Morocco, dating back to the Spanish protectorate established in 1912. Since the independence of Morocco in 1956, Spanish lost official status as the administrative and educational language in the North and had been replaced by French. Its use declined after the independence due to the Arabization process and the integration of French as the first foreign language. It is the third foreign language taught in the school system, after French and English, but it is not popular as it competes with English. Currently, the use of Spanish is limited and has decreased significantly even in the regions formerly under Spanish control. Spanish is still offered as a degree in some Moroccan universities, but the number of students is small compared to English. Spanish media presence is minimal compared to French. Recently, an increasing number of Moroccan students have been opting to continue their studies in Spain due to its proximity to Morocco and the lower cost of living. Additionally, more parents in Morocco are opting for Spanish schools as an alternative for their children's education given the high costs of American schools and the highly selective French system.

English was first introduced in Morocco during World War II with the establishment of American bases. Unlike French and Spanish, English has no colonial connotations in Morocco. It is becoming popular, especially among the younger generations, due to the impact of globalization and social media. The status of English has evolved over the last decades, as reflected in the increasing numbers of students in the departments of English at Moroccan universities. The prominence of English is boosted by the Moroccan government's support. It is currently used in various sectors, including call centres, advertising, scientific research, and education.

The preference for English as the medium of instruction in Morocco is linked to its association with modernity and social promotion. It is essential for technology transfer, modernity, and global communication. In the early 1970s, there were only two English departments in Morocco. Currently, English is taught in all Moroccan universities and is the most popular foreign language at the secondary school level. The spread of English is detailed in the section on the return to French and the spread of English.

2 Theoretical Framework and Methodology

This paper adopts critical language policy (Henceforth CLP) which emerged as a critique of and an alternative to earlier language policy frameworks (Tollefson, 2006). The failure of corpus, status, and acquisition planning in the 1960s and 1970s to achieve their stated goals contributed to the emergence of critical applied linguistics which had as its starting point the study of language within “its social, political, and historical context” (Tollefson, 2002, p. 3). The main concern of critical applied linguistics is the investigation of inequality, linguistic discrimination, and the language rights of minorities (Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson, 1992; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). This shift in applied linguistics gave rise to a growing interest in examining language policy in its historical context. CLP provides researchers with a framework to unravel the mechanisms by which states and government institutions shape how languages are used and learned (Tollefson, 1991).

CLP investigates how language policies in education create and sustain inequalities among learners and how they serve the interests of the dominant groups within a speech community (Tollefson, 2002, 2006). CLP comes as a response to the often-held premise that language policies in the traditional approach were devised to help minority languages integrate the prevailing socio-economic structures. Contrary to this optimistic approach, CLP approach in general “acknowledges that policies often create and sustain various forms of social inequality and that policymakers usually promote the interests of dominant social groups” (Tollefson, 2006, p. 42) and therefore seek to formulate more democratic policies to reduce these inequalities and promote minoritized languages. The Critical Language Policy (CLP) emerged from Tollefson’s (1991) historical-structural approach to language planning research. This approach distinguishes between the neoclassical approach, which views language planning as a non-political, non-ideological problem-solving exercise, and the historical-structural approach, which emphasizes the social and historical conditions that influence the formulation of language policies. Within the Critical Language Policy (CLP) framework, language policy is considered highly political and ideological. As Tollefson (1991, p. 32) asserts, language policy serves as “one mechanism through which the interests of dominant sociological groups are maintained, and the seeds of transformation are developed.” Thus, the primary goal of policy research in critical language policy is to investigate the underlying historical conditions of policy formulation and to reveal the mechanisms employed by the policymakers to “serve or undermine particular political and economic interests” (Ibid.). Neo-classical research focuses on individual factors, such as

motivation and attitudes, in making linguistic choices. In contrast, critical language policy examines a broader range of social and historical factors to understand the formulation of language policies and “discover the historical and structural pressures that [...] constrain individual choice.” (Ibid. p. 32).

This paper aims to unravel the interplay between language ideologies, structural conditions, and economic interests that govern language policy formulation, and determine the value assigned to each language variety in the constituted linguistic market in Morocco since its independence in 1956. By adopting a critical language policy approach, the paper argues that language policy formulation in Morocco has established a hierarchy of linguistic practices, elevating French as a de-facto official language while simultaneously relegating both the de-jure official languages Modern Standard Arabic and Amazigh to a lower status. The paper demonstrates that despite claims of safeguarding language rights and revitalizing local languages such as Amazigh, language policies often serve as a covert means of state control and a tool for managing internal social and political conflicts. The paper demonstrates how denying underprivileged groups access to quality French education serves as a mechanism through which the dominant elite maintain their economic and social status. To this end, document analysis – ‘a systemic procedure for reviewing and evaluating documents – both print or electronic (computer-based and internet-transmitted) material’ (Bowen, 2009, p. 27) – is adopted to investigate how covert ideological mechanisms imbedded in the newly drafted laws create and perpetuate language practices that favour MSA and foreign languages. Documents could be of different forms; they can go beyond texts to include photographs, artwork, and even TV programs (O’Leary, 2004). Nonetheless, in the context of the present paper, the focus is on texts or what Lo Bianco (2010) terms ‘Public text’, i.e. ‘official documentation issued by a state or its agencies’ (p. 157) such as a country’s constitution which embodies the highest example of public texts. The examination of these texts aims to unravel the declared official policies, and the hidden agendas embedded in the formulation of policies that regulate language use, language practices, and language acquisition in Morocco. Document analysis reveals the controlling mechanisms embedded in policy texts that aim to limit the success of the officialization of Amazigh. It demonstrates how regulations and laws can hinder revitalization efforts by translating ideology into practice.

3 Arabization policy: One Nation, One Language

Language policy is viewed here as one of the mechanisms used by the state and the ruling elites to determine who can access political power and resources (Tollefson, 1991; Shohamy, 2006). Tollefson (1991) argues that “Language policy is one mechanism by which dominant groups establish hegemony in language use” (p. 16). It is the primary arena for managing and manipulating language practices in society. Shohamy (2006) also claims that “It is through LP that decisions are made about the preferred languages that should be legitimized, used, learned and taught in terms of where, when and in which contexts” (p. 45). The inherent limitations of earlier models and frameworks coupled with disillusionment in the positivistic economic and social paradigms (Ricento, 2000) have prompted this shift towards examining issues of power, hegemony, and ideology in language policy formulation.

The fact that language policy “can hegemonically normalize particular ways of thinking, being and/or educating, while concomitantly delimiting others, [has] become an important consideration within the field” (Johnson, 2013). Earlier models failed to solve linguistic issues and instead created social stratification that benefited dominant language speakers and alienated minority language communities. This section examines Morocco’s language policies since independence to uncover the implicit and covert policies that sustain the linguistic and economic interests of the dominant elite.

After the independence, Arabic was established as the only legitimate language in the country, becoming the national and official language promoting political cohesion and a shared culture built on pan-Arabism and Arab nationalism ideologies. The Constitution of December 14, 1962 states “Le Royaume du Maroc, État musulman souverain, dont la langue officielle est l’arabe, constitue une partie du Grand Maghreb.” (The Kingdom of Morocco, a sovereign Muslim state, whose official language is Arabic is part of the Greater Maghreb).

The newly independent nation followed the Western model of “one nation, one language” ideology, viewing Arabic as a symbol of cultural independence from France and the nation’s eternal glue, due to the presence of Amazigh, seen as a threat to the national unity at the dawn of independence (Boukous, 2003; Hart, 1997). Lakhdar Ghazal (1976) argued that Arabization was by default an ongoing process of resistance to the French colonial residue in Morocco. Arabization was not just a linguistic or educational issue; it was rather ‘une notion militante (an activist notion) (ibid. p. 9) whose aim is to re-establish MSA as a unifying modern language in the country.

As an educational policy, Arabization had four goals. First, it aimed at unifying education through the elimination of the binary education system composed of the traditional and French system. Second, it envisaged the universalization and/or generalization of education, making schooling of children of all ages compulsory. Third, it targeted the Moroccanization of education by training teaching staff to replace foreign teachers and adapting the textbooks to reflect the Moroccan identity. Lastly, it prioritised the use of Modern Standard Arabic as the medium of instruction in all schools and all levels. The process started in 1956 as the first independent government began Arabizing lower primary grades, but progress was slow due to strong French ties. By the late 1960s, primary education was fully Arabized, while middle and high school science and technical classes remained in French for 20 years. In 1975, high school social subjects were Arabized, and by the late 1980s, math and science were Arabized in secondary schools without adequate preparation. By the 1990s, all courses from sixth grade onward were taught in Arabic, but university-level science and technical classes remained in French, creating challenges for students.

Unfortunately, the four goals proved to be elusive and remained lofty aspirations for the various governments that oversaw educational reforms since Morocco's independence (Errihani, 2023; El Biad, 1985; Grandguillaume, 2004; Hammoud, 1982). Generalizing education was far from a success, especially in rural areas where illiteracy continued to prevail. In 2018, it was reported that only 68.5% of Moroccans were literate, placing the country among those with the highest rates of illiteracy in North Africa (World by Map, 2018). The remaining objectives also yielded limited success (see Sections 5 and 6).

In 2019, Arabic was blamed for the failure of Morocco's education system, leading to a decision to restore French for scientific subjects starting from the primary level. Experienced teachers struggled to adapt due to their lack of fluency in French after decades of teaching in Arabic. Critics argue that Arabization failed to meet its goals and achieve the intended educational objectives. According to local and international reports, the Moroccan educational system has experienced significant deterioration due to this policy. The Arabization of the public education system deprived generations of Moroccans from mastering French, progressively placing Moroccan students, particularly those in science and technology, at a disadvantage.

In addition to the lack of political will, improvisation and haste that characterized its implementation, Arabization failed due to the double discourse of political leaders and its lack of implementation in higher education. While the policy targeted public education for the masses, elites, and nationalist leaders sent their children to French schools, creating an "Elite

Closure" strategy. This deepened the social gap, as French remained dominant and many lacked proficiency in it. The continued use of French in higher education for science, technology, and economics also contributed to its failure. As early as 1980s, Hammoud argued that the presence of French in the domains where Arabic - the official language - should have been adopted served as a major obstacle to full Arabization. He wrote:

The convenient long-term reliance on French as an advanced language of wider communication and a medium facilitating access to the modern world of science and technology has made Arabisation harder and harder to achieve. (1982, p. 228)

4 Amazigh Language Policy: What Outcomes?

Amazigh acquisition policy is a language policy act driven by political necessity. On the surface, the introduction of Amazigh in education in 2003 and its subsequent official recognition in 2011 represent a turnaround in the legal and cultural discrimination against Imazighen (Plural of Amazigh) and their culture and an attempt to reclaim Amazigh as a national heritage and a main component of the Moroccan culture (King's Ajdir speech, 2001). Yet it remains a very well-calculated political decision whereby the state "instead of imposing the Berber culture as a challenge to national unity, the king promoted embracing it as a necessary step in his project for a 'democratic and modernist society'" (Silverstein and Crawford, 2004, p. 44). The change then in the language policy in Morocco to integrate Amazigh is not indicative of a genuine linguistic concern for the revitalization of Amazigh but rather a strategic political decision. The rise of the Islamic movement in 1990s posed an existential threat to the state but its coincidence with the emergence of stronger Amazigh demands for linguistic and cultural rights presented the state with "an important mechanism by which [it can] manage the social and political conflict" (Tollefson, 2002, p. 5). The state has pragmatically approached the Amazigh issue by incorporating rather than repressing it. By recognizing Amazigh as an official language and introducing it in schools, the state aimed to maintain power and mitigate the rising Amazigh ethnic and linguistic militancy of the early 2000s, rather than genuinely reviving the language.

The state intentionally designed bureaucratic oversight to ensure the failure of integrating Amazigh in public primary schools. Due to pressure from the Amazigh Cultural Movement and the monarch, the policy was launched hastily without proper planning, sacrificing effective implementation for political purposes (Errihani, 2007; Boussagui, 2019). The policy

suffered from a lack of trained teachers, with initial recruits receiving only two weeks of training to teach Amazigh using a newly devised script². The unsound pedagogical decisions continued by hiring non-Amazigh speakers to teach a language they do not speak offering them three days to two weeks of training.

Despite the growing number of graduates with BA degrees in Amazigh Studies and the establishment of four teacher training centres, the implementation of Amazigh education remains deliberately slow. According to a 2016 Ministry of Education report, 11,000 teachers were trained to teach Amazigh, but 6,000 were reassigned to teach Arabic, French, and math instead. Effective teaching of Amazigh is hindered by a lack of supervision, with only 16 inspectors available, and the number of specialized teacher trainers dropping from 60 in 2009 to 17 in 2015 (Ministry of education, 2015/2016 report).

Bureaucratic delays have hindered the generalization of Amazigh teaching. Twenty years after its introduction, Amazigh instruction in primary schools has declined rather than increased. Despite years of promises, the Ministry of Education admitted the failure to meet the 2009–2010 goal of incorporating Amazigh in all public schools. The Ministry's recent projections aim for 50% coverage by 2025/2026 and full generalization by 2029/2030, without providing a strategic plan and measures to achieve this goal (Ministerial note 028X23, May 23rd, 2023). Additionally, 90% of students do not consistently study Amazigh across all primary school grades.

Ostensibly, the state has shifted the Moroccan linguistic landscape by introducing the teaching of Amazigh and recognizing it as an official language breaking away from past marginalization. However, conditions have been created that hinder the success of the Amazigh language policy. Bureaucratic oversight and restrictive legal mechanisms have turned Amazigh language revitalization efforts into devitalization.

4.1 Constitutional Ambiguity

The analysis of the Moroccan 2011 New Constitution reveals the unequal treatment national languages receive in the country. Article 5 of the new constitution names Arabic and Amazigh as the two official languages of Morocco. It states:

² The decision to adopt Tifinagh was not without controversy as three different scripts were debated. The Arabic script, the Latin script and Tifinagh script ultimately chosen after a royal intervention.

Arabic remains [*demeure*] **the** official language of the State. The State works for the protection and for the development of the Arabic language, as well as the promotion of its use. Likewise, Tamazight [Berber/*Amazigh*] constitutes **an** official language of the State, being common patrimony of all Moroccans without exception. (Jefri J. Ruchti Translation)

However, a textual analysis of the Article reveals a hierarchical positioning of both languages. The first notable aspect in the examination of Article 5 is the preamble “Arabic ‘demeure / remains / تبقى the official language of the state”. The use of the word ‘demeure’ could be interpreted to signify the continued privileged status conferred to Arabic since independence. The preamble clearly aims at consolidating the status of Arabic as the default official language of the state. This is evident in the use of the definite determiner ‘**the**’ to denote the official status of Arabic and the use of the indefinite article – of ‘**an**’ – for Amazigh, which, according to Boukous “*peut être interprété comme signifiant une langue parmi d’autres*” (‘*can be interpreted as meaning one language among others*’, translation mine) (2013, p. 17).

Article 5 undoubtedly confers a notion of singularity to Arabic and maintains a hierarchical status among Moroccan languages positioning Arabic as the primary official language and Amazigh as secondary. Maintaining the legal superiority of Arabic over Amazigh was certainly the reason for the changes made to the final draft of the 2011 constitution presented to the monarch. According to Lahcen Oulhaj, a member of the committee in charge of the constitutional reform, the first draft posits Arabic and Amazigh as equal declaring both languages to be the two official languages of the state. However, changes were made later to the draft by Mohamed Moatassim who headed the committee for constitutional reform in collaboration with the Istiqlal and the PJD parties to maintain the presumed superiority of Arabic over Amazigh (personal communication, February 24th, 2018).

Another important aspect of the article, which strengthens this interpretation is the state’s responsibility toward these languages. Concerning Arabic, the state “*works for its protection and its development, as well as the promotion of its use*”. This prescription of the state’s responsibilities towards Arabic contrasts sharply with its orientations towards the protection of Amazigh as it tied the fate and future of the Amazigh language to organic laws that are open to political interpretation.

Also important is the absence of any specification as to the variety of Arabic concerned. It is not clear whether the generic term refers to MSA or CA and whether

it encompasses Darija as well. This-ambiguity, created after the independence and perpetuated by the current constitution, positions Amazigh in competition not only with CA and MSA but also with Darija, the language that competes with Amazigh in its key domain, the home. The perpetuation of this ambiguity in the formulation of Article 5 legitimizes the use of Darija in domains that should have been reserved for the two official languages. It can be argued that the formulation deliberately favours Arabic and operates in a manner that preserves the perceived superiority of Arabic and its varieties and protects them at the expense of Amazigh.

Kabel (2018, p. 487) argues that the ambiguous stipulation of Article 5 allows for 'differing interpretations and improvisations on the part of politicians and policy-makers. This results in a continuous delay in passing the organic law relative to the official implementation of Amazigh.

4.2 The 2015-2030 New Vision for Education and Amazigh Exclusion

The 2015-2030 vision developed by Le Conseil Supérieur de l'Éducation et de la Formation et de la Recherche Scientifique (CSEFRS) under the title 'Pour une école de l'équité, de la qualité et de la promotion' (CSEFRS, 2015) illustrates the state's negative stance towards Amazigh. It indicates that Amazigh teaching is more about appeasement than genuine revitalization.

The strategy for educational reform by 2030 is based on three principles: (1) equity and equal opportunity in language learning, (2) adherence to the Constitution's status of official languages, and (3) establishing gradual and balanced plurilingualism. This vision promotes 'l'alternance linguistique' (linguistic alternation), with Arabic as the primary medium of instruction and French and English initially taught as subjects and later used as mediums for scientific instruction.

The policy prioritizes proficiency in Arabic, French, and English, excluding Amazigh from the plurilingualism framework, designating it as 'a language taught' but not a medium of instruction. This shift reverses the 2006 Pedagogical Guidelines for the Teaching of Amazigh, which emphasized literacy and proficiency. The new vision limits Amazigh to oral communication in the first two years, with writing literacy integrated in later years. It vaguely promises 'progressive generalization' of Amazigh teaching in elementary and secondary cycles without specifics.

In conclusion, the new vision perpetuates existing linguistic hierarchies, placing Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), French, and English at the top, while relegating Amazigh to oral communication.

4.3 The Organic Laws and the Dialectization of Amazigh

The state's restrictive mechanisms to hinder the revitalization and teaching of the Amazigh language are most evident in 'Organic Law 26.16'. This law, which defines the implementation of Amazigh as an official language, was passed in 2019, nearly a decade after Amazigh's official recognition. The political elite and government's reluctance to enact promised laws from the 2011 constitution has stalled Amazigh language policy, contributing to its regression. The state's delay in passing these laws exposes a discrepancy between its rhetoric and actions, suggesting that the policy is designed to constrain rather than revive Amazigh.

The bill covertly constrains Amazigh teaching and revitalization through its return to dialectization, deviating from the standardized norm developed by IRCAM. Article 1 ambiguously defines Amazigh as all regional varieties rather than a single standardized language, thus preventing it from functioning as an official language. Article 4 of the bill further supports dialectization by promoting regional linguistic expressions in the educational system over the standard norm. This definition undermines Amazigh's constitutional recognition as a unified language, minimizing its integration into public domains. It also perpetuates the longstanding ideological assumptions that Amazigh is not a language but a 'dialect' or rather a collection of 'dialects' "*lahajat*".

5 The Return to French and the Spread of English in Morocco

To address the drawbacks of the Arabization policy, the 2000 New Charter of Education (CNEF) emphasized the importance of foreign languages, particularly French and English. Foreign languages are currently viewed as essential for social and professional advancement in Morocco. The 2015-2030 Moroccan Strategic Vision emphasizes the role of foreign languages in accessing knowledge and modern technology.

The High Council for Education and Research report highlights the detrimental effects of Arabization, particularly the low proficiency in French among younger generations educated in public schools. The Council attributes the failure of the Moroccan educational system to

Arabization, holding it responsible for the challenges Moroccan young generations experience with their proficiency in French, which is a crucial requirement for employment on the job market.

To promote French and English, Morocco initiated the "International Baccalaureate" program, which offers high school students the opportunity to study scientific subjects in French or English for the national baccalaureate exam. This initiative aimed to enhance students' foreign language skills to meet the job market requirements the Arabization policy failed to meet. King Mohammed VI also emphasized the importance of foreign languages in his speeches since 2013, highlighting their added value to employment prospects and recommending their integration at all educational levels, especially in technical and scientific tracks.

After more than six decades of Arabization, the Moroccan parliament approved in August 2019, Law 51.17, which stipulates the use of French as the medium of instruction for scientific and technical subjects in Moroccan schools, starting from the primary school level. This return to French triggered a rage in parliament, especially among members of the PJD³ party and the Istiqlal⁴ party, the fervent defenders of the Arabic language, who viewed this act as a betrayal. The decision was also criticized by those in favor of the adoption of English as a medium of instruction. French has been prioritized due to its extensive usage in administrative, economic, and educational domains, especially at the university level.

Efforts to promote English are also evident as Doctoral students in science and technology are required to publish at least two scientific papers in English in indexed journals before their defence. English language is widely used particularly among younger generations, and in scientific research, foreign embassies, and international communication. However, its usage is limited compared to French and Arabic, due to Moroccans' low proficiency, especially the old francophone generations.

The Ministry of Moroccan Education decided in the summer 2023, to introduce English starting from the 2023-2024 academic year at the level of the first year of Mid-High school with a coverage rate of 50% for the first year, and 100% for the 2024-2025 year. This can

³ The Justice and Development Party (PJD) is a conservative Islamic-democratic party that endorses the Moroccan monarchy. It explicitly rejects violence and terrorism and seeks to preserve Morocco's Islamic identity through legislative processes.

⁴ The Istiqlal (PI), founded in 1947, is Morocco's oldest political party, that played a pivotal role in the country's struggle for independence from French and Spanish colonial rule. The party maintains a strong nationalistic ideology and is notably active in Pan-Arab affairs

challenge the exclusion of the masses ‘Elite closure’ through the mastery of French. The majority of Moroccans view English positively and associate it with science, technology, and economic advancement (El Kirat & Laaraj, 2016). English has witnessed steady growth, especially in higher education over the last two decades with its expansion as the language of academic publishing and scholarships. The language is likely to become the premium foreign language and medium of instruction in Morocco at the expense of French in the coming years.

6 The Role of Language Policy in Shaping Power Structures and Inequality in Morocco

The incongruity of the formulated policies and their failure to achieve their objectives has led to the balkanization of the education system in the country and consequently, the maintenance of the structures of power and dominance fashioned after the independence in 1956. Morocco has three different education systems: a public school system, run by the government, where so “many of our young people cannot fulfil their legitimate professional, material, and social aspirations” (King Mohammed VI speech, August 20, 2013); the network of forty-two elite French *lycées de mission*, run by the French government, where the well-off maintain their economic and political dominance; and the growing conglomerate of private institutions and schools where French is the dominant language to serve the middle-class families.

The Arabization of public schools had serious ramifications on the educational standards in the country. Early in 1966, Minister of Education Mohammed Benhima (1965-1967) halted the Arabization for his concern about its pedagogical consequences. More than fifty years after his concern, the decline of educational standards still plagues the public school. In a recent report, the Ministry of Education declares that 70% of students do not achieve curriculum mastery by the time they finish primary school. Their reading literacy, both in Arabic and French, is significantly lower; only 23% of students can easily read an 80-word text in Arabic and 30% manage to read a 15-word text in French (Feuille de route Ministry of Education, 2022). The unsatisfactory results are confirmed by TIMMS and PIRLS assessments, ranking 45th out of 45 in literacy (PIRLS, 2011) and 49th out of 50 (TIMMS, 2011). The private school students, however, demonstrate improved achievement scores (Ibourk, 2016) leaving the fate of public school students unfavorable and their deficit to continue throughout the curriculum and onto the labor market.

The dominance of French through its presence in the educational field (higher education) and the economy and finance plays a crucial role in maintaining unequal educational systems

which ensure that the majority of Moroccans have little to no chance of accessing the wealth and political power available only to those who speak French fluently. An understanding of the role of the lycées de mission can be gleaned from the fact that 45% of Moroccan graduates from these schools since 1956 come from just 500 families, with 15% coming from only 20 families (Moha Hajar, *La mission Française au Maroc vs La mission de l'école marocaine*, quoted in Martin Rose, 2014). This well-trained elite makes up the core of a body of technocrats who are fashioned to run the state's economic and financial apparatus. Sociologist Ali Benhaddou argues that:

Les familles bourgeoises engendrent les technocrates. L'Etat assure leur promotion [...] Ils passent successivement par les grandes écoles, les grands corps d'Etat, la haute fonction publique. Puis sans transition, ils sont cooptés à la tête des grandes banques, des grandes sociétés industrielles, commerciales. (Ksikes, 2006)

Bourgeois families breed technocrats. The State ensures their promotion [...]. They successively pass through the Grandes écoles, the major state bodies, the senior civil service. Then without transition, they are co-opted at the head of large banks, large industrial and commercial companies. (my translation)

For young people from poor families, they should be trained well enough to work as low-ranking civil servants or in low-paying manufacturing sectors. A school director of a private school in Casablanca argued that:

Il ne faut pas forcer tout le monde à passer dans le même moule comme le veut le système actuel. Les jeunes gens issus des familles pauvres doivent apprendre un métier ou une technique. Pour cela, ils ont à leur disposition des écoles de formation professionnelle.

We must not force everyone into the same mold as the current system wants. Young people from poor families must learn a trade or technique. For this, they have professional training schools at their disposal. (my translation, ibid)

The unequal access to linguistic skills translates into unequal access to power and wealth. The Arabized public school system channels graduates from poor families into unemployment or low-paying jobs where the chances of upward mobility are almost nonexistent, while the elite private schools help sustain existing power relations. Bouziane & Rguibi (2018), for example, demonstrated how the lack of proficiency in French stands in the way of many science

students graduating with a baccalaureate from pursuing studies in faculties of sciences. The authors found that science baccalaureate holders often shift from science streams in higher education to literary ones, particularly English and Islamic studies, due to their limited mastery of French acquired in primary and high school systems. Therefore, given their intertwined nature, language policy and education policies are “inseparable from the relationships of power that divide societies” (Tollefson, 1991, p. 203). Language policy reflect the interests of groups that dominate the political and economic apparatus of the state and their ability to control policy-making mechanisms and processes.

7 Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to explore language policy and power dynamics in post-independence Morocco. The main objective was to examine the role of language policy in structuring power and inequality in Morocco. The paper presented the languages in use, their functions and domains as well as their status. It also looked into the Arabization process, the Amazigh language teaching policy and the state of its officialization, and the language and educational policies. A critical review of the literature and the legal documents, including the Moroccan New Constitution was provided. The research was conducted within the framework of critical language policy, examining how educational language policies create and sustain inequalities among learners while serving the interests of dominant groups within a speech community.

The CLP was the most convenient approach for the study as it considers language policy to be highly political and ideological. The adoption of this framework helped to unveil the underlying historical conditions of Moroccan policy formulation and revealed the mechanisms employed by policymakers to “serve or undermine particular political and economic interests.”

This study showed the interplay between language ideologies, structural conditions, and economic interests that governed language policy formulation, and determined the value assigned to each language variety in the constituted Moroccan linguistic landscape since its independence in 1956. By adopting the Critical Language Policy approach, the paper argued that the claims of safeguarding language rights and revitalizing local languages, namely Amazigh, language policies in Morocco served as a covert means of state control and a tool for managing internal social and political conflicts.

Document analysis revealed the controlling mechanisms embedded in policy texts aimed at limiting the success of the officialization of Amazigh. It also demonstrated how regulations and laws impeded the revitalization processes of Amazigh.

The overall evaluation of the Arabization policy based on its outcomes and the High Council for Education report as well as the State's decision to return to French as the medium of instruction of scientific subjects revealed the failure of the policy. It also showed that it was an instrument for "Elite Closure" that deprived generations of Moroccans of mastering French, placing generations of Moroccan students, particularly those in science and technology, at a disadvantage. The policy not only failed to replace French but also led to the devalorization of MSA among the young generations who consider themselves to be victims of the policy and view MSA as a language of no value.

The Moroccan linguistic landscape will continue to evolve under the influence of globalization and social media. Alongside the real linguistic landscape, a virtual linguistic market is emerging that promotes some languages other than those imposed by state policies. This virtual space which remains beyond state control, allows Moroccan youth to use languages they master and value. Mother tongues, i.e. Amazigh and Darija, as well as English are more present in this space than French and MSA. Investigating this trend can help to determine the motivations for their use and foresee the future of the Moroccan linguistic landscape.

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A Review of Issues of Inequality and Inequity in Education Concerning the San Language Minorities in Botswana – 1997 - 2023

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Abstract

Research now abounds on the issues that bedevil the education of minority ethnic groups in Botswana. If a consideration is made about language as a human right, the right to learn in one's language becomes fundamental. Indeed, issues of equality and equity in education are subsumed in many strategies, policies, and laws that define the education of a nation. If Education is concerned with societal knowledge and cultural values systems, then there is no equity in access in Botswana as equality assumes that learners have equal linguistic competence. The paper will argue against the belief that homogeneity equalizes the learners. A point will be made that minority language speakers, such as the San (Khoisan), suffer from being overlooked and rendered irrelevant in education as they encounter school languages for the first time in the classroom. The paper will underscore the fact that matters of mother tongue education, culture-infused curriculum, and teacher training are key in education. The thesis of this paper is that a meaningful education should, underline equitable principles that bring about inclusive and constructive development of the self, democracy, self-reliance, and cherishing of unity in diversity. The methodology of the discussion will be guided by a critique of existing policies and their philosophy of education that does not value a culture-based and all-inclusive education that can benefit the Khoisan learner.

Dipatlisiso di dintsi tse di supang dintlha tse di thatafatsang thuto ya ba merafe e mebotlana mo Botswana. Fa go ka akanngwa gore puo ya motho ke tshwanelo ya setho, tshwanelo ya go rutwa ka puo ya motho e nna konokono. Ka jalo, dikgang tsa tekatekano le tshiamisetso mo thutong di tshwanetse go akarediwa mo ditogamaanong, le mealo ya tsamaiso, le melao e e tlhalosang thuto mo setšhabeng. Fa go ka lebelelwa gore thuto e akaretsa le go itebaganya le dikitso tsa setšhaba, le boleng jwa ngwao, go tlaa itshupa gore ga go na tshiamisetso mo go tseneng mo dithutong fa go sa lebelelwe letlhoko la ba dipuo tse di sa dirisiwang mo sekolong. Pampiri e, e tlaa baya pele mabaka kgatlhanong le megopolo e e akanngwang ya go tshwantshanya baithuti ba ba farologanang ka diteme, ka gore, ga ba lekane, ba bangwe puo ya bone e a dirisiwa, ba bangwe ya bone ga e dirisiwe mo dithutong. Lebaka le tlaa bewa pele la gore babui ba dipuo tsa Sesarwa, ba ba leng palo potlana, ba bewa fa mosing, ba bo ba ikgatholosiwa, jaaka e le gore ba kopana le dipuo tsa sekolo e le lantlha mo dithutong. Pampiri e, e tlaa gatelela lebaka la gore dikgang tsa puo ya ngwana go tswa lapeng, le thulaganyo ya dithuto e e akaretsang ngwao ya moithuti, le ikatisetso barutintshi, ke dikgang tsa konokono mo thutong. Mogopolo kakanyetso wa pampiri e ke gore thuto e e maleba, e tshwanetse go tswamaisiwa ka dintlha tsa tshiamisetso moithuti, le go akaretsa thuto e e agang boleng jwa motho, le go mo dira motho ka batho; go ipelega, go lebeleletse popagano ya setšhaba se se merafe le dipuo tse di farologaneng. Megopolo e e tsamaisang puisano ya pampiri e, e tlaa tsewa mo ditsamaisong tsa dithuto tse di leng teng tse di bolelwang ke babatlisisi, le go lebelela megopolo ya thuto e e sa tseyeng tsia botlhokwa jwa ngwao le puo, le go sa akaretseng thuto e e molemo mo baithuting ba dipuo tsa Sesarwa.

Keywords: *Botswana, Language policy, San minorities, inequality, inequity, mother tongue*



1 Introduction

Despite Botswana's reputation for having one of the most generously funded educational systems globally, the consequences of the current policies indicate significant failures. Inequalities and inequities still persist. This is essentially due to the missing of link between minority languages and lack of their role in education. Contrary to the common perception of Botswana as an ethnically homogenous Tswana nation, the country is actually home to a rich diversity of ethno-linguistic communities. This diversity is often overlooked in governmental documents and public discourse, which typically emphasize the homogeneity of Botswana people. However, the reality is that Botswana hosts vibrant Khoisan ethnic populations, including different speech communities such as ǀAni, Buga, Cua, Glui, Gllana, Naro, Shua, Cire-cire, Cua, Tsíxa, Sasi, ǀHuan, Taa, and Jul'hoasi, alongside other Bantu languages like Shiyeyi, OtjiHerero, Shekgalagari, IKalanga, ThiMbukushu, and Chiikuhane, as well as Afrikaans, which is spoken in the southwestern parts of the country (Gabanamotse-Mogara et al., 2023; Chebanne, 2023; Molosiwa & Chebanne, 2023). These communities, apart from Setswana speakers, are often referred to as minorities or marginalized groups. The San people, known historically and culturally for their nomadic lifestyle and diverse linguistic variations, have faced significant marginalization and assimilation pressures. Despite living in small, linguistically varied communities, these groups maintain vibrant languages that serve as essential tools for cultural knowledge and communication within their communities (Chebanne, 2015a, 2015b, 2020).

The objective of this paper is to contribute to debates on mother tongue policy and linguistic human rights. This will help position the San's lack of linguistic and cultural representation within the social framework and the education system that exclude their most important resource, which is language (Mogara & Chebanne, 2023; Botswana Government, 1993). The delimitation of the discussion to the San communities is a conscious one, reflecting the prominence of the problem concerning indigenous minorities and marginalized ethno-linguistic groups in Botswana. The problem is that the San present a peculiar case in Botswana because of their ethnic and linguistic precariousness, leading to endangerment and language death. There are several explanations for this state of affairs. Firstly, due to their ethnic way of life in rural areas and marginalized ethnicity, the San are easily abused by the majority population. Secondly, San communities undergo marginalization of their languages and are increasingly being assimilated by Tswana people, who constitute the mainline society. Thirdly, San languages are not only threatened with marginalization and oppression in the school system but are also endangered as they are limited to insignificant domains (Batibo, 2015; Chebanne 2015a; Mazonde, 2002).

Saugestad, 2001; Cassidy et al., 2001). It is hoped that this discussion will contribute to a better understanding of the San social situation in Botswana.

The paper is structured according eight sections. Section 1 is the introduction and it provides information on the issues that characterise the San ethnic communities in Botswana. Section 2 is the methodology, and it informs on the sources of data that facilitated the paper. However, section 3 is the problem statement, and presents some critical issues raised in research on the situation of the San in Botswana. On the other hand, section 4 deals with the theoretical frame that presents research on social issues that help interpret the linguistic and cultural situations of the San. Section 5 deals with challenges of the San within the Botswana social context and discusses the realities that the San experience in Botswana in critical social and developmental domains. Further, section 6 discusses strategies towards the integration of the San in Education which is what research has perceived as a way to promote education for all and for the San learners also. Section 7 presents ideas that can help promote the education and the participation of the San as equals in the learning processes. Lastly, section 8 is the conclusion that summarises the discussion.

2 Methodology

The discussion draws data from publications on the social situation of the San in Botswana. Desktop review of books, journals, dissertations, theses, reports, and official government publications were consulted. Primary sources in form of research, government and corporate reports were quite adequate and very useful to this discussion which aims at illustrating how the San issues are handled and possibly mismanaged. International best practice reports will also bolster the information that is used to develop arguments for the lack of equity in the Botswana social and education policies. The online (internet) sources were very helpful as they provided valuable data that could not be accessed physically. Even though secondary sources were adequate, specific research on equality and equity in Botswana social systems are inadequate.

3 The Problem Statement on Inequality and Inequity Affecting the San

The problems and challenges of education for the minority San begin with the curriculum content and strategies that put ethnic linguistic communities in a straitjacket, assuming that what is good for Setswana speakers is good for all learners (Chebanne, 2022). The curriculum content and pedagogical consequences of Botswana's educational language practices have been critically

documented and analyzed by Nyati-Ramahobo (2006, 2004, 1991, 1997) and Jotia and Jankie (2015), who argue against the curriculum policy that favors mono-ethnicity and mono-culturalism. Consequently, the de facto homogeneous ethno-linguistic state construct and curriculum policy on education have relegated anything to do with minority or marginalized languages and their cultural expression to oblivion (Chebanne, 2015a). Effectively, the country has upheld a hegemonic and supremacist view in matters of language and culture in formulating its philosophy of education and access (Chebanne & Kewagamang, 2020; Chebanne & Moumakwa, 2017). This has occurred despite global examples of educational policies that favor mother tongue instruction in the formative years of education (Mogara & Chebanne, 2023; Chebanne, 2015a; Nyati-Saleshando, 2010).

Since Botswana gained independence in 1966, policy documents such as the National Development Plans (NDPs) (Botswana Government 1967-present) have been unambiguous on the issue of creating an enlarged school access, and importantly on the question of equality in access and the guarantee of ten years of basic education for all (cf. RNPE, 1994; National Development Plan Eight (Botswana Government: NDP 8, 1997). All policy evidently symbolizes and refers to government power, and in matters of education, this power is the State and its political vision (Mogara et al., 2023; Chebanne, 2008). Hence, education policy in Botswana encounters theoretical challenges that must be assessed to progress in this discussion on issues of equality and equity (Chebanne, 2008). Since independence, education has been characterized by the "education for all" (Botswana Government, 1994; Botswana Government: Kagisano, 1977) type of mass education, where the state, by all means bearable, financially speaking, went on to provide free education at all levels of school. However, as Chebanne and Moumakwa (2017) argued, minority San did not benefit from this dispensation chiefly because of language challenges. While this government "education for all" stance has created a belief that there was equality in education and provided arguments for it, it effectively did not empower the San children to receive an education (Gabanamotse-Mogara et al., 2023; Mogara & Chebanne, 2023). The San education in their language is crucial. There is a need for a conscious policy mission to correct the situation, which is the non-representation of their ethnicity. Namibia has done much better for its ethnic and linguistic situations to promote mother tongues in education as a right (Haingura, 2016).

Without that consideration for mother tongue in education as a right, the threat to their languages and identity is real, as they will be lost, and the entire ethnic communities will be assimilated into the mainline society (Gabanamotse-Mogara et al., 2023; Mogara & Chebanne, 2023; Nyati-Ramahobo, 2006). The very fact that these tiny communities' speech and cultures

still exist calls for intervention to facilitate their education in their languages (Motshabi & Suagestad, 2004).

4 Theoretical Framework

This discussion takes from the debates and arguments pioneered in Botswana by Nyati-Ramahobo (1997) who viewed language practices in education as a source of social strife and conflict. This conflict resulted in the hegemony of the majority on ethnic linguistic minorities whose languages were not given a role in education. Consequently this social conflict in education engendered injustice as only the language and culture of the mainline Setswana society benefited, and minority languages speakers were left to assimilate and discard their languages. Consequently this violated and infringed on their cultural and linguistic rights (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2006). When languages are dominated by other languages, the consequences are negative in the cultural and communication spheres (Ammon, 2006). In Botswana, Batibo (2005) lamented the decline and death of minority languages, especially the San languages which he qualified as losing the battle for survival (2010). The languages in education practice in Botswana creates a serious situation that Nyati-Ramahobo (1997, 2006) qualified as the loss of quality of life for the minorities. Such situations of linguistic conflict and dominance characterise the situation of the San ethnic languages speakers (Batibo, 2015b).

In Jotia and Jankie (2015) the argument made is that when languages do not feature in education, inequalities and inequities will subsist because the culture of the speakers will also not feature. This in turn creates a situation of hegemony and assimilation which in themselves are consequences of social conflict and inequity (Jotia & Jankie, 2015; Chebanne, 2015a; Batibo 2006). When the Botswana slogans of equality in education are uttered, the reality is that some ethnic groups go to school without equal opportunities and equal rights in learning (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2006; Batibo, 2006; Chebanne & Moumakwa, 2017). In their recent publication, Chebanne and Monaka (2024) argued that the exclusive use of Setswana, the majority and national language of Botswana constitute a form of a weapon that killed the minority languages such as those of the ethnic San communities. As argued by Chebanne (2020) San language speakers in Botswana can be qualified as being under internal colonisation and this situation does not give them linguistic and cultural rights – only the language and culture of the hegemonic society are available for their education and social life. In theory and practice, therefore, these are the indices of linguistic precariousness of the San languages speakers in Botswana (Batibo, 2006; Chebanne 2002). Comparatively neighboring countries to Botswana,

such as Namibia and South Africa, albeit they introduce English at Grade 4, are doing better by promoting all their languages in education and in appropriate language use social communication domains (Batibo, 2015a) and how these compare with similar indices established in the literature (Haingura, 2016; Batibo, 2005, 2010; Brenzinger, 1992).

Moreover, in Botswana, the current situation of marginalization of the San has created what some have compared to linguistic apartheid (Chebanne, 2020; Mazonde, 2002; Saugestad, 2001). While languages falling under the Bantu group are readily acknowledged as distinct languages with their own authentic cultures, the same recognition is not easily extended to the San languages (Mazonde, 2002; Saugestad, 2001). These languages are often grouped together in a manner that erroneously suggests they are linguistically and culturally homogeneous, which is misleading (Chebanne, 2020; Güldemann & Vossen, 2000). However, linguistic and ethnographic research distinguishes between the Khoe and the San (Güldemann & Vossen, 2000). Apart from some lexical borrowings and the phonological phenomenon of clicks, which typify the languages of the Khoe and the San, they belong to different language families (Chebanne, 2020; Güldemann & Vossen, 2000). Research by Smeija (2003) and Anderson and Janson (1997), and recent surveys by Chebanne and Mogara (2022) and Nthapelelang (2000) and RETENG (a coalition of Language and Cultural Organizations) have established that Botswana is a multilingual and therefore a multicultural nation (Chebanne, 2010, 2015a). According to these sources, Botswana hosts at least 16 languages (Chebanne & Mogara, 2022, 2018). However, in terms of educational processes and access to cultural knowledge, San languages are not catered for, only Setswana enjoys the privileges and means conferred by language use practices in education (Molosiwa & Chebanne, 2023) and several mentions in the Constitution (Mogara et al., 2023; Nyati-Ramahobo, 1991, 1987). Since independence the partiality has been that Setswana is the only language that benefited from socio-cultural developments (Nyati-Saleshando, 2010; Chebanne, 2010). Conversely, to appreciate the ethnic composition of Botswana, one must understand the language situation of the country (Chebanne & Nyati-Ramahobo, 2003; Anderson & Janson, 1997).

5 The Challenges of the San in the Botswana Social Context

In all social contexts, the San languages are marginalised in Botswana. This is evident from the research literature on the social situation of the San languages' speakers in Botswana abounds (Chebanne, 2015a, 2015b; Skold et al., 2015; Mazonde, 2002; Kamwendo et al., 2009). Since the assessment made in 2000 by the Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa

(WIMSA, 2000), it became apparent that the inequality gap between the ethnic minorities of the San and the national principles in education was not closing (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2010; Kamwendo et al., 2009). The national development agenda and educational aspirations were, and still are, not equitable for the San (Kamwendo et al., 2009). Motshabi and Saugestad (2004) and WIMSA (2000) highlighted several issues: San communities were excluded from policy formulation processes, lacked representation in government, and faced significant educational barriers, including language challenges and a lack of culturally relevant curriculum (Jotia & Jankie, 2015). Additionally, the dominant educational policies led to cultural erosion, and the San remained economically disadvantaged with limited access to resources (Chebanne, 2010; Chebanne, 2015a, 2015b). They also experienced social exclusion and discrimination, hindering their participation in national development. Health disparities further marginalized the San, with limited access to healthcare services and poor health outcomes (Chebanne & Moumakwa, 2017). These issues underscore the systemic challenges faced by the San in Botswana and highlight the need for inclusive policies that address their unique needs and promote their development (Chebanne, 2015a, 2015b; Chebanne & Kewagamang, 2020).

Since independence, there have been only two educational commissions, the Education for *Kagisano* (Botswana Government, 1977), and the National Commission on Education (Botswana Government, 1993). Both education policy documents did not cater for the minority San languages (Gabanamotse-Mogara et al., 2023; Chebanne & Moumakwa, 2017; Motshabi & Saugestad, 2004; Mazonde, 2002). The Revised National Policy on Education (Botswana Government, 1994), as derived from the Report on the National Commission on Education (Botswana Government, 1993), highlights several critical issues regarding the San community's educational experiences:

- a) ***Alienation through Language:*** Despite efforts to promote educational access, the San community's situation did not improve. The school languages (English and Setswana) alienated the San people, assimilating them and causing family disintegration (p. 17).
- b) ***Social Crisis and Cultural Trauma:*** The education system caused social crises and cultural trauma, particularly affecting San language speaking children at the primary school level (p. 18).
- c) ***Foreign Languages in Education:*** The languages used in education were foreign to children starting primary school. None of the San languages was used in Botswana's education system (p. 19).
- d) ***Abuse and Discrimination:*** In public or general Educational institutions San children

suffer abuse and discrimination, including emotional, sexual, and corporal punishment (p. 19).

As other researchers confirmed, these are serious strategic problems that entrench inequalities and lack of equity in education, and approaches to resolve them will be overwhelming (Chebanne, 2020, 2008; Chebanne & Moumakwa, 2017; Nyati-Saleshando, 2010; Batibo, 2015). It is consequently apparent that things cannot be left on their own account, and the solution lies in creating an empowering environment within the education system (Skold et al., 2015; Chebanne & Moumakwa, 2017). Such an environment would enable San ethno-minorities to appreciate the education they receive and participate meaningfully in the country's development. Decades ago, in an assessment of the San in Botswana, Good (2001, p. 73 in Cassidy et al., 2001) stated:

Indigenous languages should be integrated into the school curriculum, and respected and developed within national formal education. Incorporating San culture, languages, and history in school teaching is an essential step towards recognizing San national affairs and, more importantly, providing an education system better suited to the special needs of San learners. Quality education is vital if the San are to be better equipped to lift themselves out of poverty and powerlessness (Good, 2001, p. 73; par 6.3.6, in Cassidy et al., 2001).

As argued by Chebanne and Moumakwa (2017), Chebanne (2008), and Nyati-Saleshando (2010), education is more than just opening admissions to all as equals; it involves providing an equitable learning environment where every learner feels welcome and finds relevance in their education. Mother-tongue education is a crucial way to ensure that learning experiences are less traumatizing for every learner (Skold et al., 2015; Kamwendo et al., 2009). Therefore, when defining the objectives, outlines, and conditions for the success of an education policy, the issues of equality, equity, and quality are ever-present, with equity being primordial (Chebanne & Moumakwa, 2017; Chebanne & Kewagamang, 2020). Educational values are not exoteric but stem from positive learning experiences of citizens—when education responds to aspirations, reaffirms cultural values, and empowers communities to be self-reliant rather than dependent on the state (Chebanne, 2008, p. 207). The significance of this cannot be overstated, as shown in other Botswana reports (Jotia & Jankie, 2015; Chebanne, 2015a; Kamwendo et al., 2009).

When children of Setswana speakers go to school, they arrive with linguistic and cultural advantages that the San languages' children do not have (Gabanamotse-Mogara et al., 2023; Chebanne, 2015a). For the Khoisan child, education is not just a hegemonic force but a

nefarious, alienating, and elitist force (Chebanne, 2023; Motshabi & Saugestad, 2004; Mazonde, 2002). This situation can only change with language inclusion in education and the consequent elimination of ethnic stigma (Mazonde, 2002, p. 65). As Chebanne (2023, 2022), Mogara and Chebanne (2022), and Batibo (2015) contended in their research that language policy has evidently not responded to these issues of inequality and inequity in education up to the present. Language pluralism seems to present an undeclared obstacle or problem under the guise of fearing the risk of ethnic conflicts and social quandary (Chebanne, 2023). This revolves around an ideal that rejects cultural pluralism in favor of "national construction," "national unity," and "national education" (Gabanamotse-Mogara et al., 2023). But the question remains: what kind of unity and equality exists when there is no equity in education? Instead of integrating indigenous content that reflects people's identity and values, the education system adopts a wholesale Western model, allowing it to permeate all sectors of development (Chebanne, 2022). If the country sincerely wants to address education for all and equality issues, it needs to understand the elements that factor equity—namely, mother tongue education (Gabanamotse-Mogara et al., 2023; Chebanne & Monaka, 2009) and culture-infused education (Jotia & Jankie, 2015). In the context of our discussions, these elements must be explicit in the Education and Curriculum Policies—language and culture must be considered questions of equity. This aligns with what Nyati-Ramahobo (1997, 1998) qualified as education and quality of life for all citizens of Botswana, achievable when equitable elements of education feature in the education of Botswana pupils in their ethno-linguistic diversity (Chebanne & Moumakwa, 2017).

6 Towards strategies to integrate the San in the national education system

The idea of a vision for the assessment of social and economic development of Botswana was hailed a one way the country could democratically and innovatively transform itself (Botswana Government, 1998). The first national Vision 2016 (Botswana Government, 2017) anticipated a Botswana that would have quality education that would make the country adaptable to the changing needs of the country as the world around changed. The vision sought improvements in the relevance, the quality, and the access to education. Through education it was proposed that citizens would be empowered to become innovators, entrepreneurs and producers of goods and services that would create employment through the establishment of new enterprises. Public education was planned to raise awareness on skills needed for life. The citizen would have the opportunity for continued and universal education. Importantly, Vision 2016 intended the education system to recognise, support and strengthen Botswana's wealth of different languages

and cultural traditions. It also claimed that there would be no disadvantage suffered by any citizen in the education system as a result of a mother tongue that differs from the country's two official languages (Botswana Government Vision 2016, 2017, p. 5). Evidently all these lofty ideals were not achieved (Chebanne, 2022; Mazonde, 2002).

Vision 2036 (Botswana Government, 2016) builds upon Vision 2016 (Botswana Government, 2017) which sought to achieve prosperity for all. Vision 2036 (Botswana Government, 2016, p. 10) acknowledges that Vision 2016 did not achieve its goals due to lack of a strong delivery system, and also lack of monitoring and evaluation capacity. It also sought to align itself with the National Development 12 (Botswana Government, 2019) which sought to anchor the country on democracy, economic prosperity, sustainable development, self-reliance, unity, and *Botho* (positive character). Attended to these are ideals for a knowledge economy, development in infrastructure, agriculture, services sector, ICT, finance and business and governance. The pillars of Vision 2036 also seek to build a peaceful and secure nation, a constitution of human rights, efficient civil society, modernised traditional institutions (chieftainship), religious freedom, transparency and accountability and political transparency. Related to the concerns of Vision 2036 are climate resilience, decent human settlement, effective management of natural resources (water, energy, land, and mineral). As it can be observed, Vision 2036 utterly avoids the promises to support and strengthen Botswana's wealth of different languages and cultural traditions. Clearly, Botswana seems to have a problem with the promotion of local or indigenous languages in education (Mogara et al., 2023).

In the arguments of Jotia and Jankie (2015), Chebanne (2008) and Kamwendo et al. (2009), efforts to develop San languages have primarily been driven by linguists, NGOs (championed by RETENG), religious organizations, and various international activists (WIMSA & RDU 2000; Saugestad, 2001). However, none of these activities are directly connected to any policy in Botswana aimed at promoting the welfare of the San (Mogara & Chebanne, 2022). The lack of action in developing an ethnic-language-based curriculum and cultural domains rooted in mother-tongue education (Botswana Government: Education and Training Sector Strategic Plan, 2012) suggests a distrust or lack of will to include these concerns in the national development agenda and democratize education (Chebanne, 2023; Chebanne, 2022). This is in stark contrast to the advanced initiatives in other developmental areas (Vision 2036; Botswana Government: NDP 12, 2023), where technology is prioritized. Yet, technology without the human values of language, culture, and respect for identity becomes a destructive force (Chebanne, 2015a, 2008). A curriculum reflecting cultural pluralism has never been seriously considered (Jotia & Jankie, 2015). Even the well-intentioned recommendation from the Revised National Policy on

Education (RNPE 1994) for a third school language from an ethnic minority has been met with reluctance and delays (Chebanne, 2008). As highlighted by Motshabi and Saugestad (2004), the dialogue on these issues is seen differently by the government and the spokespersons of the San communities. Education cannot merely be a matter of budgets; democratic education is fundamentally a human value, justified by its relevance to the nation and its constituent communities (Mogara & Chebanne, 2020; Chebanne, 2008).

A participant challenged government's boast that it does not have separate programmes because it wishes to treat everyone equally (...) we must recognize that Basarwa are unique and should be treated accordingly...making the government aware that RADP (Remote Areas Dwellers Programme) needs to be made ethnic-specific to truly assist Basarwa (San). (Motshabi & Saugestad, 2004, p. 72)

Concerning the education of the minority San, Botswana's education system is in a deadlock and cannot creatively cater to the San without a significant reform (Chebanne & Kewagamang, 2020; Chebanne, 2008; Chebanne & Moumakwa, 2017). The relationship between education language practice and the minority San is shaped by a centralization model marked by an uncompromising attitude, leading to growing inequalities between different minority communities and the mainline society (Mogara & Chebanne, 2023). The representation of the San's aspirations, identity, and self-definition remains elusive (Chebanne, 2008).

The appeal for an innovative policy in Botswana's education system emphasizes the need to integrate mother tongue languages, particularly those of the San community, to foster inclusivity and representation (Batibo, 2015; Kamwendo et al., 2009). In the argument of Mogara and Chebanne (2023) and Chebanne (2023), this approach recognizes that local languages are vital for democratic development and social advancement, and it advocates for their meaningful incorporation into the curriculum without dismissing existing language policies. Essential to this integration is the recruitment and professional development of San teachers, especially at the primary education level, to address community-specific issues and promote culturally relevant pedagogy (Jotia & Jankie, 2015). By prioritizing this integration, the education system not only enhances the learning experience for San pupils but also empowers them through role models from their own communities (Chebanne, 2015a; Jotia & Jankie, 2015). In the argument of Gabanamotse-Mogara et al. (2023), proactive and creative rethinking of the educational curriculum that embraces linguistic and cultural diversity is crucial for creating a more equitable environment that supports the rights and identities of marginalized groups while enriching the overall educational landscape in Botswana. The Botswana language use practice relegates all San languages to non-functional domains. In this relegation, San languages speakers can only shift to



those other languages that have demographic advantage of official status. This state of language shift can lead to language death (Batibo, 2015a; Brenzinger, 1992) with all the nefarious consequences (Chebanne & Moumakwa, 2017) conceivable as demonstrated in Table 1 below.

Language	Language use domain	Comment
Setswana	School; public information; national programmes	Used by public and private information systems especially in rural areas
English	School; public information; national programmes	Language of public administration and education. It has limited usage in rural areas
San marginalized minority languages	Family and personal domain	Mainly used in rural and family domains. Children under 6 years would have rarely heard Setswana and English spoken. This situation does not favour revitalization of these languages.

Table 1: Botswana languages use domains and marginalization of ethnic languages (adapted from Chebanne, 2008)

From the above table, it can be observed that San marginalized minority languages remain confined to rural areas. The fact that these languages feature in non-functional language use domains leads to serious linguistic difficulties in accessing education (Chebanne, 2015a, 2015b; Chebanne & Mogara, 2022). Chebanne and Kewagamang (2020) and Chebanne and Monaka (2005) identified these consequential problems as psychological, cultural, and educational in the school process for marginalized community children (Chebanne, 2018; Cassidy et al., 2001; Nyati-Ramahobo, 1997; WIMSA, 2000). Insisting on the exclusive use of English and Setswana as the only school languages, as presently provided in the education policy (Molosiwa & Chebanne, 2023; Botswana Government, 1994; Botswana Government, 1993), imposes a language handicap and trauma on San children and exacerbates their social exclusion (Jotia & Jankie, 2015). Additionally, the relocation drives that the San population undergoes lead to alienation through scholarization, further fragilizing the San, both socially and linguistically (Chebanne & Moumakwa, 2017; Batibo, 2015a, 2015b; Cassidy et al., 2001; Chebanne & Monaka, 2005).

Thus far, the discussion has demonstrated a perturbing inclination in Botswana's education policy formulation that aligns with a one-size-fits-all approach, promoting linguistic, cultural,



and political homogeneity that serves specific political ambitions or the illusion of a unified nation (Mogara & Chebanne, 2023). This perspective is fundamentally flawed, as it disregards the inherent diversity within nations; complete homogeneity is never attainable (Chebanne, 2023; Nyati-Ramahobo, 2004). Despite Botswana's self-identification as a homogenous society derived from a mono-ethnic framework, significant differences exist in social class, socio-economic access, language, and political contexts, all of which require tailored developmental responses (Mogara & Chebanne, 2023). The issue of ethnic diversity in Botswana is further complicated by a political narrative that has been intentionally designed to downplay linguistic diversity in favor of maintaining the existing inequitable status quo (Chebanne, 2023, 2020; Batibo, 2025a, 2015b). This stance erroneously implies that acknowledging linguistic diversity would undermine educational standards. In reality, embracing such diversity enriches the educational landscape and fosters a more inclusive environment, contrary to the notion that it would dilute common educational benchmarks (Chebanne, 2015a; Nyati-Ramahobo, 1997).

There was hope that when the pathways to establishing an equitable curriculum policy in Botswana were presented in Vision 2036 and in the Education and Training Sector Strategic Plan (ETSSP), there would be a brighter social future for the nation (Botswana Government, 2017, 2012). However, for these visions and plans there is effectively no operationalization to implement a comprehensive language and cultural policy. Therefore, there is still a need for a fundamental shift in Botswana's national ambitions, reorienting the focus from infrastructure development toward prioritizing the dignity and needs of the human person (Chebanne, 2020). Education loses its meaning when it fails to resonate with the social and cultural identity of all citizens—resulting in a hollow experience that equates certification with education rather than meaningful learning (Mogara et al., 2023). Additionally, it is counterproductive for Botswana to be recognized for its infrastructural advancements while its citizens grapple with a disconnection from their authentic ethno-culture and language. The San community, in particular, has suffered from this developmental approach, which often overlooks the importance of cultural richness and diversity (Chebanne, 2008). By aiming too high in broad national objectives, Botswana risks neglecting the small yet invaluable aspects that contribute to a proud and cohesive national identity, rendering grand aspirations in education ineffective and ultimately unfulfilled (Batibo, 2015; Skold et al., 2015).

7 Going Forward: Addressing Language Related Policy Issues

The current situation presented in this discussion demonstrates that the San are not facilitated to

resist or agitate for their rights socially, and educationally. Development policy generalizes rather than specifically intervening for the San in their battle for survival and social justice. Whilst equality in education is not a panacea with equity, it is important to also consider other elements and dimensions in the making of education as a right. The following sub-section provides strategies that can assure the participation of the San in education and other social domains as equals. This also calls for the democratization of the curriculum and various development policies that the Government has put in place (Botswana Government, 1998, 2017).

7.1 Mother Tongue Education in Early Years of Learning

The arguments and observations by Mogara et al. (2023), by Mogara and Chebanne (2023), Chebanne (2023), and Chebanne and Monaka (2005) provide evidence that the education process among San communities was fraught with stigmatization, traumas, domination, and overall alienation. Pupils felt they did not belong, and the school environment was hostile and inhospitable. These negative experiences corroborated the findings of the Working Group on Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA) and the University of Botswana Research and Development Unit (UB-RDU) (2001). The arguments by Cassidy et al. (2001) are crucial to appreciating the situation in which the San find themselves.

Formal education sector is another special area in which San perceive themselves to be clearly discriminated against by the more powerful Non-San Batswana. (Mazonde, 2001, p. 64; par. 5.5, in Cassidy et al., 2001)

The challenges perceived by Cassidy et al (2001) and Motshabi and Saugestad (2004) regarding the Botswana San are both developmental and social. They state that San communities are not integrated into social development as equals. Jotia and Jankie (2015) argue that the education curriculum must proactively and innovatively respond to situations that, if left unchecked, lead to intricate crises, which are construed as developmental crises or failures of educational development policies (Nthomang, 2004). Chebanne (2022), based on Motshabi and Saugestad (2004) and Cassidy et al. (2001), raised the following arguments:

- a) The San educational status is intimately tied to their relative economic poverty, their socio-economic relationship with others and the livelihood strategies necessitated by this;
- b) The language issue is a major problem for San learners, who must of necessity

study in either English or Setswana,...moreover, there are few teachers proficient in any of these languages;

- c) The abuse of and discrimination against San learners in school are widespread and are practiced not only by other students, but in some instance by staff;
- d) The existing school system lacks the flexibility necessary to accommodate the special needs of San learners for whom the formal education process is often alienating and socially disruptive.

Chebanne and van Pinxteren (2021) emphasise the critical need for a gradual transition to the inclusion of Botswana's ethnic languages in higher education. They argue for a language policy in education that prioritizes the empowerment of ethnic languages within the classroom setting. This discussion contends that the existing educational paradigms in Botswana, when subjected to thorough scrutiny, reveal that current policies have indeed exacerbated the linguistic marginalization of the San ethnic groups and their languages. The educational policies implemented have resulted in narrow and distorted understandings of educational attainment and standards (Batibo, 2015; Chebanne, 2015a, 2015b; Kamwendo et al., 2009). Policymakers and curriculum developers have tended to focus on quantitative measures—such as sheer enrollment numbers, a one-size-fits-all curriculum, and literacy rates—while neglecting the deeper, qualitative issues that determine the relevance and effectiveness of these strategies for all learners (Chebanne, 2023). For meaningful progress to occur, it is essential to address equity and equality across three fundamental pillars: language use, curriculum content, and teacher and classroom practices (Gabanamotse-Mogara et al., 2023; Jotia & Jankie, 2015; Nyati-Ramahobo, 2006). These components are crucial to establishing an equitable educational process that not only recognizes linguistic diversity but also actively incorporates it to ensure that all learners, particularly those from marginalized communities like the San, can engage meaningfully with their education and achieve authentic learning outcomes. Without such deliberate and inclusive measures, the overarching goal of an equitable education system will remain unfulfilled:

- a) Classroom processes: Ethnic minorities of the San should as much as possible be taught in their languages at formative years, that is, at lower primary. This will improve retention by lessening linguistic and cultural trauma. The provision of a viable approach to the definition of our national culture through the curriculum will create identification and association with the education system;
- b) Curriculum content: in the areas where the San are a majority, curriculum content must

reflect their cultural values so as to enhance self-identity and self-respect, and the aim should be to link school knowledge with social and cultural experience. The development of a curriculum that systematically promotes the use of traditional and cultural knowledge and know-how is the optimum for the San;

- c) Teachers' adaptability: teachers all over the country in general, and those assigned to teach among the minority San communities, must undergo a culture and ethnicity tolerance training to improve relationships between them and the minority San pupils.

7.2 Languages Policy in Education

The current languages policy in education (Gabanamotse-Mogara et al., 2023), which underpins Botswana's educational system, requires significant reforms to genuinely empower curriculum development and align with the national aspirations outlined in Vision 2036 (Government of Botswana, 2017) as analysed in section 6 above. Implementing mother tongue education specifically the use of ethnic languages - represents a practical approach to realizing this vision of social equity and development (Chebanne, 2022). To ensure that the education system remains relevant, the curriculum content must incorporate cultural knowledge and ethnic practices in its formulation. Recommendation 32 from the 1994 education policy advocates for the inclusion of a third language in the curriculum, and this would powerfully address the arguments presented here if that third language were selected from among community languages, regardless of community size (Botswana Government, 1994). Without such inclusion, the San community risks marginalization and potential cultural and linguistic extinction due to their smaller population numbers (Chebanne, 2022; Batibo & Chebanne, 2020). Utilizing mother tongue instruction, particularly at the elementary levels, can foster a sense of educational belonging for the ethno-linguistic communities of the San (Chebanne, 2015a, 2015b) while reducing the existing inequalities in educational and curriculum processes. This shift can transform education from a superficial exercise into a vital necessity that acknowledges and addresses the unique cultural and linguistic contexts of all learners (Chebanne & Moumakwa, 2017).

7.3 Teacher Training for Minority Languages

Additionally, institutions such as the Curriculum Development and Teacher Training Departments should be restructured to adopt research-based processes (Jotia & Jankie, 2015; Chebanne, 2015a). This shift would enable them to confront educational challenges with solutions grounded in researched and objective facts related to ethnic community languages. It is

crucial that research and educational data challenge the prevailing ideological narratives in education, which have historically shaped educational frameworks in Botswana based on perhaps necessary but outdated perspectives established at independence (Kamwendo et al., 2009). This socio-political approach, aimed at managing the ethno-linguistic diversity of the population while neglecting the human rights of all citizens, is no longer tenable (Kamwendo et al., 2009; Chebanne, 2010). Many crises and issues stem from such policies, which, although often idealized due to their ability to avoid immediate chaos, fail to address fundamental challenges and disparities (Okoth-Okombo, 1999; Motshabi & Saugestad, 2004). Consequently, the perceived benefits of these philosophical approaches do not translate into tangible improvements, as the realities on the ground starkly contrast with the lofty ideals espoused in policy documents (Skold et al., 2015; Nyati-Ramahobo, 2006).

Education policy must therefore align with the principles of equitable and harmonious learning experiences, as any form of prejudice, antagonism, or ethnic conflict can turn educational environments into horrific experiences (Mogara et al., 2023; Batibo, 2015). Education cannot be divorced from the value system of a society; consequently, neglecting the positive aspects of culture within education has resulted in diminished value and significance in the educational system, leading to the absurdity of students being certified rather than genuinely educated, and curricula serving as mere rubber stamps rather than critical evaluators of educational policies (Chebanne, 2022). In this context, it is challenging to discuss quality assurance objectively when the educational experience is not equitable. Education, therefore, functions as both a mediator of social inequalities and a driver of equitable socio-development programs. It cannot be seen solely as the provision of facilities, but rather as the success of a humane system that considers the diverse needs and concerns of all citizens in their ethno-linguistic diversity (Motshabi & Saugestad, 2004; Chebanne & Moumakwa, 2017). The discussion has centered on language use policy, curriculum content modernization, and teacher training, highlighting the complexities of educational processes in Botswana. It is essential to recognize that the dominant socio-political narrative creates an ideological confrontation between the government and marginalized communities, which is likely to persist (Chebanne, 2019; Kamwendo et al., 2009). Without a well-articulated mother-tongue education policy, it is challenging to envision how Botswana can meet the educational aspirations of its Vision 2036 framework.

As Mogara et al. (2023, p. 211) argued, there is a need for a paradigm shift as it has already been argued for by researchers on Botswana languages situation and its implication for the quality of education. Researchers have lamented the lack of practical action on the part of the

Government of Botswana to provide minority groups with mother tongue education, as this has generally made the country to lag behind in language rights affirmation (Chebanne, 2019; Skold et al., 2015; Nyati-Ramahobo, 2006) . An assessment of research conducted in several African educational contexts has revealed that language is one of the key determinants of success in education. In such a dispensation, mother tongue education is the key component in the lower levels of primary schools to enhance learner performance. Without this critical consideration, the impression is given that African languages contribute to illiteracy and therefore are not suitable to play the role of media of instruction in upper primary, secondary and post-secondary levels of education.

8 Conclusion

The preceding discussions is predicated on the principles of equity, prioritizing it over mere equality, as well as advocating for natural and national justice in educational provision and policy formulation. A critical reevaluation of education that challenges the prevailing socio-political dominance is essential for genuine liberation. The education system must effectively engage all individuals, regardless of their ethno-cultural backgrounds—majority or minority, rich or poor—to foster a sense of collective ownership over educational processes and outcomes. Without this inclusive approach, the quality and value of education cannot be guaranteed to benefit everyone equitably. Education should be an intentional process that upholds the fundamental ethno-linguistic and cultural rights of individuals, enabling them to be self-respecting and self-identifying. For any community to thrive in its ethnic choices, individuals must possess the right to learn and be taught in their native language, the right to self-identification, and the right to protection against the homogenizing and globalizing pressures of contemporary society. Moreover, they must have access to their meaningful language and culture, which are critical components of their identity and agency. It is through such principles that education can truly reflect and respect the diversity of human experiences, fostering an environment where everyone feels valued and empowered.

Botswana currently stands at a pivotal juncture, presenting an opportunity to implement a curriculum that recognizes and incorporates minority languages and cultures to ensure equality and equity. This shift is essential not only for cultural inclusivity but also for equipping educators with effective strategies to address the linguistic and cultural challenges faced by diverse populations. It is imperative that the Curriculum Development and Evaluation Department refocuses its efforts on conducting primary research regarding the educational materials used in

classrooms, critically assessing their outcomes using objective research instruments across different regions.

The theory of mother tongue education is central to fostering an innovative approach to San education. Further, this discussion has highlighted several key issues that must be prioritized in the pursuit of educational transformation towards equity. Concerns about the potential for increased tensions arising from a more liberal education policy are unfounded. The success of such a policy hinges on effective governance and the approach taken in designing and implementing educational policies. Currently, the San people remain marginalized and largely illiterate, underscoring the urgency of this transformation. The way forward involves a decisive rejection of the existing educational philosophy in favor of a more humane and humanistic system that genuinely addresses the needs and aspirations of all learners. By embracing a more inclusive educational framework, Botswana cannot only uplift marginalized communities but also enhance the overall quality and relevance of its educational system, fostering a society that values diversity and promotes equity for all its citizens.

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Challenges and Initiatives in Radio Language Policy Implementation: A Case Study of Two Nigerian Radio Stations

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Abstract

In response to the Nigerian legal framework's prioritization of languages spoken within its respective communities, this study examines the language policies of Nigerian radio stations, focusing on Bond FM and Voice of Nigeria. It analyzes the legislative frameworks guiding language use in broadcasting, including the 1999 Constitution, Nigerian Broadcasting Code, National Language Policy, and Freedom of Information Act. Primary data were gathered through survey, informal interviews, and observation, while secondary data was collected through a review of documents and literature. The study reveals diverse language policies among radio stations, including monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual approaches. Bond FM and Voice of Nigeria's multilingual policies promote linguistic diversity, preserve indigenous languages, and cater to diverse audiences. The stations' language choices reflect the provisions of the 1999 Constitution, Nigerian Broadcasting Code, National Language Policy, and Freedom of Information Act. The study highlights challenges and proposes initiatives to support language development and policy implementation, which includes the scarcity of qualified staff and the need for language development initiatives. The study recommends the need to develop standardized curricula for broadcasting in indigenous languages, provide training programs for broadcasters to learn multiple languages and collaboration and partnerships between broadcast stations, language education institutions, and language experts.

Keywords: *language policy, Nigerian radio stations, Nigerian legal framework, multilingualism*

1. Introduction

This study is an exploration into the key legislative frameworks and the practice of the Nigeria radio stations. After carefully reading and understanding some of the document that guide the using of language in broadcasting, it become imperative to investigate the practice in a few radio stations and look at the challenges facing the implementation of the policy in a Federal government of Nigerian owned-radio. Nigeria is home to approximately 540 indigenous languages, with English serving as the official language. This complex linguistic landscape is reflected in these legislations governing language use in the media. Key legislative frameworks influencing language use in Nigerian media include the 1999 Constitution of the Federal



Republic of Nigeria (as amended), the Nigerian Broadcasting Code (2014), the National Language Policy (2023), and the Freedom of Information Act (2011). This study shall focus mainly on the perceived radio language policy of Radio Nigeria and Bond FM Lagos as a case study.

2 Literature Review

Language policy encompasses the language practices, beliefs, and management decisions within a community or polity (Bernard, 2004). It can be applied across various domains. According to Bernard (2004), language policy involves the systematic and habitual selection of language varieties from a nation's linguistic repertoire. Furthermore, language policy reflects a set of beliefs about language usage, accompanied by intentional efforts to shape language practices through strategic planning, management, and implementation.

All legal documents in Nigerian originate from the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and any legal document that is variance with the document is declared null and void. The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria guarantees freedom of expression in Section 39(1), stating: 'Every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression, including freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference. Furthermore, the Constitution recognizes English, Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba as official languages, while also acknowledging the existence of other Nigerian languages. Additionally, the Freedom of Information Act 2011 grants Nigerian citizens the right to access information in any Nigerian language. However, the Act remains silent on the modalities and timelines for implementing this provision. The Nigerian Broadcasting Code (2014) is a document that focused on the broadcasting community. It stipulates that community broadcast services must prioritize languages spoken within their respective communities. This implies that broadcasting should be conducted in English and Nigerian languages, particularly those prevalent in the immediate environment. However, this provision does not necessarily impose a language obligation on public and private broadcasting stations, allowing them to choose languages they deem suitable for their audience. This document complements the Nigerian National Language Policy (2023): a key initiative of the Federal Government of Nigeria, which provides guidelines for the official use of various languages in Nigeria.



The policy's provisions on media, specifically radio broadcasting, emphasize the need for concerted efforts to promote the effective use of Nigerian languages in conventional broadcasting. Article 8 of the policy stipulates that broadcast media organizations must ensure that at least 60% of their programs are broadcast in Nigerian languages commonly spoken in the communities they serve. While these national laws provide for the use of Nigerian languages, especially those spoken in the immediate environment of media stations, they do not specify the number of languages that must be used in broadcast stations.

Currently, the English language dominates all linguistic community in Nigeria. Nigerian Pidgin is also used in specific radio programs, such as sports, entertainment, and call-in shows. Several studies have examined language policy and planning in African broadcasting contexts. The Federal government of Nigeria who is promulgated this document has been at the forefront of promoting these languages in broadcasting station, consequence the focus on the broadcast stations' language policy of these two radio stations owned by the federal government. Although a few other related studies has been carried out but not with focus to these federal government owned stations. For example Obukadeta (2019) investigated language policy in Kogi State, Nigeria, and found that an implicit media language policy exists, with English allocated more time than major and minor Nigerian languages. Similarly, Mpofu et al. (2019) analyzed the multilingual broadcasting policy in Zimbabwe, revealing implementation challenges. Nwaneri (2014) studied the South African Broadcasting Corporation's handling of eleven official languages, finding that viewers' preferences are influenced by language. Evans (2011) examined viewer attitudes towards language policies in South Africa, highlighting complex attitudes towards language. Effective language policy management is crucial, as seen in the British Broadcasting Corporation's standardization of Received Pronunciation (Schwyter, 2008). In contrast, according to Nwachukwu (2005) and Emenanjo (2005), Nigerian radio stations often lack standardized language policies and competent personnel, language management like the British Broadcasting Corporation's approach to language standardization offers which might be a model for Nigerian broadcast stations. This statement by Nwachukwu (2005) and Emenanjo (2005) was made two decades ago and needs reexamination in Nigeria radio stations, in the light of the provisions of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended), the Nigerian Broadcasting Code (2014), the National Language Policy (2023), and the Freedom of Information Act (2011).



3 Methodology

To conduct a comprehensive assessment of Nigeria's broadcast language policy, a survey was conducted on language usage in 13 radio stations across Southern Nigeria between January and December 2022. The surveyed stations included 91.1 FM, Lagos Talks, Nigerian Info, Wazobia FM, Rhythm FM, Faji FM, Top Radio, Lasgidi FM, Splash FM, Radio Lagos, Bond FM, Voice of Nigeria, and Real Power. Informal interviews were held with radio presenters from Bond FM and Voice of Nigeria to gather more insights. Additionally, the researcher observed the stations'

operations, with permission from the station authorities, to understand language usage and policy implementation. Secondary data was collected through a review of documents and literature.

4 Different types of Radio Language Policy in (Southern) Nigeria

The Nigeria's radio broadcasting landscape is characterized by diverse language policies. A common practice among radio stations is the adoption of a monolingual language policy, where only one language is used in all programming. Examples of stations that exclusively use English include 91.1 FM, Lagos Talks, Nigerian Info, and Rhythm FM. Notably, no radio station in

Nigeria uses an indigenous Nigerian language exclusively, without any English programming. Some stations adopt a bilingual language policy, characterized by asymmetric bilingualism, where two languages are used unevenly. Examples include Faji FM (Yoruba and Pidgin), Top Radio (English and Pidgin, with English dominating airtime), Lasgidi FM (Yoruba and Pidgin), and Splash FM (Yoruba and English). In these bilingual settings, airtime allocation varies, with English sometimes receiving more attention than Nigerian languages or vice versa. Radio Lagos Tiwa-Tiwa prioritizes Yoruba but reads news in English, demonstrating a mixed approach. A multilingual radio language policy is also employed by some stations, dedicating significant

airtime to three or more languages. Bond FM and Voice of Nigeria exemplify this approach, allocating substantial time to multiple languages. Other stations, such as Radio 1, ABS Onitsha, and Real Power 100.5, also adopt multilingual approaches, although with varying allocations of airtime to non-English languages. This study focuses on Bond FM and Voice of Nigeria due to their comprehensive multilingual language policies.



5 Language Policy in Bond FM Radio

Bond FM, a subsidiary of Radio Nigeria in Lagos State, was established in 1987 in response to the Director General of FRCN's observation that a significant portion of the population in Lagos, who spoke major Nigerian languages but were not proficient in English, were excluded from radio programs. To address this, the Director General envisioned a station catering to the interests of audiences competent only in indigenous languages. At the time, Radio 1, another FRCN unit, broadcast solely in English. To avoid duplicating content and overcome bureaucratic hurdles, the management sought approval to convert the FM station to an indigenous languages station. President Obasanjo granted approval on September 20, 1987. Bond FM recruited young, fluent speakers of Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa and initially operated from Lagos Island before relocating to Ikeja mainland to be closer to its target audience, earning the nickname "grassroots radio." The station's programming schedule is divided into language segments, with Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba again, each headed by a team leader and staffed by language professionals. Nigeria's language policy recognizes Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba as dominant languages, influencing Bond FM's selection of these languages.

The national language policy prioritizes the language of the immediate environment, resulting in Yoruba receiving more airtime than Igbo and Hausa on Bond FM. In compliance with the National Broadcasting Code, Bond FM emphasizes Yoruba, aligning with the policy. This study concurs with Igbokhare (2011) that using Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa in one station meets the language needs of approximately 90% of Nigerians. Bond FM's use of these languages benefits non-native Yoruba speakers in Lagos, providing an opportunity for language learning. Research by Okudo and Ifeagwazi (2014) demonstrates that Igbo language programming on Bond FM enhances Igbo language knowledge among Lagos secondary school students. Although the impact on Hausa speakers is unexplored, it is assumed to be positive, as the station promotes cultural preservation through indigenous languages. The station's director emphasizes the importance of mother tongue education, particularly in a cosmopolitan city like Lagos, where the choice of major Nigerian languages reflects the city's linguistic reality. With experienced broadcasters and a legacy spanning over thirty years, Bond FM serves as a training ground for future Nigerian language broadcasters. The use of Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa in Bond FM and Voice of Nigeria reinforces their significance in the Nigerian context.

6 Language Policy in Voice of Nigeria

Established in 1960, Voice of Nigeria is an international radio station under the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, aiming to broadcast authentic information about Nigeria and Africa globally. Its primary objective is to provide public service in Nigeria's interest by offering global radio broadcast services in multiple languages to Nigerians and non-Nigerians. Initially based in Ikorodu, Lagos State, the station's headquarters has been relocated to Abuja, with an additional station in Lagos. As an international broadcaster, Voice of Nigeria transmits programs beyond Nigeria's borders, initially limited to two hours of daily transmission in French and English for West Africa. The station now reaches a global audience through its digital platform, broadcasting in eight languages: English, Igbo, French, Arabic, Kiswahili, Yoruba, Fulfulde, and Hausa. Programs are transmitted from either Abuja or Lagos stations, with Hausa and English broadcast from Abuja and other languages from either station.

Voice of Nigeria broadcasts news and programs in four indigenous Nigerian languages - Igbo, Yoruba, Fulfulde, and Hausa - alongside four other languages, to wit English, French, Arabic, and Kiswahili. While English dominates airtime, the other languages share equal time, with most languages broadcasting programs twice or thrice daily. Arabic is primarily used in religious contexts and schools, while French is taught in schools nationwide. Kiswahili, spoken outside Nigeria, is also part of the station's language repertoire. This multilingual approach demonstrates a deliberate language policy. By embracing both major and minority languages, this policy has the potential to contribute to language preservation and revitalization in Nigeria.

7 Discussions on language policy in Bond FM and Radio Nigeria

Both Bond FM and Radio Nigeria practiced a multilingual language policy that attempts to mirror the provisions of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended), the Nigerian Broadcasting Code (2014), the National Language Policy (2023), and the Freedom of Information Act (2011). There are similarities and difference in the language policy practiced in these two station despite the fact that they are both owned by the Federal government that strive to promote the multilingual space of Nigeria. This can be seen in their use and projection of the languages according the documents guiding their operation. For examples, Bond FM's language policy seeks to preserve Nigerian culture, unite diverse populations, and foster a sense



of belonging among speakers of major languages. In contrast, Voice of Nigeria's language policy is driven by internal and external factors, prioritizing information dissemination. While Bond FM focuses on promoting indigenous languages, Voice of Nigeria's policy does not aim to broadcast only in Nigeria languages. That is why non indigenous Nigerian languages such as Kiswahili, Arabic, and French are used for broadcasting. Bond FM and Voice of Nigeria's language choices share similarities in the sense that they prioritizing major languages such as Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa. This focus on major languages indicates a bias towards languages with larger audiences, neglecting minority languages prevalent in Nigeria. Both stations allocate more time to languages are politically considered as powerful and major, reflecting a similar policy approach. Voice of Nigeria allocated more time to English more than other languages. Obukadeta (2019) reported similar pattern. According to Obukadeta (2019), a significant imbalance exists in the allocation of airtime, with English receiving substantially more time than other languages in a broadcast station in Kogi state. This disparity stems from English being an official language in Nigeria, having been fully integrated into the country's linguistic landscape. In contrast, foreign languages like French, German, Russian, and Chinese, which are offered as degree courses in Nigerian universities, are largely absent from Nigerian radio probably because of shortage of competent speakers and a limited audience especially. Major Nigerian languages, including Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba, and Fulfulde, are commonly used in state-owned radio stations, particularly in regions where these languages are predominant.

There are strategies that aided the sustenance of the multilingual language policy in this station. Bond FM and Voice of Nigeria carefully design their programs and news to cater to the diverse preferences of their audience in their respective languages. This tailored approach enables the stations to effectively engage with their listeners and foster a sense of community. Bond FM, for instance, features a range of popular shows that showcase the richness of Nigerian languages and culture. In Igbo, the station broadcasts shows like Oyorima and Omenilgbo, while in Hausa, it offers Kukan Kurciya. Yoruba-speaking listeners can enjoy programs like Edun Okan, Omo to Omo colour, Adelebere, and many others. Similarly, Voice of Nigeria crafts its programs to attract and retain listeners, leveraging the power of language to connect with diverse audiences. Both stations are committed to promoting Nigerian culture through various initiatives. They play local music, feature oral poets, organize drama and storytelling sessions, and broadcast in their respective languages. These efforts not only entertain but also educate and



enlighten listeners about the country's rich cultural heritage. Bond FM takes audience engagement to the next level through innovative programming. The station conducts on-the-spot interviews, which are later aired, encouraging audience participation and loyalty.

Additionally, Bond FM hosts phone-in programs, incorporating audience suggestions into their shows. This collaborative approach fosters a sense of ownership and belonging among listeners. To reinforce their multilingual policy, both Bond FM and Voice of Nigeria organize cultural events that celebrate native languages and cultures. These events provide a platform for communities to come together, share their traditions, and promote cross-cultural understanding. By doing so, the stations demonstrate their commitment to preserving and promoting Nigeria's linguistic diversity, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and vibrant cultural landscape.

Implementing a radio language policy examined in this study requires broadcast stations to have staffs qualified in multiple languages has highlighted several areas that need attention from stakeholders. The policy must ensure that every broadcast station has a diverse team of staff who can communicate effectively in various languages, particularly those spoken in the immediate environment. However, this poses a challenge due to the scarcity of individuals educated in multiple languages, especially indigenous languages. Many of these languages lack standardized curricula for broadcasting, making it difficult to find qualified personnel.

Currently, most Nigerian broadcasters learn the art of broadcasting in English and then adapt to indigenous languages (Salawu, 2017, Obiorah 2024). This limitation underscores the need for language development initiatives, such as creating standardized curricula for broadcasting in indigenous languages, providing training programs for broadcasters to learn multiple languages, and encouraging language exchange programs to promote linguistic diversity. Furthermore, developing language education policies to support the growth of indigenous languages is crucial. Collaboration and partnerships between broadcast stations, language education institutions, and language experts can facilitate the development of language training programs. Partnerships can also enable the creation of standardized curricula and provide language training, ultimately addressing the challenge of finding qualified staff. By addressing these challenges and implementing these initiatives, Nigeria can promote linguistic diversity, preserve indigenous languages, and ensure that broadcast stations have qualified staff to cater to diverse audiences. This, in turn, can foster a more inclusive and representative broadcasting sector, better equipped to serve the needs of Nigeria's diverse population.



8 Conclusion

This study sheds light on the Nigerian broadcasting language practice, particularly in Nigerian owned radio: Bond FM and Voice of Nigeria, highlighting their ability to broadcast in multiple languages. The success of these stations demonstrates their potential for language engineering and development, which can be leveraged to preserve and revitalize endangered languages in Nigeria. Voice of Nigeria's use of eight languages serves as a prime example of the feasibility of expanding language offerings with proper planning. To build on this success, the broadcast stations must establish and articulate clearly their language policies, drawing inspiration from the BBC's approach. This will inform policy formation, staff recruitment, training, and development, ultimately setting a precedent for other Nigerian radio stations. By examining the broadcast stations language policies of Bond FM and Voice of Nigeria, this study showcases the Federal Government's efforts to align with constitutional specifications, national broadcasting codes, language policies, and freedom of information acts.

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Enacting Translanguaging in a Ghanaian Multilingual Classroom: Code choices in minority language classrooms

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Abstract

The present study addresses translanguaging as a theory that unravels the deployment of linguistic and semiotic resources for communication by monolinguals, bilinguals, and multilinguals. Secondly, it explores translanguaging as a linguistic practice with unique characteristics and functions. In the multilingual classroom, translanguaging has been used strategically or spontaneously as a pedagogical tool for effective instruction and other educational ends. The present case study is conducted in Santrokofi in Ghana and sought to examine translanguaging as a pedagogic practice in a multilingual classroom that is constrained by a bilingual education policy. Using classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and focus group interviews, the present study highlights the nature and the functions of translanguaging that takes place in the multilingual classroom. The findings of the study affirmed earlier findings that the multilingual classroom is an important site for translanguaging. Again, translanguaging practices that were observed in the classroom included translation, code-switching, repairing, and deployment of various linguistic and semiotic resources and modalities to enhance understanding, explain concepts, and facilitate home-school cooperation. The study also found that although translanguaging took place in the classroom, it was only allowed across English and Ewe, and excluded learners' mother tongue, Selee, because of the English-Ewe bilingual policy of the school. The teachers consequently frowned on learners' use of their mother tongue in class. The ensuing negative attitude towards Selee did not allow both teachers and learners to maximize their full repertoire for effecting instruction in the classroom. We consider this a constraint to effective translanguaging and propose a re-examination of Ghana's language-in-education policy and teacher reorientation and training as ways of reversing teachers' negative attitudes to maximize translanguaging in the multilingual classroom.

Keywords: *translanguaging, multilingualism, bilingual education, Santrokofi, Ghana*

Nya kpukpui

Numekuku sia fo nu tso nufrafo sime wodoa gbegbɔgbɔvovowo le nufra deka me si deka gbegbɔgbɔ kple dzeɣitununya fe nunamesiwo zazã hena kadodo to gbe deka deka dolawo, gbe eve dolawo, kple gbegbɔgbɔ geɖe dolawo me. Evelia, eku nu me tso gbegbɔgbɔwo tsotsɔ yi tefe bubuwo ŋu abe gbegbɔgbɔ fe nuwɔna si me nonome kple dɔwɔwɔ tɔxewo le ene. Le sukuxɔ si me wodoa gbe vovovowo le me la, wozã gbegbɔgbɔ vovovowo to aɖaŋu alo le wo dokui si abe nufiafia fe dɔwɔnu ene hena nufiafia nyuie kple hehenana fe taɖodzinu bubuwo.

Le nusɔsrɔ sia me la, mie wɔ numekuku le Santrokofi le Ghana alebe mialé ŋku dɛ gbegbɔgbɔwɔ tsɔtsɔ yi tefe

bubuwo ŋu abe nufiafia fe dɔwɔnu ene le gbegbɔgbɔ gedɛ me le sukuxɔ si me gbe eve dolawo fe hehenana fe dɔdɔ adɛ xea mɔ na. Numekuku si wowɔ fifia zã sukuxɔ me ŋkuléle dɛ nu ŋu, gbebiame siwo wodɔ dɛ dɔdɔ afã kple afã nu, kple fufɔfo me gbebiamewo, alebe mia srɔnu tso aleke gbe vovovowo dodo fe nɔnɔme kple dɔwɔwɔwɔ le sukuxɔ wo me. Nusiwo ŋu woke dɔ le numekuku sia me dɔ kpe nusiwo ŋu woke dɔ va yi be gbegbɔgbɔ gedɛ dodo fe sukuxɔ me nye nyatakakadzɔdɔfe vevi adɛ na gbegbɔgbɔ vovovowo. Ga yi edzi la, gbegɔmedɛdɛ fe nuwɔna siwo wokpɔna le sukuxɔa me dometɔ adewoe nye gbegɔmedɛdɛ, gbe vovovowo dodo, kple gbegbɔgbɔ kple dzesinutinunya fe nunɔamesiwo alebe gɔmesese nanyo dɛ edzi, adɛ nukpɔsusuwo me, eye wɔana afeme akple sukuwo fe nusɔsrɔ na nɔnɔ bɔbɔe. Numekukua dɛe fia hã be togbo be gbegbɔgbɔwɔ gɔmedɛdɛ gaglãa dzo le sukuxɔ me hã la, Englisigbe kple Ewegbe koe wodɛ mɔ na, eye wɔdɛ nusɔrlawo fe afemegbe, Selee, le sukuxɔa me dɛ Englisigbe kple Ewegbe fe dodowo ta. Nufialawo meda asi dɛ sukuviawo fe afemegbe zazã le sukuxɔa medzi o. Asi madamada dɛ sukuviawo fe afemegbe, Selee, dzi wɔe be nufialawo kple nusɔrlawo siaa metenɔ zã wo fe gbegbɔgbɔwɔ katã le sukuxɔme o. Miebua esia be enye mɔxenu na gbegbɔgbɔ vovovowo le sukuxɔme eye miedɔ susu dɛa be woagbugbo ŋku alé dɛ Ghana fe gbegbɔgbɔ le hehenana me kple nufialawo fe tɔtrɔ kple hehenana ŋu abe mɔnu siwo dzi woato atrɔ asi le nufialawo fe nɔnɔme gbegblɛwo ŋu be woadzi gbegbɔgbɔ gedɛ wu le sukuxɔ si me gbegbɔgbɔ gedɛ le me ene.

Nya veviwo: *gbegbɔgbɔ vovowo dodo, gbe eve dodo, gbe eve dodo fe hehenana, Santrokofi, Ghana*

1. Introduction

Although the term translanguaging is recent, the phenomenon has long been universal among bilinguals and multilinguals and in multimodal communication contexts. The term was coined by Cen Williams to describe “a pedagogical practice which deliberately switches the language mode of input and output in bilingual classrooms” (Lewis, Jones and Baker, 2012, p. 643). Further attempts to clarify translanguaging as an educational practice expanded its meaning to incorporate pedagogical strategies that provide bilinguals and multilinguals the opportunities to deploy the full range of their linguistic and semiotic repertoire to enhance understanding and proficiency in bilingual education (Erling, et al., 2021; Yevudey, 2015).

The history of the term and its application in education and universally is relevant. Structuralist philosophical thought that had dominated linguistic inquiry until the 1960s construed language as a discrete or autonomous system. This philosophy had been grounded in Saussurean and later Chomskyan generative grammar, which highlighted “pre-existence” and internal “capacity” as critical characteristics of language (Garcia & Leiva, 2014, p. 201). Proponents of this theory defended the independence of the human capacity for language and downplayed the influence of the social world on language. This thinking accentuated strict

dichotomies between languages and spread negative beliefs about bilingualism, such as bilingualism causing mental confusion (Lewis et al., 2012). The overall effect of structuralist orientation on bilingual education was strictly separate periods of instruction or “pull out” programmes in schools where speakers of minority languages learned the majority language as L2 (Garcia & Kleyn, 2016, p. 24).

However, post-structuralist thoughts that emerged subsequently called for a departure from language as an autonomous system to language as “doing” (Pennycook, 2010, p. 9) and languages as an ecology. Consequently, Welsh educators began to experiment with the ideology that flexible micro-level alternation between languages by bilingual learners is useful for bilingual education, hence the coining of the term to refer to the practice where bilinguals flexibly deploy their full repertoire for purposes of understanding. The term has since been associated with educational practice; however, emerging dimensions of translanguaging propose a broader use of the term and an examination of the phenomenon outside the school domain (Lewis et al., 2012).

Baker’s (2011) definition of translanguaging as the process of making meaning, sharing experiences, and gaining understanding and knowledge using two languages is more appealing to both educational and universal translanguaging trajectories. Subsequent applications of the term have demonstrated that translanguaging is not only a phenomenon among bilinguals and multilinguals but also among monolinguals. The term now applies to speakers maximizing all linguistic and nonlinguistic resources (including modalities) in communication. The present study adopts this wider view of translanguaging to capture the maximum use of semiotic and media resources in the classroom. The objective of the present study, therefore, is to:

1. investigate translanguaging as a pedagogical practice in two multilingual classrooms in Santrokofi
2. assess the roles and constraints of translanguaging in the teaching and learning process in the selected classrooms
3. propose ways of maximizing translanguaging in the selected multilingual classrooms

The study attempts to address the following research questions:

1. What elements characterize translanguaging as a pedagogical practice in selected classrooms in Santrokofi?
2. What are the roles and constraints of translanguaging in the teaching and learning process in the selected classrooms in Santrokofi?
3. How can translanguaging be maximized in the multilingual classroom?

The present investigation is significant for several reasons: First, earlier studies on translanguaging seem to have over concentrated on speakers of minority languages schooling in majority settings; those that focus on majority L1 speakers learning the target language L2 have focused on urban communities where bilingualism or multilingualism is driven by migration. Second, translanguaging studies have mainly investigated translanguaging in bilingual contexts where their language-in-education policies align closely with their everyday use of language, i.e., the dominant local language as lingua franca and the target official language. However, there are communities where trilingualism or multilingualism is the norm rather than the exception. The fundamental question to ask is how would translanguaging proceed in a trilingual setting which is constrained by a bilingual policy?

The present study draws its relevance from examining translanguaging in this peculiar situation where the mother tongue of multilingual speakers is sidelined by a bilingual education policy where the dominant language of the community, in this case Ewe, and English are the expected medium of instruction. Ghana's language-in-education policy is essentially bilingual, dominated by English as the target language and the official language, and paired up with any of the nine government-sponsored Ghanaian languages as subjects of study. These government-sponsored languages include Akan (three dialects: Akuapem Twi, Asante Twi and Fante), Dagaare, Ga, Dangbe, Dagbani, Ewe, Gonja, Kasem and Nzama (cf. Agbozo & ResCue, 2020). These Ghanaian languages are used as medium of instruction in the first three years of primary education (Grades 1-3) after which they are only taught as core subjects at the junior high school level (Grade 4 to Junior High School 3) and as elective subjects subsequently. English takes over as medium of instruction from Grade 4 and subsequently remains the sole medium of instruction for all subjects except languages (Agbozo & ResCue, 2020; Ansah, 2014).

The rich linguistic diversity of Ghana makes this arrangement problematic. With over 79 indigenous languages spoken across the length and breadth of the country, it is certain that a bilingual policy that favours only 11 or so languages would marginalize the rest of the languages,

many of which are not developed enough for academic use. As most of these marginalized languages are spoken as mother tongues in the rural communities, Ghana's bilingual education policy in its current form denies many learners in these communities the fine opportunity to receive instruction in their mother tongue, a situation that runs contrary to UNESCO's (1953) recommendation. The present study attempts to highlight this peculiar situation and how translanguaging would play out in classrooms in a context such as this.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Translanguaging as Theory of Language Practice

Wei (2018, p. 10) proposes translanguaging as a “good candidate for a theory of language practice.” The call for such a theory has been made by Kramsch (2015) under the influence of Bourdieu's (1977) notion of *habitus*, a term applied in social anthropology to characterize the overall repertoire of knowledge accessible in each culture. Translanguaging then, from Wei's viewpoint, is a linguistic habitus constituted by and constitutive of the material interaction between a culture's social structure and its human agency (Wei, 2018). Translanguaging embodies the totality of the linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge that emerges from and underpins our social actions.

To illustrate, our interpretation of the material world is born out of the knowledge accumulated about it; however, as our interaction with the material world is not static but evolves, this interaction (shaped by sociocultural knowledge) continues to create new knowledge, and this same expanded knowledge is what we use to characterize the material world. Ours is, therefore, an ever-ending cycle (Wei, 2018) “in a continuous becoming” (Garcia & Wei, 2014, p. 8; Garcia and Leiva, 2014, p. 202) or “continual becoming” (Baynham & Lee, 2019, p. 16) which creates a pool of resources for engaging with the world. As Garcia and Leiva (2014, p. 202) put it, “...language is an ongoing process that only exists as languaging.” Garcia and Leiva (2014) buttress this view with Maturana and Varela's (1998) argument that, “[i]t is by languaging that the act of knowing, in the behavioral coordination, which is language, brings forth a world. We work out our lives in a mutual linguistic coupling, not because language permits us to reveal ourselves but because we are constituted in language in a continuous becoming that we bring forth with others” (Maturana & Varela, 1998, p. 234-235, cited in Garcia

& Leiva, 2014, p. 202). This has become a popular framework for legitimately conceptualizing language and communication as a “Trans-”, signaling “crossing” (Hawkins, 2020, p. 23). However, this crossing is not just alternating between autonomous systems and modalities; rather, it is a fluid, mutually transformative, non-hierarchical, and function-driven, collectively reflective of a complex socioculturally normed action and process of norming. The present study recognizes that the classroom is an important site or space where diverse discourses are enacted through the maximization of linguistic and non-linguistic resources to achieve educational goals and that is the essence of translanguaging.

2.2 Review of Related Studies

The term *translanguaging* has been linked to other fluid language practices labelled differently as *polylingualism*, *transidiomatic practices*, *metrolingualism*, and *codemeshing* though there are clear nuances in their application (Garcia & Leiva, 2014). The point of divergence for translanguaging, according to Garcia and Leiva (2014, p. 200), is that “it is transformative, attempting to wipe out the hierarchy of languaging practices that deem some more valuable than others.” It is an umbrella term that embraces translation, code-switching, and all the other fluid language practices. Studies in translanguaging blur the superiority of one code over others and rather accentuate how the codes mutually constitute and reconstitute each other in the processes of their deployment. Since the first use of the term, a plethora of studies have investigated translanguaging as a pedagogical practice in bilingual schools. Emerging studies have expanded the definition of translanguaging to include the full “repertoire of multilingual, multimodal, multisensory and multi-semiotic resources that language users orchestrate in sense- and meaning-making” (Hua et al., 2017, p. 413).

Earlier studies such as Creese and Blackledge (2010), Garcia and Kleyn (2016) and Yevudey (2015) have explored the pedagogical use of translanguaging from various trajectories using various research approaches. Yevudey’s (2015) work, for instance, investigated translanguaging practices in Ghanaian classrooms. Specifically, the study explored the linguistic choices that both teachers and learners make and whether those choices are influenced by policy, perception, and language attitudes. Using a mix of qualitative tools (including focus group interviews, classroom observation and interviews) and a questionnaire survey, the study consequently provided an overview of the relevance of translanguaging as a pedagogic tool in the Ghanaian classroom. Findings of the study in two classroom types – bilingual classrooms (thus, government schools)

and monolingual classrooms (thus, private schools) – observed showed that translanguaging was pedagogically relevant as it was used to reiterate and explain concepts and responses. The survey highlighted teachers’ and learners’ positive attitudes toward translanguaging and endorsement of its use in the classroom. Yevudey’s (2015) work is significant because apart from being among the few studies that have examined translanguaging from the pre-tertiary education level in Ghana, it has also documented young learners’ endorsement of translanguaging in the classroom. In a related study, Creese and Blackledge (2010) advocated a flexible bilingual approach to language teaching and learning in Chinese and Gujarati community language schools in the UK. Using data collection methods such as observation, interviews and recordings of four case studies involving Gujarati, Turkish, Cantonese, and Mandarin schools in Leicester, London, Manchester and Birmingham, the study demonstrated the effectiveness of translanguaging as a flexible bilingual pedagogy in complementary schools. Other findings of the study supported “identity performance, lesson accomplishment, and participant confidence” as some significant benefits of translanguaging (Creese & Blackledge, 2010, p. 112).

Garcia and Kleyn (2016) initiated a large-scale longitudinal study involving 67 elementary, middle and high schools across the State of New York. Each participating school had an above average number of emergent Spanish-English bilingual students. The study design was a collaborative transformative participatory action research inquiry in which teachers, and coaches, in teams, explored how translanguaging impacted the education of bilingual students. Each team was adequately resourced, trained and empowered to own their efforts and share their successes and struggles. Findings of the study showed, among other things, how translanguaging allowed students to deploy their full linguistic repertoire to influence learning and facilitated home-school cooperation.

It is clear from the literature that the benefits of translanguaging abound, ranging from creating the right home-school connection that builds learners’ confidence for learning to deepening learners’ understanding of concepts. Methods employed in translanguaging studies have been varied, including both quantitative and qualitative designs. The contexts of study have included both majority and minority context although a large chunk appears to be concentrated on minority settings.

The present study identifies this gap and attempts to add to studies in the majority setting. The setting chosen for the present study is unique because unlike earlier studies where the languages of bilinguals were the focus of translanguaging in the classroom, in the present

context, the mother tongue of participants is sidelined in the language-in-education policy and for that reason translanguaging occurred in two languages that learners were learning. This context presents a peculiar trajectory for study and broadens the general discussion and research on translanguaging.

3 Context

The context for the present study is Santrokofi, originally in the northern part of the Volta Region of Ghana but now part of the newly created Oti Region. The people are identified as Balee indigenes who speak Selee, a Niger-Congo language of the Kwa subgroup (Agbetsoamedo, 2014). Santrokofi was originally made up of three traditional communities namely Benua, Bume and Gbodome but has now been demarcated into five traditional areas. The peculiar history and location of Santrokofi and the people's association with Ewe speakers and other ethnic groupings have offered the people of Santrokofi a unique trilingual or multilingual character. Essentially, almost every indigene of Santrokofi speaks at least three languages, including Selee, Ewe and permutations of English (if educated), Akan and any other Ghanaian language. The peculiar multilingual situation in Santrokofi creates a near-triglossia where Selee is spoken at home (or with indigenes), Ewe on the streets and in semi-formal domains, and English in schools and formal domains. Per the language-in-education policy of the Ghana Education Service (in the Hohoe Municipality, where Santrokofi was located until recently) English and Ewe are the languages studied as subjects and could be used for instruction. It turns out that Selee is not developed enough for academic use nor officially recognized and accepted for use in school. This is coupled with the fact that none of the teachers in the school studied spoke Selee.

4 Methods

4.1 Approach

The present study adopted the qualitative research approach as the blueprint for carrying out the investigation for at least these two reasons. First, the study was intended to have a holistic insight into the practice of translanguaging in a rural multilingual classroom setting where both teachers

and learners were essentially multilingual but had different attitudes towards multilingualism. Second, although translanguaging is a natural phenomenon in bilingual and multilingual settings, it is construed differently, hence the practice of translanguaging follows different trajectories.

This is also attributable to different classroom resources, characteristics and constraints. The qualitative framework therefore offered the flexibility needed to adapt the study methodology to context specific and emerging situations as well as unpredictable paths of discovery (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2000).

Specifically, the present study adopted the case study design to investigate translanguaging in two classrooms (Primary 1 and 4) of a selected school in Santrokofi in Ghana. The case study design allowed for an exploration and in-depth study through the deployment of multiple data collection methods to enrich the study.

4.2 Data Collection

Several data collection methods were deployed to unravel the different facets of translanguaging in the multilingual classroom. These included observation, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions/interviews.

4.2.1 Observation

Non-participant observation sessions were carried out in 2 classrooms (Primary 1 and 4). The decision to observe was influenced by the prevailing bilingual education and medium of instruction policy of the Ghana Education Service (GES). The policy prescribes that the dominant Ghanaian language of the district or municipality (not the community) be used as medium of instruction in school from Primary 1 to 3 while English remains a subject. Subsequently, English becomes the medium of instruction while the dominant Ghanaian language remains a subject. The study chose Primary 1 to investigate how the policy influences translanguaging in the classroom among learners transitioning from kindergarten (and sometimes home) to school. These learners have their own mother tongue and learn the dominant local language (Ewe) and the official language (English). Primary 4 is also important for the study because learners at this stage switch from the dominant Ghanaian language as a medium of instruction to English as the medium of instruction. The study sought to investigate how this transition influences translanguaging.

Using observation, data were collected in the form of segment logs for each lesson observed. The segment log chronicled the lessons into logical parts or activities such as preparation for the lesson, revision of previous lesson or relevant background, the introduction of a new lesson, continuation, assessment, and ending or consolidation. These segments constituted the focus of transcriptions or records of lessons.

4.2.2 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to elicit information from teachers before and after each observation. Interviews were deployed based on Mann's (2011) constructionist view that "all interviews are already sites of social interaction, where ideas, facts, views, details, and stories are collaboratively produced by interviewee and interviewer" (Mann, 2011, p. 6). The semi-structured interview enhanced rapport between researchers and respondents and gave the flexibility to cover a range of topics while maintaining the focus of the study (Hedger & Wicaksono, 2014). In all, five (5) interviews were conducted: 1 with the Headteacher, 2 each with the teachers whose classes were observed. There were 5-8 minutes interview sessions with the class teachers before each observation and 5-10 minutes post-observation interaction with teachers. The pre-observation interviews were meant to elicit information on class sizes, the language background of learners, the topic for the lesson, teachers' own expectations and any other issues of interest. The post-observation questions afforded an interaction with the teachers on a range of issues including delivery of expectations, challenges, justification of choices (e.g., language) and other issues of interest to the researchers. The interview with the Headteacher was to elicit information on language policy, the practical application of the policy, general attitudes of teachers, learners, community members and the overall challenges confronting the school.

4.2.3 Focus Group Discussion

Based on Greeff (2005) proposal that Focus Group Interviews (FGI), also known as Focus Group Discussion (FGD), allow the researcher to explore the thoughts and emotions of participants, the present study deployed FGI in the data collection to highlight the overall connections between teachers thought and emotions, on one hand, and the practice of translanguaging, on the other hand. Effectively, the method gave insights about the thoughts and feelings of teachers towards translanguaging and the peculiar multilingual characteristics and challenges of learners and/or the people of the community. Essentially, the FGI was deployed for complementary reasons, i.e.,

to “encourage participants to share perceptions, points of view, experiences, wishes and concerns, without pressurizing participants to vote or reach consensus” (Greef, 2008, p. 300). In all, 3 FGIs were carried out: one involving the teachers at the selected school; another for the adult community members and the other for the youth of the community. Eight (8) teachers took part in the FGI for the school. These teachers were all trained and taught various classes and subjects. The interview took the form of responding to questions regarding their translanguaging practices, attitudes, beliefs and the language-in-education policy although the word translanguaging was not mentioned to them. Nine (9) adult community members (4 females and 5 males) mostly drawn from a church also responded to questions regarding translanguaging practices they were aware of in the school. The youth group (4 participants) expressed their thoughts and feelings on language use in the school.

4.3 Data Handling

All data retrieved for the present study were recorded, transcribed and translated for analysis. Both audio and video recordings were complemented by journals and field notes to ensure validity and reliability of data. Tables 1 and 2 show excerpts of segment log of the class observation.

Class:	1	Class size: 23	
Teacher:	Trained		
Language of Instruction:	Ewe and English		
Topic:	Road safety		
Teaching material:	Poster		
Duration:	30 minutes		
9:00	<i>T</i> [English]: Hello!		
	<i>SS</i> [English]: Hi! (Shouts)		
	<i>T</i> [Ewe]: Get ready for the class. Preparation		
	<i>T</i> [Ewe]: Hurry up! Sit down for the class.		
	<i>T</i> [English]: No talking, if I hear you talking, you will stand.		
	And you will not be my friend again.		

	<i>T</i>	[English]: Today, we are going on with another lesson.	}
	<i>T</i>	[English]: Before the lesson, I will tell you a story.	
	<i>T</i>	[English]: The story is about Barbara.	
	<i>SS</i>	[English]: Stop talking	
		(Teacher engages in a round of recitals with learners.)	
	<i>T</i>	[English]: Hello	}
	<i>T</i>	[English]: A duck walking	
	<i>SS</i>	[Sound]: Chachacha!	
	<i>T</i>	[English]: Walking, Walking,	
	<i>SS</i>	[Sound]: Chachacha!	
9:10	<i>T</i>	[Ewe]: Some of you cross the road before coming to school.	}
	<i>T</i>	[Ewe]: Which of you crosses the road before coming to school?	
	<i>S</i>	[Gesture]: (<i>Raises hand up</i>)	
	<i>T</i>	[Ewe]: Frederica, how do you cross the road when you are coming to school?	
	<i>S</i>	[Ewe]: I look at both sides of the road.	
	<i>T</i>	[Ewe]: What are the names of these sides you are talking about?	
	<i>S</i>	[Ewe]: Left and right.	
	<i>T</i>	[Ewe]: Very good! Clap for her.	
		(Class clap for a learner)	
		Who can tell us what we are going to learn	
	<i>T</i>	[Akan]: Who can tell us what we are going to	
		learn today? <i>T</i> [Picture]: (<i>Showing a picture to the class</i>)	
	<i>S</i>	[Ewe]: How to cross the road when coming to school?	
	<i>T</i>	[English]: Good, in English it is called “Road Safety	
	<i>T</i>	[English]: Say after me, “Road Safety”	
	<i>SS</i>	[English]: Road Safety.	
Key: <i>T</i> (Teacher), <i>S</i> (Student/Learner), <i>SS</i> (Students/Learners)			

Table 1: An excerpt of the Segment Log of a lesson observed in Primary 1

Class:	4	}
Class size:	7	
Teachers:	2 Trained teachers and 1 mentee teacher	
Language of Instruction:	Ewe and English	
Topic:	Punctuations	
Teaching material:	Blackboard illustrations	
Duration:	30 minutes	
9:00	<i>T</i> [English]: Hello! (<i>Calls class to order</i>)	}
	<i>SS</i> [English]: Hi!	
	<i>T</i> [Ewe]: Get ready for the class.	
	<i>T</i> [English]: My head, my shoulders, my knees..., ready, go!	
	<i>SS</i> [English]: My head, my shoulders, my knees, my toes ... (<i>Learners recite</i>).	
	<i>T</i> [English]: Last week, we studied nouns.	}
	<i>T</i> [Ewe]: How do we call nouns in Ewe?	
	<i>S</i> [Ewe]: “ɲkɔnya”	
	<i>T</i> [English]: Good, how many nouns can you identify in the recital?	
	<i>T</i> [English]: Let’s identify them together.	
	<i>SS</i> [English]: (<i>Class count the number of nouns</i>) Seven.	
	<i>(Teacher moves to a new lesson)</i>	
9:08	<i>T</i> [English]: Today we want to move on to something special	}
	<i>T</i> [English]: Punctuation, say it after me.	
	<i>SS</i> [Sound]: Punctuation!	
	<i>T</i> [English]: If you are walking and you get to the end of where you are going,	
	What do you do?	
	<i>SS</i> [English]: You stop.	
	<i>T</i> [English]: Good. Full stop, say it after me.	
	<i>SS</i> [English]: Full stop!	
	<i>T</i> [English]: (<i>Introduces three other punctuation signs</i>)	

9:15	T	[English]: Look at this. (<i>Showing sign</i>)	Full stop	
	T	[Ewe]:	“Tɔtɔ dzesi”	Full stop
	SS	[Ewe]:	“Tɔtɔ dzesi”	
	T	[English]:	Comma.	
	T	[Ewe]:	“Gbɔvie dzesi”	
	SS	[Ewe]:	“Gbɔvie dzesi”	
	T	[English]:	Exclamation mark.	
	T	[Ewe]:	“Ylidodo dzesi”	
	SS	[Ewe]:	“Ylidodo dzesi”	
	T	[English]:	Question mark.	
	T	[Ewe]:	“Biabia dzesi”	
	SS	[Ewe]:	“Biabia dzesi”	

Table 2: An excerpt of the Segment Log of a lesson observed in Primary 4

Data from interviews and Focus Group Interviews (FGIs) were also transcribed and translated after which various themes were teased out of the transcripts. The transcription of recordings was carried out on account of “talk, time, nonverbal actions, speaker/hearer relationships, physical orientation, multiple languages, translations” (Davidson, 2009, p. 37). Considering the long duration and sometimes the dragging associated with class control and management, transcription of data for the study was highly selective. Selectivity also reduced the complexity and the difficulty of transcribing and translating from one language to the other and including multimodal transcription. The present study narrowed the transcription to the features of discourse that have primacy and relevance to the objectives of the study (Davidson, 2009). Accordingly, only the relevant portions of the recordings were transcribed for analysis.

5 Data Analysis

The purpose of the present study was, first to establish that translanguaging took place in the classroom and, second, to examine the discursive characteristics and the value of translanguaging as a pedagogical tool in this space. The study deployed an adaptation of Scollon and Scollon’s (2004) Nexus Discourse Analysis to highlight the nature and meaning of the enactment of

classroom discourses which maximize available resources within the semiotic ecosystem. The nexus construct is a strategy for integrating analysis of different modes and levels of discourses.

Instead of highlighting the quantitative preponderance of discursive characteristics of data accessed (an approach translanguaging, as a practice theory, blurs or discourages), the study adopts a descriptive approach to the analysis of data. Accordingly, the study highlighted the fluid interaction and complementarity between the different modes and levels of discourses. The nexus analysis model enabled the thematizing of translanguaging in the classroom as involving agency, representation, multimodality, and social structures (Scollon, 2001). Drawing on these themes as evidenced in the data, the study analysed the classroom as a translanguaging space or site, focusing on (1) how translanguaging is used as a pedagogical practice, (2) the constraints in effective use of translanguaging in the space and (3) ways to maximize the use of translanguaging in the classroom.

6 Results

6.1 The Classroom as a Translanguaging Space

To address the research question of what elements characterize translanguaging in the classrooms observed, the first consideration of the analysis was to demonstrate that translanguaging occurred in the classroom. The analysis took the broader view of translanguaging as deploying both linguistic and semiotic resources in the teaching and learning process. The dominant themes that emerged from the analysis as captured in Table 3 are material, agent, and action.

Material	Pictures, gestures, sounds, images, posters, inscriptions, blackboard, wall inscriptions, songs, teaching and learning materials,
Agent	Teachers, teaching assistants and learners
Action	Silence, shouting, singing, speaking, writing, reading, reciting, gesturing, laughing

Table 3: Characteristics of the classroom as translanguaging space

All the data sources highlight these three themes as characteristic of translanguaging in the classroom.

In the classrooms observed, there were material resources deployed for teaching and learning. These included wall pictures, images and posters which the teachers used in their lessons. Teachers and learners also used their voices (oral medium) to communicate and complemented this with gestures, songs and blackboard illustrations and writings and any available teaching and learning material, including the learners themselves.

In the lessons observed, both the teachers and the learners were identified as active agents of translanguaging in the classroom although the teacher tended to dominate. The teacher, as usual, introduced the lessons, took control of the class, taught the lessons, and assessed and graded learners' work and provided feedback and remediation. The teachers' dominance was very high. They played roles such as class control, individual assistance, remediation, assessment and grading of learners' work. The learners generally listened, contributed to discussions (answered questions and in rare cases asked questions), sang songs and recitations, read independently or along with the teacher, wrote exercises, and basically followed instructions given.

Learners also provided both solicited and unsolicited assistance to their peers and sometimes gossiped with their peers while lessons were ongoing. Actions common in the classrooms included silence, speaking, shouting, singing, reading, gesturing, laughing, watching, walking, showing and pointing. Significant in the data is the observation of the flexible connectedness of material, agent and action in the translanguaging in the classroom.

6.2 The Nature of Translanguaging in the Classroom

To evaluate the nature of translanguaging that is enacted in the classroom space, the analysis examined navigation across verbal, modal and discursive characteristics. Table 4 highlights the nature of translanguaging practices enacted at the target space.

Verbal	English, Ewe, Akan, Selee (code-switching, translation, rephrasing)
Modal	Pictures, sounds (voices), sight, written, silence
Discursive	Reading, writing, listening, singing, speaking, gesturing, laughing

Table 4: Nature of translanguaging in classroom space

From the analysis, while English, Ewe, Akan and Selee formed the verbal repertoire of the classes observed, translanguaging mainly occurred in English and Ewe because of the bilingual policy in the classroom. This is augmented by modalities such as texts, videos, pictures, and other discursive activities like speaking, singing, shouting, gesturing, laughing and even silence. The fluid mixture and interplay of these elements was evident in the data. Hence, agents alternated not only languages but also modes and discursivities. Generally, translanguaging in the classroom took the form of translation, codeswitching, repairing and mode-switching (oral to visual or vice versa).

6.3 Translanguaging as a Pedagogical Practice

The analysis also unraveled the pedagogical function of translanguaging in the classroom. Baker (2011) highlighted four potential values of translanguaging in the classroom: promoting fuller and deeper understanding, assisting bilingual learners to develop oral communication and literacy in their less dominant language, facilitating home-school cooperation, and integrating speakers with different degrees of fluency (Baker, 2011, pp. 289-290). In Primary 1, translanguaging characterized the mode of instruction, promoting deeper understanding and facilitating the home-school transition. The class teacher was mindful of the language backgrounds of each student and made efforts to ensure they understood instructions or the lesson. This is evident in the following extract from the segment log:

- T* [Ewe]: Who can tell us what we are going to learn today?
(Showing a picture to the class)
- T* [Akan]: Who can tell us what we are going to learn today?
- S* [Ewe]: How to cross the road when coming to school.
- T* [English]: Good, in English it is called “Road Safety

In the above extract, the teacher used a picture to engage learners in a conversation about the topic to be studied and ask learners to guess what the lesson was going to be about. The teacher further posed a question in Ewe and attempted to translate the question into Akan, which she was not too fluent in. She then introduced the topic in English. The translation from Ewe to Akan and then English was to facilitate understanding and to help learners to engage with the pedagogic processes. The teacher subsequently in a post-less interview explained that two learners in the

class were Akan speakers and were not too familiar with Ewe, hence her decision to sometimes switch to Akan.

While Baker's (2011) propositions strongly guided the evaluation of the use of translanguaging in the classrooms observed, the study explored other peculiar or specific functions of translanguaging in the classrooms observed. Specific functions of translanguaging identified in the data included using translanguaging to draw attention, to engage learners, to enforce discipline and to make learners comfortable in class. All these directly and indirectly contributed to the overall pedagogical objectives of the teachers.

6.4 Constraints in the Effective Use of Translanguaging

The data unraveled the challenges that confronted the effective deployment of translanguaging in the classrooms of the selected school in Santrokofi. One major constraint highlighted in the data was the nature of multilingualism in the Santrokofi community. Although both teachers and learners were essentially trilingual or plurilingual, they spoke different languages or had different levels of proficiency. It was found that almost all the learners spoke Selee as their mother tongue but learned Ewe (from the community, the school and sometimes from home) and English mainly at school. On the other hand, none of the teachers spoke Selee. Some spoke Ewe, Akan, Lelemi, Sekpele, or other languages as their mother tongue, although the majority were fluent in Ewe. Of course, all teachers were fluent in English. The challenge then was with making concepts accessible in the mother tongue of learners as most of the learners were learning to speak Ewe and English, which were the selected languages of the bilingual policy of Ghana Education Service (GES) in the Hohoe Municipality, where Santrokofi was located until recently.

Teachers' language attitudes also played out as a constraint in the effective use of translanguaging in the classroom. Different teachers appeared to have different understanding of the GES bilingual policy. Some teachers opted for the strict adherence to the policy while others understood the need to implement the policy within the peculiar multilingual situation of the community. Translanguaging practices were evident in the classrooms observed where English, Ewe and Akan were adopted in the classroom.

When teachers were asked about the role of other languages such as Selee in the classroom, some teachers expressed their discomfort with the learners speaking Selee because it was not sanctioned or developed for use as a medium of instruction nor to be taught as a subject.

Teachers who were open to the use of Selee in the classrooms did not mind integrating it into their teaching. Some teachers, however, thought that since Selee was neither examinable nor as developed as English and Ewe, learners ought not waste their time using it. “They could use it at home but not in school,” one teacher remarked in the focus group interview. It was reported and observed that teachers rebuked or punished learners when they used Selee in class. “In the past, crooked shells were hung on the necks of learners who were found speaking Selee in the classroom,” a youth of the community stated in the focus group interview. Other teachers explained that they rather strategically allowed the use of Selee to deepen learners’ understanding or when they realized that learners were struggling to grasp concepts.

6.5 Maximizing Translanguaging in the Classroom

Some proposals emerged from the interview and the Focus Group Interview data elicited for the study as well as observer recommendations. Some teachers saw nothing wrong with allowing the use of Selee in the classroom. They were convinced that the learners’ mother tongue was an important resource for teaching and learning. This is reinforced in the extract below taken from the focus group interview session with the teachers.

T1: When I notice that the learners are struggling to understand a concept, I allow those who understand Selee to explain the concept in Selee for the rest of the class to understand.

This proposal meant a change in the language-in-education policy to accommodate Selee or a change in teachers’ own attitude towards the mother tongue of the learners and the need to acknowledge all languages as vital in the semiotic ecosystem. This proposal, in part, emerged from the observation and reports of some teachers’ poor attitude towards the language. Some teachers sometimes rebuked learners from speaking it. The following extract was a remark from a teacher when he overheard learners speaking Selee during a lesson observed:

T [English]: Now, let’s look at the comma, what do you call it in Ewe?

S [Ewe]: Comma, which means to take a breath.

S [Selee]: (Students chit chatting in Selee)

T [English]: Stop speaking your language.

The proposal for recognition and acceptance of Selee was reinforced in the focus group interview with community members and the youth of the community. One youth expressed concerns about their language not being spoken in their own schools and proposed:

Y3: I wish Selee was recognized and added to the languages of instruction and studied like any other language; at least spoken in class freely even if it would not be studied like Ewe and English.

As far back as 1953, UNESCO had highlighted the benefits of the mother tongue medium of instruction. Several decades on, it is worrying that there are still barriers to implementing mother tongue instruction in classrooms in Santrokofi. This was attributed to policy challenges as Selee was not developed enough for educational purposes. Again, none of the teachers in the schools in Santrokofi spoke Selee. This was reinforced in the focus group interviews. The proposal then is for the state to do more in the development of Ghanaian languages for use at least at the basic levels of education.

7 Discussion

Studies on translanguaging originated from the school, where translanguaging was conceptualized as a pedagogical tool for bilingual education. The present study has confirmed that multilingual classrooms are rife with translanguaging practices. The evidence is drawn from the materials, agents and actions characteristic of translanguaging which are found in various contexts or spaces. These elements are earlier reported in Hua, Wei and Lyons (2017), who investigated a Polish family retail shop in East London as a translanguaging site or space. In the present study, as with earlier studies, these elements bear and enact discourses that flexibly deploy resources within the semiotic ecosystem. A flexible mix of materials like pictures, recitals in different languages, sounds, and other teaching and learning materials enact various discourses of different connections for the overall objective of facilitating understanding and class integration.

The report on the nature of translanguaging in the classroom also aligns with earlier studies like Canals (2021), which investigated how gesture could form part of the comprehensible input for learners. Data from the present study of translanguaging show a vast repertoire of semiotic resources interwoven in the enactment of classroom discourses. The present study reports code

switching and translation as translanguaging in the sense put forward by Garcia (2011, p. 147) “[t]ranslanguaging includes code-switching, the shift between two languages in context, and it also includes translation; however, it differs from both of these simple practices in that it refers

to the process by which bilingual students perform bilingually in the myriad ways in classrooms – reading, writing, taking notes, discussing, signing, etc.” This is corroborated in Yevudey (2015), who found that both teachers and learners used code-switching and translation to reiterate a point, explain a concept, or explain an answer by a student.

The above dovetails into the pedagogical functions of translanguaging. The traditional function of translanguaging as a means of making sense and enhancing understanding in communication (Baker, 2011; Lewis, Jones and Baker, 2012) was confirmed. Specifically, Baker’s (2011) proposed potential benefits or function of translanguaging are confirmed in the present study. To reiterate, the present study confirmed that translanguaging in the classroom fostered understanding, promoted home-school cooperation, especially for beginners, and facilitated integration of speakers of different degrees of fluency. It is significant to note that the deployment of translanguaging in the classrooms observed was spontaneous rather than strategic as suggested in Cenoz and Gorter (2017).

The present study also identified some constraints to the effective deployment of translanguaging as a pedagogical practice. These include negative attitudes of teachers towards some languages and translanguaging practices such as code switching. This attitude was found to be potentially inimical to learners’ home language or mother tongue as suggested by Jones and Lewis’ (2014). In the present study, translanguaging was found largely with the use of Ewe and English (and sometimes Akan). Learners’ mother tongue was severely marginalized because it was not developed for academic use; it was not examinable nor was it approved for the bilingual education policy of Ghana Education Service. The reality was that practically no teacher in the school could speak Selee and therefore the language could not be a significant semiotic resource for translanguaging, at least as far as teachers were concerned.

To reverse this, it has been proposed that steps be taken by policy makers to develop the language and accept its use in class. This development, recognition and acceptance will not only embolden teachers to accept the use of Selee in the classroom but also make Selee a significant part of the linguistic repertoire for classroom communication. The proposal calls for a broader look at the language-in-education policy. A more purposeful and responsive policy would be one “that allows for several languages in the classroom and enables learners to utilize their whole

linguistic repertoire to interrogate issues, understand the subject matter and express themselves fully,” as suggested by Bagwasi (2016, p. 1). In a multilingual country such as Ghana, this call is urgent and important. As equally reiterated in Reily et al. (2022, p. 1), “[t]ranslanguaging could represent a positive shift to the way in which multilingual language practices are talked about and can contribute to decolonising language policy in African contexts.”

In summary, the present study has confirmed the multilingual classroom as a translanguaging site, highlighting multimodality, translation, codeswitching and repairing as the major characteristics of translanguaging in the classroom. The study also supports earlier proposed pedagogical advantages of translanguaging such as nurturing deeper understanding, promoting home-school cooperation and fostering integration of different speakers, among other functions. The study again highlights poor attitudes and practices of some instructors and policy challenges as constraints to effective deployment of translanguaging in the classroom. The study has therefore proposed a change of attitude on the part of teachers and policy realignment towards the academic and social aspirations of learners and the community.

8 Conclusion

To conclude, translanguaging presents an apt picture of the sociolinguistic reality of bilingual/multilingual societies, and it is high time the school gets accustomed to this reality and aligns teaching and learning with this reality. Just as multilingual interlocutors in various social domains maximize their semiotic resources for effective communication, the classroom can also take full advantage of all available semiotic resources to enhance instruction for maximum pedagogical benefits. This will require a change of attitudes towards bilingual and multilingual education. Educational stakeholders need to conceptualize language as a resource and all languages as part of the linguistic or semiotic ecosystem. This will also mean construing languages as fluid and flexible rather than discrete and compartmentalized systems. Eventually, attitudes and practices that make linguistic hegemony fester would have to give way to allow for the maximization of all the resources within the semiotic ecosystem. Attitudinal change would be driven by policy but also through further research, dissemination of valuable research findings and training on both spontaneous and strategic use of translanguaging in the classroom.

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Workplace Communication: the use of African languages by banks operating in the Free State Province, South Africa

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Abstract

Workplace communication plays a pivotal role in addressing the issues of language of communication in the workplace, particularly in multilingual settings. Most scholars have contributed extensively to this field of research and their focus has primarily been on issues of communication in business and legal contexts, health and academia. This article proposes workplace communication as an effective approach that can be adopted by banks to incorporate the use of African languages as languages of communication and business. The issue of language of communication in the multilingual bank settings of the Free State Province is a central one in this article. The main argument of this article is that English continues to be the main language of communication and business, particularly pertaining to the written communication in banks, while African languages such as Sesotho, Setswana, isiZulu and isiXhosa are excluded. Qualitative research methods were employed in this article, and interviews and qualitative observations were conducted to collect data. The findings of this study suggest that most banks use English in meetings and legal documents such as loan contracts, while most banking customers are speakers of African languages such as Sesotho, Setswana, isiZulu and isiXhosa, particularly in the townships and rural areas where the majority of black people reside. Therefore, banks operating in the Free State Province do not promote multilingualism in the workplace; instead, they promote monolingualism.

Keywords: *African languages, banking, language policy, legal documents, multilingualism, workplace communication*

Ukuxhumana kwasemsebenzini: ukusetshenziswa kwezilimi zoMdabu wase-Afrika emabhange asebenzela esifundazweni saseFreyistata, eNingizimu Afrika.

IQOQA

Ukuxhumana kwasemsebenzini kudlala indima ebaluleke kakhulu ekubhekaneni nezindaba ezithinta ulimi lokuxhumana emsebenzini, ikakhulukazi ezindaweni ezinezilimi eziningi. Abacwaningi abaningi babambe iqhaza elikhulu kulo mkhakha wocwaningo futhi bagxile kakhulu ezindabeni ezithinta ukuxhumana kwezamabhizinisi, ezomthetho, ezempilo kanye nezemfundo. Le athikili iqhakambisa ukuxhumana emsebenzini njengendlela esebenzayo futhi engasebenza iphinde yamukelwe amabhange ukuze kuhlenganiswe ukusetshenziswa kwezilimi zoMdabu wase-Afrika njengezilimi zokuxhumana nokusebenza kwamabhizinisi. Udaba lolimi lokuxhumana emabhange anezilimi eziningi esiFundazweni saseFreyistata luyingqikithi kule athikili. Iphuzu eliyisisekelo sale athikili yileli elithi isiNgisi sisaqhubeka nokuba yisikhondlakhondla solimi lokuxhumana nokwenza ibhizinisi emabhange yize izilimi zoMdabu wase-Afrika ezifana neSisuthu, iSitswana, isiZulu kanye nesiXhosa zona zishiywa ngaphandle. Izindlela zocwaningo okuyikhwalithethivu zisetshenzisiwe kule athikili, okufaka phakathi izingxoxo ze-inthaviyu kanye nokubukela abasebenzi basemabhange besebenza ukuze kuqoqwe idatha. Imiphumela yalolu cwaningo iveza ukuthi amabhange amaningi



asebenzisa isiNgisi emihlanganweni nasemibhalweni yezomthetho efana nezinkontileka zokweboleka imali ekubeni iningi lamakhasimende emabange likhuluma izilimi zoMdabu wase-Afrika ezifana neSisuthu, iSitswana, isiZulu kanye nesiXhosa, ikakhulukazi emalokishini nasezindaweni zasemakhaya lapho kuhlala khona iningi labantu abamnyama. Ngakho-ke, kucacile ukuthi amabange asebenza esiFundazweni saseFreyistata awakhuthazi ubuliminingi emsebenzini; esikhundleni salokho, bakhuthaza ukukhulunywa kolimi olulodwa.

Amagama asemqoka: *Izilimi zoMdabu wase-Afrika, ukubhanga, inqubomgomo yolimi, imibhalo yezomthetho, ubuliminingi, ukuxhumana emsebenzini.*

1 Introduction

In post-apartheid South Africa, all the eleven official languages, namely isiZulu, Sepedi, English, Sesotho, Afrikaans, isiNdebele, siSwati, Setswana, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, and isiXhosa were given official status. This means that these languages should be rehabilitated from their vernacular to gaining official status. Subsequently, they can now be used for higher functions, for example, in official communications with the government or private sector, particularly in areas where they are widely spoken. While indigenous languages, on the one hand, enjoy the status of being official, English, on the other hand, enjoys its hegemony of being a language of learning and teaching (LoLT) in the school system. This indicates that African languages do not have the same status as English, although African language speakers constitute the majority in South Africa. The *South African Constitution* (RSA, Act No. 108 of 1996) clearly states that “everyone has the right to use their language of choice”. However, most official communication in South Africa is done in English at the expense of indigenous African languages. Additionally, a survey conducted by Statistics South Africa in 2011 indicates that the South African Banking Association served 22.5 million adults. This, therefore, suggests that the majority of the South African population is affected negatively by the use of one language which is not even theirs. Henceforth, this paper looks at the communication among banking staff members – language(s) used during meetings, e-mail correspondence and informal communication. The article further looks at the communication between customers and banking staff members (tellers, consultants, etc.) – verbal and written communication.



1.1 Languages and the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1996

The national election day of 1994 in South Africa brought about several changes in many sectors; that is, economic and social sectors. The South African democratic Constitution (RSA, 1996) was one of the major changes in the history of the country, where certain rights were bestowed on the people. Language rights are one of those rights that are underpinned in the Constitution. Section 6 of the RSA Constitution stipulates as follows:

Languages. - (1) the official languages of the Republic are Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu.

During the first 10 years of democracy, language policy changes were captured in the National Language Policy Framework. Some of the Acts that were adopted for the purposes of promoting indigenous African Languages in South Africa include Subsection 5 of the Constitution, which stipulates that:

A Pan South African Language Board established by national legislation must-

- a) Promote, and create conditions for, the development and use of-
 - i. All official languages;
 - ii. The Khoi, Nama and San languages; and
 - iii. Sign language; and
- b) Promote and ensure respect for-
 - i. All languages commonly used by communities in South Africa, including German, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Portuguese, Tamil, Telegu and Urdu; and ii. Arabic, Hebrew, Sanskrit and other languages used for religious purposes in South Africa.

Despite the adoption of these policies and Acts, language planning and policy are still a challenge in South Africa. These challenges include the marketing as well as the promotion of indigenous African Languages. These languages do not yet receive the attention they deserve. The use of English as *lingua franca* has not addressed the imbalances of the past; instead, it has created the impression that English is better than all the other languages of the

country. This view is enforced by the situation that English occupies both the status of an official language and that of the language of instruction in the education sector. Edwards and Newcombe (2006, p. 140) argue that “in South Africa, as indeed in other African countries, English is a minority language. Nonetheless, its use as the medium of instruction is defended not only by the small proportion of the population who speak it fluently, but also by the majority who continue to use only local and regional languages in their everyday lives”. The point raised by Edwards and Newcombe (2006) suggests that the continued utilisation of English as the medium of instruction in education sector is not only defended by its speakers but even the speakers of African languages defend the use of English over their own languages.

However, the South African government is aware of the marginalisation of African languages in democratic South Africa, and has instituted mechanisms such as the establishment of Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB), implementation of initiatives such as the Incremental Introduction to African languages strategy to strengthen the teaching of African languages in schools, establishment of the South African Centre for Digital Language Resources (SADiLaR) and many other developmental initiatives aimed at the survival of African languages. In line with the dictates of the Constitution, the government promotes multilingualism, though some African language speakers seem unprepared and reluctant to exercise their constitutional rights and use their indigenous languages. Mkhize (2020, p. 35) posits that “resistance to the use of African languages in higher domains is a result of the hegemony of the English language and how it has negatively affected the attitudes of South Africans towards African languages because education policies have long favoured monolingualism”. The crucial point raised here is that resistance to the use of African languages in higher domains is caused by the language policies in education that promote monolingualism instead of multilingualism.

The democratic Constitution clearly states that South Africa must move forward in language inequality; however, in practice this has not materialised, especially in relation to the use of African languages at institutions such as banks, government offices, schools, workplaces and corporate sector. Subsection 30 of the Constitution states as follows:

Everyone has the right to use the language and to participate in the cultural life of their choice, but no one exercising these rights may do so in a manner inconsistent with any provision of the Bill of Rights.

Although the issue of language planning and policy affects all sectors as mentioned before, this study only focuses on the banking sector. Bankers communicate with banks either electronically, face to face or through ATMs. However, the banking sector is one of the sectors where African language speakers find themselves speaking English instead of their own language.

2 Literature Review

Most studies in the field of language planning and policy have primarily focused on the issues of language and language development in education both the basic education and higher education spheres, while very little has been researched in the banking sector (Thango and Moyo, 2020, p. 193) The most common issue and findings from the studies conducted in education reveal that the current language policies in most higher education institutions promote English in teaching and learning and thus excludes the African languages. Moreover, research shows that currently, the 26 South African universities all have English as the language of learning and teaching, while some also accommodate Afrikaans (Madadzhe, 2019, p. 211). On the same note, another study conducted by Rodrigues (2020, p. 47) on maintaining or decolonizing language practices provides an important contribution in the field of language planning. The study was conducted at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology focusing on the university's language policy. The study found that the promotion and development of indigenous languages as academic languages are well formulated in the policy, but they are rarely used in the learning spaces. This finding suggests that the university policy is good on paper, but in practice not implemented. African languages are not used in the teaching and learning context; yet the policy states that it will promote and develop African languages as academic languages. Rodrigues (2020, p. 47) further implies that the use of African languages in academic spaces is fuelled by the belief that they are “unable to grasp and convey scientific information” (Rodrigues, 2020, p. 47).

Though the above studies were conducted in the education sector, the issues addressed mirror those addressed by this article. For instance, the common issues addressed are those pertaining to the hegemony of English in education while the African languages are left out. Moreover, this article seeks to address the same issue of English being the main language that is widely used in the banking sector as the language of business and communication.

Consequently, the issue is that the use of English as the main language of teaching creates linguistic challenges for speakers of African languages and thus advantages those who are native speakers of English. Accordingly, the same speakers of African languages in the education sector are faced with the same challenges in the banking sector where English is also the main language of business and communication, specifically in the written communication such as email correspondence, loan agreement contracts and letters to customers. Another issue at play here is that of illiteracy rates in South Africa, wherein the majority of citizens are not conversant with English and are excluded from the mainstream economy due to language barrier/s. For instance, a survey conducted by Statistics South Africa in 2011 indicates that the South African Banking Association served 22.5 million adults. This, therefore, suggests that the majority of the South African population is affected negatively by the use of one language which is not even theirs.

Thango and Moyo (2020, p. 195) argue,

Of greater interest is the consideration of the adverse inequality as a result of the country's history and the resulting illiteracy rates. This is exacerbated by the use of primarily one language as medium of instruction (English) to the detriment of the other official languages. Issues such as these necessitate that the inclusive use of language in a culturally, ethnically and racially diverse society be taken seriously.

The issue of illiteracy and the use of English as the sole language of communication in banks need to be addressed urgently. Banks serve the communities; therefore, the language of choice in banks needs to be provided as an option for customers. Banks ought to use local languages in order for customers to understand their banking matters easily.

Therefore, it is imperative that banks operating in multilingual settings understand the dynamics of workplace communication, culture and their impact on the communication so that effective communication can be maintained among the customers and banking staff members. Workplace communication in multilingual settings further incorporates the dynamics of intercultural communication. Therefore, culture plays a pivotal role in communication. Within the context of banks, culture influences how banking staff members interact with one another in work-related matters and even socially when at work. Devkota (2020, p. 80) conducted a study on bankers' communication know-how: an analysis from commercial banks of Kathmandu Valley. Their study argues that "banking communication plays the role of mediator in between bank, customer, government, shareholder, suppliers,

client, board of directors and employees that strengthen connection between them”. The crucial point raised here is that banks play a very fundamental role between customers and other important stakeholders in society and communication are at the top of everything in this regard. This further involves communication between the banking staff members and banking customers. Therefore, this section intends to discuss workplace communication in banks in relation to the languages of the majority, in particular, African languages. This includes the dynamics of workplace communication and their impact on the communication between banks and their customers. Furthermore, the section will also discuss intercultural communication as one of the fundamental aspects in workplace communication, particularly workplace(s) situated in multilingual settings such as the banks operating in the Free State Province of South Africa.

2.1 Workplace communication

Workplace communication began as a field of research in the 1990s and the focus was primarily on issues of communication in business and legal contexts, health and academia (Bargiela-Chiappini, Nickerson & Planken, 2007, p. 5). The present study can also be classified under the same field of workplace communication, since it deals with the languages of communication in the South African banking sector, particularly in the Free State Province. The issue of language of communication in the multilingual bank setting of the Free State Province is a central one for the present study. The main argument of this study is that English continues to be the main language of communication and business in banks while African languages are excluded.

Communication in business refers to the information provided by the business to its customers, employees and stakeholders. Communication can either be internal or external (Nwata, Umoh & Amah, 2016, p. 88). Both the internal and external communication can either be written or spoken communication. This article addresses two major aspects of workplace communication, namely internal and external communication. The communication channels utilised by the banks will be investigated with a special focus on the languages used. Shrestha, Parajuli and Paudel (2019, p. 272) assert that “effective banking communication strengthens the relationship between customer, suppliers, stakeholders, manager, client, employees and board of directors”. Therefore, in order for the customers to have access to effective communication, the issue of language of communication cannot be ignored. In the context of this study, the issue about the use of African languages as means of communication

in banks operating in the Free State Province needs to be interrogated. This study therefore investigated the language used by consultants and tellers during meetings, discussions of work-related matters, informal communication and language used by consultants and tellers when assisting banking customers.

2.2 Internal communication

Mushaathoni (2024, p. 175) puts internal communication into perspective by stating that “internal communication is considered a group of processes responsible for information flow and collaboration among participants involved in the communication process”. This form of communication entails the process of sharing information internally within an organisation. It can occur in multiple processes and uses quite a variety of communication tools, among others, employee publications – paper or electronic, employee intranet, email, memos/letters, inserts/enclosures, large group meetings, small-group meetings, bulletin board, social media, video, PowerPoint slides, webinars, face-to-face communication and displays/exhibits (Rana, 2013, p. 2-4). Internal communication, including its communicative tools, all involves the use of language. According to Nagachevska, Dzhereleiko and Kushka (2023, p. 6), “communication within the banking sector includes both individual dynamics and the broader social-organizational structure”. Communication happens between a bank and its customers and, more importantly, is the communication channel that is utilised by the bank which in the end the customers have to be familiar with. Therefore, in the banking sector communication tools are crucial, especially when considering the language use. In terms of internal communication, this article looks at the language used when banking staff members communicate through email, during meetings, internal memos, notices in the bank (notice boards), signage and posters. In each bank selected, the researcher managed to see five emails, five internal memos, five documents of minutes of meetings, however, notices on notice boards, signage and posters cannot be quantified since banks operate differently. The key point of departure here is that all emails, notices, minutes of the meetings and internal memos were written in English in all the banks selected.

2.3 External communication

Tankosic, Ivetic and Mikelic (2017, p. 1) define external communication as “bringing information from outside into the organisation and out of it”. This type of communication in

the organisation entails that there is communication from the customers coming into an organisation while communication also goes out of the organisation to the customers and stakeholders. External communication is thus a fundamental line of communication since it engages with a multitude of stakeholders. It is unlike the internal communication that normally revolves around the employees, managers and stakeholders. However, both the internal and external communication are key in the business communication model. This article will also delve into the aspects of external communication in the banks operating in the Free State Province particularly investigating the language/s used by the customers when communicating with banks, as well as the language/s used by the banks when communicating with customers. The focus will be on the communication tools used such as email correspondence, telephone calls, documents given to the customer (both legal and banking documents – savings and investments), advertisements, policy statements, newsletters, letters and posters. The issue of legal documents, such as loan contracts that are mostly written in English, creates a problem for customers, since most customers are black people who are not formally educated and some are not fully conversant with English.

Within the South African context, research shows that there is a problem with communication in most workplaces due to issues of language of communication in the workplace. For instance, a study conducted by Emuze and James (2013) explores communication challenges due to language and cultural diversity on South African construction sites. Their study surveyed general workers and site managers employed by five general contractors in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa and found that communication problems occur on construction sites due to language and cultural, diversityrelated barriers. The issue of language barriers is therefore created by the fact that the workforce in South Africa is diverse. Therefore, the issue of language of communication is central to everything in the workplace.

This resonates with Listyo (2005, p. 227), who posits that most contracts in business, especially international business, are done in English. Bargiela-Chiappini and Nickerson (2003, p. 4) assert that “the role of English as the lingua franca of business is now largely unquestioned”. This point, therefore, suggests that the sole use of English in business has become the accepted practice. Many countries, including South Africa, use English as the sole language of business. On the same note, Holmes (2017, p. 8) argues that “ignoring languages deprives recognition and understanding of the richness of insight into local

communities and cultures, and the full capabilities of employees coming from these communities”.

Moreover, Mnguni (2020, p. 864) similarly argues, “The anomaly of the dominance of English and Afrikaans, particular in the financial industry, has implication for the development of the majority of the citizens in the country, especially in poverty-alleviation and national development interventions.” The dominance of English in banks as the main language of business and commerce is an indication that banks are not prepared to serve local communities. Instead, they serve a particular group in society, that is, the rich and elites. Kaschula and Hickey (2019, p. 201) put the above points into perspective by arguing,

Indigenous languages therefore remain on the fringes of economic use and are largely relegated to the informal economy. This excludes the majority of South Africans from the mainstream economy. Furthermore, the inevitable creation of a three-tiered economy emerges, with fluent English-speakers controlling the first economy, functional Englishspeakers operating in the second economy where they can get by with their functional English proficiency, and those with no English proficiency relegated to the third economy or informal sector.

From the above quote, one can pick up linguistic divisions in the banking sector. For instance, the issue of English being the main language that is widely used in the banks suggest that the majority of the population in the Free State province are excluded from the mainstream economy. Therefore, it means that they cannot fully participate in the economy due to language barriers.

3 Theoretical Framework

This article adopts the theory of linguistic imperialism by Phillipson (1992). This theory is crucial in this article, since it looks at the use of English as the main language of business and communication, while African languages are excluded. Phillipson (1997, p. 238) defines linguistic imperialism as a theoretical construct used to account for linguistic hierarchisation and to address issues of why particular languages are frequently used while others are not. Moreover, the theory looks at the issue of structures and ideologies that create linguistic hierarchisation. Therefore, linguistic imperialism is suitable for this article to understand why English is widely used in banks, while African languages are not used in most cases. The

issue of ‘linguistic hierarchisation’ is the one that proves that some languages are more powerful than others. This may be caused by the fact that the issue of language is political and involves issues of power dynamics. Within the South African context, the issue of English being the main language of teaching and learning and in business as the main language of communication is an indication that the interests and ideologies of ‘those who fund’ businesses and education are considered (Phillipson, 1997, p. 239). This simply suggests that the language policies of banks are most likely to serve the interests of their donor. Therefore, this theory answers the questions raised by this article, which among others involve the question as to why English is the main language that is widely used in business and communication, and African languages are excluded. Most banks consider English as an international language and language of business; however, the issue is that most customers are not speakers of English; instead, they are speakers of African languages.

4 Research Methodology

4.1 Sociolinguistic situation of the Free State Province

The Free State is a multilingual province with six official languages spoken, namely, Sesotho, English, Afrikaans, Setswana, isiZulu and isiXhosa. When including Sign language, the official languages amount to seven. According to the Census 2011, Sesotho is the mother tongue of 64.2%; followed by Afrikaans at 12.7%; followed by isiXhosa at 7.5%; Setswana at 5.2%; isiZulu at 4.4%; English at 1.3%; and other languages at 4.7%.

Language	Number of first language speakers	Percentage
Sesotho	1 762 699	64.2%
Afrikaans	348 690	12.7%
isiXhosa	206 919	7.5%
Setswana	142 771	5.2%
isiZulu	120 806	4.4%

English	35 693	1.3%
Other languages	39 831	4.7%

Source: Data retrieved from Census, 2011

Table 1: Language distribution in the Free State Province in %

When looking at the above table, it is noted that Sesotho constitutes the highest number of speakers out of the six official languages in the Free State Province, while English constitutes the lowest number of speakers. Yet the banks opt to use English as the language of business and commerce while the majority of the speakers in the province are speakers of Sesotho and other African languages such as isiXhosa, Setswana and isiZulu, including Afrikaans. It is important also to note that the category ‘other languages’ represents the languages which are not official in the province, but due to the free movement of people coming from other parts of the country and the world for different reasons, among others, such as job opportunities, they still speak their languages, even though they are not yet official in the province. This study constitutes empirical research based on a qualitative analysis. The study utilises this type of research tool because it aims to address the issues of workplace communication within the multilingual setting of banks in the Free State Province. To address the research problem, an inquiry using a qualitative approach was undertaken to ascertain the opinions and experiences of the banking staff members regarding the use of African languages in banks. The interviews with the banking consultants were conducted with the purpose to find out about the language used during meetings and when they communicate as colleagues, whether for work-related or socially related matters. Five banking staff members (one per bank, per district) were sampled from five banks operating in the Free State Province. The study followed a purposeful sampling, wherein the researcher opted to interview the banking staff members in order to get information on matters relating to the use of African languages at banks. In the process of getting data from the banks, the sampling entailed at least one bank per district (which means one teller or consultant per bank). The districts are Motheo, Xhariep, Fezile Dabi, Lejweleputswa and Thabo Mofutsanyana.

The process of selecting the participating banks in this study followed the principles of selective and purposeful sampling. In selective and purposeful sampling, the researcher knows whom to sample for the purpose of the study (Coyne, 1997, p. 624). The choice of banks as research site of this study was motivated by the fact that banks cater for clients from

diverse linguistic backgrounds. Banking staff use a particular language when assisting clients, while clients might use another language when communicating with bank tellers or consultants. In this study, the researcher sampled banks based on the aims and objectives of the study. The researcher considered categories such as language, diversity and multilingualism. Coyne (1997) further states that before a researcher samples, he or she will develop an interest in and pay several visits to the site to observe his or her hosts. Once the researcher has conducted these visits, he or she will know whom to sample. The banks that were selected to participate in this study are situated in places or towns in the Free State Province deemed to be multilingual. This was important to get a full picture on the implementation of multilingual language policies at banks operating in the province. Though the study did not sample all the banks operating in the province, the banks sampled represent the population of the province, since the branches of the selected banks are situated in the major municipalities of the province where the majority of the province's population reside and the most languages are spoken. Bank 1 represents banks operating in the Lejweleputswa District. The bank is based in Welkom where they speak mostly Sesotho, Afrikaans, English and isiXhosa. Bank 2 represents banks operating in the Xhariep District. This bank is based in Trompsburg, a town that represents other local municipalities in the district. In this town the population speak mostly Afrikaans, Sesotho, English, isiXhosa and Setswana. Bank 3 represents banks operating in the Fezile Dabi District. It is based in Sasolburg where the majority speak Sesotho, Afrikaans, isiXhosa, English and isiZulu. Bank 4 represents banks operating in the Motheo District. The selected bank is based in Bloemfontein, where the population mostly speak Sesotho, Afrikaans, isiXhosa, English and Setswana. Bank 5 represents the banks operating in the Thabo Mofutsanyana District. The bank is based in Harrismith, the town where most of the population speak Afrikaans, English, Sesotho and isiZulu. Therefore, all these towns comprise a high number of languages and speakers; thus reflecting strongly on the entire population of the Free State Province. The sampling of one bank per town/district makes sense when looking at the considerations made, which among others involve the language and population size per town selected in terms of banks. The researcher interviewed five banking staff members (that is, one consultant per bank) working at the selected banks operating in the Free State Province. Secondly, the researcher conducted qualitative observations at five banks from the five districts of the Free State Province (one bank per district). The qualitative observations followed the following process:

first, the researcher went to observe the clients who were doing enquiries in the banks' branches (inside the banks), the purpose was to witness the language/s they use when interacting with the banking staff (either the consultant or the teller) at the banks. During the observations, the researcher wrote down everything which he saw at the banks, i.e. the language of communication between clients and banking staff (tellers, consultants). Second, the researcher observed the notices displayed inside the banks and signage used, looking at the languages used. Third, requested to see emails sent to customers and between staff members, internal memos and adverts (focus was on the language used). Thereafter, from what the researcher wrote down (observed), he then developed case studies.

5 Research Ethics

The process of applying for ethical approval was followed in this study. The researcher applied for ethical clearance at the University of the Western Cape and then took the approved letter to the banks to seek permission to conduct research. A letter accompanying the interview questions, the qualitative observation schedule and the consent form were sent to the banks, stating the nature of the study and requesting participation in the research initiative. The banking staff and customers were assured in advance of their anonymity and confidentiality in this study. Furthermore, the banks were also assured that their names would not be disclosed or written in the research; their participation in the study remained anonymous.

6 Findings

This section seeks to provide the findings of this study. The findings emanate from the structured interviews of five banking consultants and the qualitative observations conducted at five banks operating the Free State Province (one bank per district). The interviews had a set of nine questions that the five banking consultants had to answer. The first part of this section entails the results from the structured interviews with five banking consultants. The second part of this section entails the results from the qualitative observations.

7 Results from the Structured Interviews with Banking Consultants

Analysis of interview excerpts focuses on the following identified themes:

- Language used during meetings.
- Language used for work-related matters.
- Language used during informal conversations (social purposes among banking staff).
- Language used by consultants and tellers when assisting customers.
- Language options provided by the banks at their ATMs.

7.1 Theme 1: Language used during meetings

The responses from all the five consultants indicate that the selected banks use only English during official meetings. The common reason provided is that English is the only official language of most banks and it is the world language or language mostly used in business. In this response, there are two factors: 1) the issue of English adopted as the only official language; and 2) the issue of promoting monolingualism and violating the language rights of the staff. This indicates that other official languages are not given a chance to be used and developed for used by banks.

7.2 Theme 2: Language used for work-related matters

This theme focuses on the written communication (email) between the staff and managers, colleagues and, in some instances, communication to customers. The study found that at Bank 1, the bank uses English in email correspondence and in meetings the bank uses Afrikaans and Sesotho; Bank 2 only uses English both in email correspondence and verbal communication during meetings; Bank 3 uses either Sesotho or English for verbal communication during meetings and strictly English in email correspondence; while Bank 4 uses English and Sesotho during meetings (verbal communication) and only English in email correspondence; and Bank 5 uses only English in both meetings and email correspondence. From these responses, one can notice that most banks use English in email correspondence, while a majority of them use a combination of languages such as English, Afrikaans and

Sesotho in formal meetings (verbal communication). Only one bank that strictly use English in both the email correspondence and during meetings. Moreover, it is noticeable that most banks are flexible when it comes to verbal communication and only strict when it comes to written communication wherein English is the main language of.

7.3 Theme 3: Language used during informal conversations (social purposes)

This theme focuses on communication between five banking staff (that is, one staff member per bank selected) when they talk in general; not about work, but as colleagues, either during their breaks, lunch time or social gatherings, including greetings. The data reveal that Sesotho is mostly used during informal communication, and in some instances, it depends on the colleagues if they wish to accommodate one another by means of code-switching. In this theme, one can see that there is no rule forcing banking staff members to use a particular language. Instead, it is open; one uses the language one prefers. However, Banks 1 and 4 use English, Afrikaans and Sesotho, which is different from the other three banks, which either use only Sesotho, or also allow colleagues to choose a language they prefer. The issue of Banks 1 and 4 having colleagues who prefer to use English, Afrikaans or Sesotho, in particular English and Sesotho, may suggest that the choice is influenced by the environment where the banks are situated. For instance, these two banks are both in cities where the population is mixed. Bank 1 is based in Welkom, where the population is dominated by speakers of English, Sesotho, isiXhosa and Afrikaans, and Bank 4 is based in Bloemfontein, where it is the same case as with Bank 1.

7.4 Theme 4: Language used by consultants and tellers when assisting the customers

This theme reveals that in the communication between the customers and consultants, customers are free to use a language they prefer. It is during these conversations where the consultants assist customers with their banking matters such as applying for loans, credit card application, enquiries and any other matters. It is therefore noticeable that customers and consultants are free to use any language they both understand. In cases where they do not understand one another, most banks opt for English. However, only Bank 5 indicated that it has interpreting services in cases where the consultant does not know the customer's language. Then the bank brings in the interpreter to assist. This is a commendable service in the banking sector wherein the majority of the customers are speakers of African languages

and English is not their home language. The challenge here is that some banks do not provide professional interpreting services and most customers are in danger of making wrong financial decisions. This finding resonates with subsection 30 of the South African Constitution (RSA, 1996), which states, “Everyone has the right to use the language and to participate in the cultural life of their choice, but no one exercising these rights may do so in a manner inconsistent with any provision of the Bill of Rights.”

The Constitution grants every citizen the right to use a language of their choice in all social and formal domains. However, in practice this has not yet materialised, especially in higher domains such as schools, banks, workplace, and the media. In most cases, the right to language of choice is always violated by those in power. The current language practice in education is a good example to demonstrate how language rights are violated. All languages are accorded the same ‘official status’, but English is the only language used in teaching and learning and African languages are only taught as subjects in schools. This, therefore, makes people, especially speakers of African languages, think that English is superior to their languages. Hence, they prefer to use English to their own languages. More importantly, language politics also play a contributing role in this matter of English ruling the world. Phillipson (1992, p. 23) puts this into perspective by arguing that “English is now entrenched worldwide, as a result of British colonialism, international interdependence, ‘revolutions’ in technology, transport, communications, and commerce”. The point raised here is that the ruling of English is a political move by the USA, since it is the country in major control of the economy, politics and military force in the contemporary world. Consequently, this suggests that, since businesses all over the world are funded mostly by the USA, the issue of language cannot be ignored.

7.5 Theme 5: Language options provided by banks at their ATMs

The data reveal that, out of the five banks interviewed, only one bank gives customers an option to transact at its ATM using a language of preference or choice. These options are available in all the official languages of South Africa, while three banks give options only in English and Afrikaans, and one bank provides no option or language choice; it is only English.

8 Results from the Qualitative Observations

8.1 Theme 1: Language/s used in the signage and marketing documents

This theme deals with the language/s used by banks on their signage inside and outside of their buildings. This includes signs, directions, marks on the doors and notices. Moreso, the theme includes the language used in marketing documents of banks. During the visits to the five banks studied, the researcher noted that out of the five banks observed, two banks only use English in their signage, while the other three use both English and Afrikaans. None of the five banks incorporates an African language. Furthermore, out of the five banks that were observed by the researcher, two banks use only English in their advertisements, while the other three banks use both English and Afrikaans.

9 Discussion of Findings

9.1 Finding 1: Implementation of multilingual language policies in banks

The study found that banks adopt language policies that promote English only. Therefore, this study suggests that banks promote monolingualism instead of multilingualism.

Bamgbose (2000, p. 30) posits that “language is a powerful symbol of society, particularly if its potential is fully recognised and exploited”. So, in relation to this study, it can be argued that the development of African languages in the banking sector, particularly to be used as ‘languages of business’ by banks, depends primarily on whether the banks recognise their potential or not. The issue of the development of African languages, especially their usage in the South African banking sector, will take us back to the language planning of the country as a whole. The language planning itself needs to be revisited and perhaps look at the usage of African languages, starting from their usage at home, school, workplace, media, and in government offices. As noted by Haugen (1997, p. 348), “for underdeveloped languages to become adequate instruments for a modern nation is to overcome problems of codification and elaboration”. According to Fishman (1979, p. 13), codification and elaboration are the two related steps of language planning. Codification involves the “statement of purposes, procedures and resources”. Elaboration goes beyond codification; it recaptures the intentions expressed in the fact-finding phase (Fishman, 1979, p. 14).

9.2 Finding 2: The use of African languages in banks

The study found that 81% of the total population sampled indicated that they preferred to use English when they communicated with consultants at banks, followed by 25% who indicated that they preferred Sesotho, 17% indicated that they used isiZulu, while 11% indicated that they preferred Afrikaans. Only 3% indicated that they preferred isiXhosa and Setswana. This finding resonates with Holmes (2017, p. 8), who argues that “ignoring languages deprives recognition and understanding of the richness of insight into local communities and cultures, and the full capabilities of employees coming from these communities”. The lingua franca policies in South African banks undermine the language rights of the South African citizens. The constant reasoning from the organisations and even governments, which asserts that ‘multilingualism’ is a cost to be avoided, is null and void in the multilingual setting of banks in the Free State Province of South Africa.

9.3 Finding 3: The use of African languages by banks

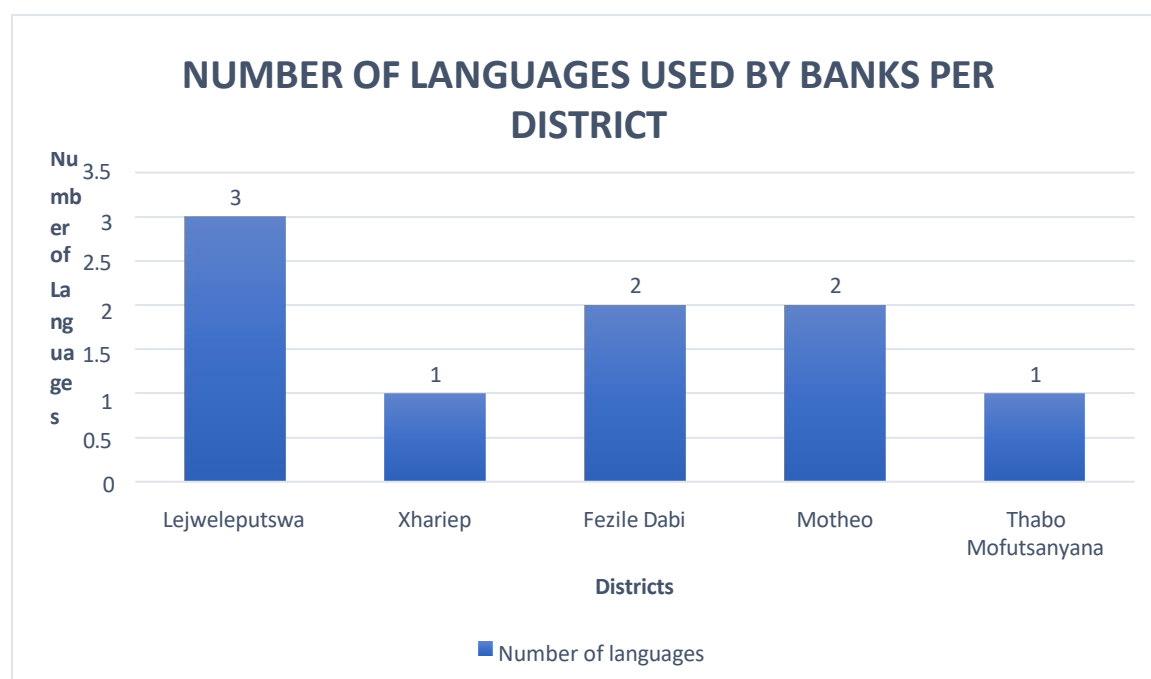


Figure 1: Number of languages used by banks per district

Figure 1 displays the data in relation to the languages used by banks for official or workrelated matters. In the above graph, for ethical considerations, the names of the banks are not reflected. Only the districts where the banks operate are indicated. Lejweleputswa represents Bank 1, Xhariep represents Bank 2, Fezile Dabi represents Bank 3, Motheo

represents Bank 4 and Thabo Mofutsanyana represents Bank 5. These languages are languages which the banks prefer to use due to their demographics and their language policies. This means that these are the languages the banks have adopted as their official languages of doing business, even though some still allow customers to use their languages of preference. Data indicate that all the banks engaged use English for official communication, either through emails or per telephone when contacting their customers. However, some do use English and other languages. For instance, Bank 1 uses English, Sesotho and Afrikaans; Bank 2 uses only English for work-related matters; Bank 3 uses either English or Sesotho; while Bank 4 uses English for official meetings and communication, and Bank 5 also uses only English for communication with customers. More importantly, though most banks prefer to use English as the main language of business and communication, they still allow customers to decide on the language they prefer. However, this cannot be guaranteed, as some consultants or banking staff members may not be conversant with other languages except either English or Afrikaans. Furthermore, out of the five banks that participated, only one bank provides customers with an option to transact in a language of choice at the ATMs. The rest of the banks only allow transactions at their ATMs in English or Afrikaans, and some only in English. This finding resonates with that of Mnguni (2020, p. 864), who argues that the dominance of English and Afrikaans in the financial sector creates problems or rather, obstacles for the majority citizens. To contextualise this point, the issue is that when English and Afrikaans are the only languages used in the financial sector, this causes the languages of the majority of the South African citizens not to develop, in particular the African languages. The African languages, therefore, continue to be neglected, while English and Afrikaans flourish and enjoy the parity of esteem.

The majority of customers at most banks are black South Africans who speak African languages and not English and Afrikaans. However, the current language practice of banks indicates that banks continue to use English and Afrikaans as their sole languages of business and commerce, despite the fact that their customer base is in the townships and rural areas where the majority of black people are located. The continued use of English and Afrikaans by banks has influenced the speakers of African languages to believe that their languages are inferior. African language speakers do not exercise their right to use or speak their own languages when communicating and transacting in the banking sector.

9.4 Finding 4: Adherence to language rights

The study found that English is used as the sole language of business and communication by banks, despite the fact that the majority of the people in the Free State Province are Sesotho speakers, not English speakers. This finding resonates with a study conducted by Tshotsho, (2013, p. 43), which reveals that English and Afrikaans still enjoy higher status than other official languages. Tshotsho (2013) argues that the value attached to English and Afrikaans makes it difficult for African languages to develop. The study also found that while English is the only language used to measure students' performance in schools, the result is that African parents send their children to English-medium schools because they see African languages as unfit to be used as medium of instruction in schools. Moreover, the issue of English being the sole language of business and communication in the banking sector creates problems for most customers, particularly those speaking African languages and who are not fluent in English. Another point of discussion here is the issue of linguistic divisions in the banking sector. The sole use of English in banks thus creates some sort of social classes. Those who are educated, with English as their mother tongue, definitely benefit from the use of banks, while those who are educated, but at the same time are speakers of African languages belong to another social group, which may be referred to as the middle class.

9.5 Finding 5: The use of English and sometimes Afrikaans in the signage, marketing and documents

The study found that all the banks that were observed by the researcher use English and Afrikaans in their notices, pamphlets, letters, media statements, advertisements and other official documents. Listyo (2005:227) posits that most contracts in business, especially international business, are done in English. This then suggests that English is the sole language of business, and the indigenous languages are deemed unfit to conduct business transactions. Similarly, Bargiela-Chiappini and Nickerson (2003:4) assert that “the role of English as the lingua franca of business is now largely unquestioned”. This point, therefore, suggests that the sole use of English in business has become the accepted practice. Many countries, including South Africa, use English as the sole language of business and communication.

10 Conclusion and Recommendations

Through the findings of this study, it shows that the banks operating in the Free State Province do not promote multilingualism in the workplace; instead, they promote monolingualism. The study found that most banks in the Free State continue to use English as the sole language of business and communication. For instance, in most banks, consultants and tellers, or rather banking staff members, are obliged to use only English during their meetings at the workplace, although they are allowed to use their own languages for social purposes; that is, during breaks and lunch, but for work-related matters they ought to use English for formal conversations such as work-related matters. Moreover, the current language situation at banks indicate that banks promote English as the sole language of business, thus considering it as the only language suitable to be used in formal domains, with African languages considered only in informal domains. This is rather problematic in society at large because it creates a negative picture of African languages, while English dominates, since people will only see English as the only language to be used in formal domains. In order for banks to promote multilingualism, they ought to incorporate the use of African languages as languages of business and communication. For the benefit of the banking customers, banks must at least employ multilingual banking staff members who will be able to assist customers who come from diverse backgrounds. Additionally, in order to make sure that customers understand the content written in marketing documents, signage, notices or pamphlets, this article recommends that banks should use the official languages of the province when sending out a communique to customers. For instance, the Free State Provincial Government Language Policy (FSPGLP) identifies Sesotho, Afrikaans, isiXhosa, Setswana, isiZulu, and English as official languages of the Free State Province. Banks are private entities; therefore they must also develop their own language policies that are in line with the official languages adopted within the province. Banks may not adopt only one language; they have to develop and use all the official languages in the province; thus considering the majority of speakers in the area where the bank's branch is situated. In turn, this will help to eliminate issues of language barriers and misunderstandings in banks.

Finally, since banks operate as private entities the challenge is that they do not feel obliged to incorporate African languages as languages of communication and business. Instead, they continue with the sole use of English as their official language of communication and business. Consequently, it becomes a difficult exercise for communities, academics and other stakeholders to challenge the status quo of banks. Therefore, this article

proposes that the Free State Provincial government should come up with a legislation that will oblige all banks operating in the province to incorporate all the official languages of the province in their daily operations, not only regarding verbal communication aspects, but including written communication, official documents, and email correspondence to banking customers. Henceforth, the involvement of the the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) and the Free State Provincial Language Committee (FSPLC) can greatly assist in monitoring the implementation of the FSPG Language Policy by the banks operating in the Free State Province.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethical Clearance from the University of the Western Cape



**UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE**

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24 May 2023

Mr MZ Thango

African Language Studies



Faculty of Arts and Humanities

HSSREC Reference Number: HS21/7/64

Project Title: An analysis of official language policies and their relationship to everyday language use in multilingual bank settings in the Free State Province

Approval Period: 22 May 2023 – 21 May 2024

I hereby certify that the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape approved the methodology and ethics of the above-mentioned research project.

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval.

Please remember to submit an annual progress report at least two months before expiry date. Failure to submit your annual progress report on time will result in the immediate lapse of your ethics approval and you will have to resubmit an entirely new ethics application.

For permission to conduct research using student and/or staff data or to distribute research surveys/questionnaires please apply via:

<https://sites.google.com/uwc.ac.za/permissionresearch/home>

The permission letter must then be submitted to HSSREC for record keeping purposes.

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse events and/or termination of the study.





Ms Patricia Josias

Officer: Research Ethics

University of the Western Cape

NHREC Registration Number: HSSREC-130416-049

University of the Western Cape, Robert Sobukwe Road, Bellville 7535, Republic of South Africa

Appendix B: Interviews with Consultants and Tellers

Interviews with consultants and tellers

1. What is your home language?
2. Which language do you use when communicating with colleagues in the bank?
 - **For work-related matters**
 - **For social purposes**
3. What language do you use during work' meetings? What compels you to use this language?
4. Which language do you use when assisting customers at the branch?
5. Do customers use their languages in the banks or they only use English or Afrikaans?
6. If for instance, a customer uses his or her language, other than English or Afrikaans, do you still manage to communicate effectively? Are there challenges when using an African language in the bank?
7. Does your bank provide a language choice in the ATM for customers to select from when they transact? Which languages are those and why?
8. Do you think African languages are fit to be used in the banks, as languages of business and communication? Please elaborate.
9. Does your bank have a language policy? Which languages are adopted and why those languages?

Postcolonial Language Imperialism in Africa: The Latter-day Saints Missionary Program

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Abstract

This paper aims to explore the neocolonial implications of mission language planning, particularly how The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' (LDS Church) mission program relates to postcolonial African language policies. Beginning with a conceptual overview of English language hegemony engrained in African language planning, the investigation covers a detailed inquiry into the LDS Church's mission operations through contemporary missionary language training and practices. Analysis of the languages of instruction reveals a Eurocentric bias in the selection of languages within the LDS Church's Missionary Training Centers, emphasizing the need for a more inclusive and contextually relevant approach to language planning and assignment. Interviews conducted with members of the Church, having served missions on the African continent, further support this conclusion. The implications of conducting mission operations in Africa from an Anglocentric perspective relate to postcolonial discourse on power and exclusion in multilingual ecologies. Considerations for future studies include further documentation of the perspectives of speakers of African languages engaged in mission-related practices within the LDS Church.

Keywords: African languages, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, English language hegemony, language policy and planning, missionary linguistics

1 Introduction

Contemporary mission work functions in successive conjunction with its history of colonial subjugation. This incidental form of neocolonialism thrives on Eurocentric language policies influencing contemporary African language ecologies. An American denomination of Christianity known as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church; colloquially Mormon Church) facilitates proselytization work which relies on these policies to delineate the language of instruction for a given area of missionary service. This paper aims to examine active LDS Church growth operations in Africa and the relationship between mission language planning and national language planning. The implications of conducting these programs through linguistic hegemony will be considered in the context of postcolonial discourse.

Christian evangelical work and colonial linguistics have a long, intertwined history on the African continent, often facilitated through Western standards of literacy and the indexical link between European languages and Christianity (Pennycook & Makoni, 2005). In diachronic studies on imperialism, and on the standard language policies that have followed, missionary work reappears throughout as a powerful socializing institution while acting as an extension of the colonial regime. First as descriptive linguists and later as volunteer preachers, Western missionaries shaped linguistic identities in multilingual ecologies by categorizing languages according to “European cultures of standardization,” which could then be “projected onto potential converts” (Errington, 2008, pp. 108-109). Described by Pennycook and Makoni (2005, p. 141) as “the bait for the missionary hook,” the English language has also served historical and contemporary proselytization efforts through ESL education. Missionaries have served a critical role in establishing an exclusive connection between those who are allowed to associate as church members and those competent in the language of institutional power.

It is imperative to first examine the role of the English language in postcolonial African language policy, analyzed through the relevant literature, before interpreting its pertinence to the LDS Church’s missionary program. This will preface an assessment of how a legacy of colonialism influences language policy and planning, identifying factors that impede the decolonization process. The Latter-day Saints and the workings of the mission process will then be examined through a concise overview of their features. In addition, an inquiry into how mission language assignments are utilized and regarded by members of the Church in the field will be contextualized through participant interviews with returned missionaries. These topics will combine to provide insights into the relationship between language policies and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints’ chosen languages of instruction.

2 Institutionalized Anglocentrism in Postcolonial Africa

The English language has been recognized as having reached globalized status through preserved power from its enduring history as an instrument of imperialism. In an official status, the English language occupies a majority of formal domains, maintaining an implicit association with the elite and often doing so alone (Costley et al., 2022; Githiora, 2018; Mensah, 2012; Nakayiza, 2016; Opoku-Amankwa, 2009). This imported prestige is typically accompanied by a

subordination of indigenous languages and persists fixed in language policies that reflect an earlier colonial era (Bamgbose, 1999). The question of national language policy in Africa is often met with interethnic tensions and structures of inequality driven by the Western ideological link between a standard language system and national unity. The initial problem of selecting a language for Christian missionary training is intertwined with these complexities of language standardization. As posited by Irvine and Gal (2009, p. 423), “ideas that were forged in [a colonial] context have remained deeply embedded in our analytical frameworks,” and thus serve as important points of consideration in their postcolonial contexts.

Costley et al. (2022, p. 3) contextualizes contemporary English as serving “‘a symbolic function [...]’ to index modernity.” Errington (2008) interprets the Eurocentric perspective on language difference through its application in creating linguistic hierarchies which marginalize and assimilate languages not standardized to imperialist ideology. These “cultures of standardization” foster a perception of nonstandard speech patterns as “marks of personal deficiency” (p. 108). In colonial processes, these cultures are imposed through English language hegemony to create “an Anglophone elite which would be ‘[indigenous] in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect’” (p. 128). As a result, colonial languages secure positions of power which, in turn, affects the positions of existing languages in the social structure and the ease of mobility for their speakers. Over the course of successful repetition of this operation through many facets, the former colonial language shifts in perception from oppressor to modernizer, bringing a linguistic element of internal colonialism to social discourse.

2.1 Language Planning

In administrative language planning, African languages and languages in Africa are divided among both separate and overlapping domains. While English, as a propositioned global lingua franca, is implemented across formal domains, indigenous African languages are often sorted as high or low and extended across a variety of domains (Bamgbose, 1999; Nakayiza, 2016). Relying on historical context, languages are distributed across three key categories: official, national, and local. Official languages are typically utilized to conduct formal government procedure and legislation, international business, and higher education. Oftentimes, public policy is articulated almost exclusively in English, such as in the Anglophone African context (Errington, 2008; Githiora, 2018; Mensah, 2012). The national category commonly hosts the

languages of local media, news, and advertising. National languages share the education domain but maintain less relevance in comparison to the official medium of instruction and are often not extended in use past secondary education (Opoku-Amankwa, 2009). The majority of indigenous languages in a multilingual community are designated as local languages, which are used in widespread everyday social interaction and lower-level commerce (Githiora, 2018). This system recycles itself through restricted access to administrative authority, maintaining power centralization among English speakers.

The monistic ideology that drives English language imperialism is a derivation of the Western perspective on language use (Irvine & Gal, 2009; Wolff, 2016). In this view, one language represents a united community or nation while multilingual ecologies are consequently divided. The exchange of power between African languages and European languages in Africa has aided in marginalizing distinct indigenous languages in this way by allowing them to be categorized as accents or dialects of a single dominant language (Bamgbose, 1999; Errington, 2008). As a consequence of this structure, speakers are assigned sociocultural attributes which affect their attitudes and beliefs regarding themselves and speakers of other languages or dialects. These associations can also be used to exclude groups of people from participating in certain domains, such as government, based on proficiency in the language of the corresponding domain. In Zambia, for example, English is one of several official languages, but is only spoken by 1.7% of the population (African Studies Center, 2023). Of equal significance, “The constitution [of Zambia] [...] states that in order to be elected to parliament, candidates have to be over 18 years old and proficient in English” (Costley et al., 2022, p. 5). These proceedings instill an ideology of English language dominance across institutions of power and socialization but have simultaneously inspired waves of attempts at challenging such assimilationist policies.

2.2 Decolonization of Language Policy

Increasingly, efforts to decolonize national language policies have been met with four barriers: symbolic dominance, indices of development, the Anglocentric standard, and internal opposition. On an administrative level, a local language may be declared national or official in a hollow display of progress and never receive the appropriate role enhancement (Bamgbose, 1999; Nakayiza, 2016). This fault becomes especially consequential in consideration of what is demanded of a language to further its development within a speech community. Bamgbose

(1999) notes the four indices of development being a standard orthography, a set lexicon, a span of literature, and an existence across various domains in local discourse. Essentially, the criteria that are required for formal development of a language cultivate from its use in formal domains. Additionally, this model demands that, in order for more African languages to be implemented to the official tier, they must be made equal in significance to English. This process of standardization for national language planning codifies local languages through the Western perspective, promoting a language that is no longer an accurate reflection of its speech community.

Beyond judgements on language planning by government administrations, propositions to replace English-only policies with local languages as the medium of instruction have faced repeated opposition from within public discourse. The mother-tongue education movement in Africa has been argued to be a veiled effort to subordinate the African population on a global scale by denying access to languages associated with global opportunity like English (Bamgbose, 1999; Nakayiza, 2016; Opoku-Amankwa, 2009). This preference of English monolingualism for upward social mobility is especially detrimental to preserving a multilingual ecology because of its cultivation through the will of the population rather than being exclusive to the ruling elite. These obstructions to the decolonization process assist in maintaining a Eurocentric system which directs opinions on language policy and planning, ultimately determining the future of postcolonial Africa's linguistic landscape. In the following section, these considerations will be contextualized through the methods and languages by which the LDS Church conducts missionary programs, initially through the perspective of the Church administration itself and subsequently through a critical analysis of the data collected.

3 The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Although discordantly recognized by other Christian faiths, Latter-day Saints administration defines the Church as “a restoration of New Testament Christianity” (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints [LDS Church], 2022a). According to Church doctrine, the Latter-day Saints represent a branch of Christianity which accepts the fundamental principles of the Bible, the role of apostles and prophets, and the timeline of Jesus Christ on earth and up to his resurrection. In addition to these structural beliefs, the Church claims a unique doctrine in which God (known to

the Latter-day Saints as *Heavenly Father*) and Jesus Christ appeared to a man known as Joseph Smith in the United States, ca. 1820. Joseph Smith claimed that God called upon him to serve as a prophet who would reestablish the Church for the present-day. In 1823, he recorded to have witnessed another apparition, the angel Moroni, who revealed to him a set of golden plates inscribed with the history of a civilization on the American continent from 2200 B.C.E. to 421 C.E. These accounts are said to have been translated by Joseph Smith into English and sequentially published in 1830 as the first Mormon Church scripture – The Book of Mormon (2022a).

As of December 2022, the LDS Church has 115 official translations of The Book of Mormon. The translation process requires an official review “by Church leaders with a strong gospel background” to the intention “that translations reflect as closely as possible the spirit and meaning of the English version” (LDS Church, 2022a). The Church strives to communicate an assurance that any individual may have an opportunity to be literate in the relevant scripture. However, the intention of literacy is antithetical to the inequitable access to oral education of the gospel.

3.1 Missionary Training Centers

For it shall come to pass in that day, that every man shall hear the fulness of the gospel in his own tongue, and in his own language, through those who are ordained unto this power, by the administration of the Comforter, shed forth upon them for the revelation of Jesus Christ. (Doctrine and Covenants 90:11)

The traditional timeline that leads Latter-day Saints to missionary service begins with church participation in early youth, as a minimum to include completion of a four-year seminary. At the age of eighteen for boys and nineteen for girls, young church members become eligible to receive their mission call to 1 of over 400 location assignments around the world. According to the LDS Church (2022a), missionaries “are sent only to countries where governments allow the Church to operate” and are unable to demonstrate preference towards a destination or language. Following receipt of their assignment, new missionaries are sent to a Missionary Training Center to be equipped with the tools necessary to proselytize in their appointed area, most significantly including an education in their mission language.

There are 10 Missionary Training Centers in operation worldwide which instruct among a selection of 60 total languages. At the time of this paper’s publication, the Church had just begun announcing the construction of an 11th MTC in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as a French language training center, yet without details regarding the area of service (LDS Church, 2024). The flagship MTC is Provo (Utah, United States), with those subsequently established being Mexico City (Mexico), Preston (England), Manila (Philippines), Auckland (New Zealand), São Paulo (Brazil), Lima (Peru), Bangkok (Thailand), Accra (Ghana), and Johannesburg (South Africa) (LDS Church, 2022a). At their assigned training site, new missionaries are issued a strict regimen to prepare for conversations of conversion through an approach to language education constructed for specific contexts. According to data collected in an interview conducted by NPR Staff (2014) with a Provo MTC instructor, the maxim of the MTC is “speak your language.” Missionaries are coached to learn vocabulary through speaking, enacting exchanges they are likely to encounter with locals of their area assignment, with a peer playing the role of “potential convert” (2014). Preparation in the assigned language spans most commonly over three weeks and, at a maximum, twelve, including those tasked to learn an unfamiliar orthography. The largest and most numerous in languages of instruction is the Provo MTC which educates on 55 languages, encompassing all of those administered by the LDS Church, excluding Urdu, Greek, Kiswahili, Amharic, and Q’eqchi’ (see Table 2 for a complete list of the 60 languages of instruction). For the context of the present discussion, focusing on area assignments on the African continent, only 5 languages are offered: English (including ESL), French, Kiswahili, Amharic, and Malagasy (LDS Church, 2022a).

3.2 Language Assignment

Missionaries sent to serve in any permitted region of Africa attend either the Ghana (West Africa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Madagascar), South Africa (Southeast Africa, Madagascar), or Provo (worldwide) MTC (Call, 2013; LDS Church, 2022a). The Ghana MTC instructs on English, French, Kiswahili, and Amharic. Even though Kiswahili is a lingua franca of East Africa and Amharic is spoken rarely outside of Ethiopia, they are both exclusively offered at the West African-serving MTC. Amharic (Afroasiatic) and Kiswahili (Niger-Congo) are also the only 2 indigenous African languages out of the 60 total selected by Church administration for instruction. As for the South Africa MTC, the only language other than

English taught is Malagasy, an Austronesian language principally spoken in Madagascar. By organizing the data collected into their respective linguistic families – incorporating all 10 MTCs – and calculating the relative frequency of each family, additional patterns emerge which demonstrate a Eurocentric approach to mission language selection and assignment. Table 1 consists of the complete details of the MTCs, areas served, and languages of instruction with durations.

MTC Location	Area Served	Languages of Instruction
Brazil	Mozambique, Cape Verde, Angola, South and Central America, Mexico, Japan, Portugal	Portuguese (3-6 weeks), Spanish (3-4 weeks), Japanese (9 weeks)
Thailand	Southeast Asia	English, Thai, Russian (3 weeks ¹)
England	Europe	German (3-6 weeks), English, Spanish, French, Russian (3 weeks), ESL (6 weeks), Greek (9 weeks)
Ghana	West Africa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Madagascar	English (3 weeks), French (3-6 weeks), ESL, Kiswahili, Amharic (6 weeks)
Mexico	Mexico, other countries of North, Central and South America, Dominican Republic, Haiti	Spanish (3-6 weeks), Haitian Creole (3 weeks), Q'eqchi' (9 weeks)
New Zealand	Australia, Fiji, Samoa, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Tahiti, Tonga	English, French (native speakers only), Samoan (native speakers only), Tongan (3 weeks), ESL (6-9 weeks)
Peru	Central and South America	Spanish (3-6 weeks)
Philippines	Asia	Tagalog (3-6 weeks), Cambodian, Cebuano, English, Hiligaynon, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Mongolian, Urdu, Vietnamese (3 weeks) (all

¹ The Thailand MTC was the last to open in January 2024. The duration of these three language programs is unconfirmed as of this study's publication.

		languages except Tagalog, native speakers only), ESL (6 weeks)
South Africa	Southeast Africa, Madagascar	English, Portuguese (3-6 weeks), Malagasy (6 weeks)
United States	Worldwide	55 different languages

Table 1: Languages of instruction and areas served of the Missionary Training Centers

Of the 60 total languages for training, 48% ($N = 29$) of them can be classified as Indo-European. There is currently at least one European language taught in each MTC and for every area served, primarily English, French, or Spanish. The remaining families are Austronesian (20%), Sino-Tibetan (5%), Uralic (5%), Austroasiatic (3%), and one language as the sole representative of its language family (18%), such as Thai (see Table 2 for language families). Additionally, regarding any training center or assignment to which a missionary could be sent, there is a 19% probability that the mission language would be English, factoring for English speakers as well as those learning English as a foreign language across all of the 10 MTC's languages of instruction. However, this Anglocentric approach to mission language planning is not distributed evenly, evident by contrast of the 12 Austronesian languages taught to Asia-serving missionaries and the 2 African languages for Africa-serving missions. Deconstructing the 60 languages of instruction by service area and classification reveals a disregard towards educating missionaries in indigenous African languages.

1	Albanian (Indo-European)	29	Thai (Kra-Dai)
2	Armenian (Indo-European)	30	Turkish (Turkic)
3	Bulgarian (Indo-European)	31	Ukrainian (Indo-European)
4	Burmese (Sino-Tibetan)	32	Vietnamese (Austroasiatic)
5	Cambodian (Austroasiatic)	33	ASL (Indo-European)
6	Cantonese (Sino-Tibetan)	34	Cebuano (Austronesian)
7	Croatian (Indo-European)	35	Danish (Indo-European)
8	Czech (Indo-European)	36	Dutch (Indo-European)
9	ESL (Indo-European)	37	Fijian (Austronesian)
10	English (Indo-European)	38	French (Indo-European)
11	Estonian (Uralic)	39	German (Indo-European)

12	Finnish (Uralic)	40	Haitian Creole (French Creole) ²
13	Georgian (Kartvelian)	41	Hiligaynon (Austronesian)
14	Hmong (Hmong-Mien)	42	Indonesian (Austronesian)
15	Hungarian (Uralic)	43	Italian (Indo-European)
16	Icelandic (Indo-European)	44	Kiribati (Austronesian)
17	Japanese (Japonic)	45	Malagasy (Austronesian)
18	Korean (Koreanic)	46	Malay (Austronesian)
19	Latvian (Indo-European)	47	Marshallese (Austronesian)
20	Lithuanian (Indo-European)	48	Norwegian (Indo-European)
21	Mandarin (Sino-Tibetan)	49	Portuguese (Indo-European)
22	Mongolian (Mongolic)	50	Romanian (Indo-European)
23	Persian (Indo-European)	51	Samoan (Austronesian)
24	Polish (Indo-European)	52	Spanish (Indo-European)
25	Russian (Indo-European)	53	Swedish (Indo-European)
26	Slovak (Indo-European)	54	Tagalog (Austronesian)
27	Slovene (Indo-European)	55	Tongan (Austronesian)
28	Tahitian (Austronesian)	+ ³	

Table 2: List of the 55 languages taught at the Provo Missionary Training Center

3.3 Field Guide

We teach missionaries to speak foreign languages so we can take the gospel to the whole world. But missionary work would be a lot easier if everyone spoke the same language! Well, Zephaniah prophesied that someday we will: “For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent’ (Zephaniah 3:9).” What is this “pure language,” and how will everyone learn it? We don’t know all the details. But in the meantime, with the help of the Holy Ghost and the gift of tongues, we keep working to bridge language barriers. Heavenly Father understands all of His children—and someday we will all understand each other too. (LDS Church, 2022b)

² Haitian Creole is coded here as a French Creole, in accordance with MTC instructional methods, despite the fact that the author disposes the concept of Creole Exceptionalism.

³ Q’eqchi’ (Mayan), Kiswahili (Niger-Congo), Greek (Indo-European), Urdu (Indo-European), and Amharic (Afro-Asiatic) are not Provo MTC languages of instruction.

The infamous language education methodology of the LDS Church is further detailed through their self-published training handbook, *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service*. The book's seventh chapter – *How Can I Better Learn My Mission Language?* – introduces missionaries to standard advice on personal study of a foreign language, including how to document new vocabulary and grammar, improve pronunciation, and prepare materials to communicate the message in the mission language (Bennett & Fu, 2014; LDS Church, 2004). Moreover, the guide acknowledges that missionaries may be ill-equipped to encounter cultural or linguistic differences in their area of service. The preliminary suggestion to introduce the section on learning local culture and language is to “Strive to understand the culture of the people so that you can communicate the unique aspects of the message of the Restoration in a way that will be clear to them” (LDS Church, 2004, p. 132). However, the proposed timeline duration for mission language acquisition via the MTCs, at maximum being 12 weeks, does not adequately reflect this goal.

The purpose of the significantly short missionary language training of the MTCs is not to impart proficiency, but to introduce basics and instill a learn-while-you-go (i.e., “speak your language”) framework from the start of the service period. New missionaries begin their (3 to 12- week) program by learning basic syntax and phonology through standard phrases such as, “What did Jesus Christ do when he was on Earth” (NPR Staff, 2014). This method speaks to the efficacy of a context-based approach to language acquisition but remains misaligned with realistic training durations necessary for acquiring a working proficiency (24 to 88 weeks for native speakers of English), even with program durations timed congruently with L1-L2 similarity (Foreign Service Institute, n.d.). Additionally, research on language acquisition suggests that the onset for missionary training surpasses the critical period for second language acquisition in adolescence, making the LDS Church training timelines insufficient and ineffective (Hartshorne et al., 2018). It is also worth noting that the pragmatic bilingualism promoted by Christian mission practices is defined as “between indigenous languages and a metropolitan language,” represented by the predominance of ESL as the language of instruction in the LDS Church's MTCs (Pennycook & Makoni, 2005, p. 144). In mission praxis, these methods prove less practical in the face of real cross-cultural experiences.

3.4 Accounts from Returned Missionaries

While the larger religious institution is the present subject of study, it is integral that the individual perspectives of missionaries are recorded and acknowledged when studying their collective influence to avoid the creation of oppositions in research. In attempt to do so, three independent interviews were conducted with returned LDS Church missionaries to gather evaluations of the efficacy of the mission language assignments. Each of the interviewees were assigned service areas in Africa by the Church and, most notably, English-speaking missions. Questions presented related to mission assignment, including the area served, the MTC attended, the language of instruction, and if any other languages were studied while serving. Each interviewee reported studying their assigned language at an MTC with no prior experience. Any additional necessary training was completed informally while serving the duration of the mission. The interviews were conducted informally via phone calls and text messages where responses could be recorded in the form of direct quotations and interviewees were provided sufficient time for reflection. Finally, participants were asked to consider how they felt overall about their mission assignments and their impressions on any resultant accomplishments.

The first individual interviewed was appointed to a mission in Cape Town, South Africa, and attended the Provo MTC. Although their language of instruction was English, they reported learning Afrikaans and isiXhosa during their service period. The second and third missionaries served in Accra, Ghana and Freetown, Sierra Leone, respectively, but both received their training at the Ghana MTC. While also assigned to English-speaking missions, the second and third interviewees similarly studied languages indigenous to their areas of service. The missionary in Accra, Ghana described their decision to learn to speak Twi as necessary to their perceived success, but insufficient for the multilingual community. They observed a wide variety of local languages and dialectical differences that led to the impression that their mission to proselytize was limited to the bounds of their linguistic repertoire. While serving in Freetown, Sierra Leone, the third missionary expressed dissatisfaction with their language assignment. Furthermore, they cited a discussion with Church officials in which they were informed that obtaining proficiency in a local language (Krio) would be essential as it was not taught at the MTC. Continuing to reflect on the relative success of their mission, they described figurative distance between themselves and members of the population due to their status as a monolingual English speaker. The use of Krio and Mende allowed them to not only proceed with their missionary work, but to

also communicate respect effectively. Each missionary reported a revelation of unpreparedness despite following each measure guided by their administration. However, in considering their positionality as English speakers in Africa, they opted for practicing cultural relativism to achieve mutual understanding. The emergent patterns from these accounts help to illustrate the omissions of an Anglocentric approach to language assignment amidst a multilingual Africa.

The LDS Church's service guide emphasizes that if a missionary does not already know English, learning the language would allow them "to help build the Lord's kingdom in additional ways" (LDS Church, 2004, p. 128). In an environment where the colonial language maintains dominant status, adopting the language into one's repertoire provides opportunity for gaining an advantage, and furthermore, native speakers of the language hold the advantage inherently. By approaching mission language assignments observing this correlation, the Church is able to delegate missionaries who already align with existing positions of power. The LDS Church's missionary language program proves even less adequate when considered in conjunction with the Church's history with African-based proselytization efforts.

3.5 The Latter-day Saints in Africa

There is a history of doctrine and circumscription which details vital information for the backdrop of the LDS Church's developments in West Africa. Sanneh (1989, p. 40) notes that mission activity is facilitated and diffused through two impulses: "the obligation to spread the message with every available facility and opportunity" and "the need to regulate the emerging community of believers;" the first signifying the purpose of the mission while the second serving to address the intractable plurality that is produced through a successful mission. In standardizing the administration of the gospel, the Church can conduct successful missions which diversify the Church while homogenizing the congregation to a particular standard beyond what is demanded by the doctrine.

As of March 2025, there are a total of 849,568 LDS Church members in Africa, and 31 African countries which host missions for the Church. Nigeria holds 27% (232,654) of all African Latter-day Saints at approximately 0.1% of the total population (African Studies Center, 2023; LDS Church, 2025). In correspondence to the impact the Church has had on the religious landscape of Africa, Hurlbut (2018) describes that contemporary doctrine of the LDS Church was critically shaped by the early events of the Church's operations in Nigeria. Prior to the 1978

Priesthood Revelation, in which the honor of priesthood, admission to Church temples, and equal Church membership was extended to black Latter-day Saints, the prevailing doctrine of the Church was ““that the Negroes are not entitled to the full blessings of the Gospel”” (p. 2). Following the 1978 declaration, the Church still struggled to establish itself officially in Nigeria by failing to provide translations of religious texts into local languages. In the late 20th century, imported Church leaders were still uneducated in languages such as Igbo, Efik, and Hausa, and members of local congregations were unable to understand English. In a series of letters exchanged between LDS Church missionaries in Nigeria, the lack of action on translation efforts was cited to derive from the government’s discomfort with the decision to diminish resources intended for a multilingual ecology to a select few languages. This concern suggested that ““showing favoritism toward one tribal language over another [...] could lead to resentment among other ethnic groups,”” reflecting similar concerns in government language policy and planning. However, this argument was accompanied by one by missionaries in which Efik was described as a ““relatively minor language,’ despite the fact that the majority of Nigerian Mormons lived in the Efik-speaking region” (p. 15). The consequences of attempts to proselytize without local languages as a resource, and furthermore demonstrating a preference towards English-only oral education, have been demonstrated as inherited and sustained by contemporary LDS Church mission practices.

4 Discussion and Conclusion

The Christian mission in Africa contributes to ongoing English language hegemony as an ecclesiastical subdivision of the process. Prior research on related Christian church practices reveals a relatively straightforward, yet socially and politically biased, objective toward mutual understanding often swept up by macro-level-imposed language marginalization (Pennycook & Makoni, 2005; Schneider, 2022). Makoni and Makoni (2009) conclude that the impact of Anglocentric missionary practices on English language hegemony in Africa is relatively minor compared to those institutionally imposed forces and pro-Global English public opinions. However, the LDS Church’s selection and distribution of languages of instruction reflects Africa’s language policies and planning which directly contribute to the marginalization of local languages in favor of languages of former colonial powers. Resultant English-only language

policies have since been shown to create space for sociolinguistic binary opposition structures rooted in Anglocentrism.

The LDS Church's primarily English-oriented African mission language assignments were presented through a descriptive analysis of their 60 languages of instruction. This subject was further explored through the Church's administrative history rooted in a discriminatory system to keep Africans from becoming full-fledged members of the Church. In context, the list of languages of instruction for the LDS Church's Missionary Training Centers is a cumulative product of the history of the Church in Africa and the effects of a globalized and neutralized English language. While English has been demonstrated to maintain this position in language policy and planning of multilingual ecologies, the perception of English in Africa as a simple answer to a multifaceted question is irresponsive to the actual sociolinguistic situation presented through modern missionary accounts. The interviews conducted with returned missionaries revealed individual perspectives on the shortcomings of mission training and language assignments. These assignments were further contextualized through the Anglocentric ideologies that influence the spread of English as an official language and lingua franca in postcolonial societies. For an LDS Church missionary in Africa, participation in the sociolinguistic situation of the area served is left to the discretion of the individual. However, the perceived success of missionary service has been demonstrated to be more dependent on micro rather than macro language ecologies, as discourse necessary for building the preacher-convert relationship with the wider population is communicated through the local languages within the community, not through the official languages of the elite. Should international organizations, such as the LDS Church, maintain English as a primary means of global communication, it is recommended that a pluricentric or transnational approach is adopted in training programs to encourage critical reflection and help facilitate effective cross-cultural communication (see Baker & Ishikawa, 2021 for transcultural recommendations on English language teaching).

Questions that pertain to the LDS Church incorporating more African languages into missionary education are similar to those of ongoing discourse regarding the accommodation of multilingualism in national language planning. How could the present selection process for mission languages of instruction be improved to better reflect the sociolinguistic situation of a given area? How effective are representative language selections in comparison to those that represent power structures in effect? Given that African Latter-day Saints are subject to the same

conditions when it comes to mission language assignments, subsequent research is encouraged to explore these considerations further through the perspectives of speakers of African languages. Such missionaries, with the whole of their linguistic repertoires, could presumably still be assigned English or French-speaking missions in Africa.

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