Rethinking Multilingualism: Education, Policy and Practice in Africa

Edited by

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INTRODUCTION

'Languages don't have bones, so you can just break them': rethinking multilingualism in education policy and practice in Africa

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Abstract: Multilingualism is widespread amongst individuals and communities in African countries. However, language-in-education policies across the continent continue to privilege monolingual approaches to language use in the classroom. In this paper we highlight the colonial origins of these monolingual ideologies and discuss the detrimental effects which arise when learners' linguistic repertoires are not welcomed within the education system. We draw attention to major themes within education across a range of contexts: policy vagueness, teachers as policy implementers, and the creation and imposition of boundaries. We advocate for a language-in-education approach which brings the outside in, which welcomes individuals' lived multilingual realities and which values these as resources for learning. We highlight the ways in which translanguaging 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. We conclude by calling to action those working on education and policy to ensure that learners and teachers are better supported. We call ultimately for a rethinking of multilingualism.

Keywords: multilingualism, translanguaging, access, language policy, language-supportive pedagogies, Africa.

Note on the authors: see end of article.

1. Background

The ways in which we have come to understand multilingualism have changed significantly over the last 50 years. However, we are yet to reach consensus about how to best harness multilingualism as a resource for individuals, communities and society more broadly. There is increasing evidence of the benefits of mother tongue and multilingual education (Cummins 2000; Ball 2011; UN 2015; UNESCO 2015a; UNESCO 2015b). Despite this, the use of English as a medium of instruction in education continues to grow globally (Dearden 2014). Some 40 per cent of the global population does not have access to education in a language they speak or understand (UNESCO 2016: 1). Monolingual policies which do not accurately reflect the linguistic reality of many people's lived experiences can inhibit access to health, education, political and economic systems (Bamgbọṣe 2000; Djité 2008; Williams 2011; Negash 2011).

This supplementary issue of the *Journal of the British Academy* brings together those conducting research on multilingualism in Africa, with a focus on language policy and education on the continent. We are interested in the links between language policy and multilingual practices—both in formal educational contexts and outside of these spaces. In these contexts, there are interesting questions relating to the extent to which the practices used inside the classrooms mirror or reflect those outside the classroom. There are questions as to whether the current approaches and policies most appropriately support and enable effective educational and learning experiences—as will become clear over the course of this paper, you will see we argue that they do not. There are questions as to whether multilingualism itself is encouraged or permitted. Across many African countries, there is a discourse on which language should be used as the medium of instruction in education and which language should be the national or official language, as well as which speech communities should be supported or even protected. However, what is notably less present in these discourses is whether—and how—formal provisions for multilingualism itself can be established. That is, not just whether one language is more 'fit for purpose' than another language, but whether policy can in fact support multilingual language practices themselves.

2. Multilingualism and education in Africa

Individual and societal multilingualism is a key aspect of the linguistic reality of many African countries. In some ways, this multilingualism differs from that seen in much of the so-called Global North, where linguistic diversity is the result of more

recent population changes and cycles of migration.[1] Rather, there are numerous communities and regions in Africa which have been consistently characterised by what has been termed 'sustained multilingualism' (Lüpke 2016; Makalela 2016a) or 'stable multilingualism' (Nakayiza 2012). This situation has led to the observation that multilingualism is the 'lingua franca' in Africa (Batibo 2007; Fardon & Furniss 1993).

Multilingualism implies choices and freedoms for speakers to draw from their range of linguistic resources to make meaning and interact with/in the world. Language policy, on the other hand, is often concerned with managing the choice of language at the individual, community and national level. In the post-independence period of the 1960s, nationhood and national unity in Africa were commonly equated with monolingualism (Heine 1970; Bamgboṣe 2000). As a result, the majority of African countries adopted one official language, and in many African contexts, language policies exhibit an 'inheritance situation' (Bamgboṣe 1991: 69; see Batibo 2007 for discussion of post-independence language policy) in which countries continue to implement policies which reflect those of the colonial period and favour the use of colonial languages in education (Kamwangamalu 2018). In some instances, this explicitly includes the adoption of a former colonial language as the medium of instruction in some or all levels of education. In other cases, however, even when another language is chosen as the official or national language (e.g. in Tanzania, where Swahili is the official language), policies are still very much inspired by European monolingual approaches to language planning and management. As Reilly (2021) notes for Malawi, for example, language policies and discussions around policies are often embedded within a monoglossic perspective and concern themselves with when to move from one monolingual medium of instruction to another monolingual medium of instruction. There is, therefore, in many instances, an 'inherited monolingual bias' (Ndhlovu & Makalela 2021: 62), regardless of which language is chosen for which purpose.

The widespread adoption of monolingual policies and approaches has a wide range of consequences for education. The monolingualising (Heller 1995; 2007) of education systems perpetuates systems of inequity in which some language and literacy practices are valued and others are stigmatised (García 2006; Windle *et al.* 2020; McKinney & Christie 2021). It also reinforces boundaries. Boundaries between languages themselves and boundaries between the school and the home. These boundaries are created through, and reinforce, inequitable systems of power and can oppress, isolate and exclude (Windle *et al.* 2020).

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[1] We recognise that the 'North/South' dichotomy is artificial. There are 'Norths in the South' and 'Souths in the North' (cf. Pennycook & Makoni 2019; Chetty *et al.* forthcoming), and any attempt to group together vast, diverse portions of the world is reductionist. We use the term here, however, since our primarily concern is not with the terms themselves but the approach which considers it possible to divide the world and its people into (such) categories in the first place.

The artificial monolingual space often created in education leads to pressures on teachers to conform to monoglossic ways of being which contradict lived multilingual realities. Teacher training within Africa (as in other contexts) seldom equips teachers with the multilingual pedagogies which would be helpful within the classroom and rarely consider teachers' linguistic repertoires as an important tool (Erling *et al.* 2021). Teachers are then faced with the pressure of implementing monolingual policies and preparing students for monolingual exams, while having to ad hoc navigate the multilingual reality of their learners (Bagwasi & Costley 2022, this issue; Reilly *et al.* 2022, this issue). Such pressures and practices lead to a devaluing of certain language practices and identities. In many African communities, the continued dominance of a colonial or dominant national language means that some teachers and parents have ceased to value their 'ethnic' languages, arguing that their low socioeconomic standing is caused by their use of the community language (e.g. Mapunda 2013).

Educational approaches which do not make room for or value wider language practices can contribute towards increased marginalisation of languages and language communities, resulting in language endangerment and language shift (Boyer & Zsiga 2014; Bagwasi 2021). Additionally, these practices often render students' language practices as invalid, which also has negative consequences on their sense of self and identity (Chumbow 2013; Kirkpatrick 2013). When the language practices within the classroom are not familiar to students, they are not able to effectively access and engage with education or to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for them to pass required assessments. This often means that students are unable to engage with education and drop out of school. While there are additional factors in school dropout rates in Africa, this lack of engagement and knowledge acquisition due to language is likely to be a factor (Bamgboṣe 2011; Glanz 2013; Kioko *et al.* 2014; Kiramba 2014; UNESCO 2016; Brock-Utne 2017; Clegg 2021; Clegg & Milligan 2021).

An exception to the monolingual official languages policy is found in the case of South Africa. The Constitution of South Africa recognises 11 official languages. Given the legacy of Apartheid, it is perhaps not surprising the Constitution sought to recognise many more groups than were recognised in the language policies of other countries in Africa. Although the adoption of 11 official languages has been critiqued as a symbolic rather than practical gesture (Batibo 2007), there are languages used in South Africa which do not have official recognition.[2] One of the observations that emerges from the South African context is that many of the practical challenges are similar to those in other countries which have chosen a single official language. A regional approach to what is considered—or assumed—to be learners' home languages means that children with different first languages are also marginalised or

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[2] In 2021, South Africa also announced that South African Sign Language would be designated as an official language. Work is under way to enable this as it requires an amendment to the Constitution.

overlooked by policy. In education, we still see the dominance of a single regional language followed by another language of wider communication (see also Kula & Mwansa 2022, this issue; Reilly *et al.* 2022).

The dominance of English within education systems across Africa is both a consequence of colonialism (McKinney 2020) and a symptom of neo-liberal capitalism (Piller & Cho 2013; Price 2014). In many contexts, while English is synonymous with education, so too is it synonymous with employment (Reilly *et al.* forthcoming). The emphasis on acquiring English language skills is founded on the belief that this is the language of opportunity and value which students will need in their lives after education. This ignores a reality in which (1) many students do not complete secondary school; (2) the majority of individuals are employed in the informal economy; (3) multilingualism is a natural occurrence and is a skill valuable in the labour market. The emphasis on acquiring English above all else thus has both serious consequences for education and is pursued under a belief which ignores multilingual realities which characterise vast portions of Africa.

Eurocentric, monoglossic conceptualisations of language, which were a crucial part of colonial othering and oppression (Errington 2001; Makoni & Pennycook 2005; Rosa & Flores 2017), have continued to have a major influence on how language policies are constructed in African countries. Multilingualism and linguistic diversity have long been considered problematic and associated with disunity, low social cohesion and low rates of socioeconomic development (Batibo 2007). The enumeration, naming and counting of language(s) is one of the foundations of this belief.

African languages operate from a position of historical and continued marginalisation. Early efforts to count languages and people, as well as to divide and draw lines between groups, served to further the colonial endeavour. The division of groups also served to disrupt local and historical networks, organisations and concentrations of power. It also an imposed a conceptualisation of language and identity which more closely resembled the dominant notions of language and identity in Europe, which also adopted monolingualising approaches to the creation of the European nation state. African languages were routinely viewed by colonisers as 'inferior'. The complexity of African languages as well as the complex language practices of their speakers was often deliberately overlooked or denied. In many instances, this came from explicitly racist worldviews—in order to acknowledge the complexity of African languages, it was necessary to acknowledge the complexity of African peoples, communities and ways of organising. This was in direct contravention of many of the dominant colonial discourses, which were steeped in notions of 'rescue' and 'civilisation'. Under these views, colonialism was argued to be improving the lot of African populations rather than constituting a racist imposition with extractive goals.

These monolingualising tendencies also have consequences post-, and beyond, education. A monolingual approach does not align with the lived multilingual reality

of individuals, communities or countries around the world. The dominance of a monolingual approach to language policy is perhaps fundamentally an approach which will never be effective as it does not consider the linguistic reality for individuals and communities, or the value of fluid language practices which challenge the boundaries between named languages (Makoni & Mashiri 2006; Erling *et al.* 2017; Ndhlovu & Makalela 2021; Reilly 2021). This is true in the African context but is also mirrored in diverse countries, regions, communities and homes around the world. The challenge here is therefore to both recognise what is unique about the multilingual practices and realities of the numerous and diverse African contexts, and to avoid presenting these linguistic practices as exceptional.

This dominance of monolingual approaches does not just concern English. There are also countries in which other languages play this role. This is the case in countries where French, Spanish or Portuguese have the role of the language of the former colonial power. However, there is also another context in much of North Africa, for example where the discourse pertains to the role of Arabic and/or French, often at the expense of other languages found in the region, such as Tamazight (see Rouabah 2022, this issue). This in some ways reflects the situation in Tanzania, where Swahili is the official language and the linguistic context has also been described as one of triglossia, with English the language of education from secondary school onwards, Swahili as the official language and the community languages representing the third category of language. In North Africa, in addition to the discussions pertaining to the role and value of different languages, there is also the differing status of Modern Standard Arabic and varieties of Arabic which are also present in a country, often resulting in a diglossic situation. This is a reminder that in many ways it is less the language choice itself that is the issue—although the choice of language does of course reflect a colonial inheritance—but the choice of a monolingual policy at the expense of multilingual realities. In this sense, Swahili or Setswana (see Bagwasi & Costley 2022) can also be languages which marginalise other (minoritised) languages in a given context. In education, this monolingual, one language at a time approach to schooling is present in all contexts discussed in this volume. In addition to the examples given above, we see that alongside English, dominant regional languages are prioritised in Ghana and a single language, Chichewa, is prioritised in Malawi (see also Reilly *et al*. 2022). An approach to language-in-education policy which is built on monolingual foundations will always necessitate the choice of which single language to choose, which inevitably results in multilingual practices being side-lined and marginalised.

In the next section, we explore a concept which we believe is central to a better understanding of multilingual language dynamics in Africa, particularly in the context of educational and language in education policy—translanguaging.

3. Translanguaging in Africa

Recent years have seen a growth in studies examining multilingual realities in educational contexts, particularly those adopting the lens of 'translanguaging' (Williams 1994; Canagarajah 2011; Lewis *et al.* 2012; García 2014; Wei 2018). Translanguaging refers to both language practices of plurilingual individuals and communities and pedagogical approaches that harness such practices (García 2014). Scholars working on translanguaging argue that imposing monolingual norms onto multilingual learners can perpetuate inequality, as well as meaning that some learners are expected to work in and through language and literacy practices that may bear little or no resemblance to their own (Canagarajah 2011; Lewis *et al.* 2012; García 2014). In adopting a translanguaging approach in educational contexts, 'bi/multilingualism is acknowledged as a resource and teachers strategically incorporate students' cultural and linguistic funds of knowledge in academic tasks' (Paulsrud *et al.* 2021: xxiii). Crucially, this is situated on the 'concept of the multilingual speaker, the whole linguistic repertoire and the social context' (Cenoz & Gorter 2020: 307).

Translanguaging as a pedagogical approach entails 'mobilising [students'] full language repertoire as a resource for learning' (Erling *et al.* 2021: 14; see also Duarte 2020; García & Kleyn, 2016; García & Sylvan 2011). Different approaches to translanguaging are currently a central topic of debate within multilingual education and applied linguistics (see, for example, Brooks 2022; Flores 2022; Cummins' 2021 discussion of unitary translanguaging theory and crosslinguistic translanguaging theory; García *et al.*'s 2021 manifesto, which outlines their decolonial approach to language and education).

Much of the research on translanguaging has focused on North America and Europe, where translanguaging has been used to challenge negative attitudes towards bilingualism and the marginalisation of certain (ethno)linguistic groups. However, explorations of the practice of translanguaging in the context of Africa are also increasing (cf. Lüpke *et al.* 2021; Madiba 2014; Childs 2016; Guzula *et al.* 2016; Bagwasi 2017; Makalela 2016a; 2016b; 2019; Erling *et al.* 2021; Makoni & Pennycook 2006; see also Bagwasi & Costley 2022; Reilly *et al.* 2022; Weidl 2022, this issue). Given the multilingual ecologies within Africa, translanguaging is particularly apt for conceptualising the language practices found on the continent (Makalela 2016a) and, as García *et al.* (2021) write, translanguaging

> is a way to understand the vast complexity and heterogeneity of language practices, avoiding their conception as problems and their evaluation in the negative terms of the colonial imaginary line that values only those socially situated as being above and making invisible those assigned to being below.

Given the ways in which African multilingualisms have been problematised, this translanguaging perspective is particularly relevant within education contexts across the continent. Translanguaging offers an opportunity to construct pedagogies through a 'decolonial lens' (Cushman 2016: 236). We agree with Ndhlovu & Makalela (2021) that translanguaging could be a powerful decolonial tool and with García (2019: 162) in thinking that translanguaging provides a chance to 'decolonize our conception of language and, especially, language education'. Ndhlovu & Makalela (2021) suggest that the adoption of translanguaging pedagogies could offer a means through which to 'decolonise multilingualism'. Decolonising multilingualism relates to fundamental epistemological questions, acknowledging that 'mainstream approaches to multilingualism and language diversity ... follow a mono-epistemic paradigm that focuses on standard countable language things' (Ndhlovu & Makalela 2021: 11), challenging how useful this perspective is within educational contexts and exploring new ways of thinking (Phipps 2019).

A translanguaging pedagogy disrupts the monolingual ideologies which are dominant within much education (Duarte 2020). As we will see throughout this *Journal of the British Academy* supplementary issue, the multilingual reality of much of Africa means that teachers and students are already engaged in complex, sophisticated translanguaging pedagogical practices (Erling *et al.* 2021). The innovative ways in which teachers are disrupting language policy and implementing multilingual pedagogies in Africa is an untapped resource for the construction of translanguaging and language supportive pedagogies globally. Inclusive, contextually appropriate multilingual education is not a panacea for ensuring quality and effective education for children worldwide, but it is a necessary element. We argue that education systems and policies that continue to be built on monoglossic ideologies, which are exclusionary and neglect to engage with, and accommodate, the multilingual realities of students' lives, will never be truly effective for all students.

4. 'Breaking the bones: rethinking multilingualism'

At a teacher meeting on language and language policy in Botswana in February 2022,[3] a teacher described the way in which they and their pupils use language as being like a body: 'Languages don't have bones, so you can just break them.' This statement provides a telling insight into how this teacher views everyday flexible, dynamic and multifaceted language practices—both inside the classroom and in the broader community. However, it also provides an excellent lens through which to explore the issues

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[3] This meeting was organised as part of the Global Challenges Research Fund research project *Bringing the Outside In: Merging Local Language and Literacy Practices to Enhance Classroom Learning and Achievement*.

raised in this journal issue in that policies are the bones—the supporting skeleton—upon which classroom and wider social practices rest. The theme that unites these contributions is 'rethinking multilingualism'. We see in each of the papers that the context and countries on which the authors are drawing from or working in are multilingual. We also see in all of these instances that the policies—without exception—are monolingual in nature. Even those which might perhaps be viewed as multilingual, in that they recognise multiple languages, can still be thought of as monolingual, as the multiple languages are adopted *in sequence* rather than at the same time. We therefore have *sequential multilingualism*, which still means that a single language is chosen over another (or indeed, all others).

This supplementary issue of the *Journal of the British Academy* brings together those working on topics relating to multilingual educational practices and policies, with a focus on Africa. It seeks to provide a forum for the exploration of issues relating to languages in education, particularly in relation to enhancing equitable access to resources in the African context.

The issue foregrounds experiences and practices emanating from the Global South, as well as providing an opportunity to (re)examine current practices and contexts for North–South collaboration. We are also interested in the role of multilingual approaches and translanguaging in processes such as transformation and decolonisation, as well as innovative methodologies which may be used to inform the discussion. The articles contained here highlight a broad range of issues and adopt a number of different (methodological) approaches.

The paper by Rouabah (2022) examines education in Algeria, where recent policy shifts have attempted to promote multilingualism. This has been done through a focus on encouraging the learning of foreign languages in education and acknowledging the role of Tamazight as an official language, through inclusion in regional schools in some instances. However, despite recent changes, it is argued that there is a mismatch between the language practices inside and outside the classroom. Moreover, these language policies have implications for social justice issues and access to power.

Kula and Mwansa (2022) focus on education in Zambia. This country's language policy is ostensibly more inclusive, as it allows for the use of a 'familiar language' in the first four years of education. However, as there is no clear guidance on how individual educational districts of schools should decide what counts as 'familiar', in practice this is defined in a restrictive way, only to include one of the seven officially recognised regional languages. In their discussion of children's reading ability in selected Zambian primary schools, Kula and Mwansa highlight the ad hoc and 'haphazard' way in which individual teachers disrupt the official language policy and use learners' linguistic resources in the classroom.

Bagwasi and Costley (2022) report on the Botswanan context. In Botswana, Setswana and English are the only languages legitimised within the education system.

This context is also particularly English-dominant, with English being the main MOI from the second year of primary school onwards. Drawing on data from classroom interactions, Bagwasi and Costley problematise the rigid separation of languages within this monoglossic policy approach, highlighting that it does not reflect the rich linguistic diversity of the country or the fluid and dynamic ways in which individuals use language inside and outside of the classroom.

The article by Mapunda and Gibson (2022 this issue) focuses on Tanzania, a country with a number of parallels to Botswana in that English and one dominant national language are prioritised in policy (Swahili). The Tanzanian language policy adopts Swahili as the MOI for primary schools, with English for the remainder of education, once again providing an example which neglects the majority of languages in the country—with approximately 150 languages not recognised for use in formal contexts or for use within education. Drawing on examination results and classroom practices, the authors illustrate how MOI issues affect equality of educational outcomes as children who do not have Swahili resources in their linguistic repertoires are significantly disadvantaged.

The contribution by Reilly *et al*. (2022) provides a comparative discussion of the Malawian and Ghanaian contexts. They trace the historical changes to language policies in each country, highlighting the monoglossic ideologies on which they are based. The discrepancy between policy and practice is clearly visible within classrooms in both countries, as multilingual language practices are commonplace in contrast. In this data, we see how multilingual repertoires can be positively harnessed to engage students more effectively with education.

Weidl (2022) discusses multilingual practices in Senegal, focusing on the Casamance region. She highlights how fluid language practices are commonplace by presenting linguistic ethnographic data from two distinct contexts—family discussions and official learning environments. In doing so, she illustrates that multilingual languaging practices are the norm for individuals, and artificial monolingual systems are restrictive. Weidl also provides an important reflection on the limits of epistemologies and methodologies from the 'Global North'.

Across the papers in this journal issue, a number of key themes emerge. All the papers focus on language-in-education policies. As Spolsky (2004) highlights, language policy can take many forms—language management, language practices and language attitudes. The majority of our papers start from a point of critiquing policy as legislation, arguing that the restrictive monolingual policies found across the contexts under discussion are harming students' educational experiences and attainment. A fundamental issue here is a lack of transparency on language policy decisions and a lack of clear implementation plans for the practical roll-out of policy. What we find, across countries, is a *policy vagueness*. Often language policies are not clearly documented, are often incredibly brief, are embedded within other educational legislation

and do not appear to be treated as matters of importance. Language policies appear to serve purely ideological functions and are separated from the realities or concerns of education and ultimately their uses, the learners and teachers.

The importance of teachers as enactors of language policy therefore becomes central. What we see clearly from all contexts discussed is that teachers are under numerous and immense pressures. Responding to factors such as the demands of the curriculum; parental expectations; and the practical realities of managing classroom spaces which comprise individuals with diverse repertoires all influence how teachers implement language policy. While we see that different teachers take different stances towards embracing students' linguistic repertoires, we also see that teachers are actively engaged in language practices that disrupt the monoglossic nature of the 'official' policy and are ultimately much more responsive to the needs of learners and communities.

Boundaries are another key theme throughout the papers. Boundaries are created and reinforced but also challenged and permeated at multiple levels. We see clearly boundaries created between the school and the home, which influences attitudes towards what language practices are appropriate or valid within each space. For example, dominant, 'official' languages are accepted within the school and may have little place within the home, while the multilingual practices present within the home are not viewed as being of value past the school gates (see Bagwasi & Costley 2022; Kula & Mwansa 2022; Mapunda & Gibson 2022). We also see conceptualisations of language, and language practices, which conform to monoglossic ideologies; we see important value placed on named languages by individuals, while also seeing conceptualisations and practices which challenge these ideologies and actively disrupt boundaries between named languages.

Pennycook, Kubota and Morgan, in their preface to Ndhlovu and Makalela's *Decolonising Multilingualism in Africa* (2021), write:

> Many of the common ways of thinking about multilingualism, as exemplified in notions such as mother tongue education, bilingual education, or multilingual language policies need critical interrogation. They simply do not match the ways in which languages are used or understood in many African contexts.

Similarly, Erling *et al.* (2021: 13) write:

> the promotion of indigenous African languages in education often fails to recognise the rich multilingual repertoires of learners, simplistically putting forward one language for schooling where community members are more linguistically diverse.

This is our starting point for rethinking multilingualism. There is a disconnect between many policies, research and conversations on multilingualism which does not match the linguistic reality. Our perspective on rethinking multilingualism in education and language policy in Africa is informed by the work of scholars cited in this

introduction, by our experiences of living, working and researching in a range of educational contexts in Africa and by our frustration at the inequity and injustice of education systems across Africa in which systemic issues result in multiple children being silenced, ignored and excluded. This *Journal of the British Academy* supplementary issue represents a contribution towards rethinking multilingualism and a call to do it.

5. Steps for rethinking multilingualism

In order to rethink multilingualism, we believe:

The starting point must be to value all the linguistic resources which pupils bring to the classroom. Where languages and language practices are stigmatised, this must not simply be dismissed but must be understood, in dialogue with the people and communities of language users affected. Taka fanila tangisa ne ku tolela pezhugwi ndimi bana dza ba no zha ku ikwele be dzi ziba. A kuna ndimi idzedzi pa dzi no lingigwa pasi kene kuna sekwe ngwao dzabo kwa dzi no lingigwa pasi, ichechi cha ka fanila lingisisiwa ku lebesaniwa ne beni be ndimi kene ngwao idzedzo.[4] Re tshwanelwa ke go simolola ka go lemoga boleng ja diteme tse bana ba tlang ka tsone ko sekolong. Re seka ra itlhokomolosa mabaka a diteme dingwe le ka fa tiriso ya tsone e tlontlololwang ka teng, mme re buisanye le batho le badirisi ba diteme tseo gore re tlhaloganye mabaka a tsone.[5] He tjhwanee go simolola gka go lemoga boleng jhwa rityeme jhe batyhwana be da gkajho mo shekoleng. He shegka ha ithogkomolosha mabagka a rityeme ringwe le gkaho tyihiso ya jho e tontololwa gka ho, mbe he buisanye le batyho le barihisi ba rityeme jheriyong gore he raloganye mabagka a jho.[6] I hatula iya gwandya, i lilazima i bi gujitogwa i ndimi jose ijo abhana bhagwizaga najo u ng'widarasa. Ulu bhubhiza bhuliho bhubaguji bho ndimi na matumiji ga lulimi lungi, iti mhayo gwa gudalaha gete, i lilazima gumanyike, kubhitila gu mahoya gi hanga lyene.[7]

The current monolingual system simply does not work with regard to nurturing and supporting multilingual practices and in recognising the positive role of multilingualism in teaching and learning. An 'otherwise' is essential (Walsh 2018; García *et al.* 2021). Sera inayohusu lugha ya kufundishia ikubali na iheshimu ukweli kwamba lugha za jamii zipo, na watoto wengi maeneo ya vijijini wanafahamu kidogo sana, ama hawafahamu lugha inayoitwa rasmi.[8] Ukulesha abaana ukubomfya indimi balanda kumayanda musukulu cimo nokubeba ukuti indimi shabo tashacindama

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[4] Ikalanga.

[5] Setswana.

[6] Shekgalagari.

[7] Sukuma.

[8] Swahili.

shakubomfyafye ku ngánda. Abaana teeti baishibe nangu ukwishiba intambi.[9] Bringing the language practices and repertoires which naturally exist outside of the classroom into the education space provides one avenue for change and for an otherwise.

National-level language policies have proven themselves not fit for purpose. More localised approaches are necessary, which provide practical and flexible strategies for language-supportive learning which draw on the linguistic repertoires of the wider school and community populations. In dialogue with teachers, students, communities and governments, we need to reflect on what makes language policy useful and effective. Imisolele ya matampulo ya mitundu yimwi iya kuwomvya awantu wonsinye nanti kulolechesya pa mitundu itichi itavwilizya nkani. Cinga zipa ukulolechesya pa miwele yino inga ficilizya amasambililo ya mitundu yino isukulu inga womvya. Mu kulanzyanya na wa sambilizya, awana wama sukulu, awikalansi nu wu teko, cikulondeka ukwelenganya ama tampulo ya mitundu yino inga wvilizya.[10]

Strict impermeable boundaries between school and home are not useful. We adopt the term *living multilingual reality* to reflect the everyday languaging experiences and practices of individuals. This relates to Ndhlovu & Makalela's (2021: 159–61) call to focus on the *languages of the people* and *socially realistic multilingualism.* The lived multilingual reality of individuals and communities is something which can be harnessed for engaging with, and increasing the effectiveness of, education systems.

Change must happen across the education system. Teachers are powerful agents for language policy implementation and for disrupting monolingual approaches, but they are also only one part of a larger, multi-faceted system. For effective multilingual approaches to education, multilingualism must be considered across the whole system. We must reflect on what valuable education looks like in different contexts. Crucially, we must also reconsider assessment practices.

Monoglossic ideologies and the enumeration and naming of languages have for far too long been central to how multilingualism and linguistic diversity in Africa are discussed. We must also recognise how this affects how we conduct and represent our research. We must consider the language we use to talk about language and be pragmatic in our decisions to ensure that it is the lived multilingual reality of learners which is prioritised within education.

We need to reflect on how we do research on language and on education. We need to emphasise collaboration (Costley & Reilly 2021) and open access, to include a diversity of knowledge systems (Chetty *et al.* forthcoming) and to avoid the appropriation of knowledge. We need to reconsider what are valuable as research outputs when, in our current system, too often journal articles and edited volumes are produced in

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[9] Bemba.

[10] Namwanga.

English are dominated by 'Northern' scholars and are inaccessible to scholars who are not affiliated with university libraries with large budgets (Gibson *et al.* forthcoming).

What does it mean to rethink multilingualism in the African context? It means a genuine shift away from sequential monolingual approaches which are presented as multilingual. It means a true value and appreciation of linguistic variation and diversity, both between languages and within languages. It means truly valuing African languages and seeing them as equal to all others in terms of the role they should play in schools, communities and workplaces. It means the creation of spaces for learners and teachers to express themselves fully and to use their full linguistic repertoires. It means breaking down the boundaries between home and school, the boundaries between languages. It means viewing teachers as powerful agents of change and for the implementation of language policy. It means recognising that teachers are already disrupting monolingual approaches which are imposed on them and their teaching. It means recognising that the current systems are not fit for purpose and are not serving the learners, teachers and the broader aims of equality, access or sustainable development. It means supporting multilingual practices and realities in every stage of the education process, as well as all stages of policy creation and implementation. It means supporting teachers to use multilingual approaches in their classrooms. It means training teachers in techniques and strategies for language-supportive pedagogies. It means recognising that the monolingual expectations and impositions are legacies of colonial policies and divisive approaches and decision making. It means recognising that languages and the people who use them have the power to disrupt. It means that the policies—like the languages—need to be flexible and dynamic. It means remembering that languages do not have bones.

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Multilingualism in Algeria: educational policies, language practices and challenges

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Abstract: Recent language policy developments in Algeria have attempted to promote multilingualism through encouraging foreign languages (French and English), acknowledging Tamazight as an official language and incorporating it into some regional schools. However, the competition between the official languages and the 'foreign' ones even in educational settings continues to (re-)shape the sociolinguistic profile of the public domain. This paper discusses these language policies, how they are reflected through language practices inside and outside the classroom, the challenges facing multilingualism, and the politics behind it. The analysis highlights the link between language practices and the lack of social justice and equal access to resources and power. Informed by onsite fieldwork, including questionnaires, interviews, and ethnographic observations, the study discusses the wide division of opinion in relation to these ideologically driven policies and socially constructed practices due to their connection to issues of identity, nationalism, (de-)colonialism, and globalisation.

Keywords: Multilingualism, language practices, policies, power, identity, nationalism, (de-)colonialism, globalisation.

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Introduction

Africa is home to about 30 per cent of the world's languages, and multilingualism has long been its 'lingua franca' (Batibo 2005; Fardon & Furniss 2003). Across much of Africa, it is the norm to speak more than two or three languages. Different groups embrace second and third languages for their usefulness in the region, such as the widely spoken Swahili in Eastern Africa, Hausa in Northern Nigeria, Wolof in Senegal, Akan in Ghana, and English in South Africa. Nevertheless, this linguistic richness is usually undervalued and disregarded by policymakers in the interest of national unity and integration. In other words, first languages are not perceived as useful because of their lack of capital in the national and global economic market, while some official languages are promoted over others, as is the case with English in South Africa. The main reason behind this is the ideology of nationalism and unity against 'threats' of regionalism and diversity. Despite the prevailing daily multilingual practices, the imported models of education, which mostly follow a monolingual agenda, led to the failure of many language-in-education planning models used in African schools (Banda 2009).

Blommaert *et al.* (2005) suggest that language is an ideological object that is used alongside social and cultural interests. In African politics, linguistic or ethnic differences are often exploited for political ends (Bamgbose 2003). The historical context and political pressures create an uneven distribution of linguistic domination and value. Therefore, how and why languages come to be practised in certain ways depends on the power relations and ideologies attached to them. Following Bourdieu's (1977) perspective, 'stronger' languages empower speakers by providing them with social, cultural, economic, and symbolic capital. In other words, speaking the 'stronger' language practically or symbolically implies higher social status, better education, and more power. In this respect, language is both a negotiable commodity (Rubdy & Tan 2008) and a symbol of struggle and power (Bourdieu 1991; Williams 2000).

Given that the domain of education is one of the most crucial in creating transformations, promoting social justice, economic equality, and enhancing literacy, language policies and multilingualism pose substantial challenges (Beukes 2009). Negative attitudes towards minority, minoritised, or indigenous languages can lead to relegating them to the back seat and limiting their usage inside and outside classrooms. At the same time, using only the ex-colonial foreign language(s) can increase socio-economic differences. However, the link between attitudes, policy, and language practices is not straightforward; these are all constantly reshaped to respond to social, political, and economic needs.

Shifting the lens to North Africa, the sociolinguistic context of Imazighen is no different. Imazighen,[1] also known as Amazigh or Berber people, are the indigenous people of North Africa. They have been continuously invaded by other groups, which

contributed to a change in the linguistic profile of the region. In the case of Algeria, the successive invasions included the Phoenicians who arrived in 860 BC, the Romans in 2 BC, the Vandals in 429 AD, the Romanised Byzantines in 533 AD, the Arabs in the 7th century, and, later in the 11th, the Spanish (1505–1791), the Ottomans (1529–1830), and the French (1830–1962). Out of these colonisers, the Arabs and the French are of interest here because they largely shaped the sociolinguistic situation of present-day Algeria.

As a result of the historical, political, and socio-economic background, the language profile of Imazighen in North Africa has dramatically changed over the centuries. Their language practices, similarly, fluctuated across generation, region, gender, social class, and ideological stances. While language policy most often dealt with language as an object, subject to the ideologies of standardisation, purity, and modernity, language practice unceasingly evolved and shifted as a result of changes in power or political and economic domination, or, more neutrally, based on group solidarity and communication as a means rather than an end (Fardon & Furniss, 2003). In this paper, I discuss these processes and examine the fluctuation between language policy, ideology, and practice with regard to multilingualism. The paper addresses the following questions: What is the situation of language planning and ideology in Algeria with regard to national and foreign languages? How is multilingualism perceived in practice among both Tamazight-speaking and Arabic-speaking communities in Algeria?

Algeria: language policy and context

The sociolinguistic profile of Algeria is characterised by multilingualism. Arabic[2] and Tamazight are the most prevalent languages in terms of daily use. Standard Arabic (*SA*) has been the first official language since 1963; Algerian Arabic (*AA*) is the main medium of daily communication. Tamazight (*MZG*), which acquired official status in 2016, has 11 geographically scattered varieties (Eberhard *et al.* 2019), with varying degrees of mutual intelligibility due, in part, to the long absence of a unifying writing system (Sadiqi 2011). The major Tamazight varieties and groups are: Kabyle, Chaouia, Touareg (also known as Tamahaq), Mzab, Chenoua, Tashelhit, Tagargrent,

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[1] Imazighen, Berber, or Amazigh are all widely used in the literature, but Imazighen is the preferred term among many people in Algeria. *Berber* and *Tamazight* serve as umbrella terms for the language itself. Berber belongs to the Afro-Asiatic language family, which includes Semitic, Cushitic, Egyptian, and Chadic languages. Berber stretches from Siwa in Egypt to the Canary Islands in the Atlantic Ocean, and from the Mediterranean coast to Niger River in the Sahara.

[2] The diglossic nature of Arabic is usually ignored by its speakers. People use *Standard Arabic* (*Fuṣḥa*) and *Algerian Arabic* (*Dārja*) interchangeably. Both are simply named *Arabic* (ʿ*Arabiyya*). Algerian Arabic, like other varieties of Arabic, is well known for having regional sub-varieties.

Temacine, Tidikelt, Tarifit, and Taznatit. Despite having represented over 50 per cent of the Algerian population in 1830 (Benrabah 2013: 24), nowadays the Tamazight-speaking population constitutes a minority of the population. Since the 1960s, and arguably before, the Arabic-speaking population vastly increased numerically and, importantly, became the governing class. However, while Arabic has gained salience as the language of nationalism and 'unity', French (*Fr*) continues to dominate the political and economic scenes, with a significant challenge from English (*Eng*) among the younger generation. In order to understand the current linguistic situation, it is important to shed some light on the development of language policies in the country over recent decades (before 1960, 1960–90, and post-1990). In doing so, I also briefly highlight the top-down policy of Arabisation and bottom-up policy of promoting Tamazight. Top-down policy here refers to policy decisions implemented and imposed by an executive governmental body, while bottom-up policy is mainly initiated by grassroots activism, where individuals and communities are the impetus for change.

French colonisation, lasting for 132 years (1830–1962), has had an impact on the social and linguistic situation in Algeria. Along with a strict policy of assimilation, France introduced the country to European settlement, displacing and dispossessing farmers, mostly Imazighen, to provide fertile lands to the 'colons' or settlers. These zones were re-populated later by Arabophones (Grandguillaume 1996; Chaker 1998). The French also used a policy of ethnic division to maintain control. They created the 'Berber Myth', where Imazighen, especially Kabyle, were portrayed as descendants of Europeans.[3] They promoted the idea of two different ethnic groups, i.e., Arabs and Imazighen, subject to different degrees of integration into the French culture. At a linguistic level, French was the official language of Algeria in 1848 and Arabic a foreign language by law in 1938. Moreover, between 1914 and 1954, 2 million Algerians, out of fewer than 10 million, had lived in France and mastered French, of which Kabyle represent a significant number (Benrabah 2013).

By the time of independence in 1962, Algeria was left destroyed and the implications were clear at all levels. Many Imazighen were displaced into regions other than their original communities, either within Algeria itself or abroad. Their number within Algeria dropped from 36.7 per cent in 1860 to 29.4 per cent in 1910 to 18.6 per cent in 1966 (Chaker 1998: 13; Kateb 2005: 95; Valensi 1969: 29). Linguistically, Standard Arabic was declared the only official language despite the absence of qualified Arabic teachers. French was relegated to the status of a foreign language but remained the preferred working language in government and urban society. Accordingly, students

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[3] Kabyle is the largest Amazigh group in Algeria. In the 'Berber Myth', Imazighen were praised for their religious heterogeneity and flexibility in contrast to Arabs (Benrabah 2013: 27). Imazighen were stereotypically identified as sedentary, living in the mountains, and liberal as opposed to Arabs, who were pictured as nomadic, living in the plains, and Muslim (Lorcin 2014).

who obtained an education in Arabic without proficiency in French had fewer prospects in the job market (Le Roux 2017).

Economic decline, resulting from the oil price collapse in 1986, fuelled social discontent and led to the 'Black October' riots of 1988 and civil unrest throughout the 1990s. While many observers claim that religious and political factors are to blame for the civil conflict (1990–2000), Testas (2001) argues that there is a strong connection between economic decline—indicated by high inequality, low productivity, and unemployment—and political instability. This suggests that, while religious 'fundamentalism' and a lack of democracy remain significant, they were not alone the cause of the conflict. The popularity and influence of the 'Islamist' movement were mainly the result of the government's inability to keep its economic promises. The armed conflict, after the military cancellation of the parliamentary elections of December 1991, won by the Islamic Party,[4] lasted for a decade and resulted in complete socio-economic chaos. Estimates suggest that there were 100,000–200,000 victims (McDougall 2017: 291), millions of individuals displaced, and hundreds of qualified Francophone professionals forced into exile.

Since 1962, the regime in Algeria had used language as 'a proxy for conflict' (Benrabah 2013), and the school was a 'fertile ground for linguistic wars' (ibid.: 54). This situation was the result of deliberately placing languages in a hierarchy to represent different capital and ideologies. Tamazight was associated with regionalism and portrayed as a threat to national unity; Algerian Arabic was pictured as a combination of French and Arabic that is inadequate for education; French was a symbol of both colonialism and mobility, while Standard Arabic represented Islamisation, de-colonisation, and nation-building (Jacob 2020). Education was used to disseminate these narratives and served as a facilitator for upward mobility, appropriation, and legitimisation of language (Standard Arabic), religion, and behaviour (Rouabah 2020). Immediately after independence, a top-down approach of Arabisation, brought about by an authoritarian regime, was implemented with complete disregard for methodology, context, and popular sentiments. The main objective of the policy was to transform schools from a French-based educational system to an Arabic-based one, without any consideration of Tamazight. The process has an impact on media, public sphere, and the workplace. Le Roux (2017) critiques the Arabisation approach and argues that opting for multilingualism would have ultimately advanced education in Algeria. In fact, Arabisation has remained virtually non-existent within higher education in scientific and technical specialties such as medicine, science, and engineering (ibid.). In these fields at the university level, French has generally remained the language of instruction and research.[5] Despite the continuous efforts to 'arabise' these disciplines

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[4] The party called for Islam as the law of the government, Arabic its sole language, and it promised complete economic change.

within higher education, implementation has continued to be a challenge as there is a high demand for proficiency in French to access the job market. Chaouche (2005), in a study in the second largest Algerian city, Oran, found that a significant majority of university students felt that teaching in Algeria should be bilingual in Arabic and French (35 per cent) or multilingual (46 per cent) and that Algeria is in need of a multilingual reform (49 per cent).

With regard to Tamazight, its place in Algerian politics was noticeable. After banning a lecture by the Kabyle activist and author Mouloud Maammeri on Tamazight poetry in Tizi Ouzou, a Berber civil disobedience movement began in Tizi Ouzou, then spread throughout the country in March 1980. Demonstrators had two main demands: a change to the status of Tamazight and the use of Algerian Arabic instead of Standard Arabic. They called for 'Tamazight di Lakul' (i.e., Tamazight in school) and 'Le berbère et L'arabe parlé = langues officielles' (i.e., Berber and spoken Arabic as official languages) (Gordon 1985: 138). The police crackdown on striking students caused more than 30 deaths and hundreds of casualties. The event became known as the Berber Spring. Kabyle people, however, continued to resist. The school boycott for the whole academic year (1994–5) touched all levels of education from primary through higher education programmes and persisted, despite some opposition, until President Zeroual passed a decree to create the *High Commission for Berber Affairs* (HCA) in order to promote Tamazight as part of the Algerian identity. Accordingly, a pilot programme for teaching Tamazight in secondary schools, after having already established two departments for teaching Tamazight language and culture at a university level, was launched in the Kabyle region. In contrast, other Berberophone regions received little attention because of the apparent lack of interest among its speakers in the territory and the lack of instructors and materials. In April 2001, a *gendarme* shot dead a young Kabyle, and a social explosion burst out against discrimination and injustice. Consequently, around 123 protesters were killed and hundreds wounded within a month (Benrabah 2004: 104). This has come to be known as Black Spring. Before parliamentary elections were due in spring 2002, and to ensure Imazighen's participation in the electoral process, President Bouteflika named Tamazight as the second national language on the 7th of April. Not long after winning the elections, he announced that, while Tamazight had been declared a national language, Arabic must and would remain the only official language (Liberté, El-Watan, sep. 2005, cited in McDougall 2010: 31).

Despite the lack of political will and support, Tamazight was announced as an official language in 2016. Nevertheless, the issue of writing Tamazight has been a subject of continued controversy. Three scripts are used for its writing: Tifinagh, Arabic,

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[5] The language policy for higher education in Algeria maintains using SA for literary disciplines and French in scientific and technical ones, with a recent plan to shift from French to English. However, the plan is still debatable.

and Latin, each motivated by different political and ideological reasons. Many Kabyle speakers prefer the Latin script for Tamazight as they perceive it as 'simple, good, most accommodative, and scientific' (Rouabah 2020), but this script is used recursively as a link to French and colonialism. It remains, however, the preferred orthography among all teachers of Tamazight and the one currently used in classrooms. On the other hand, Touaregs advocate for Tifinagh as they have maintained its use over the centuries. Many activists and parents similarly argue for preserving the authenticity of the language and a 'full' revival of its distinctiveness. Some of the younger generation (i.e., students in governmental schools) and politicians advocate for the use of the Arabic script for Tamazight, which they claim sustains unity in the region. The script, for them, indexes the language and, by extension, Muslim identity (ibid.), similar to the case that has been described in Kenya where piety is linked to language and understanding of the Quran that is in return strongly attached to purity (Parkin 2003). The choice of the script remains vital in language planning at school. Yet, the 'choice model' followed by the government falls short in responding to the conflicting interests of programme managers, school directors, teachers, parents, and students. Errihani (2006) argues the choice of the Tifinagh script in Morocco is similarly ideological and not practical due to the lack of pedagogical training, whereas Mostari (2009) claims that the preference for the Latin alphabet by Algerians, for both Tamazight and Algerian Arabic, makes clear the importance of French in the society.

Another problem facing the revival of Tamazight is standardisation, a process linked to the movement calling for identity differentiation (Soulaimani 2016). Although standardisation offers some benefit for using a unified Tamazight language in classrooms, the process enforces homogeneity over a language that is inherently diverse and variable (Milroy 2001) and, in some cases, favours one variety over another (such as Kabyle, for example, over Chaouia or Tamahaq), which leads to further regional conflicts. Unifying linguistic components of these different Tamazight varieties presents a case of linguistic erasure, a process that 'renders some persons and activities invisible' (Irvine & Gal 2000: 38) by undermining the local intimate qualities of mother tongues. Likewise, El-Aissati, Karsmakers, and Kurvers (2011) consider the gradual introduction of a standardised form of Tamazight in Moroccan schools a serious challenge due to the difficulties inherent in combining the different varieties.

The status of French and English, as foreign languages, is as conflicted and rivalrous as the status of Arabic and Tamazight, the national languages (Zaboot 2007). To understand how French and English are framed with respect to multilingualism in Algeria, it is important to briefly explain their history of use. Since 1962, eliminating French has continued to be challenging, and the elite, who were promoting Arabisation for the public, maintained its use as an operational medium for science, economy, upward mobility, and education (Achab 2012; Benrabah 2013; McDougall 2011). This policy ensured the maintenance of the elite's social inequality and power,

leading to 'a crisis of legitimacy' (Holt 1994: 40). Nowadays, French is taught in schools, starting from grade 3. It is still the main medium of scientific research and a necessary badge for the job market, social mobility, and administrative services. Urbanisation, Benrabah (2005) argues, further favours its spread over Arabic, and therefore upholds its privileged position in the linguistic market. On the other hand, English is rarely used outside schools. Despite this, English has recently been gaining a large audience, especially in the oil industry, computing, and scientific documentation, but also as a linguistic agent of promoting peace (Belmihoub, 2012). Benrabah observes that 'the more Algeria became arabized with Arabic displacing French as a medium of instruction, the more demands for English increased' (2013: 90). In other words, despite representing colonisation, French still carries stronger economic and social capital in Algeria, and because Arabic alone cannot serve all the academic and professional needs of its people, there is a need for another foreign language, English in particular, for both de-colonisation and globalisation (Benrabah 2013). In 1993, the ministry of education made it possible for parents to choose between French and English for their children in primary school. However, this top-down educational intervention failed the same year; more than 73 per cent of parents and 52 per cent of teachers preferred the maintenance of French, and the total number of pupils who chose English between 1993 and 1997 was less than 2 per cent (Benrabah 2013).

In summary, the above section contextualised and discussed the development of language planning in Algeria before and after independence. It highlighted the ideological stances behind the top-down language policies and how language and identity issues were used as divisive tools for Algerians, mainly through schools. The ongoing linguistic conflict reflects three layers of tension: Tamazight and Algerian Arabic vs. Standard Arabic, Standard Arabic vs. French, and French vs. English. Linking Arabisation with Islamisation, Tamazight with regionalism and separation, French with colonialism and the job market, and English with globalisation has generated extensive debate around the contradictions between language policy and practice. For instance, whereas the language-in-education policy across primary, middle, and secondary schools maintains its support for the usage of Standard Arabic as a medium of instruction, higher education and mobility demand the usage of French. These top-down policies serve to enlarge the social class gap and are continuously challenged by students through their usage of Algerian Arabic or preference of English over French, for example. These attitudes and practices are further illustrated in the sections below.

The field sites of the study

As mentioned earlier, this paper examines language planning and language attitudes as well as linguistic practices among Tamazight-speaking and Arabic-speaking

communities in Algeria. To that end, it utilises sociolinguistic interviews, surveys, and ethnographic observations. The study is informed by onsite fieldwork between August 2017 and November 2020 in multiple settings in East Algeria, including educational institutions in Berber- and Arabic-speaking regions. These were four governmental middle schools (i.e., grade 6–9, ages 12–16) where Standard Arabic, Tamazight, French, and English are all taught as subjects, while Arabic is still the main medium of instruction in other subjects such as science or history. The cities under examination are Batna, a majority Berber Chaouia community with some Arabs, and Setif, a majority Arabic-speaking community with some Kabyle and Chaouia speakers. Empirical data were gathered based on observation both inside and outside classrooms (25 hours), group and individual interviews mainly with parents, teachers, and students of different educational backgrounds (55 participants), and questionnaire surveys. The surveys were distributed both face-to-face and online to more than 450 respondents, including students, teachers, parents, activists, and members of the public.[6] The main questions in the survey and interviews centred around: language usage in families, schools, and public domains; language attitudes and issues of identity and language policies; and the effects of some political, historical, and socio-economic processes on language use and multilingualism in the region.

The school community is ethno-linguistically diverse and multilingual. Arabophones, Francophones, and different Imazighen work together to teach Arabs and Imazighen (mainly Chaouia and some Kabyle). Nonetheless, each of them comes with certain linguistic preferences and ideologies. Teachers—as policy actors—are central in reproducing or challenging inequalities, subordination, and exclusion through the implementation of policy, challenging or transforming the official discourse (Valdiviezo 2009). While the government introduces these policies, the teachers guide and control their use in the classroom. Their opinions and practices are important in shaping the local understanding of social structures and contesting the traditional linguistic hierarchy. Therefore, Heller and Martin-Jones (2001) rightly identify classrooms, in multilingual settings, as significant sites for the (re)production of cultural identity and social inequality. Failure to accept multilingualism and diversity would have dramatic effects on the community.

Monolingualism in schools

Education generates social control through its legitimacy (Williams 1992), particularly with regard to arguments relating to ex-colonial, official, national, minority, and

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[6] Some of these data were part of my PhD fieldwork (Rouabah 2020).

indigenous languages. The role of school is vital because of its consistent use and mis-use of language(s) as 'ideological constructs' (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas 2013: 508). This section discusses language practices at school and the reasons behind these practices.

In terms of preference, when asked '*Which language would you prefer to be used as a medium of instruction in your local school?*', the questionnaire data show that SA and AA were the most favoured languages mainly by middle-school level students, but also their parents (see Table 1). English, interestingly, scored higher than French and Tamazight, for reasons to be discussed later.

In terms of the reported language use at school (see Table 2), the questionnaire data reveals that the usage of Tamazight varieties and foreign languages is not viewed as important, whereas Arabic is overwhelmingly used by almost 80 per cent of the respondents. SA is the most widely used language (40 per cent), followed by AA (38 per cent), with only a minor difference between the two. Despite the fact that lan-guage-in-education policy only supports the usage of SA as the medium of instruc-tion, AA is actually challenging SA and expanding into the school domain, which traditionally marginalised local varieties.

Despite the varied attitudes towards AA, almost everyone agrees it is central to Algerian identity. The attitudes of the respondents ranged between impurity, also reported previously by Benrabah (2007), uniqueness, flexibility, and creativity. The views of Ahmed and Lynda presented below reflect common narratives among young people.

> Dārja [AA] has become more like the real official language. They took Standard Arabic, changed it and added some French to it and created this Dārja. The majority of Algerians know nothing in Standard Arabic, whether we are speaking about lay people or politicians and the elite. Schooling is in Dārja, everything is in Dārja. (Ahmed)
>
> Dārja [AA], for me, is Arabic and French. It is both languages in one. It is an alien dialect. I do not know if I consider it a language in the first place. It has no history, but it is uniting us. I like it, as it is simpler than the standard. (Lynda)

In the classroom context, a puristic attitude in favour of SA still prevails. Students report being constantly reminded of the inferior position of AA. For teachers, par-ticularly of Arabic, SA represents not only beauty and prestige but also religion. SA is portrayed as 'sacred' or 'holy' due to its relation with Islam (see also Daoudi 2018). For a long time, SA has been perceived as the symbol of nation, unity, urbanity, and education. These values have been promoted by the state through media and school.

Table 1. Preferences for the medium of instruction.

Language	SA	AA	MZG	Fr	Eng
Preference	30%	30%	15%	8%	17%

Table 2. Language(s) use at school.

Language	SA	AA	MZG	Fr	Eng
Use	40%	38%	12%	8%	2%

Haeri (2003) comments that people in Egypt feel they are custodians of the language rather than its speakers. Despite this strong position, the use of SA at school is steadily decreasing in the face of AA. Moreover, while Arabic might be 'glorified as an object, it is not always valued as a tool' (Davies & Bentahila 2013: 89).

Tamazight, on the other hand, indexes rurality, illiteracy, and secularism as well as lack of opportunities (Rouabah 2020). It is mostly viewed as a 'competitor' for Arabic and a 'colonial project', similar to Almasude's (2014) and El-Aissati's (2005) findings in Morocco. The long history of discrimination of Tamazight is evidenced by ongoing major challenges for its use in schools at status, corpus, and acquisition planning levels. Many parents openly expressed their lack of enthusiasm about the value of teaching their children Tamazight because of its low social and economic capital (see Errihani 2006). Khelkhal and Touati (2018) reported that, except for teachers of Tamazight, all other teachers expressed a clear rejection of teaching Tamazight. These attitudes strongly influence identity perception. Most young Imazighen perceive themselves as Arabs. The following quotes by three teachers not only identify the crucial role of schools in linking Arabisation with Islamisation but also illustrate how they systematically generate a 'false' identity and perception in the community.

> Tamazight is a political project. It is the reason behind ethnic, regional and religious conflicts. (Musa)
> The majority perceive themselves as Arabs or at least convince themselves so. … Religion is becoming their identity. There are few who know they are Imazighen! (Moudi)
> Tamazight is a mere symbol. It means nothing to me. I started to hear about it only recently with politics. (Mira)

These extracts demonstrate the strong tension between Imazighen activists calling for the promotion of Tamazight and the Arabic-speaking group (both Imazighen who were arabised through school and family socialisation, and the Arabs). Considering that the communities under investigation are ethno-linguistically mixed, the pressure of the second category's opposition to teaching Tamazight in schools is strong and continues to feed into negative attitudes towards using Tamazight inside and outside educational institutions. This hinders the progress of language revitalisation efforts and full access to Tamazight education and literacy.

Interestingly, when participants were asked about '*the current official languages in Algeria*', few people considered Tamazight as 'official' (10 per cent), an equal score to French. The lack of institutional support for Tamazight and its low presence in media and schools reflects its continuous marginalisation, even as a national official

language. Participants, surprisingly, also selected AA as an official language, with 25 per cent responses second only to SA (55 per cent). This choice was justified by the dominance of AA in public, schools, media, and workplace. For participants, the increasing usage of AA even among politicians, to compensate for their low competence in SA compared to French, is sufficient for perceiving AA as a second official language instead of Tamazight.

Contrary to teachers in The Gambia who regularly use local languages in the classroom for pragmatic and pedagogic needs (McGlynn 2013), teachers in Batna and Setif consider the use of Tamazight or Chaouia by their students as a sign of disrespect. Many students were discouraged when using it in my presence; others were penalised. Language, hence, is used to impose authority and enforce 'respect'. Teachers' shaming of students, particularly boys, when using their mother tongue is reflective of the imposition of this attitude (see an example of such classroom interactions below). By reproducing the perception of Arabic as the language of power in the classroom and reinforcing the low status of local languages, teachers are imposing a monolingual language-in-education policy on a multilingual community. Students, accordingly, internalise such values associated with each language within the school system but sometimes make them explicit, too. In many instances, I witnessed young individuals (mostly students) mocking their Tamazight-speaking parents or grandparents for their accents or perceived 'mistakes' in Arabic.

> Teacher (in SA): So, what does this text imply? What does unify you as Algerians?
> Student -1- (in Tamazight): many things, like koskous and misery and …
> <Students laugh>
> Teacher (in SA): You better behave yourself. When you answer, you use SA. Next time, you will leave the class. The question is clear. There are important elements for Algerian identity. Think about Arabic for example.
> Student -2- (in AA): I thought Tamazight is our language, sir!
> Teacher (in SA): It is your language in this region, but not the language of all Algerians.

With regard to English and French at school, their usage is very limited outside of their respective classes. Students, as well as teachers, report strong negative attitudes towards French and the increasing positive perception of English. When my questionnaire participants were asked about which language they would prefer to be removed from school as subjects and potential mediums of instruction, French topped the list (40 per cent), followed by Tamazight (15 per cent). The rest (45 per cent of respondents), however, responded that they would like to maintain all current languages. While Arabic and English are portrayed as instruments of de-colonisation and globalisation, French is seen as linked to brutal colonialism (Benrabah 2013). In the same line of thought, when asked which language they assume would be dominant in the future in Algeria, the majority named English (52 per cent), while Arabic and French

only scored (15 per cent). The following quotes represent the frequently reported perceptions.

> English is the future. It is the language of liberation and end of colonialism that lived with us for so long. It is the language of research, technology and power. (Sam)
> I hate French. It is beautiful but it carries bitter memories of the coloniser and France. I prefer English, it is easier and more practical. It is the language of the globe. (Hana)

Yet, the possibility of English superseding French in the Algerian linguistic market largely depends on future socio-economic reforms. Many middle-aged and elderly people, as well as the elite and Kabyle speakers, believe French should be maintained, as SA fails to meet the young people's aspirations for industrialisation, science, and mobility (Benrabah 2007). In a study in the Kabyle region, 83 per cent of the youth showed a preference for French as the language of future opportunity, while associating SA with dictatorship and oppression (Zaboot 2007). Algeria's hydrocarbons and energy industry, the backbone of the Algerian economy, creates the highest demand for English education in the country. Meanwhile, media, information, and communication technologies, as well as public educational institutions, still provide limited exposure to English and French, which continue to dominate the private education sector, with less access for the majority of people. A high demand for opening the economy to the international market and foreign investments might be the only way for English to gain stronger ground in Algeria.

Multilingualism outside schools

Contrary to many majority groups, language tends to be perceived as key to identity and group solidarity among minorities (Bhat 2017; Romaine 2013; Sallabank 2010; Williams 2008). Language choice in multilingual societies thus represents a link between history, social organisation, and an aggregation of identities. Despite the English-only policy used in Malawian universities, for example, teachers and students were in favour of multilingualism and the use of both English and Chichewa (Reilly 2019). Similarly in Algeria, the majority of participants were supportive of multilingualism, both in higher education and public life, and saw it as an empowering way to understand each other and to further enrich the Algerian identity. When asked if they prefer having one language that unifies all of them, interviewees favoured diversity and argued that every language has its own domain of significance and value:

> The world is diverse by nature, we should learn more. All languages are good and each one has its own value within its space. I use Berber at home, but Arabic in public and French in the workplace. And to communicate with the world now, we need to speak English. (Sara)

When asked '*Which language do you need for the job market nowadays?*', AA topped the list (47 per cent), followed by an equal choice of French and SA (20 per cent), while English was limited to 10 per cent of respondents (Table 3). Despite the positive attitudes towards English in general, most respondents are aware of the current limitations of its use in the job market.

For the language of technology in Algeria (Table 4), French scored the highest as the dominant language for sciences and technological devices (45 per cent), with a slight challenge from SA and English. On the contrary, the usage of Tamazight remains very limited in practice, particularly when not among intimate networks or at home.

However, the persistent presence of SA here can be misleading. Errihani (2008) argues that the choice of Standard Arabic as a useful language in public is simply the result of either feelings of loyalty to the Arab ethnicity or feelings of guilt associated with people having abandoned Arabic in favour of French. Participants usually feel that the promotion of it, even when not spoken by many, is part of defending and asserting Muslim identity. This apparent conflict between the will to have economic capital through French usage, as Errihani (2008) observes, and the feeling of responsibility to publicly support Arabic, transcends the individual level to be part of the government's discourse promoting Arabic and implicitly using French.

The lack of capital associated with Tamazight is also linked to numerous factors. Language policies are not enough to change the status of the language in public and improve the economic situation of Imazighen or alter the attitudes of the Arabic-speaking majority. In fact, many parents compare teaching Tamazight to the early policy of Arabisation, symbolising lack of training and opportunities in the future, as it targets those speakers in rural areas, while urban dwellers send their children to private schools to learn foreign languages instead (see also Errihani 2008 and Buckner 2006). One Amazigh parent stated:

> my children are not for experiments; the state wants us to teach them Tamazight while they send their kids to learn French and English; they want us to remain poor and illiterate. If they really wanted to promote it, they would have implemented it in all schools. (Salim)

As far as English is concerned, its perception as a 'neutral' language and a 'decolonial' tool to renew social and political hierarchies is clear (Jacob 2020), an opinion that is usually shared by both its users and non-users. This explains why its spread and promotion is seen as a positive step and an opportunity to overcome the previous colonial

Table 3. The language of the job market.

Language	AA	SA	Fr	Eng	MZG
Percentage	47%	20%	20%	10%	3%

Table 4. The language of technology.

Language	Fr	SA	Eng	AA	Tamazight
Percentage	48%	21%	21%	8%	2%

rules and policies, and subsequently overcome the 'crisis' of French. Language planning is political, but its ideological and psychological impact is also strong. At the level of the individual, English is signalled as a solution to all economic, political, educational, and social failures (Millani 2000). Yet, the implications of these narratives and attitudes are complex in practice.

In general, participants practice code-switching and translanguaging depending on the domain (e.g., home, market, workplace, hospital, or administration) and the addressee (educated or uneducated, old or young, urban or rural, male or female, etc.). When asked what language they mostly use in public, the overwhelming majority (80 per cent) recalled that monolingualism is an obstacle and exhibited use of both Algerian Arabic and Amazigh varieties (Chaouia or Kabyle), and sometimes French. One participant, Aisha, for instance, attributes the complexity of the answer to this question to the surrounding context, educational background of the speaker, and their socialisation patterns. She adds 'we don't use one language all the time, we can't. It is always changing depending on where you are, what for and to whom you are speaking; we mix languages. That is what we do. I might be speaking Arabic for a minute then shift to French then back to Berber'. Surely, as language attitudes shift and other major language policies are enforced, language practices in education, workplace, and public will take another track.

Discussion and conclusion

The preceding attitudes towards different languages have practical implications as to whether the language will be used, in education and more generally, or not. In the case of Tamazight, for instance, while positive attitudes contributed to the maintenance of Siwi in Egypt (Serreli 2016) and Kabyle (Bektache 2009) and Chaouia in the Massif (Guedjiba 2012), negative perceptions led to a shift towards Arabic among Touaregs in Libya (Adam 2017) and Imazighen in Tunisia (Gabsi 2011). Language practices, accordingly, are the result of decades of unplanned language policies. They reflect social injustice, hegemony, and re-distribution of power resources in the market such as education and class (Bourdieu 1990; Blommaert 2003).

Education, with its built-in judgements, only legitimises the socio-economic inequalities and biased perceptions by providing hierarchies for language use and making them appear natural (Crossley 2003). The inequalities, in this case, are mostly based on social

class, urban–rural background, and ethnicity, but are mediated by language. The school uses specific linguistic forms that only children from privileged (dominant) backgrounds have had access to in their past socialisation. Children from lower social classes who share the same habitus and language face more challenges at school and, so, have higher rates of failure (see also Haeri 2009). For instance, the school provides privileges to the Arabic-speaking majority based on the assumption that everyone speaks a variety of Arabic natively. This puts Tamazight speakers in a position of managing both AA and SA in order to be able to compete in the field of education and literacy. Furthermore, the introduction of Tamazight for Berber speakers and its poor management adds to the dilemma of learning the standard form of Tamazight along with their native varieties. Similarly, providing a monolingual arabised system at middle and secondary schools, then setting French as a medium of instruction for science at universities, places those bilinguals/multilinguals from urban settings in a favourable position.

In retrospect, the linguistic complexity in Algeria is not unique. Language contact, multilingualism, and conflict are common worldwide, including elsewhere in Africa. It is not rare to see foreign languages taking the lead while African languages are relegated to the back seat of both political and public life due to the governmental disregard for the relationship between language, literacy, and economic development (see Blommaert 2003). The most visible example is their minimal usage in national and local legislature (Beukes 2009). In South Africa, for example, 11 languages have been granted 'official' language status, but government functions are almost exclusively executed in English. In many cases, the colonial languages become the official languages in practice. The proclamation of languages as official, national, or regional imposes a power and status hierarchy among not only the languages but also the speakers of these languages (Banda 2009). In the Ghanaian context, the shift involves three or more languages; Ghanaians shift from one minor indigenous Ghanaian language to a major regional one and subsequently or concurrently to English (Bodomo *et al.* 2009). Horesh (2020: 23) maintains that 'it is the speakers of the language that shape not only matters of "attitude" and "identity," but also how the languages they speak evolve and orient toward one another'. Put differently, speakers of any language are critical for any action to take place, whether regarding identity revival or loss, multilingualism or planned monolingualism, through their linguistic practices, attitudes, and pressure on policymakers. In its early revitalisation years, the provision of Welsh-medium and bilingual education, for instance, was almost entirely the result of the strong collective pressure that parents exerted on authorities (Williams 2014). Also, the process of encouraging stable bilingualism in Irish Gaelic and English since the 1970s included promoting Gaelic outside the Gaeltacht areas and was driven by local activism and language planning (Laoire 2005).

In this article, I have illustrated the link and, sometimes, contradiction between language policies, language ideologies, and language practices in Algeria, using qualitative data and

analysis from various sources—interviews, surveys, and ethnographic observations—in an attempt to bring this issue closer to those interested in Africa. The article highlights several factors that have been responsible for the complexity reflected in today's linguistic situation in Algeria; some are historical, while others are political and socio-economic. Officialising Tamazight and promoting English are two clear illustrations of how speech communities can affect language policy, regardless of the diverse reactions to these bottom-up changes. Despite the insignificant presence of Tamazight and English in the school domain, and the continuing support for Standard Arabic in public and French in the job market, the linguistic daily practices of individuals are characterised by inclusive multilingualism. Code-switching and translanguaging are the norm, and all languages are present in different domains for different purposes. Therefore, the Algerian state may best serve its people by encouraging multilingual practices and language versatility both in schools and outside to reduce the links between language, ethnicity, history, and politics. Enabling people to develop their multilingual language portfolios, with equal access to resources, would avoid another return to monolingualism. Language policy should blend the 'minority' with the 'majority' and the local with the international to allow the young people to correctly understand and celebrate their past while at the same time feeling equipped for their future (Bouchard 2019).

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Which multilingualism do you speak?
Translanguaging as an integral part of
individuals' lives in the Casamance, Senegal

Miriam Weidl

Abstract: Senegal is a West African country that is highly diverse and multilingual on a societal and individual level. Multilingualism is used in most interactions of peoples' everyday lives in a translanguaging fashion. Yet, beside some small efforts, the only official language in the institutional sector and education remains French. However, educational systems and language policies do not reflect the reality of the people they are created for since monolingualism often only plays a minor role in their lives. Based on empirical data collected in the Casamance, this article focuses in particular on these issues through displaying multilingualism as an adapting system that moves within the social environments while integrating different languages, intermixed in a way that is appropriate for its speakers in respective situations. On the basis of case examples, concepts are presented for the reinforcement of multilingualism with potential to strengthen local languages and cultures from the inside out.

Note on the author: Miriam Weidl is a (socio)linguist with a background in African studies and anthropology and is currently working as a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Helsinki. Her research is based in West Africa, especially focusing on southern Senegal. Her interest is aimed at multilingualism, the use of multiple languages in different situations of life, the diversity of individuals' linguistic repertoires and the alternation of language during conversations, which is highly connected to people's social realties, experiences aims and moods. She finished her PhD at SOAS, University of London, as part of the Crossroads Team (soascrossroads.org) and is a founding member of the LILIEMA project (www.liliema.com), which constitutes the basis of her postdoctoral research. She is currently investigating translanguaging practices and the connectedness of multilingual language use and social settings through in-depth ethnographic research and focuses on a better description and understanding of linguistic realities.
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1 Introduction: the monolingualisms in multilingualism

Large parts of the world are ruled either monolingually, pursuing the nation-state model to create hypothetical homogeneity and unity, or multilingually, in a few languages. In this scenario, multilingualism is broadly understood as the utilisation of more than one clearly defined monolingual system, a phenomenon that often does not do justice to the complexity of multilingualism.

Supporting official societal multilingualism concerning mainly the institutional sector yields benefits for individuals in culturally and linguistically diverse areas but also bears high potential for exclusion. This is, for example, the case of the Nordic countries (Björklund *et al.* 2013), which, compared to many places in the Global South, host a rather low number of languages spoken by the majority of inhabitants. The system fails weaker cultural and linguistic groups, who suffer disadvantages. In the Western world, language and national identity are intertwined concepts that perform well for many (Davis & Dubinsky 2018; Simpson 2008), yet prescribed identity markers often do not hold for all groups of speakers.

In the Global South, most people's lived realities are characterised by high cultural diversity and complexity, which go hand in hand with applied societal and individual multilingualism (Evans 2018; Ndhlovu & Makalela 2021). Yet, official institutional systems, all over West Africa (and many other parts of the world), are preoccupied by monolingualisms. Here, we face a conundrum; on the one hand, policy and education makers try to enable education through a reduction of diversity with language as a medium but not the aim, while, on the other hand, many researchers of multilingualism try to emphasise the importance of exactly this diversity for equality, (self-)development and even conflict-management. The essential basis for cooperation, however, is lacking.

In Senegal, the official language is French only, even though only an extremely small minority of inhabitants (partly) identifies as French and neither use the French language in their private spheres nor identify with French culture (Ngom 2003). Within multilingual Senegalese societies, fluid linguistic practices carry little to no resemblance to linguistic applications within the official systems. It is impossible to ignore this fact, as limited approaches to linguistic inclusion and promotion of major Senegalese languages (like Wolof, Pulaar, Sereer and Joola) in different official sectors are made. Although appreciated by many speakers who clearly identify with the chosen languages, for others, implementations are likely to be received as just another conflicting language policy that creates division and potentially weakens smaller ethno-linguistic groupings. Thereby, part of the main problem seems to be a misunderstanding of multilingualism: the use of a multitude of monolingualisms, inadequately entitled as 'multilingualism' without further explanation in education or politics,[1] neglects the speakers' realities while disregarding widespread

translanguaging practices (Blommaert *et al.* 2015; Canagarajah 2012; Canagarajah & Wurr 2011).

More attention needs to be drawn to the multiplicity of existing multilingualisms, which cannot and should not simply be replaced by monolingual practices in every sphere. Nevertheless, the formal inclusion of several languages (or multilingualism) in institutional and educational sectors poses a huge difficulty, and efforts made by governmental agencies might always struggle to meet everybody's needs. Yet, a step towards an involved discussion in order to establish an inclusive approach, creating awareness of wider macro- and micro-societal issues, is a general rethinking of the concept of multilingualism itself.

This paper contributes to a more in-depth understanding of multilingualism by displaying it as an adapting system that moves within the social realities of its speakers and integrates different languages, definitions, lects and styles that are intermixed in a way that is appropriate for the respective situation. In the following section, I therefore briefly discuss conceptualisations and terminologies surrounding multilingualism; then, in section 3, I focus on the macrolinguistic and sociolinguistic environment in Senegal and the Casamance. In section 4, I present the diversity of language use through translanguaging examples of multilingual repertoire users in two very different contexts. I demonstrate that daily realities are rather far removed from a centralised, often urban-based elite and the official institutional system. One example shows a private conversation in a household; the other presents data collected in a more formal LILIEMA[2] course setting. Section 5 is dedicated to reflecting on the highly multilingual individuals who live in strict monolingual official systems as well as the needed adaptation of research, showing the relevance of various perspectives on situations and data. The final section concludes with an outlook on possible improvements that could arise for multilingual people, especially being part of small-scale language ecologies through a better understanding of multilingualism as well as a greater collaboration of research, educational institutions and politics.

[1] Within the Senegalese Government, for instance, 'national languages' (that is, local Senegalese languages with a rather undetermined national status) and their use are accepted as working languages alongside French, as long as they are understood by all attendees. This framework supports the use of widespread Senegalese languages (Wolof, Sereer, Pulaar etc.), which in higher political levels often get translated to French by interpreters (Diallo 2010)—a system led by the presupposition that 'multilingualism' is the result of subjoining more than one standardised language with clear language borders.

[2] LILIEMA is a project that aims to empower multilingual speakers to use, read and write the languages in their repertoires in a way that is appropriate for them and is of use for their personal needs. For more information, see section 4.2 or www.liliema.com.

2 Conceptualisations and terminologies surrounding multilingualism

This chapter deals with a brief conceptualisation of multilingualism as a backdrop to the empirical analysis presented below. Various schools of thought widely agree on the fact that multilingualism can be found everywhere on the globe; recent years have seen a great expansion of research into multilingualism, in not only volume, but also methodology (Blackledge & Creese 2010a; Evans 2018; Otsuji & Pennycook 2010; Stavans & Hoffmann 2015 a.o.). Nevertheless, multilingual speakers and their environments can vary widely, and multiple approaches are needed for various contexts, aiming to enrich each other in order to create a broader understanding of multilingualism (Aronin & Hufeisen 2009; Edwards 2012; Kemp 2009). Although most of the research concentrates on Western(ised) societies and the Global North, recent investigations focus more and more on multilingual, decentralised and (rural) small-scale ecologies, providing detailed insights into lived realities of multilingual repertoire users of the Global South, as it is the case for the present article (see e.g. Di Carlo *et al.* 2019; Evans 2018; Léglise 2017; Lüpke *et al.* 2020; Singer & Harris 2016b).

Notwithstanding more open-minded approaches, including more scholars from the Global South as well as various views on data and settings (see also Goodchild 2018; Weidl 2018), we are obliged to use the knowledge and terminologies originating from the Global North. However, many publications are part of the long tradition of Western scientists and missionaries researching according to their specific aims and needs while analysing from their sole points of view and must be understood as such and reconsidered in their individual context (Ndhlovu & Makalela 2021; Phipps 2019). Data veracity often presents as a matter of opinion; for instance, the description of monolingual societies and clearly delimited languages can be the result of the research projects having predefined, leading objectives. In this respect, the clear definition of 'a language' is a sociocultural and often also political abstraction and in many instances poorly reflects real life applications (Jørgensen *et al.* 2011: 26), which are central to this article.

Whereas special attention is often drawn to small or bigger scale institutional mono/multilingualism, much more complex societal multilingualism as well as translanguaging practices have probably always existed. Languaging or translanguaging are concepts that accept all mixtures in language use as natural and real (Canagarajah 2012; Wei 2018). Rather than a counting of standardised languages, translanguaging recognises that actual language is far more complex and comprises many factors, going far beyond 'a named language'. Real-life language use is analysed in its context, without restrictions of standardisation (Blommaert & Backus 2012; Jørgensen *et al.* 2011; Toivanen & Saarikivi 2016). Translanguaging is subsequently also used as an approach and analytic tool in sociolinguistic research and incorporates not only language use but also social and societal context, situation-specific social interactions,

passive comprehension, any kind of body language and writing (Blackledge & Creese 2010b; Canagarajah 2011; Wei 2018).

In this context, multiculturality, diversity and superdiversity also play a significant role. Whereas multiculturality describes a situation in which an individual is partly a member of more than one cultural orientation (Vertovec 2007; Zarete *et al.* 2011), 'superdiversity' is understood as a concept going beyond diversity, without an obligation for a numerical measurement of language, culture or society (Blommaert & Backus 2012). Originating in a tremendous increase of diversity through faster globalisation and migration in the West, I would like to argue here that 'superdiversity' is also often a norm in the Global South, yet is additionally encouraged by globalisation and migration (Blommaert *et al.* 2015; Jørgensen *et al.* 2011; Toivanen & Saarikivi 2016). Similar to the Global North, labourers in particular originate from different places all over the world[3] and also settle in rural areas to conduct their business and live with their families. With superdiversity, a more in-depth approach is supported. This goes beyond a diversity of concealed concepts and instead integrates more complex, context-dependent concepts within individual interpretations of situations that are needed for the analysis of the empirical data presented below.

3 Senegal and the Casamance: sociolinguistic insights and macrolinguistic overview

3.1 Contemporary linguistic environment: repertoires and education

Senegal is one of many West African countries in which societal and individual multilingualism, including a huge number of languages, varieties and lects, determines private life but plays a relatively small role in official and educational institutions. The majority of the inhabitants of Senegal are highly multilingual; many speak more than four languages in often fluid and context-dependent practices. Here it must be emphasised that most of the languages are acquired orally though fluid languaging practices in which languages are often blended together. People's linguistic repertoires

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[3] In the area of interest, specialised labourers and traders selling beauty products and herbal remedies originate from all over Africa; Asian countries (India, Sri-Lanka, Bangladesh etc.) seem to be especially interested in the cashew crop, whereas Europeans and Americans are for example trading partners for peanuts in the Casamance. The road construction company fixing the biggest roads in the area are Spanish, however, employing Italians and Portuguese as well, all of whom leave family and regular workers behind. Additionally, many people (predominantly originating from other French-speaking countries) have families in the Casamance and are as present as regular researchers, NGOs and church members originating from all over the world, making the Casamance highly diverse—a diversity that increases even more in urban centres.

and their scopes of application are versatile and depend on individual (family) backgrounds, places lived, mobility, interests and experiences (Goodchild 2018; Lüpke & Storch 2013; Weidl 2018).

In Senegal, the linguistic situation can be described as versatile. Just under half of the population of the country at least partly identify with Wolof, which is also the most used language of wider communication in Senegal. Wolof is spoken by more than an estimated 90 per cent of the population, all over the country, and plays a considerable role in everyday lives for many people (Johnson 2005). The power of the language is irrefutable and outperforms French, with the result that some people in some areas fear 'Wolofisation', a theory of a forceful spread of Wolof, gradually devouring smaller, less powerful languages and even being co-responsible for language death (Keese 2016; McLaughlin 1995; O'Brien 1998).[4] Other languages, like Pulaar, Sereer, Mandinka, Joola or Soninke, are identity markers for a large number of people and play a role as regional languages of wider communication in different areas either next to Wolof or even replacing it in certain sectors. Furthermore, many small identity and patrimonial languages are spread all over the country, representing a huge diversity while creating and adding to the creation of (super)diverse personalities (Goodchild & Weidl 2019; Lüpke 2016, 2018; Weidl 2018).

The ex-colonial language French is the only official language of the institutional sector in Senegal, making the language a condition to accessing certain official services like education, politics, parts of the job market and often also economic success. A relatively small number of Senegal's inhabitants actually use French as a language in their daily conversations, which is reflected in statistical data about French proficiency:[5] depending on the source, a variety of French is regularly used only by approximately 15–20 per cent of the population, with a wider distribution amongst men than women (Bichler 2003). McLaughlin (2008) mentions that only 10 per cent of the population uses standard French in their daily conversations, and as an identity language, unmixed standard French is almost exclusively used by Senegalese families with French origin or roots in France (Ngom 2003).[6]

Public schools, with the exception of a few bilingual pilot-schools, use French only as a medium of instruction from year one. For the students attending these schools

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[4] Wolofisation is often perceived as a threat to languages and cultures all over the country; however, former research by Weidl (2018) in the southern parts of Senegal and Haust (1995) in The Gambia proved that neither Wolof nor globalisation and modernisation are threatening smaller but locally stable identity languages. Quite the opposite happens, and languages in people's linguistic repertoires seem to increase.

[5] The author observed that a much larger number of speakers in Senegal are able to communicate their needs in French (orally); they are not included in these statistics since their linguistic application is too far from the norm and/or they are not comfortable in French literacy practices.

[6] Similar observations were already mentioned by Dumont (1982), have not changed much since not long after Senegal's independence in 1960 and won't undergo radical changes soon.

who have had very different previous exposure to French, a certain proficiency or self-study is a precondition. Many students who previously did not have much contact with standard French are initially unable to follow the content of the courses and might only acquire French through listening, if they can remain in the system long enough (Fall 2013; Lüpke *et al.* 2021). Yet, due to the instrumentalisation of French and the creation of a statistically consistent French-using elite, standard French is largely associated with prestige, quality education, development and high social class (Ngom 2003). Nonetheless, theoretical efforts are made to integrate national languages into the official educational system throughout the country; a recommendation resulting from the *Assises de l'education du Senegal* (2014) (Senegalese education conference) is to create a language policy that includes local languages in the educational system all over the country, but particularly advises to be clear and coherent in the application of languages. However, as will become apparent throughout this chapter, these mono-lingual-based systems do not reflect people's linguistic realities, irrespective of the fact that homogenous language areas are culturally scarce and appropriate teaching materials are insufficient.

Moreover, Arabic plays a central role in Senegal as the language of the most wide-spread religion, Islam, to which over 90 per cent of the Senegalese population offi-cially belongs. The language is taught in connection to studying the Quran in Quranic schools; however, the private education sector also offers education in Arabic, open-ing avenues to religious leadership and the Arabic world (Lüpke & Bao-Diop 2014; Ngom 2017).

Senegalese media are dominated by French, but Wolof and other languages with (regionally) high numbers of speakers play an essential role on the radio and some TV programs. Smaller languages, however, are dependent on local, private initiatives pro-moting the distribution of information in certain languages (Weidl 2018). Amongst the overall population, active literacy use in private spheres is relatively low but con-tains versatile potential applications. Individuals write in either Latin or Arabic script in French or Arabic respectively, or use the script to write in local (often not codi-fied) languages, applying flexible and multifaceted local grassroot literacy practices (Blommaert 2011; Vigouroux 2011; Weidl *et al.* forthcoming). Interestingly, UNESCO (2019) observed that 51.9 per cent of the Senegalese population over 15 years of age are literate in French, a number which does not, however, correspond to proficiencies in standard French and needs to be further scrutinised. Even though clear sources for the data are not provided, the number matches with 51 per cent of students who complete the primary school cycle (UNESCO 2016) and therefore might have influ-enced the assumption that every student who attended French school for a certain number of years is also able to read and write in French. The reality is rather different, and many students face great problems during their education, where they transfer to the next school-level without understanding the content or passing the exams, or

drop out early, whereupon they seem not to use literacy in French much, if at all. Nevertheless, they might still be active literates according to their needs, using other, often ignored literacy practices that are devalued by many. Nowadays, due to globalisation and development, there is a growth of manifold grassroots literacy use which is recognised (Blommaert 2008), especially in online media and social networks of the mainly younger Senegalese population (Deumert & Lexander 2013; Lexander 2010).

Despite high multilingualism, Senegal is officially ruled by monolingualism, with very few approaches to integrate multilingualism—which is, however, understood as a multitude of monolingualisms. Notwithstanding, the above insight into the linguistic environment has presented a highly diverse and complex character, creating multilingual inhabitants who have to linguistically adapt to different situations and contexts throughout their days and lives.

3.2 The Casamance: some characteristics fuelling multilingualisms

Zooming in on smaller geographical areas, generalisations become inoperative as the multidimensional nature further increases. A closer consideration of subgroups within the bigger language classifications of the above-named languages and the incorporation of cultural diversities that play a considerable role in peoples' lives, as well as the individuality and personal ethnography of every single repertoire user, is indispensable. The closer we look at repertoire users and their societies, the more sophisticated insights about multilingualism become possible. This section will focus on linguistic and cultural diversities within the Casamance region of Senegal, with a focus on the possible makeup of individual linguistic repertoires, striving not for generalisations but rather to present an inclusiveness of varieties.

The Casamance is an area marked by an eventful history which is, in its multidimensional nature, reflected in the multilingual lives of its inhabitants. The area is located in the south of Senegal, partially bounded by The Gambia, a country located inside Senegal, and bordering Guinea Bissau to the south. Even though across the borders local cultural and linguistic dissemination are merging, colonial borders and political rule have resulted in an even greater mix of languages. Up to today, The Gambia's only official language is English, much in the same way as Portuguese is in Guinea Bissau (De Jong 2007; Juillard 1991). A wide range of exchange and trade by the inhabitants is apparent, and residents in the border regions can cross the border freely, stimulating intensive (linguistic and cultural) contact.

Even though people with roots in the Casamance often express solidarity (especially when geographically not being placed in the Casamance), being a 'Casamancaise' cannot be an indicator of common denominator for linguistic and cultural homogeneity. The urban areas are highly multilingual, but intense multilingualism is

similarly common in rural areas; former investigations have shown that the numbers of languages increased drastically in connection to people's mobility and experiences (Goodchild & Weidl 2019; Lüpke 2016).

Different languages of wider communication aid activities in the area, with a significant impact of Joola Fogny (but regionally limited to also other Joola languages) in the southern parts of the Casamance river and Mandinka in the north of the river. Additionally, Wolof speakers are present everywhere in the Casamance; however, attitudes towards the language and its use differ from person to person and village to village, as for example research by Goodchild (2018) and Weidl (2018) has shown. Furthermore, a Portuguese-based Creole[7] also spoken in Guinea Bissau is part of many peoples' linguistic repertoires and was, as mentioned by Juillard (2001), used as the main language of wider communication especially in the regional capital of Ziguinchor; however, an increasing proliferation of Wolof (and probably also other local languages) has gained dominance today. Described by Dreyfus and Julliard (2004), mainly people coming from the north of the country were employed in institutional sectors and opened up possibilities to orally use Wolof. This situation aided the proliferation of Wolof in sectors that would otherwise have been exclusively French (see also De Jong 2007; M. Evans 2003).

Many of the villages in the Casamance use patrimonial languages as identity markers, which can be traced back to the language associated with the male founder of the village.[8] Different languages within these villages are often amalgamated as one (including many varieties) by linguists and politics, as the example of Joola languages (see e.g. Barry 1987; Goodchild 2018; Tomàs 2005; Watson 2018) or Bainounk languages (Biagui 2006; Cobbinah 2010; Lüpke 2016), even though none of them are used in the official system and many differ widely from one another. For their speakers, a disparity is perfectly clear and subtler understanding is vital. Patrimonial or heritage languages (and bound cultural affiliation) play an important role in people's lives, and it is, for example, no rarity that individuals who migrated elsewhere (e.g. to work) send their children to the village of their ancestral origin for linguistic residencies (Calvet & Dreyfus 1990), a time in which they can acquire the language and become familiar with local cultural traits and responsibilities. Such languages mostly count relatively stable but small speaker-numbers, and these numbers remain stable since people are adapting to a changing world through adjusting their multilingualisms (Goodchild & Weidl 2019). They are further strengthened and maintained by local cultural activities, ceremonies and (ancestral) beliefs,[9] which are performed based on the patrimonial language and aid the preservation of small-scale languages.

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[7] Henceforth indicated as 'Kreol'.

[8] Identities are mainly based on patrilineal descent but are individually customisable (Weidl 2018: 303).

[9] Local beliefs are very frequently performed in combination with Islam or Catholicism, as only these are officially recognised in the country and the religious systems seem to mutually accept each other, even though ideologies differ.

Neither villages that are characterised by one patrimonial language nor their inhabitants are monolingual, and diversity is increased by people's individual backgrounds, exogamous marriage patterns, and a certain need for everyone to be able to be familiar with at least one language of wider communication (Di Carlo 2017; Lüpke 2016). Large languages of wider communication like Wolof, Kreol, Joola Fogny or even French seem not to pose a risk for the people, but are, if necessary, acquired in addition. The number of identities, cultures and languages is substantial and much more fine-grained and complex than widely assumed. Linguistic attitudes and ideologies, always going hand in hand with cultural (self-)identification, are wide-ranging; like everywhere else, people are biased, which can influence individual development of multilingual linguistic repertoires (Busch 2015; Irvine & Gal 2000; Swigart 2000). Preconceptions leading towards an affirmation or denial of certain languages and cultures often originate from local historical events, rivalries or more individual, personal reasons. However, what is most important is that these sensitive linguistic and social structures are context-dependently applied in real life situations. Speakers fluidly adapt their multilingualisms in fluid (trans)languaging practices influenced by their interlocutors, social settings, aims in conversation, experiences, attitudes and ideologies, and even missing conceptions of terms in certain languages, emotions and mood, as will become clear in the follow sections.

4 Insights into manifold linguistic realities and settings

This section is dedicated to presenting communicative events from multilingual repertoire users in the Casamance, based on empirical data collected in the Casamance, Senegal, since 2014 during the Crossroads project (www.soascrossroads.org) and the LILIEMA project (www.liliema.com). These together provide an insight into the manifoldness of multilingualisms as an integral part of people's daily lived experiences (see also Goodchild & Weidl 2019; Lüpke *et al.* 2021; Weidl 2018). Therefore, I present data from participants' language use in two very different settings that are quite opposed: a family discussion in the village of Djibonker and a teaching–learning environment in the village of Darsalam. Hereafter insight is presented into the sociolinguistic environment surrounding speakers as well as the individual linguistic repertoires, context, ethnographic background and interlocutors' common grounds. Data is discussed from different perspectives, combining the views of repertoire users, research assistants and the researcher in analysis (Goodchild 2018; Weidl 2018; Weidl & Goodchild in preparation).

4.1 Actual language use in a familiar setting

Below, a multi-layered analysis is presented of a short verbal exchange of close family members of a household located in Djibonker, a village in the southeast of the

Casamance, Senegal. Bainounk Gubëeher, a language spoken by about 1000–1500 people residing in the village and more living elsewhere (Cobbinah 2010; 2013), is attributed as the patrimonial language to the village. Bainounk Gubëeher is not fully mutually intelligible with any other Bainounk language,[10] even though their speakers always find multilingual ways to communicate with each other. The village and its inhabitants are highly multilingual, and during investigations for several years, not one speaker reported being monolingual (Goodchild & Weidl 2019; Weidl 2018). Multilingualism existing as a norm is necessary for day-to-day tasks and is further supported by migration, exogamous marriage patterns, the village's geographical position and mobility, as well as the proximity to a national road connecting significant trading points (Weidl 2018).

In the household where the verbal exchange took place, four adults and ten children are regular residents: LOGf3,[11] her husband JPSm4 and their five children; KS2f4 and her husband LMm4, with their four children; as well as one fostered boy, who is related to the men of the family and was sent to the village from Dakar around 8 years old to become familiar with his ascribed patrimonial identity. The two men are half-brothers who were born and lived for large parts of their lives in the village. LOGf3 and KS2f4 moved to the village after their respective marriages and have linguistically and culturally different backgrounds to their husbands. The household can be described as superdiverse, and people adapt their interpretation of their identity and linguistic repertoire dependent on context and interlocutor.

On the day of the recording, all the adults, their children, and IPSm4 and myself (MWf3) were present (both being regular and well-known guests), yet not everybody joined the conversation below. In Figure 1 all the adult[12] speakers' self-reported languages within their multilingual linguistic repertoires are listed to give a brief overview of diversity. Unfortunately, due to lack of space, the speakers cannot be presented in

LOGf3	Bainounk Gubëeher, Balante, Joola (undefined), Joola Fogny, Kreol, Njago, Wolof
JPSm4	Bainounk Gubëeher, Bayot, French, Joola Banjal / Joola Enampore, Joola Buluf, Joola Fogny, Joola Kaasa, Joola Brin, Njago, Wolof
KS2f4	Arabic, Bainounk Gubëeher, Baïnounk Guñaamolo, Bayot, Joola Buluf, Joola Fogny, Joola Kaasa, Joola Kujireray, Sarakhule, Sose, Wolof
IPSm4	Arame, Kreol, Wolof, Joola Fogny, French, Sose, Joola (undefined), Bayott

Figure 1. Reported linguistic repertoires.

[10] Reported by Bainounk Gubëeher speakers, as well as speakers of Bainounk Gujaher and Bainounk Guñamoolo.

[11] The subscript after the participant code designates their sex, as well as their age group at the time of the recording: 'f3' therefore means 'female, in her 30s' and 'm6' would mean 'male, in his 60s'.

[12] Speakers under 18 were only interviewed if they expressed interest in participating by themselves.

detail; however, their linguistic repertoires can be traced back to individual experiences and life-histories (see also Weidl 2018).

On this ordinary Saturday, the family sits together in the most commonly used space in the front of their house, discussing and doing chores together. The setting of the conversation in Example 1 is pictured in Figure 2; some of the speakers are visible for the camera,[13] the position of IPSm4 is indicated through an arrow and the children were mobile during the conversation. The arrows in the transcription of Examples 1 and 2 signal who the person is addressing with their speech.

Figure 2. Household conversation.

In the conversation, the adults are reprimanding the children, who do not behave in the way they should. The two mothers lead the conversation; however JPSm4 and IPSm4 interfere, using the term 'orange' [L06, L07, L08] to indicate that their behaviour is inappropriate (whereby 'red' would have been an escalation). The excerpt was transcribed and translated to French by a Senegalese research assistant (RA) and to English by the author. A translation and retranslation from French to English was necessary for the purpose of this article; however, all examples have been discussed with various participants of the example as well as the RA to guarantee an 'authentic' translation to English, as far as this was possible. The RA was further asked to add his interpretations of the languages used, which is displayed to the right. Already showing a huge number of languages, they even increase with more perspectives on the data. Here, the RA is in the position of a local but external observer who is familiar with the people and shares many languages within their multilingual repertoires.

From a researcher's perspective, even more languages could be found in the example above, and certain definitions could also differ; for example, the lexeme 'ebol' [bowl]

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[13] Audio and video recordings were always used as a default if the circumstances permitted it.

Example 1.

01	LOG$_{f3}$	→kids	*ukaan dëdú*	Bainounk Gubëeher
			"put them there"	
02	KS2$_{f4}$	→ LOG$_{f3}$	*emukenoruti*	Joola
			"this is not sorted out yet"	
03		→LAM$_{m0}$	*iseni ebol yay uye*	Joola
			"I gave you which bowl, the one over there"	
04		→kids	*úwúlen úwúlen mun usenoom ebolai ebol yëkóon*	Joola
			"put it down, put it down and you give me that bowl, there is only one bowl"	
05	JPSm4	→all	***orange orange** legi*	Wolof, **French**
			"orange orange at the moment"	
06		→	*orange*	French
			"orange"	
07		→	*dey **deplane** ñiñi*	Wolof, **French**
			"is brings people of their plans"	
08	IPSm4	→ JPSm4	***Orange** moom moi lolú*	Wolof, **French**
			"Oranges that is what they do"	
09	KS2$_{f4}$	→kids	*ulax údëëk unooh*	Bainounk Gubëeher
			"Take and sit down"	
10		→	*gunohuro [incomprehensible]*	Bainounk Gubëeher
			"if you do not [incomprehensible]"	
11		→	*mu ne ko bilahi*	Wolof
			"*He told him bilahi*"	
12		→ JCMm1	*jean-sena uwulol wai*	Joola
			"Jean-cena give him some"	

[DJI040217MW_c   ut07[14]]s

and 'ebolay' [that bowl] is used in L03 and L04, which was marked as Joola by the RA. However, 'bol' is a lexeme originating from French, which is used with a Joola noun class prefix 'e-' and determining suffix '-ai'. KS2f4 reports not speaking French as she

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[14] This example is also analysed in Weidl (2018: 243) but with a different focus, and it is therefore reanalysed within a different context here.

only visited school very infrequently; however 'bool' or 'bol' is also a lexeme frequently used in Wolof (Diouf 2003: 73) and could have come into the repertoire of KS2f4 in different ways. L07 was tagged as Wolof and French by the RA; the lexeme 'deplane', spelled 'deplaner' in the translation to French, is interesting. While agreeing that the verb looks a lot like French, it is only used in Senegal and not in standard French, and whereas the RA translated it as 'bringing people of their plans', other speakers explained that the word could also mean 'to embarrass someone'. In L11, KS2f4 uses the word 'bilahi', which was marked as Wolof and was not translated by the RA; however, from a researcher's perspective, this originates from Arabic, meaning something like 'by god'. KS2f4 is a regular user of Arabic terms; however, she rarely analyses as Arabic herself. The use of these terms can be traced back to her childhood education as a Muslim by her father, even though she identifies as Catholic nowadays.

In an analytic conversation after watching recordings of a very multilingual family discussion including the one presented above, LJSf1, the oldest daughter (17 at the time of the interview) of LOGf3 and JPSm4, described the language situation as following:

> This is how we speak, that is what feels natural. We can all understand each other, there is no need to restrict ourselves to one language. Some things, I cannot say them in one language, but does it matter? When I see my friends in Ziguinchor I also speak in many languages, but maybe in others. It works. [DJI170317MW]

Confirming the statement above, the combination of different kinds of data and analysis gives further insights into multilinguals' linguistic realities. KS2f4, for instance, reports that she is only confident to use Bainounk Gubëeher (which she reports to have low proficiency in) in her home with LOGf3 and the children (but not the men), if she knows the right terms. She often uses a Joola language to address her husband, whereas she uses Wolof to address JPSm4, who is himself not an advocate for using a Joola as a language in their home. The RA did not feel confident defining which Joola languages are used but mentions that it seems to be close to Joola Fogny.[15] The only speaker who uses Joola actively in this conversation, however, reports that she speaks Joola Buluf (or 'her own Joola') and refutes her own use of Joola Fogny in the household, which represents the manifold possibilities for interpreting a situation.

The speakers themselves reflect their linguistic behaviour as they also explain it in in-depth sociolinguistic interviews. The application of language is highly context dependent but also influenced by interlocutors, as can be observed. Furthermore, the use of a certain language can be used to determine who is addressed, or to in/exclude certain people from conversations, and background knowledge on the people present is

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[15] In both projects, we simultaneously worked with several RAs who often mutually supported each other for translations and the naming of languages.

[16] LILIEMA is a project supporting language-independent literacies for inclusive education in multilingual areas. See Lüpke *et al.* (2021), Weidl *et al.* (forthcoming) and www.liliema.com for more information.

used. Even though language choice in multilingual, fluid language use seems to supervene; it follows certain rules that can only be understood by the speakers themselves and can only be noticed from an in-depth sociolinguistic and ethnographic approach.

4.2 Translanguaging practices in an official setting

The second example shows a conversation in a teaching–learning environment during LILIEMA[16] multilingual literacy courses. These courses are taught by trained Senegalese instructors who offer them in various villages in the Casamance, and neither the teachers nor the attendees are restricted by a predefinition of language(s) that can be used. During the courses, the aim is to motivate individuals with various backgrounds to use literacy (more) actively and in a way that is adapted to their needs, accepting multilingualism and heterogeneity in spoken and written language, without enforcing language standards. This is not only an inclusive way to support a sustainable development of literacy use but also further empowers highly multilingual individuals in small-scale language ecologies and opens up new opportunities (see also Lüpke *et al.* 2021; Weidl *et al.* forthcoming).

The example below is a classroom conversation in Darsalam, an adjoining village to Djibonker to the west. Darsalam is linguistically and culturally highly complex and an interesting place which cannot be identified with one patrimonial language; during the French colonial period, villages were officially structured, and settlements geographically separated from each other instead of considering cultural orientating and a part of Djibonker ended up being officially in the village of Darsalam. Other parts of the village are described as being Bayot or Joola Fogny dominated, with speakers being multilingual in many of the languages present.

The attendees of the course all know each other and live in the same village, yet do not share the same households and would not all describe their cultural identities to be similar. The two teachers present are JD5f4, who is from and lives in Djibonker but has spent a long time in Senegal's capital, Dakar, and ACBm3, who was born and lived most of his life in Brin, a village bordering Djibonker to the east, with Joola Kujireray as a patrimonial language. In Figure 3 the teachers' reported linguistic repertoires as well as the languages reported by the LILIEMA attendees in Darsalam are

JD5$_{f4}$	Bainounk Gubëeher, French, Joola Fogny, Joola Kujireray, Wolof
ACB$_{m3}$	Bainounk Gubëeher, Bayot, English, French, Joola Eegiima, Joola Kujireray, Joola Fogny, Joola Kaasa, Mandinka, Wolof
LILIEMA course attendees	Arabic, Bainounk Gubëeher, Bayot, English, Joola Fogny, Joola Kaasa, Joola Kreol, Kujireray, Mandinka, Pulaar, Wolof

Figure 3. Reported linguistic repertoires.

presented. Not all the attendees of the LILIEMA course participated in research to the same depth and individuals are therefore not introduced separately.

Figure 4 and Figure 6 show the teaching–learning context and Figure 5 the blackboard labelled with different human body parts in various languages.

Figure 4. ACB_{m3} (left) teaching.
[200205DAR_MW_ P1040311]

Figure 5. Blackboard.
[200205DAR_MW_ P1040540]

Figure 6. Some course attendees (sitting) and LILIEMA teacher JD5f4 (standing).
[200205DAR_MW_scs04]

Example 2 presents an excerpt of a conversation the attendees and course teachers had during an exercise with the aim of naming as many human body parts as possible in any language.

In Example 2, the five course participants and the two teachers discuss the task to jointly write down certain terms on the blackboard and in their notebooks, in a conversation that can be easily followed. The conversation feels habitual, and the participants move between languages fluidly, the only way that they describe to be very natural and expedient for them. The RA marked five different languages in this short excerpt and the participants seem to comprehend all of them, or at least understand the meanings in their context. In analytical sessions of the recordings with course participants, the languages categorised by the transcriber were (partly) identified in another way, adding different perspectives on the data. Such group discussions are especially helpful to get an idea of the broader sociocultural settings as well as experiences, attitudes and ideologies of all people involved, including the researchers.

Since the opportunity is provided and encouraged within the LILIEMA course, we further observed that this manifold and fluid use of languaging is also applied

Example 2.

01	P01$_m$ →all	*Oli an ukan ja ma 'kameñ' an ateki ma, oli yo jonemi kameñ*	**Bayot**, Joola Fogny
		"We, if a person does that 'kameñ' (makes a movement with his hand), if a person hits you like that, this is what we call 'kameñ'"	
02	P02$_m$ →P01	*Ambroise, kuñia*	Bayot
		"Ambroise, cheek!"	
03	P03$_f$ →all	*ee kakonaku kameñaku koke ko nuŋaremu man utek*	Joola Fogny
		"Yes, this is the same (in Joola Fogny) this is the one (word) you use if you hit someone"	
04	P02$_m$ →all	*Oriŋo*	Bayot
		"forehead"	
05	P03$_f$ →all	*Waa kurege kuñia?*	Joola Fogny, **Bayot**
		"How do we say cheek?"	
06	P02$_m$ →all	***Kuñia**, les joux les joux, **oriŋo** c'est le front*	**Bayot**, French
		"Cheek, the cheeks, the cheeks, forehead is the forehead"	
07	JD5$_{f4}$ →P02$_m$	Aah bijun	Bainounk Gubëeher

01	P01_m →all	*Oli an ukan ja ma 'kameñ' an ateki ma, oli yo jonemi kameñ*	**Bayot**, Joola Fogny
		"Aah forehead"	
08	ACB_{m3} →all	Waa usaŋoe?	Joola Fogny
		"What else is missing?"	
09	→P03	Vivianne, yangi bind fofu ?	Wolof
		"Vivianne, are you writing there?"	
10	P04_m → ACB_{m3}	***Non**, bindul*	**French**, Wolof
		"No, she does not write"	
11	P03_f → ACB	*Bindaguma de*	Wolof
		"I have not written it yet"	
12	ACB_{m3} → P03_f	*Do bind?*	Wolof
		"Don't you write"	
13	P04_m → ACB	***ah jibinda** en même temps*	**Joola Fogny**, French
		"Ah we write at the same time"	
14	ACB_{m3} → P04_m	*waaw*	Wolof
		"yes"	
15	JD5_{f4} →all	***kom sa** ni jimanj*	**French**, Joola Fogny
		"Like that you will know it"	
16	P03_f → ACB_{m3}	*Aah kama **dee na**, Aimé hana ukanut kukilëk?*	**Wolof**, Joola Fogny
		"Ahh, so he died (did not do what he was supposed to do), Aimé didn't you draw eyes?"	
17	P05_f →all	***halif**, yo yomi wa? Bususëbu ni kubainuk*	Bainounk Gubëeher, Joola Fogny
		"*halif*, what is that? Is that the chest in Bainounk?"	
18	ACB_{m3} →P05_f	*Hafit*	Bainounk Gubëeher
		"Chest"	
19	P03_f →P05	***hafit** c'est le dënë*	**Bainounk Gubëeher**, French, *Wolof*
		"chest that is the chest"	

[200205DAR_MW]

in writing and fully covers the needs of the participants using literacy in that way. Additionally, written multilingual texts were readable and understandable for other attendees and the teachers as long as they shared the same languages as their linguistic repertoires.

5 Multilingual individuals in monolingual systems

The two above examples clearly show how versatile and multifunctional speakers' language use is, and their linguistic practices prove to be distinct from monolingualism, even if all the interlocutors present share the same language(s). Imposing only strict monolingual language use on these repertoire users is often perceived as a burden for them and leads to non-application of certain languages due to the fact that their use is too distant from their social and linguistic reality. It is also for this reason that the usage of, for instance, monolingual French interactions is restricted to official settings and is seldom used in the private sphere. From a European perspective, the language use of the speakers in Examples 1 and 2 seems to be highly multilingual and extraordinary, yet for the speakers themselves, multilingualism is the most common and most effective way to communicate.

Examining real-life linguistic behaviour in two villages and two very different settings in the Casamance, a conflict between official language policies and linguistic realities is evident. In countries like Senegal, the monolingual structures only function and entail advantages for a very small group of people who are mainly part of the country's elite. Through a high proficiency in standard French, individuals gain a superior social status, enhanced opportunities in education, better accessibility to information and even easier connections to the Global North. A 'French identity', however, is not sought after by the majority of the population, and, as is the case all over the world, certain personal cultural and linguistic orientations are privileged. But, even if an official career is aimed at, becoming part of this prestigious elite is challenging. For children, support for and access to essential learning and financial preconditions have to be provided to give them a realistic change. Even though the usage of French increases in urban centres due to the tighter distribution of French language institutions, opportunities for adolescents who come from a lower social class to integrate into the French-speaking elite are relatively low.

The examples from the Casamance above by no means constitute an exception in Senegal, and even though high multilingualism does not exclude proficiency in standard French, in such contexts, languages that are most widely required are used the most, and French does not play a significant role in many peoples' personal lives. In contrast, the majority of Senegal's population demonstrate a wide range of skills and

competence in several languages and end up being diminished and disadvantaged by not having their wide-ranging abilities recognised.

5.1 Adapting the research to the setting

Many terminologies, concepts and perceptions originating in the Global North or from people who were socialised and/or trained in Western societies often need to be readjusted in settings of the Global South. It must be emphasised that approaching a certain situation as a researcher with definite ideas and desired outcomes for a research project influences the results. Enforced by the assumption that certain (Western) contexts are replicated all over the world, the leading researchers might interfere with the data in a way that affects the analysis—a fact that needs to be counteracted in order to gain real insight into sociolinguistic situations that can then, in turn, affect politics, education and, hence, development.

The closer we look, the more diverse settings become, and an integration of the various perspectives to get a better in-depth insight into actual linguistic behaviour becomes obvious. As researchers educated in Western institutions, we have to question our own approaches first, as for example often-used standard sociolinguistic interview questions like 'what language(s) do you speak?' can create confusion for participants. In Western educational ideologies, students are trained to name and enumerate the languages they speak, a conceptualisation that is only applicable in systems where languages are learned in a separated, delimited and mainly written way. Yet, in a setting where speakers acquire languages orally in various mixed forms informally, the distinction of languages follows other socially driven assessments, often combined with the urge to respond to a researcher's enquiry in a way that pleases them (see also Goodchild 2016). Furthermore, the official system and language policies can affect the speakers' self-perception, which can go so far that in certain contexts, their multilingualism is degraded and only European languages are listed as 'languages spoken', with the others dismissed as 'dialects'. Unfortunately, the ideology that a high proficiency of a certain language is needed so it can be part of one's linguistic repertoire seems to be widespread, and passive comprehension or being able to use languages for certain contexts only is often disregarded, even though the languages still play a huge role for repertoire users (see also Kristiansen 2010; Singer & Harris 2016a).

Most people in Senegal are highly proficient multilinguals, which is the manner of speaking that is most effective for their lives, in which they encounter different people and are mobile over even short distances, which can demand a different application of multilingualism. Opportunities and possibilities that multilingual language users have due to the diverse application of their linguistic repertoires cannot be provided by monolingualism in their contexts. The fluid and unrestricted

translanguaging practices presented above might look unstructured to people from the outside; as intensive interviews fortified by ethnographic data have yet proven, motivations behind the transformation of multilingualism are controlled and shaped by external and internal factors (Goodchild & Weidl 2019; Weidl 2018). A monolingual discourse cannot be ruled out in a private sphere as certain cultural or social contexts require language use based on one language—this monolingual discourse still allows fluid languaging practices and, even though they are often perceived as being monolingual by the speakers, prove to be multilingual from a researcher's perspective (Goodchild 2018; see Weidl 2018: 257–8). In research, a multiplicity of analyses fuelled by the inclusion of different perspectives must be considered to obtain in-depth results that do justice to the manifoldness of language use in its social environment.

6 Conclusion

Lived sociolinguistic realities in the Global South vary widely from settings of the Global North, which are preoccupied by widespread monolingual idealisations (Ndhlovu & Makalela 2021). Yet, official structures affecting the Global South are clearly influenced by (ideas originating from) the Global North. This often implies that people with less active skills in (written) standard languages are, in the current institutional system, clearly disadvantaged, irrespective of the fact that linguistic skills are a multidimensional affair and language proficiency cannot be meaningfully collapsed into yes/no answers in real life. In Senegal, highly multilingual individuals marginalised from the official system due to low access to standard French can be found all over the country and might even constitute the majority of the population.

   Yet, all the speakers presented in this paper are multilinguals with diverse identities who linguistically adapt with impressive ease within contexts and social constellations according to experiences, assessments of the context and common knowledge. Their multilingualisms naturally maintain small-scale language ecologies as well as cultural heritage, whereas systematised monolingualism often threatens especially small and nationally more 'insignificant' groupings. For speakers who did not grow up in a sphere that is dominated by monolingualism, multilingualism is the only normal way of conversing, and restricted adaptation to one language is impractical and unnatural.

   The conception of an insufficiently far-reaching understanding of multilingualism in many under-researched or misconceived settings is based on a nation-state model, in which stakeholders argue for a reinforced focus on one or view languages to

solve problems; however, the contrary might be the case and even trigger wide-ranging social and cultural discrimination. The integration of a Senegalese language in Senegal would in certain settings, for instance, offer potential for the same issues already faced due to monolingual French structures, a fact that must be taken further into consideration. For many individuals in the Casamance (and the Global South), there is no compelling necessity to study one language formally, since this entails restrictions and would not reflect their lived experiences and realities, nor is there a realistically increased chance that proficiency in a standard language would secure better economic conditions.

In research, it is indispensable to encourage more in-depth approaches that reflect and adapt to linguistic and cultural realities and consider the inclusion of various perspectives (going beyond the view of a trained researcher) as a necessity. Against this background, the conceptualisation of mono- and multilingualism can then be reconsidered in superdiverse, translanguaging contexts in which people move fluidly through their individual use of languages.

Rounding off an overall picture, a general, more thorough and deeper understanding of multilingualism is needed, in which multilingual varieties, possibilities and applications are more broadly accepted, and certain prohibitions or discrimination due to multilingual language use no longer take place. Empowerment towards a positive awareness of multilingualism and diversity could have lasting effects on language policies, education and the development of the country as a whole, as long as multilingualism is not perceived as and solidified into a burden in many sectors. As part of speakers' high proficiencies, multilingualism is the normal way of conversing, and rigorous restrictions to the application of one language are not expedient for an overall improvement of educational level impacting the entire country. Besides major institutional systems, which might to a certain extent always be monolingual, more projects like LILIEMA are needed that support possibilities that differ from but at the same time support official educational systems to empower people to flourish in their multilingualisms instead of the reverse: diminishing individuals through the attribution of low proficiency in big, standardised languages while not providing sufficient educational choices or support. In the LILIEMA project, we saw that a general linguistic empowerment in turn improves people's attitude towards writing and education as such, resulting in sustainable individual development that seems to contaminate people's close environment. The collaboration and amalgamation of research, politics and educational institutions can then make a collaborative effort that leads to a better understanding of multilingualism and hence open up new avenues for a general acceptance and better integration of speakers using and identifying with different kinds of multilingualisms that do not fit into prefabricated systems.

Acknowledgements

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Language policy in Ghana and Malawi: differing approaches to multilingualism in education

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Abstract: Despite substantial international evidence that children learn best in a language which they understand, language-in-education policies in much of Africa do not effectively accommodate the range of languages found in the classroom, instead prescribing dominant national languages and/or colonial languages such as English. Further, these language policies continue to reflect a monoglossic conceptualisation of languages and do not adequately account for the multilingual repertoires of individuals and communities. They do not reflect an understanding of the ways in which multilingual language practices could be harnessed for education. This article provides a comparative overview of the policy context in Malawi and Ghana, at the levels of legislation, practice, and attitudes. Through interviews, questionnaires, classroom observations, and classroom recordings in primary schools, we highlight the multilingual realities of educational spaces in each country. We highlight that, despite different sociolinguistic and legislative contexts, there are similarities between these contexts which emerge as important factors when considering multilingualism within education.

Keywords: Language-in-education policy, multilingualism, Malawi, Ghana, language attitudes, classroom practices.

Note on the authors: see end of article.

1 Introduction and overview

Despite substantial international evidence that children learn best in a language which they understand (Dutcher 2004; Alidou *et al.* 2006; Ball 2011; UNESCO 2016; 2018), language-in-education policies in most African countries do not effectively accommodate the range of languages found in the classroom, instead prescribing dominant national languages and/or colonial languages such as English (Bamgbose 2004; Batibo 2014; Simpson 2017). Further, these language policies continue to reflect a monoglossic conceptualisation of languages and do not adequately account for the multilingual repertoires of individuals and communities (Erling *et al.* 2017; Reilly 2021). They do not reflect an understanding of the ways in which multilingual language practices could be harnessed for education.

This paper explores the ways in which multilingualism currently manifests, and is viewed, within primary education in two distinct African contexts—Malawi and Ghana. These contexts are compared to ascertain the degree to which issues within multilingual education in low resource contexts[1] are universal and to identify how varying contextual factors may influence the issues faced.

They vary socio-linguistically; in Malawi, English is treated as the de facto official language, while Chichewa is the de facto national language.[2] However, not every Malawian learner speaks or is familiar with Chichewa. There are approximately 18 languages spoken in Malawi: Chichewa, Cisena, Cilomwe, Ciyawo, Citonga, Cisenga, Cingoni, Citumbuka, Cilambya, Cinyika, Kyangonde, Cisukwa, Cindali, Cimambwe, Cibemba, Cinamwanga, Cnyakyusa, and Citumbuka-Citonga (CLS 2010: 40). This policy focus on English and Chichewa has resulted in a situation in which other Malawian languages, and speakers of those languages, are marginalised (Kishindo 1994; Kamwendo 2005). Ghana has 79 indigenous languages, of which nine are government-sponsored languages: Akan, Dagaare, Dangme, Dagbani, Ewe, Ga, Gonja, Kasem, and Nzema; and English as the official language (Dzahene-Quarshie & Moshi 2014; Yevudey 2017).

In terms of language-in-education policy, the two countries are also distinct. In contrast to other countries in the region, Malawi's 2013 policy states that English should be the only language used in education (Law Commission 2013). In Ghana, the government-sponsored languages in addition to English are used as media of instruction at the lower grade classes 1–3, and from grade 4 onwards the government-sponsored languages become subjects of study and English becomes the medium of instruction

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[1] Following Erling *et al.* (2021: 2) we define low resource contexts as those in which "as capacity constraints around resources—for individuals, schools and communities—inhibit the quality and equity of learning and teaching."

[2] In this context, the official language acts as the language of government and other high-level domains while the national language has cultural relevance as a language of national unity.

from grade 4 to tertiary level (Ansah 2014; Ministry of Education, Ghana & Ghana Education Service 2014; 2020; Bretou 2021; Djorbua *et al.* 2021).

While these differences exist, alongside additional distinctions in terms of e.g. economy, society, culture, and population, we present a comparison of these contexts as two countries which have undergone numerous language policy changes in the last 70 years. Our interest is in using these two case studies to explore the various pressures which influence language policy formation, how these pressures may have different policy outcomes, and the extent to which language policies are practically implemented in multilingual contexts.

This paper provides a comparative overview of the policy context in each country, at the levels of legislation, practice, and attitudes. Through interviews, classroom observations, classroom recordings, and questionnaires in primary schools, we highlight the multilingual realities of educational spaces in each country, and how the multilingual practices in the classroom are viewed by pupils and teachers. We will highlight that, despite different sociolinguistic and legislative contexts, there are similarities between these contexts which emerge as important factors when considering multilingualism within education.

Section 2 provides an overview of key issues regarding monolingual versus multilingual approaches to education in multilingual contexts. Section 3 provides a comparison of the language policy approaches in Ghana and Malawi. Then, in Section 4 and Section 5, respectively, data from each country is discussed and compared, highlighting the language practices and language attitudes in each context. Finally, Section 6 provides a discussion of the key findings of this comparison.

In comparing these two different contexts, this paper will address the following questions:

1 What multilingual practices are found in primary classrooms in Malawi and Ghana?
2 What are the perceptions towards multilingual practices in primary classrooms in Malawi and Ghana?

2 Overview of multilingual education

Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education (MTB MLE) provides students with the opportunity to learn in a language with which they are familiar and can provide them with a solid foundation in literacy skills before acquiring literacy in second/foreign languages such as English (Heugh 2002; Nekatibeb 2007; Ball 2011; Kirkpatrick 2013; Global Education Monitoring Report 2014; Taylor & Fintel 2016). Current research suggests that for MTB MLE to be effective, the period in which the familiar language is used should be as long as possible before a transition to another language takes place. Heugh *et al.* (2007) suggest that this should be for at least six to

eight years in sufficiently resourced, effective learning environments. However, in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), early exit transitions are commonplace, with the medium of instruction (MOI) moving away from a familiar language to a less familiar language such as English after the lower primary stage (Simpson 2017). The minimal time spent using a familiar language is not sufficient for learners to be able to develop the language and literacy skills that are required to effectively learn in the new MOI (ibid.).

Current policy and practice in much of SSA do not effectively incorporate learners' (and teachers') multilingual resources into education, and go against research evidence of the benefits of MTB MLE (Agbozo & ResCue 2020; Opoku-Amankwa & Brew-Hammond 2011). This is largely due to perceived disadvantages or challenges of adopting a multilingual approach. Two of the major challenges are that 1) it is considered to be economically difficult to incorporate multiple languages into the classroom (Schmied 1991; Breton 2003) and 2) colonial, European languages such as English are viewed as more suitable for educational purposes and inherently more valuable for learners to know for life opportunities (Heugh *et al.* 2007; Tembe & Norton 2008; Becker 2014; Bamgbose 2014). While there is increasing evidence of the benefits of mother tongue and multilingual education (Cummins 2000; Ball 2011; Yevudey 2013), there is concurrently an increase in the use of English as a medium of instruction across various levels of education globally (Dearden 2014). The difficulties of promoting mother tongue education within SSA reflects the 'inequalities of multilingualism' (Tupas 2015) wherein promotion of mother tongue policies can conflict with regional/international socio-political structures which promote English.

Increasingly, calls are being made to recognise the benefits which multilingual teaching practices have within the classroom. This involves interchangeably using more than one language, drawing on a wide range of linguistic resources, within one lesson. This type of language use is widespread amongst multilinguals (Gardner-Chloros 2009; Lopez *et al.* 2017) and in multilingual classrooms, although often unofficial and stigmatised (Ferguson 2003; Heugh 2013; Mazak & Carroll 2016). Research shows that this has a wide range of pedagogical benefits such as: aiding student participation and performance (Clegg & Afitska 2011; Viriri & Viriri 2013); content clarification (Ferguson 2003; Uyes 2010; Chimbganda & Mokgwathi 2012); classroom management (Canagarajah 1995; Ferguson 2003); humanising the classroom environment and expressing a shared identity amongst staff and students (Ferguson 2003); increased understanding of subject content (Baker 2001; Yevudey 2013); facilitating home–school links (Baker 2001); and reiterating important information (Adendorff 1993). While these practices are found to occur widely in multilingual contexts (Heugh 2013), they are often stigmatised and not recognised at an official policy level.

Research into multilingual teaching practices has been noted to be mostly descriptive and uncritical as it has largely attempted to highlight that multilingual language use is a legitimate strategy in the classroom (see Lin 2013 for criticism). Research has often

focused on high-resource contexts (Creese & Blackledge 2011; García & Li Wei 2014). It has been suggested that to harness multilingual language practices effectively, appropriate resources, curricula, pedagogies, and teacher training are necessary (Adendorff 1993; Vorster 2008; Erling *et al.* 2016; Erling *et al.* 2017). There are increasing advocates for language policies which adopt a flexible multilingual approach (Lasagabaster & García 2014; Guzula *et al.* 2016; Erling *et al.* 2017). However, further research is needed on how to effectively implement these policies and engage all stakeholders in supporting flexible multilingual policies (Weber 2014; Milligan *et al.* 2016; Erling *et al.* 2017). Accessible multilingual education is viewed as an essential step in achieving inclusive and quality education for all, as outlined in SDG4. As inclusive and quality education is viewed as a key foundation in achieving all 17 SDGs, multilingual education is key to achieving sustainable development (UN 2012; Vuzo 2018).

We consider multilingual education as a key element in enabling individuals and communities to live flourishing and fulfilled lives. This article seeks to contribute to the support for multilingual approaches to education in SSA, and beyond, and to foreground the importance of two factors when looking to progress discussions around language and education. These are 1) understanding how multilingual practices currently manifest in educational contexts; and 2) understanding the perceptions towards multilingualism of stakeholders. The following sections provide a comparative analysis of each of these three factors in the contexts of Malawi and Ghana.

3 Malawian and Ghanaian contexts

This section provides contextual information on the two countries as well as a historical overview of the language policies in Malawi and Ghana. In doing so, it will highlight the prevailing language ideologies which influence the policy decisions.

Both Malawi and Ghana are multilingual countries, albeit to varying degrees. The number of named languages reported in Malawi varies between 12 and 35 (Makoni & Mashiri 2006), all of which are Bantu languages. Chichewa is the most widely spoken language in the country, with the remaining languages being minorities to varying degrees. Ghana has approximately 79 indigenous languages (Simons & Fennig 2019, Ansah 2014). Ghanaian indigenous languages fall within the Niger-Kordofanian group. Widespread languages in the country include Akan, Ewe, Ghanaian Pidgin English, and Massina Fulfulde (Lewis *et al.* 2016).

After obtaining independence from Britain (Ghana in 1957 and Malawi in 1964), both countries adopted English as the de facto official language. In Malawi, Chichewa is also considered to be the de facto national language. Ad hoc announcements at various points since independence have also elevated a number

of additional Malawian languages to official languages (Kayambazinthu 1998: 411; Moyo 2001). However, without any widespread publicity and little discernible practical change, the reality of English as the official language and Chichewa as the national language is the dominant perspective for the majority of citizens in the country. English is therefore the dominant language officially used in high-level domains such as government, business settings, and courts. It is also the dominant language within education, with Chichewa being the only Malawian language taught as a subject (Chavula 2019).

Ghana, by contrast, has at a government level provided more support to indigenous languages. Since 1951, out of the 79 indigenous languages, nine of them are government-sponsored languages. The nine languages are referred to as government-sponsored because they have been selected as languages that can be used and/or translated into in parliament, used during national events, and academic materials are frequently developed in these languages for use in schools. They are also approved languages of government that are to be taught and studied from pre-school to tertiary levels (Owu-Ewie 2006; 2013), and they are used as the major languages or one of the major languages of one of the then 10 regions of Ghana, where they tend to serve as lingua franca. Akan is spoken in Ashanti Region, Dagaare in Upper Western Region, Ewe in Volta Region, Dangme in Greater Accra, Dagbani in Northern Region, Ga in Greater Accra, Gonja in Northern Region, Kasem in Upper Eastern Region, and Nzema in Western Region (c.f. Agbozo 2015; Yevudey & Agbozo 2019). In the respective regions, these languages are also used as a medium of instruction from pre-school to lower grade classes 1–3 and as subjects of study from upper grade classes to tertiary levels where the latter refers to university, polytechnics, and Colleges of Education. It should be noted that Akan has three dialects, which are Asante Twi, Akwapim Twi, and Fante and they are spoken across various regions, including Western, Central, Ashanti, Eastern, Brong Ahafo, and the northern portion of the Volta region of Ghana.

3.1 Language-in-education policy

The tension between the competing roles of English and Malawian languages, and at what stages of education they should be used, has been central to the language-in-education policy debate in Malawi (Kayambazinthu 1998: 389). The changing language-in-education policies, which will be outlined below, suggest that this has remained true to the present day. Changes to Malawi's language-in-education policies have generally been implemented by newly elected governments and based on little sociolinguistic research. During the colonial period, colonial schooling used English as a MOI alongside indigenous languages in the early years of education

(Mtenje 2013: 96). During the colonial period, there was opposition to Chichewa being used as the sole Malawian language in education, with Levi Mumba, a leading Tumbuka educationalist, arguing that 'people go to school to learn their own vernacular books, after which they wish to learn English which is more profitable' (NNM1/16/4, Mombera District Council, 1931/39 cited in Kayambazinthu 1998: 400). Since Malawi achieved independence, there have been three major changes to the language-in-education policies: 1) In 1969, Chichewa was introduced as the MOI for the first four years of schooling, after which time English was to be used as the MOI for the remainder of education (Chilora 2000: 2; Mtenje 2013: 96). This was part of the then new government's goal to ensure that Chichewa became a dominant language in the country. 2) In 1996, coinciding with the introduction of free primary education for all, a new policy directive was introduced stating that children should be taught in their mother tongue for the first four years of education, with English again being the MOI from the fifth year onwards (Secretary for Education 1996, cited in Kayambazinthu 1998: 412). This policy follows widely accepted international advice regarding the importance of early years' mother tongue education in school (UNESCO 1953). However, this policy directive lacked a clear implementation plan and was never fully implemented (Kishindo 2015). 3) Finally, the most recent change in Malawi's language-in-education policy occurred in 2014, after Malawi's New Education Act was introduced and when it was announced that the MOI would be English from the beginning of primary school (Mchombo 2017: 195). The various changes to language-in-education policies in Malawi have all been introduced without being informed by any relevant research and without any existing implementation plans. This policy situation is important to understanding the contemporary sociolinguistic context as it provides a top-down perspective on which languages are deemed valid for use in the education system.

A similar tension between English and indigenous languages is present in Ghana. After Ghana's independence in 1957, the policy of the country on language of education, especially for the lower primary/grade, has been characterised by a succession of multiple, sometimes conflicting, policies (Owu-Ewie 2006; Ansah 2014). As Leherr (2009: 2) states, '[d]espite being a multilingual country, Ghana has never had a nationwide approach for bilingual education, but rather a history of non-systematic instruction in English and local language and a changing and ambiguous language policy'. The policies either support monolingual MOI by promoting exclusive use of English, or bilingual MOI through a combination of the indigenous languages and English.

A closer consideration of the historical account of the language policies of both countries provides evidence of the fluctuations over the years. Table 1 presents a historical overview of the language policies from 1929 to 2002, which is adapted from Owu-Ewie (2006: 77) with the era beyond 2002 added. For purposes of comparison, Table 2 provides this information for Malawi.

From the historical evidence presented above, it could be argued that the current inconsistencies and conflicting policy on language-of-education in Ghana is a result of historical consequences as shown in Table 1. Taking into account the language of education between the 1529 and 1925 periods, Ghana had two education eras—the Castle School Era and the Missionary School Era. Both eras operated under different language policies. The castle schools were the schools set up by colonisers as the first formal education in the country aside the already existing informal education, which was mainly oral. The arrival of missionaries such as the Wesleyan and Basel Missionaries in the country, around the same period as the castle school, led to the establishment of mission schools. The MOI for the castle schools was English-only whereas the mission schools adopted a bilingual approach that stipulated using Ghanaian languages from the first to third year of studies with a transition to English from the fourth year onwards. These variations in policy are a consequence of the motivation of the two groups. Whereas the castle schools were meant to develop the local people into fluent speakers of the colonial languages, the missionaries, on the other hand, aimed to develop the language of the people while introducing them to the colonial languages. Studies such as Agbozo and ResCue (2020) and Ansah (2014) provide comprehensive historical insights into the various languages-of-education policies. These studies conclude that the historical evidence and the motivations for the previous policies on education have a great consequence for the formulation and implementation of future policies. The current policy stipulates the use of Ghanaian indigenous languages at the lower grade classes (grades 1–3) as mediums of instruction and English becomes the medium of instruction for grade 4 onwards. At the lower grade classes, English can be adopted in addition to the indigenous languages where necessary (Ansah 2014; Bretou 2021; Djorbua *et al.* 2021).

What emerges clearly in the two tables above is that the Ghanaian education has undergone more fluctuations to language-in-education policy than in Malawi. Both countries have involved indigenous languages to varying degrees in the early stages of education and so too have both had English-only policies, with Malawi's recent English-only approach contrasting distinctly with the Ghanaian policy approach. Another important factor in the policy context of each country is that these policy changes only directly affect the early primary years of education, and English is dominant in the remaining years of all stages in the education system. Thus, the major medium of instruction from upper primary/grade classes (grade 4) to tertiary level is English. So even when indigenous languages have been considered for use within education, they are only viewed as suitable within lower primary classes. The next section provides further discussion on the ideologies present within the contemporary policy context in each country.

Table 1. A diagrammatic representation of language-of-education policy in Ghana from pre-colonial era to the present.

PERIOD	1st YEAR	2nd YEAR	3rd YEAR	4th YEAR	5th YEAR
1529–1925:					
1 Castle Schools Era[3] 2 Missionary School Era	English and other colonial languages				
1925–1951	Language of immediate community			English	
1951–1955	Language of immediate community	English			
1956–1966	English				
1967–1969	Government-sponsored languages	English			
1970–1973	Government-sponsored languages			English	
1974–2002 (Sept.)	Government-sponsored languages			English	
2003–2006	English				
2003/4-2008/9(EQUALL)[4]	Government-sponsored languages			English	
2009–Present	Government-sponsored languages + English, where necessary			English	

[3] For further information on castle schools and a historical overview of the use of Ghanaian languages in education from 1529 see Owu-Ewei (2006).

[4] From 2003 to 2008, two language policies were in operation. First, the schools that use English-only medium of instruction and some selected schools called EQUALL schools were under the Education Quality for All (EQUALL) pilot study, a programme which was a bilingual medium of instruction.

Table 2. A diagrammatic representation of language of education policy in Malawi from pre-colonial era to the present.

PERIOD	1st YEAR	2nd YEAR	3rd YEAR	4th YEAR	5th YEAR +
1891–1964 (Colonial Period)	**Malawian languages and English**				**English**
1964–1969	Malawian languages and English				English
1969–1996	Chichewa				**English**
1996–2013[5]	Mother tongue/familiar language				**English**
2013–Present	**English**				

[5] This policy directive was never fully implemented.

3.2 Language ideologies in policy

The language policies and language-in-education policies in Malawi have been widely criticised by Malawian academics. This is mainly due to the fact that the policies do not accurately reflect the multilingualism and linguistic resources which are found in the country. Due to this, Moyo (2001: 1) has stated that there 'is a crucial need for language policy in Malawi to be reviewed'.

Simango (2015) has suggested that despite the various changes to language-in-education policies, Malawi has yet to produce a policy which is effective and widely supported. The implementation of these policies has been characterised as ineffective and has lacked appropriate teacher training and resource development (Moyo 2001; Kamwendo 2003; Mtenje 2013). Effective language planning in low-income countries is difficult due to a lack of financial resources leading to ineffective implementation (Breton 2003: 209). The 1996 policy directive was never effectively implemented as resources were never produced in any language other than English and Chichewa, and teachers were placed in areas in which they could not speak the mother tongue of their learners (Kishindo 2015). This policy was also not widely supported by the public, who wanted their children to acquire English language skills and believed that a monolingual English MOI would be most beneficial for their children (Msonthi 1997; Matiki 2001; Kamwendo 2008). These reasons have contributed towards the new English-only policy, which Kamwendo (2015: 24) states is 'pedagogically unsound' and is not inclusive as it does not take into account the multilingual reality of Malawi. This new policy goes against research in Malawi which shows that development of literacy in Chichewa aids literacy development in English (Shin *et al.* 2015) and that a Chichewa MOI, instead of an English MOI, does not negatively impact reading ability in English but improves reading ability in Chichewa (Williams 1996).

The legislation which dictates the language-in-education policy in Malawi is the New Education Act. This act was introduced in 2013, to replace the 1962 Education Act, which was deemed to be obsolete and in need of reform (Law Commission 2010), and to work towards improving education provision in the country. The New Education Act seeks to ensure that education in Malawi will produce learners who have 'knowledge and skills relevant for social and economic development of the nation' by providing quality education which is inclusive and accessible (Law Commission 2013: i). Education in Malawi should provide a means to 'promote national unity, patriotism and … loyalty to the nation' as well as 'an appreciation of one's culture' (Law Commission 2013: 8–9). At the same time, it should produce graduates who are able to 'compete successfully in the modern and ever-changing world' (ibid.). Curricula should be developed to ensure that they are relevant to Malawian students, Malawian society, and the 'dynamic global economy and society' (Law Commission 2013: 41). Education is then positioned as an experience which should benefit, and be

of relevance, to students in the local context but also to prepare them to participate in the global context.

The New Education Act states:

> (1) The medium of instruction in schools and colleges shall be English
> (2) Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1), the Minister may, by notice published in the Gazette prescribe the language of instruction in schools

<div align="right">(Law Commission 2013: 42)</div>

The announcement of the policy divided public opinion (Chiwanda 2014; Gwenge 2014) and has been widely criticised by Malawian linguists as being pedagogically unsuitable (Kamwendo 2015; 2016; Kishindo 2015; Miti 2015; Simango 2015). While the policy was to be introduced in 2014, it was designed without a clear plan for implementation, and at the time of writing, it is not clear to what extent it is being implemented in practice or how it has affected classroom language practices (Chavula 2019; Kamtukule 2019). The English-only policy implementation has been stated to be an 'ongoing' strategy (Government of the Republic of Malawi 2016: 48). It has also been acknowledged that adequate conditions and resources do not currently exist within the Malawian education system to enable effective implementation of an English-only policy (School-to-School International 2017; Kamwendo 2019; Dexis Consulting Group 2021).

A 'coherent language policy' (Kishindo, personal communication) does not exist in Malawi. Instead, as is the case with the 'ambiguous language policy' (Leherr 2009: 2) in Ghana, the 'incoherent and contradictory language polic[ies]' (Matiki 2001: 205) are viewed by many Malawian linguists as merely 'statements made for political expediency' (Kishindo, personal communication). For Kayambazinthu (1998: 369), language policies in Malawi have been created 'ad hoc' and represent an example of 'reactive language planning' which is 'based more on self-interest and political whim than research'.

Malawi's Constitution states that '[e]very person shall have the right to use the language and to participate in the cultural life of his or her choice' (Government of Malawi 1998: 8). This constitutional right, however, appears to be limited as the legislative dominance of English in key domains such as politics,[6] health, and education restricts the use of Malawian languages within them. Language planning in Malawi has numerous issues which result in a tension between policy and the linguistic reality of the country. The perception that English is the language which will most enable learners to contribute to their own development and the development of the nation, and to compete internationally, overrides any consideration of the benefits which multilingual approaches to education will have.

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[6] While English remains the official language of the political domain, politicians are aware of the value of Malawian languages, regularly using them during election campaigns.

There is a contrast in that the Ghanaian policy makes space for languages other than English. There is a similar lack of policy documentation in Ghana, as it is primarily teacher handbooks which provide information on MOI. As part of Ghana's commitment towards the provision of quality education, the government set up the Education Strategic Plan via the Ghana Ministry of Education. This was in congruence with research into language-of-education and the realisation of the benefits of bilingual education for both pedagogic purposes and the cognitive development of pupils. The strategic plan includes the following:

> 1) To ensure that by P3, pupils will be functionally literate and numerate and will have achieved reading fluency in their mother tongue (L1) and in English (L2); and,
> 2) To ensure literacy and numeracy in Ghanaian Language and English by 50 per cent of Primary 6 pupils by 2013.

<div align="right">(Leherr 2009: 1)</div>

One of these strategies is the Breakthrough to Literacy/Bridge to English (BTL/BTE) programme, which was jointly funded and implemented by the Ghana Ministry of Education and the USAID-funded Education Quality for All (EQUALL) Project (Leherr 2009). The BTL/BTE project was meant to develop the literacy and numeracy skills of pupils in both Ghanaian languages and English. This language-of-education strategy is meant to develop pupils into 'balanced bilinguals' in their mother tongue and English. Inspired by the success of this project, the Ministry of Education in Ghana formed a National Literacy Task Force (NLTF) in June 2006 to develop and implement the National Literacy Acceleration Program (NALAP). This literacy programme came into effect in 2009 and was implemented mainly in public schools with support from USAID (Leherr 2009). The general aim of the NALAP is to provide quality education to pupils from kindergarten via the language they already know—that is, their mother tongue or language of wider communication of a given region/district—and their 'second language', English. The programme also aims to provide reading and teaching materials in selected Ghanaian indigenous languages and English to enable the pupils to acquire literacy and numeracy in both languages (Fobih *et al.* 2008). This bilingual programme is adopted in public government schools while private and international schools tend to adopt English-only instruction.

In all, the discussions present the linguistic and sociolinguistic realities that a given policy on language-of-education has to take into account and, in addition, the influence that these realities will have on the implementation and evaluation processes of the policy. It is evident that the multilingual nature of Ghana has had overarching consequences for language policy on education over the years. The Ghanaian policy offers some space for multilingualism, particularly within the early stages of schooling. However, this is still restricted to only the government-sponsored languages and English. English continues to dominate after the initial years of education, and the

switch to English instruction is too early to be pedagogically effective (Simpson 2017; Boateng 2019; Bretuo 2021; Djorbua *et al.* 2021). The diversity of multilingualisms and repertoires of teachers and learners has not been effectively accounted for, and research suggests that this policy is not always practically implemented in schools (Owu-Ewie & Eshun 2015; Djorbua *et al.* 2021). This policy does, however, contrast to the current situation in Malawi, in which the multilingual repertoires of citizens are ignored within education and English dominates the top-down policy perspectives as the only language which is both valuable within education and valuable for learners in their future lives. The key ideological difference is that Malawian policy views monolingualism as valuable and multilingualism as a problem, while in Ghana multilingualism, to a certain extent, is positioned as a resource. The next sections will look at how these different policy perspectives actually manifest in reality in both countries and how this affects practices and attitudes within education.

4 Reality of multilingualism in primary classrooms

This section presents classroom observation data which provides insight into the language practices found within primary schools in Malawi and Ghana. This will highlight the extent to which the top-down legislation influences classroom language practices and also provide a comparison of the practices found in each country.

In Malawi, classroom observations were conducted in early 2019 in eight primary schools across two districts (Mangochi and Nsanje) by the Centre for Language Studies at the University of Malawi. The two districts were purposively sampled because of their linguistic make-up. Mangochi is a predominantly Ciyawo speaking district, where it is possible to find learners coming to school for the first time that lack or have limited knowledge of Chichewa or English. In Mangochi, two schools from strictly Ciyawo-speaking communities were sampled, plus two other schools from mixed communities (Ciyawo and Chichewa). Nsanje district is predominantly Cisena speaking, where it is possible to find learners coming to school for the first time that lack or have limited knowledge of Chichewa or English. Out of the four schools in Nsanje district, two were from typical rural areas where Cisena language was predominant. The other two were of semi-urban nature where native speakers of Cisena and non-native speakers were learning in the same class. While these observations come six years after the announcement of the new policy, the findings indicate that the primary school classrooms in the study are multilingual environments. There is also a lack of awareness amongst school staff and students of the existence of an English-only policy. This suggests a substantial lack of any effective roll-out plan for the implementation of the policy.

In direct contrast to the monolingual English-only policy, the language practices which were observed in the primary schools in the Mangochi and Nsanje districts were highly multilingual. In the majority of observations, learners used resources from at least three languages—English, Chichewa, and the local language associated with the district (Ciyawo in Mangochi and Cisena in Nsanje). Further, there was little use of English in Standards 1–4, increasing only in Standards 5–8. In addition, throughout the year groups in each of the schools, students displayed clear difficulty when presented with English-only instructions. They were unable to effectively comprehend content or tasks and chose to answer questions and conduct group discussions in their familiar language. In the classes observed, students were not penalised for using languages other than English, with teachers often not using strictly English-only MOI themselves. For example, in a Standard 4 Agriculture lesson when a pupil answered a question using the Cisena term *mataka* (soil), the teacher replied in Chichewa *eya, dothi* (yes, soil).

In a more urban school within this district, a teacher was observed using resources from English, Chichewa, and Cisena to facilitate students' learning during a Standard 6 lesson on Communication. For example, after receiving no response to the question 'What do you understand by the word "Communication"?' the teacher repeated the question using Chichewa: '*Mukamva zoti Communication, mumati ndi chiyani*?' When discussing traditional methods of communication in this class, the teacher gave the example of 'giving a black chicken to the chief'. To ensure ease of understanding, the teacher then repeated this example in Cisena, a language more closely linked to students' linguistic and cultural heritage, stating: '*kwenda kwa mfumu kukapereka nkhuku yotchena*'. The teacher here is aware of the multilingual repertoires within the classroom and uses the linguistic resources available to ensure that their students understand the content of the lesson, independently of what any language policy stipulates. However, despite the multilingual reality of the classrooms, staff involved in the study were favourable towards the use of English-only from Standard 1, believing that the current multilingual approach will have adverse effects for students' acquisition of English and during their examinations.

Teachers and headteachers in the eight schools involved indicated that there was no official roll out of the English-only policy, and they had not received any direct communication relating to the New Education Act. The majority of the Malawian teachers interviewed were in fact unaware of any policy change, as exemplified by one teacher who stated:

> I am not aware of the English-only policy, but I am only aware of the policy that stipulates that Chichewa is the language of instruction from Standard 1 to 4 and English from Standard 5 to 8.

This lack of communication has resulted in a situation in which there is little awareness amongst front-line educators of the existence of an English-only policy. The majority of those involved in this study stated that the current policy was that Chichewa should be used for the first four years of education, and thereafter English should be introduced as the medium of instruction in full.

Similar multilingual practices are apparent in Ghanaian primary schools. Unlike Malawi, these practices are, however, mandated by the policy being followed in the schools as the public schools observed adopt a bilingual medium of instruction. Classroom observations were conducted in 2012 and 2014 in four schools in Ho in the Volta Region. Ho township was chosen because this is one of the towns where Ewe is predominately spoken, and both Ewe and English are used in schools as mediums of instruction as well as subjects of study. In these classrooms, the majority of the pupils were bilingual in Ewe and English with some having other languages in their repertoire, including Akan (Twi), Ga, Hausa, and French. Some of the pupils were monolingual English speakers, and there were a few pupils who were monolingual in Ewe.

Multilingual speakers have the capacity to construct sentences or phrases that reflect the linguistic knowledge of their repertoires, and these practices are evident in classrooms observations from Ghana. For example, during a Language and Literacy lesson in a class 3 classroom, the teacher asked the pupils '*ne emu dumí de dɔlele ka míaxɔ*' (when you are bitten by mosquito, which type of sickness will you catch). A pupil responded using the English term 'malaria', which the teacher then used in their response to the pupil, saying '*ne míxɔ* malaria *ne mímeyi kɔdzi kaba o tsie adzɔ*' (if you catch *malaria* and you do not go to the hospital on time what will happen?). During these Ewe Language and Literacy lessons, both Ewe and English were activated, and the teacher and the pupils were thus in a bilingual mode. The example given above illustrates the ways in which individuals will naturally use their multilingual repertoires in their day to day lives. Multilingual practices between English and Ewe were frequent in the classrooms observed, and an artificial monolingualism is not enforced within the classroom.

The following extract is a Language and Literacy lesson in a class 1 classroom. The topic of the lesson was road safety. The extract below highlights how multilingualism can be brought into the classroom and used to scaffold learning.

> **Teacher:** Ke le ʋegbeme *road safety* le ʋegbeme nye nuka? Yema meŋlɔ̃ ɖe afima mekae ateŋu agblɔe nam? Newó kpɔ ekpea dzi *in English is what* '*road safety*' *then Ewe version is here*. Mekae ateŋu agblɔe le eʋegbe me nam? *Hurry up! We are waiting for you.*
> (So in Ewe what is road safety in Ewe? That is what I have written there who can tell me? When you see the board in English is what road safety then Ewe version is here. Who can tell me in Ewe? Hurry up! We are waiting for you.)
> **Pupils:** ((unintelligible speech from pupils))
> **Teacher:** *Ah ha. Can you read the Ewe version for us? Yes*
> **Pupil 1A:** Mía ƒe dedienɔnɔ le mɔdzi. (Our safety on the road)

Teacher: Ah ha. Dedienɔnɔ. (Ah ha. Safety)

Pupils: Dedienɔnɔ (safety)

Teacher: Dedienɔnɔ le lɔrimɔwo dzi. (Safety on the road)

Pupils: Dedienɔnɔ le lɔrimɔwo dzi. (Safety on the road)

Teacher: Dedienɔnɔ le lɔrimɔwo dzi. (Safety on the road)

Pupils: Dedienɔnɔ le lɔrimɔwo dzi. (Safety on the road)

Teacher: *And in English it is what?*

Teacher and pupils: *Road safety.*

Teacher: *Road*

Pupils: *Safety*

Teacher: *Road*

Pupils: *Safety*

Here we see that the teacher introduced the topic in English and asked the pupils to provide the equivalent in Ewe. One pupil then reads the Ewe version of the topic on the board and the teacher and the pupils repeated the topic in Ewe. Finally, the topic was reiterated in English by both the teacher and the pupils. The teacher in this example actively creates space for multilingualism in the classroom and encourages students to draw from a range of resources in their linguistic repertoires, by asking the pupils to provide both the Ewe and English versions of the topic. The conversation exchange shows that both the teacher and the pupils were in a multilingual mode during the lesson as both Ewe and English were activated.

As can be seen from the brief examples discussed above, primary classrooms in both Malawi and Ghana are clearly multilingual environments, in which teachers and learners bring their multilingual repertoires to the classroom and utilise these resources to engage in learning and teaching. The most important distinction in these contexts is that the multilingual practices observed within the Ghanaian classrooms are sanctioned by policy whereas those in Malawi are in contradiction to the policy. Data from Malawi highlights that there is little evidence of the English-only policy actually being implemented. While the policy was to be implemented from September 2014, it is unclear from the data collected so far that any implementation has in fact occurred. Regardless of the policy choices made by government, the multilingual realities of each classroom manifest during lessons.

5 Language attitudes

Language attitudes and language policy legislation interact and influence one another in complex ways. Knowledge of stakeholder language attitudes, and understanding the ideologies informing them, can play a key role in the successful implementation of language policies. The classroom observation data discussed above highlights the

multilingual reality of educational spaces in both Ghana and Malawi—whether this aligns with, or is in opposition to, the official policy. This section will provide brief insights into the attitudes of teachers in these different multilingual contexts. The data was obtained through interviews and questionnaires and in each context was obtained during the periods of classroom observation data discussed above.

Studies on attitudes towards language-of-education in multilingual contexts present varying perspectives. This is clearly displayed in the attitudes of teachers in the Ghanaian schools. Echoing the perspective of established academic research on mother tongue education, one teacher notes:

> It is widely accepted that children learn to read better in their mother tongue which is familiar to them, when this concept has been established they learn to read in the second language.

Similarly, another Ghanaian teacher recognises the necessity of using languages other than English and drawing on the learners' linguistic repertoires to create effective learning environments, saying:

> As the saying goes 'all fingers are not equal', most students speak and write English in schools especially the young ones but when it comes to teaching and learning, one must sometimes use the local language to break down their levels of knowledge and understanding which will make them interested in a particular subject.

These teachers highlight that familiar languages perform essential functions in the classroom through developing learners' knowledge, which can then be expanded on in an additional language. They also point out that familiar languages can engage learners in their content learning and multilingual approaches can be used to facilitate teaching and learning.

However, the multilingual repertoires found within the classroom are not viewed in a positive light by all teachers. For some teachers, the use of more than one language is viewed through a deficit lens and as something which will have a negative impact on the long-term educational outcomes for learners. As one teacher highlights:

> It will cause the pupils to relax in making effort to understand the English language.

There is a sense here that rather than viewing multilingualism as something which can improve educational experiences, it is instead something which can hinder acquisition of English. Multilingual practices are also viewed by some teachers as something which could confuse learners and could have negative impacts across their linguistic repertoire.

> It will not help pupils to use the right expressions for English and Ewe.
> We can translate statement from Ewe to English but mixing the two languages at the same time can be confusing to [the] children.

These negative attitudes towards multilingualism in education were widespread in the data obtained from the Malawian teachers. The majority of teachers were in favour of a strict English-only MOI as they believe that if English is used more frequently, and introduced early, then it will increase learners' fluency. This is despite the recognition that this presents communication challenges in classrooms as they acknowledge many learners do not understand teachers when they use English. Rather than supporting a multilingual approach, such as that presented in the classroom observation data highlighted above, the optimal solution is believed to be the use of English. As two teachers stated:

> If we use English only from standard 1 they will get used [to it].
> I think it would be good to teach in English to achieve competency.

The overarching message from teachers' attitudes in the Malawian schools is that the acquisition of English is one of the key goals of education. So valuable is English perceived to be that this is then pursued even if it is to the detriment of learning in other content subjects. This is primarily due to the belief that English is a key language for learners to have access to opportunities in their life after education, as noted by one teacher:

> The English-only medium should be preferred as it would make learners to speak English fluently. English is important for future life as English is key. Government should introduce English from standard 1.

The relationship between beliefs and policy is cyclical, and these beliefs on the value and suitability of English within education are reinforced by the policy discourse, which positions English as the only suitable language within education.

While there is positivity towards multilingual strategies in the Ghanaian data, overall from the teachers involved in these two contexts, it can be seen that perceptions around the necessity of acquiring English language skills in education acts as a strong factor in influencing language attitudes. The function of education is to provide learners with the skills they need to flourish in their lives. As English is believed to be the language through which individuals can flourish, this appears to strongly influence attitudes towards favouring the use of English as MOI. While this is a common belief in a number of contexts globally, there is insufficient evidence to support this claim. It also risks viewing English as a panacea, ignoring other material and social constraints which inhibit an individual's ability to lead a fulfilling life. Recent studies in Ghana and Malawi suggest that rather than English being the sole language which can improve life outcomes, multilingual skills are necessary in the labour market and provide individuals with positive job prospects (Dzimbiri 2019, Atitsogbui *et al.* 2021, ResCue *et al.* 2021).

6 Discussion and conclusion

This article has detailed and compared the language-in-education policy situation in Ghana and Malawi through discussion of three main areas: policy legislation; classroom language practices; and teacher attitudes.

The key difference in these two countries is at the level of policy legislation and the ways in which this engages with the specific multilingual context. Malawi's current policy is monolingual, while Ghana's is more multilingual. At a policy level, in Ghana, the multilingual repertoires of learners are embraced, to a limited extent, in the early years of education, while in Malawi they are ignored. However, in Ghana this is still limited to only the government-sponsored languages and to the early years of school from kindergarten to grade 3.

There are a number of similarities between the contexts. Both have had numerous fluctuations in language policy over the past century and a policy vagueness and confusion persists in each country. Policy, where it exists, is often relegated to a few minor sentences in other educational documents and is not accompanied by an effective, detailed, and realistic implementation plan. This lack of implementation is most acutely seen in Malawi, in which a number of educators are unaware of the recent change to language-in-education policy. This then calls us to question what the purpose of language policy legislation is within these contexts. As the classroom data discussed illustrate, there can be a mismatch between policy and practice as despite different legislation, in practice classroom contexts are multilingual in both countries. However, by not recognising the multilingual realities of learners and of their classrooms, monolingual English-dominant policy can lead to the marginalisation of the language practices of learners from minoritised language groups.

The dominant position of English in language-in-education policy is evident in both countries. The attitude data discussed highlight that teachers view English as a key language for their pupils to learn, and this has a significant influence on their reported attitudes towards policy. While reported attitudes value English, the language practices in each context indicate that multilingual practices are being used positively by learners and teachers to facilitate learning and engage students with their education. Policy makers in these contexts, and other contexts in Africa and beyond, could learn a valuable lesson by paying attention to the ways in which multilingualism is already being harnessed within education to inform more inclusive and effective language policy.

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Learning literacy in a familiar language: comparing reading and comprehension competence in Bemba in two contrasting settings in Northern Zambia

Nancy C. Kula and Joseph Mwansa

Abstract: The latest language in education policy in Zambia is to use a 'familiar' language in the initial stages of education before transitioning into a regional and later foreign language medium. Investigating the use of a familiar language—Namwanga—in Northern Zambia, in the context of a regional language—Bemba—the article shows that learning of literacy in the regional language is better supported by classrooms that allow free use of the 'home' language or mother tongue. Results from a reading and comprehension task show no hindrance to the achievement of reading fluency in a regional language when a familiar language is encouraged in the classroom. The article provides support for multi-literacies developed through languages that learners are exposed to in their environment rather than a foreign language.

Keywords: Medium of instruction, familiar language, literacy, multi-literacies, reading fluency, regional language, mother tongue, Zambia.

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1 Introduction

The multilingual situation in many African contexts presents many challenges for selecting mediums of instruction. With 73 indigenous languages (CSO 2012), Zambia is no different. This article considers a particular case in relation to the selection of a medium of instruction in a context in Northern Zambia where the regulated regional language offers different advantages to learners depending on whether they are mother tongue speakers of the regional language or not.

Of these 73 languages, seven have the status of national languages, with English (outside of the 73) as the official language. The seven national languages are based on region and are also referred to as regional official languages that are used as lingua franca in the 10 provinces of Zambia. These are Cinyanja, Chitonga, Icibemba, Kiikaonde, Lunda, Luvale and Silozi.[1] These languages are used as media of instruction in the first four years of primary school but are also the regional languages used in local courts, mass media and for political mobilisation. The policy to have the first four years taught in one of the regional languages holds mainly in government schools and also much more so in rural than in urban schools. The use of only the regional languages in schools in any particular province means that children who speak other languages—any of the other 66 indigenous languages—must learn through a second Bantu language. This situation therefore affects a high number of learners, and we are particularly interested in this question as it relates to learning literacy in reading and comprehension.

It is now widely accepted that learning through a mother tongue (MT) achieves better outcomes for learners, and organisations like UNESCO recommend the use of mother tongues at least in the early years rather than learning through a second foreign language (UNESCO 2011; Alidou *et al.* 2006). A term used in this context as a good alternative to the MT is a 'familiar' language. We aim to explore the performance of learners when a familiar language is used. We will provide some contextualisation of how 'familiar' can be understood and compare learners in a familiar context vs. a MT context.

This study was conducted as part of an ongoing larger collaborative project focusing on ways in which multilingual practices can be harnessed to improve classroom learning in three sub-Saharan African contexts: Botswana, Tanzania and Zambia. This larger work aims to understand how the multilingual realities of learners in their day-to-day life outside the classroom contrasts with the classroom situation and how

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[1] Some languages cover more than one province and some provinces are represented by more than one language. IciBemba is spoken in the Copperbelt, Northern, Luapula, and Muchinga provinces and urban parts of central province. Zambian language names, like other Bantu languages, usually belong to a nominal class whose prefix e.g. ici-, ci- ki- is used with the language name. We may sometimes drop this prefix in writing. Nothing hinges on this contrast.

the natural multilingualism in all three contexts can be brought to bear on classroom practices. This article reports on a specific study in the context of Zambia. The data reported on in the study was as such part of other forms of data collected, including classroom observations, teachers, parent and learner interviews, focus group discussions and data collected through questionnaires. These data provide a rich background on which the specific study on achievements in reading fluency and comprehension by Grade 4 learners is to be understood. The study was conducted in Northern Zambia, which like the rest of the country is multilingual.

Focusing on Northern Zambia, we will look at Namwanga-speaking children from Nakonde, a town on the Tanzanian border, who learn through Bemba as the regional official language, as a familiar language. We will contrast this with another location, Kasama, the provincial capital/headquarters of the Northern Province, where the majority of people are Bemba speaking and children learning through Bemba generally speak Bemba as their MT. The reading data we report on in this article is part of ongoing work that aims to compare the reading abilities of learners in both urban and rural settings of these two areas. The rationale for this is that urban settings are more likely to have a higher use of Bemba and possibly incorporate other languages while rural settings are more likely to use local dialects and have fewer other languages; we would like to know whether this has any effect on learning. We currently have data from more urban settings, and our findings are therefore to be further enhanced by the next phase of data collection in rural settings away from the main town in each case.[2] As is to be expected, the urban schools are more multilingual than the rural schools because of the many government, civil and other workers who are posted to these locations from different regions of the country. Our results are therefore to be understood insofar as they relate to this specific setting.

We provide an overview of the language in education policy of Zambia in section 2 and then consider some current thinking on reading in multilingual contexts in section 3, followed by the reading fluency and comprehension study, including the findings in sections 4–8. In section 9, we provide some discussion of teachers' practices

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[2] Data was collected in February–March 2019. Primary schools closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic before rural schools could be reached. Data collection in the more rural schools is due to be conducted in 2021–2. By urban settings we refer to towns, which are regionally important as areas of trade and/or administration, with government offices that attract civil servants from different regions of the country. Schools in these areas that we term 'urban schools' usually have more multilingual student populations owing to the mobility of the inhabitants in these settings. However, the lingua franca is usually the official regional language. Rural settings are mainly small towns or villages/clusters of villages where the student population in schools is more monolingual, made up of smaller communities who speak the same language and in many cases have been inhabitants in the same areas for long durations with less mobility and usually correlate to what are termed as 'tribes'. In these settings also the official regional language would be the medium of instruction in schools, referred to here as 'rural schools'.

in the classroom and also consider some data from interviews with parents as well as teachers, which provides further insight into the context in which learners were schooling, particularly in the familiar language context. We have a discussion in section 10 and end with some conclusions in the final section.

2 Language in education policy and literacy in Zambia

Zambia has been grappling with poor literacy achievements among primary school learners for more than five decades. The schooling system is divided into seven years of primary school, comprising Grades 1 to 7, and five years of secondary school, comprising Grades 8 to 12. There is a national exam in Grade 7, at which point those who are successful progress to Grade 8. At Grade 9, there is a junior secondary school national exam to progress to senior secondary school from Grade 10 to 12. Literacy, which is taught in Zambian languages in primary school, is expected to be successfully achieved by Grade 4, from which point the medium of instruction is exclusively English. Kelly (2000), in his report on the first countrywide baseline study of reading achievement of learners in Grades 1–6, attributed the poor literacy levels (and educational achievements in general) to the language in education policy adopted a year after independence in 1965. The policy from 1965 to 1996 was that English was to be used as the sole medium of instruction in the entire education system. Kelly (2000: 7) argues that this policy resulted in a 'schooled but uneducated generation' characterised by learners who lacked creativity and inventiveness, engaged in rote learning and memorisation instead of understanding and, more importantly, were largely illiterate. The country had abandoned the three-language policy that had been in place during the colonial period from 1927 up to independence. In this policy, first recommended by the Phelps Stokes Commission in 1924 (Ohannessian 1978: 279), children began their education in 'a tribal language', which we can understand as a Bantu mother tongue, in the lower grades before transitioning to a Bantu lingua franca (that is, a regional Bantu language) in the middle grades. In the upper grades the medium of instruction then shifted to the use of English. This was implemented as follows: in the first two grades, children learnt through the medium of their MT, and in the third grade they were taught in one of the regional official languages if this was not the same as the MT, and finally in the fifth grade English became the medium of instruction. Conversations with adults who went through this system of education impressionistically suggest that this policy was more effective at imparting literacy skills to learners so that even learners who dropped out of school in the first three years were literate enough to, for example, write letters.

After the English medium programme was implemented, however, it became clear that the majority of learners were graduating from primary school barely able to read

and write. This was contrary to the claim made by those who recommended the adoption of the English medium of instruction from Grade 1 that the earlier the learners started using English, the better would be their spoken and written English.

In a policy document entitled *Focus on Learning* (1992), government acknowledged that 'Too early an emphasis on learning through English means that the majority of children form hazy and indistinct concepts in language, mathematics, science and social studies' (p. 28). They went on to point out that the use of English as a sole medium of instruction downgraded the indigenous languages and did not foster appreciation for the learner's cultural heritage. The exclusive use of English also made the school an alien institution in the community. In spite of being aware of the negative consequences of an English-only medium of instruction on children's education, no practical steps were taken to change the language policy for the better. Williams (1998), for example, found that Zambian learners in Grades 3, 4 and 6, on average, were unable to read texts two grades below their level. He also found that Zambian learners were not performing better than Malawian learners in English literacy in spite of the fact that the latter began their education in the local language (Chichewa) before shifting to the English medium in Grade 4. In addition, the Malawian learners outperformed the Zambian learners in local language literacy. Another study in 1995 conducted as part of the Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) assessed literacy and numeracy levels in the education system and reported that only 25.8% of the learners in Grade 6 could read at a level defined by teachers as minimum and only 2.3% at the desired level (SACMEQ 1998).

In 1996, as a way of arresting the falling literacy levels in primary school, the government replaced the 'straight into English' policy with one which allowed for the use of Zambian languages as languages of initial literacy instruction in Grades 1–4 but retained English as the official medium of instruction in all the other subjects (MOE 1996). In practice, in the new Primary Reading Programme (PRP), initial literacy was taught in one of the seven regional official languages in the first grade, but was closely followed by the introduction of English in the second grade. During the pilot stage of the literacy component of the Primary Reading Programme, which was called the New Breakthrough to Literacy (NBTL), the results of the learners' reading performance were very promising: children were breaking through to literacy within a year and the reviewers claimed they were reading at a level equivalent to Grade 4 or higher (Linehan 2004). However, the abrupt shift to English literacy in the second grade appeared to arrest the development of reading skills in the local languages, and learners were unable to transfer their literacy skills from Zambian languages to English as envisaged in the policy document *Educating Our Future* (MOE 1996).

Many new studies and assessments by both the Ministry of Education and non-governmental organisations on learners' literacy have since then continued to report low literacy levels in primary schools. For example, SACMEQ (III) of 2010 reported that

only 27.4 per cent of Grade 6 learners tested in reading fluency read at the basic competence level. This and similar reports prompted government to once again reconsider its language in education policy in 2013. The Primary Literacy Programme (PLP) was then launched through a National Literacy Framework (MESVTEE 2013), and this came with a change in the language in education policy that now stipulated that the medium of instruction in the first four grades would be in a 'familiar' Zambian language, rather than just the regional languages. Literacy would initially be in familiar Zambian languages while literacy in English would be introduced in Grade 3 after an oral English course, which would start in Grade 2. English would be used as a medium of instruction starting in Grade 5. This was a full circle return to the language in education policy in the colonial period up to independence. However, the main difference between this and the pre-independence policy was in allowing initial literacy in any mother tongue without restriction to the seven official regional languages. This was a significant shift in all those areas where languages other than the seven regional languages are spoken. The National Literacy Framework (MESVTEE 2013: 12) acknowledges the importance of using a 'familiar language' (which seems to be used interchangeably and broadly understood as a mother tongue) and recommends that instruction be 'in a familiar language, so as to build learners' arsenal for learning to read in other languages as well as learning content subjects.

However, in the subsequent Zambia Education Curriculum Framework (MESVTEE 2015), the term 'familiar language' is, unfortunately and counter to the wider language embracing approach expected, used in a rather more restricted way that is not equivalent to the mother tongue. It is defined as a local language that is commonly used by children in a particular locality. It could be a zone or community language (ibid., vi). Furthermore, in discussing the language of instruction, the document treats a familiar language as one of the seven zonal/regional languages: Cinyanja, Chitonga, Icibemba, Kiikaonde, Lunda, Luvale and Silozi, as well as widely used community languages in specific school catchment areas. How to select these 'widely used community languages' or decide which languages count within this framework is not clarified and essentially boils down to the dominant use of the regional languages. Some language groups not represented by the seven official regional languages, and which can be deemed to be widely used community languages, have attempted to use their languages in primary schools but have not been successful or suffer many impediments due to the lack of resources and the inability to financially support such approaches without government assistance. Namwanga is one such language where an attempt was made in the 1990s to the early 2000s. An association of Namwanga speakers (mainly educationists) produced a language course for Grade 1 called *Chinamwanga amatampulo: ibuuku lyamusambiliizi* (Mulilo 2005): 'Steps in Chinamwanga: a learner's coursebook'. However, this was ultimately unsuccessful due to lack of funding as well as apathy from some teachers and learners

in implementing it. As a result, Namwanga-speaking children have continued to learn through IciBemba, the regional official language in the area. Thus, the very encouraging policy to use familiar languages seems to practically revert to using only the regional national languages in early years.

3 MLE perspectives on reading fluency and comprehension

Contemporary work on multilingual education (MLE) strongly advocates viewing the multilingual repertoires of learners as resources that should be exploited to ensure effective learning. Benson (2013: 11) argues that MLE must be viewed as 'a systematic approach to learning that builds on the learner's home language, knowledge and experiences to teach literacies, languages and the rest of the curriculum'. In terms of reading, Benson (2013) points out that most Early Grade Reading Assessments are based on monolingual, usually English speakers and that such methods, when transferred to multilingual contexts, have limited effectiveness. Benson (ibid.) advocates that approaches to literacy must be adapted to the contexts of use and that effective practices must aim to demonstrably improve the learners' quality of life and be 'socially, culturally, economically and environmentally sustainable' (p. 6) and, as such, must be understood and developed in the context of practice. Benson offers a view of literacy that is ideological and where 'literacies vary by cultures and conditions, that engaging with true literacy is a social act, and that multiple modes of literacy or literacies are presented in learners' backgrounds, experiences and future needs' (Benson 2013: 9–10). In adopting this ideological model of literacy, we must guard against equating learning reading to literacy and further equating literacy to education. Rather, we must appreciate the multiplicity of literacies that particularly multilingual contexts provide. We must be more concerned with 'communicative practices' and aim to understand how languages are comfortably and seamlessly used in different contexts; in navigating social relations outside the classroom and at home; in negotiating power relations in the classroom; in managing local identities and cultures; and in contributing to wider regional, national and international discourses.

Testing and learning reading are not just about developing isolated decoding skills but must be connected to comprehension, and it is now well established that such comprehension is best served by the use of a mother tongue or a language in which learners have comfortable competence that would allow automaticity in reading. As Kuhn *et al.* (2010) argue, the ability to develop automaticity in reading with effortlessness and a lack of conscious awareness relies on simultaneous awareness of what is being decoded, which is based on the ability of learners to speak and understand a language. Sphernes and Ruto-Korir (2018) argue in a similar vein that languages learnt through a spontaneous process better facilitate the learning of reading and

comprehension than do foreign languages learnt through non-spontaneous or academic processes.

The other important consideration for reading and another reason why literacy-learning strategies developed in the north are less applicable to the south, at least in sub-Saharan Africa, is differences between orthographies and other linguistic features like phonology and morphology. For example, the difference between shallow and deep orthographies significantly affects how reading is taught and should be taken into consideration (Schroeder 2013; Mwansa 2017). Shallow orthographies are those where there are consistent correspondences between letters and the sounds they represent in the language. Zambian languages are good examples of these. In deep orthographies, as represented by English, there are many inconsistences in the correspondences between letters and the sounds they represent in the language, many of these owing to the historical development of the language. For example, some letters can represent more than one sound or a sound can be represented by more than one letter in English, which is never the case in Zambian languages. While it is easier to teach learners in shallow orthographies to associate letters with sounds and thus be able to decode (sound out) any word, in deep orthographies different strategies more reliant on word recognition or the use of rhymes used to teach reading. Thus, while the former orthography favours the identification of syllables, the latter is better suited to the identification of words.

4 The current study

We begin by providing some background on how reading is taught in Zambian primary schools. The new Literacy Programme in Zambian languages uses the synthetic phonics approach, which simply means that children learn individual letter sounds (letter names are not taught initially) and then blend them into syllables and finally words. The first sounds that are taught are the five vowels: *a e i o u.* Then the consonant sounds are introduced, starting with the most frequently occurring sound/letter in the language to the least, as calculated using a corpus of literature in each of the seven regional official languages. The idea behind this is to enable learners to begin reading as quickly as possible since they would be exposed to the most commonly occurring sounds in words early.

The first step in teaching a letter sound is to introduce it orally through a phonemic awareness exercise. Children are shown a picture of an object or person or one depicting an activity to identify or name the initial target letter. The children are taught how to pronounce it and then the teacher writes the letter that represents the sound on the board. After practising how to write it as a small and capital letter, it

is then blended with a vowel at a time. For example, if 'm' is the target sound, it is blended with the five vowels and practiced in syllable drills: *ma*, *me*, *mi*, *mo*, *mu.* This is the prescribed method of teaching initial literacy according to the Primary Literacy Framework (2013), and such drills are common practice often heard in schools.

Children are asked to think of words in the language that can be made with the vowels and syllables learnt so far. For example, in Bemba, *umume* 'dew'; *mama* 'grandmother', and so on. In this way, children can see the usefulness of what they are learning, and that they can express themselves in writing in their own language. The practice with syllable, word and sentence formation was also designed to increase the reading fluency of the learners. This programme, therefore, took care of most of the critical component reading skills identified by the National Reading Panel (2000), namely, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency and vocabulary. The remaining skill, comprehension, would come later when the children started reading extended texts.

All the individual sounds and syllables in the regional languages are supposed to be covered in the first two years of primary school, so that in Grade 3 the concentration would be on increasing reading fluency. In Grade 4, children should have progressed from 'learning to read' to 'reading to learn', that is, using their literacy skills to read content subject matter. However, in most of the primary schools, there is very little grade or age-related reading materials, and much of what they read is what teachers write on the board. This was the case also in the schools in which the study was conducted, though see discussions with teachers on materials further below.

4.1 Purpose of the study

This was an exploratory study that examined the reading abilities of learners from two contrasting linguistic areas in Northern Zambia. Details of the two areas of focus will be provided further below.

In light of work on multilingual education, as for example discussed by Benson (2013), we conduct this reading test in contrast to how Early Grade Reading Assessments (EGRA) are generally done. EGRAs are usually conducted in a foreign language that is not familiar to learners. As Benson (ibid.) advocates, we aim here to contextualise the test in the context of use. Bemba is one of the languages that the learners are exposed to daily, and we use the reading test to gauge to what extent this exposure allows them to effectively engage in this language. We conduct this study under the assumption that literacy in Bemba will both demonstrably improve the learners' quality of life in their social and cultural context and also provide a better vehicle and indeed also act as a gauge of their literacy capacity in Namwanga and in

their multilingual practices. This is something that an evaluation of literacy ability in English, for example, would not provide, not least because, as noted above, different pedagogical strategies are required for reading of deep versus shallow orthographies. We see this study as speaking to the idea of literacies, and that for these learners this is one of the many literacies that they are on the way to mastering in weaving their language practices in their social space and for their future experiences. We thus conduct this study in full appreciation of the multiplicity of literacies that this context provides. What is missing and which is an aspiration of a future study is to adopt the use of a multilingual text that reflects the translanguaging use of what we treat as distinct languages here—Namwanga and Bemba—but we see the present study as providing a useful initial step in achieving and unpicking a more complex picture. There were two research objectives for this study. The first one was to ascertain whether Namwanga-speaking learners after four years of learning through a regional Zambian language (as a familiar language that is not their MT) would be fluent in reading Bemba and how this compares to the level of Bemba-speaking children with the same text at the same level. The second objective was similar but related to comprehension—how good were Namwanga-speaking learners at reading comprehension after four years of instruction through Bemba as a familiar language and how did this compare to Bemba-speaking children at the same level? These two questions are related in that reading fluency is highly correlated with reading comprehension (Schroeder 2013). We follow Kuhn *et al.*'s (2010) characterisation of reading fluency and how it relates to reading comprehension:

> Fluency combines accuracy, automaticity, and oral reading prosody, which, taken together, facilitate the reader's construction of meaning. It is demonstrated during oral reading through ease of word recognition, appropriate pacing, phrasing, and intonation. It is a factor in both oral and silent reading that can limit or support comprehension.

We further take the simple view of reading as proposed by Gough & Tunmer (1986), which states that reading is decoding and linguistic comprehension. We discuss in what follows the context of the study and the methodology adopted.

5 Participants

5.1 Teachers

Four teachers in total participated in assessing learners. In each school, we recruited a Grade 4 class teacher of the selected class and another Grade 4 teacher present at the time of testing. In each school, we recruited Bemba-speaking teachers.

We selected a Grade 4 class in each school that we found in session. In many primary schools in Zambia, there are up to three sessions in a day when different grades or sometimes different classes of the same grade are in school. When we visited a school and were lucky enough to find a Grade 4 class in session, we picked that for testing. It was thus purely random and opportunistic. We chose to test Grade 4 learners because they are a terminal grade in the current language in education policy: initial literacy instruction ends at this stage as well as the use of the local language as a medium of instruction in content subjects. According to the policy, learners at this stage will have transitioned from learning to read to reading to learn. They would, therefore, be more fluent readers than those in lower grades. Moreover, in the case of the Namwanga children, they would be expected to be proficient in speaking and reading Bemba after four years of instruction through this medium.

5.2 Learners

A total of 60 Grade 4 learners (aged between 9 and 10 years) participated in the study. From each school, we randomly selected 30 learners (15 girls and 15 boys) by picking names from the class register. By doing this, we were able to pick only Namwanga-speaking children for Nakonde and Bemba-speaking children for Kasama by using their surnames, which generally transparently reflect their language or ethnic group/tribe (see footnote 1) and which was further confirmed by the teachers.

6 The research sites

The first research site was Nakonde, a busy border, trading town. The majority of the residents are Namwanga-speaking people who are also found on the Tanzanian side of the border. Namwanga is a central Bantu language classified as M22 in Guthrie's (1967–71) classification of Bantu languages. The number of native speakers of the language was given as 400,000 in the 2010 census (CSO 2012). As an ethnic group, Namwanga constituted 2.8 per cent of the Zambian population (CSO 2012). Related dialects of Namwanga include Iwa, Mambwe, Lambya, Tambo, Lungu and Nyiha. These are sometimes referred to as the Mambwe–Namwanga group of languages. In terms of language vitality, Namwanga can be said to be developing. It is used not only in homes and community but also on the local community radio station in Nakonde. It is also used in churches interchangeably with Bemba. Namwanga people have been in contact with Bemba-speaking people from pre-colonial times, which has resulted in borrowing of words across the two languages. Kashoki and Mann (1978: 54), using a list of some 100 basic words, found a 58 per cent correspondence in vocabulary

between Bemba and Namwanga. This is lower than that between Namwanga and Mambwe at 75 per cent, for example.[3]

In Nakonde town, Bemba is commonly used as a lingua franca among, for example, people who have come from other regions of the country and work at the border or in businesses and government offices. In the trading areas, including those on the Tanzanian side of the border, in addition to Swahili, Namwanga and Bemba are also used.

The second site was Kasama, which is the provincial administrative town for the Northern Province. It is a largely Bemba-speaking town, although there are residents from all regions of the country. Bemba is a central Bantu language classified as M42, which is the most widely spoken language in Zambia at 33.5 per cent in the 2010 census (CSO 2012). When combined with some 20 dialects, the Bemba language group constitutes 41 per cent of the Zambian population. As mentioned earlier, Bemba is one of the seven regional official languages in Zambia.

Apart from the contrasts in the language situation, the schools sampled did not differ from each other in any substantial way, if at all. They were both quite well equipped with enough desks so that no learners were sitting on the floor or were crowded on few desks. However, in both schools we found no reading materials for literacy. The teachers said there were textbooks for some of the content subjects, but we did not observe any such textbooks being used by learners. The enrolment in the Kasama school was slightly higher than that in the Nakonde one, with 63 learners present on the day of the study in Kasama, compared to 52 in the Nakonde school, in the Grade 4 classes tested. The teachers involved in the study in the two schools had very similar teaching experience of over 10 years on average.

7 Instruments

7.1 Qualitative instruments

Three research instruments were utilised in this study. The first one was an interview guide that was used in the larger ethnographic study with teachers and parents. Its main focus was on the teachers' language practices in school: we asked about the

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[3] Grimes (1988) argues that for speakers of two varieties to have mutual intelligibility, they must share at least 85 per cent of their vocabulary. Varieties sharing less than 70 per cent of their vocabulary are too distinct to be considered as part of the same language and those with lexical similarities between 70 to 85 have marginal intelligibility. In this case, Mambwe and Namwanga can be said to be marginally mutually intelligible dialects. In the case of Bemba and Namwanga, following this cut off point, the two can be said to be unrelated languages. However, the sustained contact between the two ethnic groups through generations of Namwanga people who have been exposed to the Bemba language in school as a subject and also exposure to it through mass media, and day-to-day use, the two languages have grown closer or are certainly perceived to be close by speakers.

language or languages the teachers used in teaching in class, with colleagues and with parents. Teachers were also asked to comment on their language preferences and whether they allowed learners to use other languages apart from the official local language of instruction in class. Similarly, for parents, we asked them what languages they normally use at home, how much they were involved in their children's school work, their understanding of the languages used in school and also what their preferences were of which language should be used.

The second instrument was the observation guide, which was used by research assistants to assess whether the school had facilities and materials to support literacy development and also how lessons were conducted, in particular, to observe the teachers and learners' language practices in class. The third instrument was the reading text and comprehension questions, which are discussed below.

7.2 Quantitative instrument

7.2.1 Reading text

The passage used was developed by the researchers; see the text given in (1) below. It was tried out on Grade 4 learners in a non-participating school and found to be suitable. It was short enough to be read in a minute. The passage was a narrative and was on a topic that learners would identify with and thus contextually relevant. In keeping with our adopted ethnographic linguistic approach and the principle of researching multilingually and collaboratively (see Costley & Reilly 2021), the researchers discussed and agreed with the teachers how to grade learners in terms of reading fluency in Bemba on a five-point Likert type scale.

We followed Kuhn *et al.* (2010) above in our interpretation of fluency and reading comprehension. In fluent reading, there is a reflection of syntactic and semantic aspects of the text being read (Rasinski *et al.* 2020: 2). When a child reads expressively, that is, with appropriate intonation and pacing, it shows that she is able to recognise meaningful units of information in the text. In other words, the child is already processing its meaning. Research has shown that reading fluency is associated with reading comprehension (Rasinski *et al.* 2020: ibid.; Kuhn *et al.* 2010). We based the formulation of the five-point Likert scale on this. Thus, a child reading as one would normally speak in the language would score five marks. One not able to read at all would be given a mark of zero. One sounding out letters/syllables and retracting to blend the sounds/syllables would score 1 mark; one able to call out a word at a time would score 2 marks; while one able to put some words in meaningful phrases would score 3 marks; and finally, one able to read with minor pauses would score 4. Scoring didn't include noting down mistakes but was more by an overall impressionistic evaluation. To ensure that there was a high level of agreement between the pairs of teachers

who rated the learners' reading, we made them do some trial runs with a number of students. Inter-rater reliability of their scores was assessed using a two-way mixed consistency average measures Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) in SPSS to assess the consistency of the teacher's ratings of the learners' reading fluency for each school. The resulting ICCs were within the excellent range at 0.95, which showed very high agreement between the pairs of teachers in both schools.

(1) Reading passage

Mutinta aalefwaya ukushita injinga. Asungile ulupiya pa imyeshi isaano. Lilya lwaku-manina, aile kumatuuka neensansa mukushita injinga. Pa mwinshi wetuuka asangile banakulubantu abamulombele ulupiya. Bamwebele ukuti umwana wabo aleelwala kukalaale nomba

tabakwete ulupiya lwakwendela. Mutinta aabomfwila uluse abapeelapo ulupiya lwakwe ati: 'Nkeesa shita limbi injinga'.

Translation

Mutinta wanted to buy a bicycle. She saved money for four months. When it was enough, she very happily went to the shop to buy the bicycle. At the entrance of the shop she found an old lady who asked her for some money. The old lady told her that her child was unwell in the city and she didn't have money to travel to the city. Mutinta felt sorry for her and gave her some of her money and thought: 'I will buy the bike another time'.

(2) Comprehension questions

1. Cinshi Mutinta aleesungila ulupiya?
    Why was Mutinta saving money?

2. Aleumfwa shaani ilyo ailemukushita injinga?
    How was she feeling when she went to buy the bike?

3. Bushe alingile mwituuka?
    Did she enter the shop?

4. Nibaani asangile pamwinshi wetuuka?
    Who did she find at the entrance of the shop?

5. Mutinta muntu wamusango nshi?
    a. Wacilumba
    b. Wacikuku
    c. Wabutani
    d. Wansansa
    What kind of a person is Mutinta?
    a. She is proud
    b. She is compassionate/warm hearted
    c. She is stingy
    d. She is a happy person

7.2.2 Comprehension tests

As illustrated above in (2), the passage had five questions, four of which were self-response type of questions, split equally between ones based on explicitly stated

information in the passage and others that required learners to make straightforward inferences. The fifth question required interpretation and integration of information; thus, the questions were presented in order of difficulty. The goal of the questions varying in level of difficulty was to discriminate between weak and strong comprehenders.

7.2.3 Procedure

The test was conducted in a quiet, empty classroom where two teachers sat at a table and learners came to sit across the table one by one. The learner was told to read the text aloud as best they could. Those who were unable to read within a minute after a number of prompts were asked to leave the room. The teachers wrote down separately a score for the reading fluency part. After reading, the text was taken away from the learner and then one of the teachers read the questions out slowly. The learner answered the questions orally. In some cases, the teacher had to repeat a question if the learner appeared not to have heard it properly. Each teacher had to indicate a mark for each correct answer. The answers had been agreed upon by the researchers and the teachers beforehand. After completing the assessment, the child was thanked for participating.

8 Findings

8.1 Reading fluency results

The first research question was whether Namwanga learners learning through a second Bantu language, Bemba, would be as fluent as Bemba-speaking children learning through their first language/mother tongue. Table 1 shows mean scores in the reading test contrasting gender and school location.

These results show that in both schools, girls performed slightly better than boys, and this is even more so in the Kasama school. The performance in reading showed that Nakonde learners (M=2.9, SE=.21) were slightly better that those in Kasama (M=2.3, SE=.27). However, the above results were not statistically significantly different $t(58)$=−1.62, p>.05.

We assessed the inter-rater reliability using a two-way mixed consistency average measures of ICC to assess the degree of consistency of the teacher's ratings of learners' reading in the two schools. The resulting ICCs were within the excellent range for each pair of teachers in the two schools. For Nakonde it was 0.944 and for Kasama slightly higher at 0.980.[4] This was almost perfect agreement between the pairs of teachers in the two schools.

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[4] Inter-rater reliability of less than 0.4 is classified as poor; 0.41 to 0.59 fair; 0.6 to .74 as good and 0.75 to 1 as excellent (Cicchetti, 1994).

Table 1. Comparison of mean reading performance between Kasama (Bemba speaking) and Nakonde (Namwanga speaking).

Gender	School	Marks (average out of 5)
Boys (N=15)	Kasama	1.87
Girls (N=15)	Kasama	2.80
Total	Kasama	2.3 SE=.27
Boys (N=15)	Nakonde	2.83
Girls (N=15)	Nakonde	2.93
Total	Nakonde	2.9 SE=.21

8.2 Reading comprehension

The second research question asked whether Namwanga-speaking learners who had been learning through a familiar language (Bemba) would perform as well as Bemba-speaking learners learning in their MT, in reading comprehension. Table 2 below gives the mean scores of learners in the two schools segregated according to gender, and the total mean scores are shown below each school location. The picture is similar to the one for reading fluency; girls were slightly better than boys in both schools, especially in the Kasama school. In reading comprehension, again Nakonde learners (M=3.7; SE=.23) performed slightly better than Kasama learners (M=3.0; SE=.36), but this difference was not statistically significant $t(58)=-1.63$, $p>.05$.

We were also interested in seeing whether in these two schools, there was a relationship between learners' performance in reading fluency and reading comprehension as argued in Kuhn, Schwanenflugel and Meisinger (2010). There was indeed a significant relationship between reading fluency and reading comprehension in both cases at r=.91, $p<0.01$ for Kasama and r=.67 $p<0.01$ for Nakonde.

9 Classroom observations and teacher/parent interviews

In order to better contextualise and understand the learning environment in which the learners tested were immersed and provide a context for the discussion of the results, we provide here some discussion of how learning occurred and was delivered in the classroom by considering some findings from classroom observations. In addition, we also discuss some interview findings from teachers and parents that show the kind of attitudes and ideologies on language and, in particular, on media of instruction from these two important players in the students' learning environment.

Table 2. Reading comprehension results.

Gender	School	Marks (average out of 5)
Boys (N=15)	Kasama	2.53
Girls (N=15)	Kasama	3.47
Total (N=30)	Kasama	3.0, *SE*=.36
Boys (N=15)	Nakonde	3.46
Girls (N=15)	Nakonde	3.93
Total (N=30)	Nakonde	3.7, SE=.23

This provides us with some important insights into some of the students' lived experiences. The data reported for teachers was conducted in the two schools but also as part of the wider study, similar observations and interviews were conducted in other schools in the two linguistic areas. We note here that we are yet to complete data analysis of all the data collected as part of the larger study to provide more robust trends and in this sense the attitudes discussed here cannot at present be deemed to be representative of the whole data set. We here thus provide an impression of some of the views that came up consistently in the data so far analysed and leave a more detailed analysis to future publications. The same applies to the data from interviews with parents. Nevertheless, in all cases the views reported here were raised multiple times.

9.1 Teachers' classroom practices and interviews

Most teachers reported that they used Bemba in teaching and with colleagues and parents. In addition, they also used English with colleagues and in staff meetings. Some teachers in the Namwanga area said they switched into Namwanga to explain difficult concepts or clarify points when this was deemed necessary. In class, some said they allowed learners to use Namwanga in the early stages e.g. in Grade 1. Teachers explained that grade ones have difficulties when they first start school because of the change in language from the home language, Namwanga, to the language of instruction, Bemba. But the teachers felt that the learners appear to learn Bemba very rapidly within a few weeks and are completely fluent within a year, and they argued that the best time to learn a new language is when the learners are still young. Teachers' views on learners' initial competencies can be seen in Extract 1 below and on the support they offer learners by using Namwanga in Extract 2 below from a focus group discussion with teachers.[5]

[5] In all extracts, the words in italics in the Namwanga text indicate the speaker's use of English words.

Extract 1, from ZN 02 Te INT 050320 (2) JM:

[T:… Baleesa ne cinmwanga ceka ceka mu *first week*. Nomba *by the time* twile tulesambila icibemba bele baleba *used* nabena. *But* ilya *first* na s*econd week* kulabafye limbi cilia ulelanda tabacishibe pantu baliba *used* ne cinamwanga.

… They come with only Namwanga in the first week. But as they go on learning, they get used to Bemba. But in the first and second week sometimes they don't understand what you are saying because they are used to Namwanga.

Extract 2, from ZN Te FG Te Re300320 JM:

[T1: Ee nga namona taleecita *understand* limo tuleesa mukubomfyako icinamwanga. Namweba. Nangu uo wamona ukuti ici taleeumfwa pantu bambi tababomfyako nangu icibemba pa ng'anda [T2: nga bantu bapalamina uku (pointing in direction of the border) ne ciswaili)] … cinamwanga, *so* nga wamona ukuti taleecita *understand* wa bomfyako icinamwanga.

When I notice that they don't understand, sometimes I use Namwanga. I tell them. Or anyone you notice that they don't understand because some don't use any Bemba at home [T2: Like people living near this area (pointing in the direction of the Tanzanian border) and Swahili] it is only Namwanga, so when you notice they don't understand you use Namwanga.

In another interview [ZN INT Te Re 020320JM], a deputy head teacher expressed the same, pointing out that when Bemba was used in early years, this can create a 'language barrier' with children who do not speak Bemba as they are unable to answer questions asked in Bemba. Although the deputy head teacher acknowledged that teachers were encouraged to use both Namwanga and Bemba in the early years and certainly in the first grade, he also expressed that there was variation in how much this was implemented and it mainly depended on a teachers' preference and leniency in the classroom.

Some teachers—principally Bemba speakers—said they understood Namwanga but could not speak it and in this case only spoke in Bemba in the classroom even if they allowed students to speak in Namwanga. Teachers who came from other language groups (Tonga, Bisa, Nyanja) had managed to learn Bemba but only basic Namwanga and so could only use Bemba in teaching.

In terms of reading, interviews with teachers and learners showed that there was little reading outside of class and there were not many reading materials in school or in homes. Teachers did report that there were textbooks available that could be used in school. The main practice observed, though, and also discussed with teachers is that they wrote sentences and words on the board that learners could read and also copy into their books to practice reading at home. In discussing whether Bemba should be used to teach literacy and reading, most teachers were happy to adopt Bemba, saying they had seen positive results of reading skills learnt in Bemba being used for English; see Extract 3 below. One teacher, though, in evaluating the success and progress of learning reading, regarded having only 10 children who could read well in her Grade 3 class of up to 70 pupils as doing well.

Extract 3, from ZN Te FG Te Re300320 JM:

[T: Ine palwandi kuti namona caaliba fye bwino pantu umwana nga acita *break* mu ciBemba aishiba bwino bwino ne cisungu balesa mukwishiba bwangu tabashupikwa pantu balesha ukulapashanyako filya fine ifyo alebelenga muciBemba; babelenga icisungu muci-ibemba baleeshako panoono nomba kuti mwanona kwati balefilwa *pronunciation* … Nga acitafye *break* mu ciBemba nefya cisungu aleeshako panoono. *Then* apo ba*teacher* beshila mukubomba ni pali *pronunciation* nga baba *introduced* ku cisungu.

In my opinion I think it is good because when a child breaks (through) in Bemba, and knows it very well they also learn English quickly. They don't have problems because they compare how they read; they read English in Bemba although you would think they fail to pronounce. … When they break (through) in Bemba even in English they try (to read). Then the teacher has to work on the pronunciation when they are introduced to English.

Classroom observations in Nakonde (Namwanga-speaking area) showed that in all grades learners usually conversed in Namwanga among themselves but mainly answered teachers' questions in Bemba. In two classes observed, learners conducted a group discussion in Namwanga, but the learner who went to present to the whole class used Bemba. Outside the classroom, the language of play was largely Namwanga. In one class, the teacher asked learners to tell a story and one student did so in Namwanga. The teacher continued the class and discussed the story told in Namwanga and asked the pupils questions about it in Bemba, without translating any of the Namwanga as she confidently correctly assumed that the learners had fully understood. However, the teacher herself did not speak in Namwanga and when learners responded in Namwanga the teacher repeated the response in Bemba. See part of this interaction in Extract 4 below. The story the student told was about a hare who was lazy and did not do any work. The languages used are given in brackets, showing the teachers' continued use and recasting of responses in Bemba, despite allowing the use of Namwanga in the classroom. The teacher also ends this section with positive reinforcement 'you are all clever', showing that she does not treat the use of Namwanga in the classroom negatively.

Extract 4, from ZN INT Te Re 020320JM:

Teacher: Ati kalulu. Acitenshi? [Bemba]
          He says hare. What did the hare do?

Pupil 1:   Akuwomba ncito [Namwanga]
          He worked

Teacher: Ati alebomba incite … [Bemba]
          That he worked

Pupil 2:   Vwi … vwile e kalulu a siomba ncito [Namwanga]
          I have heard that/understood that the Hare did not do any work

Teacher: Ati atila, bayini, kalulu taleebomba inciito? *Okay* mwalicenjela bonse. [Bemba]
          He has said [the learner who answered in Namwanga], do you agree, that the Hare did not do any work? Okay. You are all clever.

Thus, while teachers appreciated the difficulty that children faced when they first entered school and faced Bemba in contrast to predominantly speaking Namwanga at home, they felt that overall, the use of Bemba was acceptable as they learnt the language quite quickly, likely also aided by the similarity in grammatical structure. They also offered some scaffolding for students by allowing them to use Namwanga in the early years. An important issue in relation to teachers is also that some did not speak Namwanga and although they reported to have good understanding of the language, they were not themselves in this case able to use Namwanga in the classroom. In most cases as above, even when Namwanga was allowed and students were not reprimanded for using it, the teacher themselves did not speak in Namwanga, which could be a way of continuing to signal the official language of instruction. Conversations with pupils in focus groups revealed that they used Namwanga among themselves and at home, but in addition, they also used some Bemba in the community. Students did not view the use of Bemba in the classroom negatively and said they could understand.

9.2 Parent interviews

Interviews with parents were conducted in Nakonde in the neighbourhoods of the schools where the study was conducted, so that parents who were interviewed had children who went to local schools. Generally, parents had lived in the area for extensive periods, and some were born in the area. Selection followed a snowballing pattern and was dependent on availability and willingness to participate. Interviews were conducted by a research assistant who was fluent in both Namwanga and Bemba and took the structure of a guided conversation that also included some general conversation about the area.

Parents reported that the language used at home and in daily interactions such as at markets, in shops and at church was Namwanga. They also reported that they also used Namwanga at PTA (Parent–Teacher Association) meetings in schools. They reported that they understand that their children learn in Namwanga, Bemba and English when they are in school. When asked whether they thought their children understood what was taught in Bemba and English, some parents expressed that they think in this case children do not understand well, while others thought they could understand because they learn that different languages are used in different contexts:

> Extract 5, from ZMPNS2-IntPaRe-040320MM:
> Pa: eeh tukuti tuti muwufupi tukupusana, ndiwafuma walemba iciwemba koko ni cizungu, koo tukulandavye icinamwanga ampela so ukuzana ngawa ti alembe atandi asimpe andi alande icinamwanga.
> *Pa: yes, we can say that, in short [it] differs, … they learn and write in Bemba and English at school, here at home we just speak Namwanga that's all, so you find that they do not write but instead only speak Namwanga.*

We asked parents to consider what language they thought would be optimal for children to learn in, in school and found that parents overwhelmingly preferred Namwanga (Extracts 6–8):[6]

> Extract 6, from ZMPNS3-IntPaRe-040320-MM:
> Pa: Ninga zumilizya ukuti wa wonvya icinamwanga. … Eta, amuno mumwitu muwinamwanga.
> *Pa: I would suggest that they use Namwanga … because this is a Namwanga-speaking area.*
> Extract 7, from ZMPNS2-IntPaRe-040320MM:
> Pa: koo tunga sola ici Namwanga nye amuno nga twati tuti iciwemba awikala kaya awinam-
> wanga wa tupunye. … aco nga wiza we mweni mpaka ulande ici namwanga.
> MM: vyo wa Tembo wiza koo wasanguka awinamwanga asawawemba.
> Pa: eeh wasanguka awinamwanga.
> *Pa: here we can choose Namwanga because if we say Bemba, the people living here will not like it as here we are all Namwangas. … Even if you come as a visitor you have to speak Namwanga.*
> *MM: so people who are called Tembo (and hence come from the Eastern Province) they come and become/must speak Namwanga and not Bemba?*
> *Pa: yes precisely, they become Namwanga.*
> Extract 8, from ZMPNS2-IntPaRe-040320MM:
> Pa: … Pamwi cino nandi nkolowozye apa mulandu wakuti ngawakusambilila icizungu ici Namwanga wakupotwa so nga twati lemba kalata wakupotwa …
> *Pa: … Maybe I can add something about the issue of children learning in English at school, they have difficulty with Namwanga so when you ask them to write a letter in Namwanga they are unable to do so.*

In the above quote, the parent was expressing his displeasure of the fact that children do not learn Namwanga at school and are thus unable to write even a letter in it. In other words, the education gained in school does not appear to be relevant to the lives of children in the community, from the parents' perspective.

In terms of parents helping children with homework that is given in Bemba, some parents said that they found it easy to help the children with this also when it was in Bemba, otherwise if homework is in English and a parent can't help, then they rely on older siblings to offer support to younger ones. Asked further how they manage to help children with homework when it is in Bemba, given their saying that they only use Namwanga at home and in most activities, this was one of the responses in Namwanga:

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[6] A reviewer points out that this positive attitude of parents to a smaller local language is different from that reported in most other African countries/contexts. Perhaps in this case it is due to the settled multilingual use of language, where both languages are deemed as a standard part of the local linguistic repertoires but at the same time with some understood contextual delineations. It could also be that the linguistic ethnographic methodology with the focus groups adopting a supportive and local nature and also being conducted in Namwanga better created a context for free and unregulated expression.

Extract 9, from ZMPNS2-IntPaRe-040320MM:

Pa: ah tukakonkavye but nke tukakonka co walemvile mu ciwemba but canga cipepuke nga wasambililanga icinamwanga elo wazana ni cinamwanga ku ng'anda.

Pa: well, we just follow what they have written in Bemba but it would be much easier if they learnt in Namwanga since they speak Namwanga at home.

Thus, overall, parents were very keen for their children to learn in the language they use at home, as they considered that to be most useful. There was little acknowledgement that there was also use of Bemba in the community, which the parents must also interact with, with parents' perceptions closely tied to identity and cultural practice.

10 Discussion

The results from the short reading and comprehension study conducted shows that the learners using Bemba as a familiar language and those using it as a MT in the same town setting do not show a statistically significant difference in performance. The performance of all learners shows that they perform better on comprehension than on reading but also, as these are Grade 4 learners, their performance is expected to be better and around the mark 4, also for a relatively easy text such as this. The results are particularly unexpected for the learners whose MT is the language of instruction; the reason for this is not immediately clear to us, and we can only speculate that it may be to do with the relatively small sample. The teachers' rating of the learners' performance, although subjective, showed an acceptable level of reliability, and so this cannot be the reason for the differing performance.

The results showing that the learners whose first language is Namwanga and who learn through a familiar language, Bemba, perform on a par with those who learn through their mother tongue lead us to investigate further the status of the 'familiar' language. In this case, it is a language that is structurally similar to Namwanga and with a lexical similarity of 58 per cent, and above all is a language that is also used outside the classroom and is heard in the learner's wider community as regional language and lingua franca. It is worth pointing out that in the 2010 census in Zambia (CSO 2012), 38.9 per cent of Mambwe–Namwanga speakers reported using Bemba as their main language of communication. In addition, as a bustling trade town, the environment also has a regular influx of travellers who are likely to speak the lingua franca. Although a number of activities can be argued to take place in Namwanga, at least for the settled town dwellers, there is also the presence of Bemba on many radio programmes, for example. In this sense, Bemba is on a different footing from a foreign language, like English or French, that predominantly exist outside the community. To capture this contrast, Benson (2013) also distinguishes languages which learners are exposed to in the environment versus those to which they are not exposed to and

which are, as such, classified as foreign. Recall that the teachers in fact reported that children were able to begin to use Bemba fluently quite quickly. Although the languages are marginally similar, we must assume that the accelerated pace of speaking Bemba is because for these learners they encounter this language in their environment. The learners themselves also reported not having much difficulty with Bemba and even expressed a preference to learn in Bemba, although we treat these responses with caution as they are not quantified and may also reflect what the learners perceived to be the expected response. Under these conditions, the results show that languages which learners are exposed to, because they are part of their immediate environment, *can* moderately successfully be used as mediums of instruction. There are, though, a number of crucial elements that make this possible. Firstly, as we saw from the classroom observations, learners were free to use Namwanga in the classroom and were not discouraged if they gave responses in Namwanga. This shows that teachers were to a large extent building on and exploiting the language resources that the learners brought to the classroom by allowing Namwanga to also be a language of the classroom and not only a home and an at play language. We consider this use of Namwanga in the classroom to be by far the most important factor. The free use of Namwanga also shows learners that their mother tongue is valued, which is important for their own identity and motivation and fosters a spirit of free expression in the classroom. Secondly, Bemba was not a totally foreign language to the learners, and although it was the medium of instruction, in most classes it did not pose a threat to the learners' mother tongue, which could also be used. As a familiar language, it was easier for learners to develop semi-automatic skills in reading also because comprehension in Bemba could be aided by the moderate lexical similarity with the mother tongue. Finally, it appears that the learners managed to navigate the different uses of their languages in a meaningful way that allowed an equitable negotiation of power between languages inside and outside the classroom. This has parallels with findings in Spernes & Ruto-Korir (2018) in their study on language preferences in rural Kenya, where learners varied in language preference and their own perceived competence in the four skills between the home language Nandi, the regional and national language Kiswahili and English. Their preferences were based on five contexts of use: (i) communicating with family; (ii) communicating with friends; (iii) use at school; (iv) importance for culture; and (v) communicating with everyone. This textured use of languages is typical of multilingual contexts and correlates to different literacies where each serves a purpose and meaning in the lives of learners and users. As long as no value judgement is added to this stratification, a healthy intermingling of languages in different and across contexts can co-exist.

A concerning matter, though, with the results for both groups of learners is the overall poor performance in reading at Grade 4, when learners would have been expected to have acquired full reading fluency in the familiar language or MT by

Grade 3. Since students start learning English oral skills in Grade 2 and then literacy in English in Grade 3, it is likely that this complicates the learning situation for them and hinders their progress.[7] This kind of short-term transitional model, where learners must quickly shift to another, usually foreign, language as MOI fails to fully exploit the benefits of the familiar or first language of the learners.[8] As Mwansa (2017) has shown in another study on reading skills in Lusaka schools, students showed regression in their Zambian language literacy skills when English was introduced too quickly, such that ground that had been gained in learning reading was then subsequently lost. We would thus argue that it is important that the skills in initial literacy are significantly strengthened before they begin to be built upon; otherwise, it may lead to literacy in English having to be taught from scratch with no benefits accrued from previous learning based on the familiar or MT language. If the transition period is too short, it will result in poor retention of skills already learnt. What is needed in such cases, as Benson (2013) suggests, is continuing literacy in the familiar language or MT even when the foreign language is introduced. A further important point that the findings raise in relation to there being no real difference in performance between the learners who used a familiar language and those who used the MT is that in fact more use of Namwanga in the classroom should be encouraged and also for learning literacy, since this will put students at even more of an advantage and remove any initial delay and difficulty no matter how short, especially in this current situation where they will also have to transition into English. The fewer the obstacles the learner faces, the higher the chance of effective learning. We would assume that the skills learnt in the MT, particularly in relation to automaticity in decoding and fluency would be more long-lasting and better able to be available for literacy in English when this starts.

Another important factor is the wider applicability of the findings. As discussed earlier and assumed throughout the discussion, literacy-learning pedagogies have to be adapted and adjusted to the learning context. We think that our findings are unique to this town-setting context where the familiar language is widely used in the immediate environment and community. This, we think, would contrast with a more rural setting where the regional language was not familiar in being within the learners' daily discourse. It remains to be seen in future research whether this assumption is borne out,

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[7] The current education policy's aim is that children would transfer their literacy skills from Zambian languages to English. However, Mwansa (2017) observes that the initial skills in Zambian languages are not currently being exploited to teach English literacy because all the sounds corresponding to the Roman alphabet are reintroduced, including those already familiar to children, rather than merely concentrating on new sounds. Needless to say, this causes confusion for children who must then assume they are learning all new sounds.

[8] There is also a lack of transfer of skills from the familiar language to the MT, since parents report that children cannot write in Namwanga and yet they can in very similarly structured Bemba. There are missed opportunities to exploit resources and learning in both directions that can be leveraged.

but we take it that the familiarity of the MOI, coupled with the use of Namwanga in the classroom, is what acts as a vehicle enhancing the development of semi-automatic reading fluency in Bemba.

11 Conclusion

Although some positive results have been achieved for some learners with the use of a familiar language in learning literacy, there are many aspects of the process and context that need to hold for this to be successful. A crucial issue in this regard is that while a number of teachers did not discourage the use of Namwanga in the classroom, practice was essentially haphazard and dependent on a teacher's preferences, as noted by one deputy head teacher, who comments on how systematic the use of Namwanga is. He says it is good practice for overcoming language barriers in the classroom, however: 'nomba nga asanga *teacher monster* palaba *distance* sana ninshi', '*if s/he (the student) finds a monster of a teacher, this creates a big distance (between the teacher and the student)*' that is a barrier to learning.

The 'monster teachers' the deputy head refers to here are those teachers who discourage the use of Namwanga in class and who are not willing to use this familiar language with the learners to help them bridge gaps in their understanding of content. Both types of teachers do exist in the Zambian context: those willing to use the children's familiar language to facilitate learning, even if this means investing their time and effort in learning the language; and those who are insensitive to the communicative needs and challenges their learners face in using a second Bantu language. There is no readily available data about the performance of these learners in the education system.

It is an open secret that the decision to offer initial literacy instruction in Zambian languages was, first and foremost, to provide a strong foundation on which to build literacy skills in English (MOE 2013; MOE 1996). The idea of providing additive bilingual education, which was also claimed as one of the aims of the 2013 policy (MOE 2013: 5), has not been borne out because Zambian languages are not used beyond Grade 4 as media of instruction in any content subjects, nor are they used in the end of primary school leaving examinations as qualifying subjects. It would appear, therefore, that these languages only serve as tools for acquiring literacy and language skills in English. It is, therefore, not necessary to discourage the use of any other familiar Zambian language that can facilitate the acquisition of initial literacy skills. Where teachers are capable of providing effective instruction in a language other than the seven regional languages, this should be encouraged; after all, Zambian languages are Bantu languages with very similar grammatical structures. It is these similar structures that can be exploited to facilitate the learning of multiple Zambian languages in the predominantly multilingual context of the country.

We thus end with some emerging patterns which, if further substantiated, provide the basis for recommendations to be considered in other multilingual learning contexts where a familiar language other than the MT may have to be used for a wide range of reasons, not least of which is resources in low-income countries, as well as political motivations.

⇨ All languages 'outside' and which are part of the language repertoires of learners, be they familiar languages or MTs, should be brought inside the classroom to enhance classroom experiences

⇨ Curriculums should embed multi-literacies for the different purposes of use that languages in multilingual communities have

⇨ Multilingual practices in classrooms should not be left to chance and teacher preference but should be embedded in policy and supported in teacher training

⇨ Continuing literacy in the familiar language or MT should be maintained throughout primary school to facilitate better transitions into foreign language literacy

⇨ Leverage the high literacy skills of teachers to learn local literacies to better embed them in classrooms, aided by strategies to do so, developed in their teacher training

⇨ As also noted in Mwansa (2017), teachers have to be materials developers, creating stories and texts that foster the development of literacy and supplements the oral culture at home

⇨ Consider the support, scaffolding and strategies needed for teaching academic content in this approach (e.g. use of bilingual glossaries)

⇨ Exploit teachers' own linguistic repertoires to de-stigmatise the use of multiple languages in the classroom

⇨ Consider and take into account the specific contextual support that is needed to ensure effective learning

⇨ Consider whether assessment of language competencies on entry into school can play a role in influencing practice.

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A defiance of language policy: seamless boundaries between languages in Botswana classrooms

Mompoloki M. Bagwasi and Tracey Costley

Abstract: Botswana is a multilingual and multicultural country with 25 to 30 languages. In contrast to this everyday lived multilingualism, the country's language-in-education policy (LIEP) attempts to create a homogenous population in which only two languages are used—Setswana and English. This study investigates language use in classrooms in two schools in Botswana. It explores how the LIEP is enacted in classrooms, which language(s) are used and how. The paper argues that despite a LIEP which tends to prescribe how languages are to be used within education, there is evidence that Botswanan languages are used in much more fluid ways and that the boundaries constructed through the LIEP do not necessarily play out in the day-to-day worlds of teaching and learning in schools. The paper explores the different ways in which the current LIEP meets and diverges from everyday language practices and ends with some suggestions for future policy and practices.

Keywords: Language policy, multilingualism, education policy, classroom practices.

Note on the authors: see end of article.

Introduction

We begin our discussion with an overview of the linguistic landscape of Botswana to provide an outline of the factors that have influenced the language-in-education policy (LIEP) in recent years. It is against this backdrop that we discuss the ways in which these policies have shaped and influenced what languages are used in schools and how. We show the different ways in which languages have been positioned within the LIEP and what questions these raise for us. We then move on to discuss data collected from a larger international project on multilingual classrooms across Botswana, Tanzania and Zambia to explore in more detail how language policies are, or are not, being taken up in classrooms in Botswana. We draw from classroom observations from two schools in a multilingual area of Southern Botswana to explore how teachers and students make use of their linguistic resources in the classrooms. We explore how the current LIEP meets and diverges from everyday language practices, and we end with some suggestions for future policy and practices that encourage, rather than supress, classroom practices which more accurately reflect the nature of Botswana's multilingualism.

Policy context of Botswana

Botswana is a multilingual country which is estimated to have between 25 and 30 languages (Anderson & Janson 1997; Mokibelo 2014a; Nyati-Saleshando 2011). Even though it is commonly held that English is the country's official language and Setswana is the national language, the country does not have a formally stated national language policy. English and Setswana have acquired their *de facto* roles as official and national languages respectively mostly out of practice rather than legislation because the Constitution of Botswana does not designate such roles to them. During the time of British rule (1885 to 1966), English was used for record keeping and for administrative purposes, whilst Setswana was the lingua franca. The issue of a national *de jure* language policy was not addressed at independence (in 1966). There was, however, a requirement for members of parliament to be competent in both English and Setswana, which led to the two languages being perceived as the official and national language respectively. In fact, the LIEP is the only policy document (see Botswana Government 1977 and Botswana Government 1994) which declares them as thus.

The first National Commission on Education, which came under the banner of *Education for Kagisano* (Education for social harmony), declares Setswana as the national language in such statements as

> … a fundamental requirement is that the national language, Setswana, must be mastered by all, for it is an essential means of communication between Batswana[1] and it is the medium through which a great deal of the national culture is expressed.
>
> (Botswana Government 1977: 76)

Concerning the status of other languages in the country, Anderson and Janson (1997) and Nyati-Ramahobo (2008) point out that the Botswana Constitution is silent about the roles of the different languages that exist in the country. This silence is important, as recent data indicate that while 78 per cent of the population reportedly use Setswana at home, only approximately 18 per cent of the population regard themselves as speakers of Setswana as a first language (Nyati-Saleshando 2011). Whilst these numbers may have changed since 2011, they go some way in reflecting the position of Setswana in Botswana. With respect to English, the same survey found that 40 per cent of the population reported that they were able to read, write and understand English.

Within Botswana, Setswana is not only a lingua franca but also a powerful identity marker, as it identifies a speaker as being a 'true' or 'genuine' Motswana. Participants in Bagwasi and Alimi's (2018: 59) study defined a *Motswana tota* (real, genuine Motswana) as somebody who 'was born in Botswana, speaks Setswana, comes from one of the eight Setswana ethnic groups and both his/her parents are born in Botswana'. Such social influence and the dominance of Setswana in the linguistic landscape of the country put a lot of pressure on speakers of other languages to take up Setswana, and this has important implications for the role and status of these languages *vis-à-vis* Setswana. For many speakers of a local minority language such as Sepedi, Afrikaans, Ikalanga or Lozi, the acquisition and use of the dominant language is seen as a mark of elevation from a small and low position to high or mainstream society, and in Botswana this reflected in a shift from minority languages to Setswana and English. Letsholo (2009) identifies such a shift in speakers of Ikalanga. Similarly, Monaka (2013) too notes a shift by speakers of Shekgalagarhi to Setswana, and Batibo (2008) highlights a loss of identity amongst Khoesan language speakers, who are increasingly shifting to Setswana. Batibo argues that the younger generations in the Khoesan communities embrace Setswana language and culture at the expense of their parents' language and highlights the risk that language shifts such as these can contribute to language loss. In Botswana, where language is viewed as a symbol of identity, such shifts in language often lead to a change in and erasure of ethnic identity.

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[1] Plural of Motswana, which means citizen of Botswana.

Languages in schools

Botswana's LIEP has undergone several changes from the period when Botswana was under British rule (1885–1966) to the current time. For the 81 years that Bechuanaland[2] was under British rule and the 11 years following Botswana's independence, there was no well-defined LIEP (see Mafela 2009). Setswana was used as a Medium of Instruction (MOI) in the first three or four years of primary school and then English took over. This arrangement was quite flexible, allowing teachers to teach in Setswana or other indigenous languages up to the end of primary school. Mafela (2009: 59) argues that 'it is specifically the lack of a coordinated language policy at that time which provided an opportunity for the use of various forms of indigenous languages in colonial and missionary schools'. The flexible language arrangement in the class-room was, however, later replaced by more restrictive post-independence LIEPs that came in 1977 and 1992.

The first National Commission on Education which carried the banner *Education for Kagisano* (Education for social harmony) came in 1977. As its name suggests, it aimed at an education policy that would facilitate nation building and unity in an ethnically and linguistically heterogeneous country. Like in many African countries, unity and nation building were very strong sentiments in the period following independence. The Commission felt that education could be used to promote nation building and unity by promoting Setswana, the dominant indigenous lingua franca, which it presumed and declared to be the national language. The Commission felt that the education system at the time favoured English over Setswana. It argued that:

> the introduction of English as a medium of instruction as early as[3] Standard 3, and the amount of class time allocated to English clearly discriminated against the national language. … The national language, Setswana, must be mastered by all, for it is an essential means of communication.
>
> (Botswana Government 1977: 76)

The Commission also acknowledged the role of English as the language of business, development of human resource and the link between Botswana and the international community and therefore recommended that 'English should have a place in the curriculum' (Botswana Government 1977: 31). It recommended that 'Botswana Primary schools should aim to ensure that children acquire a basic command of written and spoken English and of Mathematics which are the tools of further learning in school and are needed in many jobs'. Consequently, the Commission recommended that:

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[2] During the protectorate period, Botswana was called Bechuanaland.

[3] Primary school grade/level is called a standard in Botswana. So, Standard 1 means Grade 1 and so on with students entering Standard 1 at around 6 years old.

> Setswana should be used as the medium of instruction for the first four years of primary school with the transition to English taking place in Standard 5, by which time children must have become fully literate in Setswana. Setswana should be given more time in the school time table, and should have the same status as English as a subject in the Primary School Leaving Examination and in the[4] selection process for secondary school. English should continue to be taught as a subject from Standard 1, with the aim of preparing children for the transition to English as a medium of instruction at Standard 5.
>
> (Botswana Government 1977: 76)

This education policy was in use for 15 years (1977–1992), but education systems require periodic reviews. So, in 1992, the first LIEP was reviewed to identify its strengths and weaknesses and to align it to a rapidly changing Botswana economy and changing cultural and linguistic values. This revised policy, which came to be known as the Revised National Policy on Education, argued that:

> there is a concern about the poor performance of primary school children in English and part of the problem is that children do not get used to using English early enough in the learning process and yet they are required to write their examinations in the language.
>
> (Botswana Government 1994: 59)

The Commission then responded to this challenge of poor performance by reducing the number of years that Setswana should be used as a MOI and increasing the number of years English should be used. It recommended that 'with respect to the teaching of languages in primary school, English should be used as the medium of instruction from Standard 2 or as soon as practical' (Botswana Government, 1994: 60). Though the Commission claims that the basis for the shift was the poor English performance and the late exposure to the language, Bagwasi (2016: 4) argues that 'the reason for the increase in the use of English in schools was a response to the high demand for the English language by the rapidly growing westernized job market in Botswana'. It seems that, in the absence of a national language policy, the LIEP has been used directly or indirectly to represent the linguistic interest of the nation and regulate language use in Botswana. This is important in the context of Cenoz's (2013) observation that education plays a major role in the sustenance of languages and that languages are learned, maintained and reinforced through education because learners spend many hours and years of their lives at school.

Bagwasi (2016: 4) draws several conclusions from Botswana's LIEP. First, the Government of Botswana is silent about the roles of minority languages that exist in the country. Second, only two languages (English and Setswana) enjoy official recognition in the school. And, third, the LIEP compartmentalises languages—Setswana is to be used in Standard 1 and English is to be used from Standard 2. Further, Setswana is to be used to teach the subject Setswana whilst all other subjects are to be taught

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[4] Only those learners who have a pass in English are eligible for progression into secondary school.

in and through English. As mentioned above, the LIEP recommends that Setswana should be used as a MOI at Standard 1 and English should be used as the MOI from Standard 2 and/or as soon as possible (Botswana Government 1994). Bagwasi (2016: 6) is critical of this language arrangement and argues that:

> such a policy is framed on our narrow and traditional view of multilingualism in which languages are seen as discrete, fixed and separable into different categories and functions and that effective communication, language learning and teaching can only be achieved if the languages are separated according to place, time, function, subject, department, topic and teacher. In Botswana schools, languages are presented in a sequence whereby one language is introduced after the other, and there are periods of instruction in Setswana and then there are periods of instruction in English. The language-in-education policy does not allow or make any provisions for any language mixing or concurrent use of several languages in a lesson or classroom.

In conceptualising languages as separate and discrete entities, the policy fails to take into account the lived experience of students and teachers, potentially imposing boundaries and practices which may not exist in practice. What might be more appropriate is an 'integrated view of language which regards multilingual practices as products of language users' multiple repertoires that are employed in a contingent and flexible manner' (Kubota 2014: 3). This understanding of multilingualism as representing a set of fluid and responsive practices is also central to the concept of translanguaging (García & Kleyn 2016; García & Wei 2014; Lewis *et al.* 2012), which sees language as a resource that speakers draw from in order to make meaning. In this sense, languages from the perspective of their users do not exist as discrete, bounded entities but rather as one system of language. This means that from a translanguaging perspective, the current LIEP is problematic in that it sets up a false division between Setswana and English. In setting up this dichotomy, it potentially forces students and teachers to use language in a way that limits rather than facilitates opportunities for meaning making. Similarly, in promoting only Setswana or English, the policy imposes monolingual norms onto a multilingual context and in so doing fails to recognise the diversity of language practices that are found in schools and classrooms in Botswana.

What we have, then, is a policy environment that constructs languages and language practices in ways that may not reflect the actual language practices people make use of and engage in on a day-to-day basis. As Ball (1997) suggests, although often seen as offering solutions and solving problems, policies pose problems for individuals. The problems occur from the fact that policies are things that need to be acted upon and responded to. When we think about education policies such as the current LIEP in Botswana in this light, we can begin to see that the types of problems it poses, and the solutions that are developed will vary at the national, regional and local level. There will also be variation within school districts as well as within

individual schools and classrooms. This means that policies rarely (if ever) produce identical responses but rather produce responses that are locally informed and developed (Costley & Leung 2009; 2014). It is in this vein that we are interested in understanding how teachers and students in Botswana respond to the challenges posed by the LIEP, and this paper is centred around two interrelated research questions, which are:

1. How is the language-in-education-policy being enacted in schools and classrooms in Botswana?
2. What languages are used in classes and how are they being used?

Methodology

This study is the first of a series of findings from data collected as part of a project entitled 'Bringing the outside in: Merging local language and literacy practices to enhance classroom learning'. The main objective of this larger study is to explore ways in which everyday multilingual practices can be harnessed to enhance experiences of education in Botswana, Tanzanian and Zambian schools. The data discussed in this paper draws specifically from the work that is taking place in Botswana. The permit to conduct research in Botswana schools was obtained through the University of Botswana's Office of Research Development, which ensured that all ethical considerations were met. Further, all participants in the study were asked to consent to take part in the study by signing a consent form which was written in English and Setswana. Parents or guardians were asked to sign on behalf of their children (under 16 years old), and all learners and teachers have been given pseudonyms in order to maintain anonymity.

The first phase of data collection was in 2020, in two villages. The first (Village A) is semi-urban and approximately an hour from the capital, Gaborone. Though this settlement has a population of over 200,000 cosmopolitan and multilingual/multicultural inhabitants and a modern infrastructure, it is categorised as a village because of its traditional structures, which are headed by traditional rulers called *dikgosi* (chiefs). The dominant language in Village A is Setswana; however, there are small communities of Shekgalagarhi, Ikalanga and speakers of Khoesan languages for whom Setswana and English are additional languages. Two focal primary schools (Schools A and B) were selected, and a total of 24 lessons and four teachers from two Standard 1 and two Standard 3 classes were observed in these two schools. The choice of Standard 1 and 3 was based on the fact that, as discussed above, the Botswana LIEP requires Setswana to be used as the MOI in Standard 1 and English from Standard 2. Standard 2 is considered a transitional year in which learners are transiting from Setswana to an English

medium. The learners and teachers are expected to have transitioned to English as the MOI by Standard 3. School A is located in a ward where Setswana dominates, while School B is located in a ward where there is a recognisable or established presence of Shekgalagarhi language. Different lessons (English, Setswana, Mathematics, Cultural Studies, Science, Creative and Performing Arts) were observed and recorded using a small dictaphone, and the recorded data was then transcribed, paying particular attention to the language use of the students and teachers. A further 140 participants were surveyed in Village A, but the data we discuss in this paper draws specifically from the classroom recordings that were collected in Schools A and B.

The data handling and analysis has been an iterative process and has followed a grounded theory approach (Charmaz 2014). Adopting such an approach means that we have been able to work out patterns and themes from the data, building and testing our hypotheses as we have moved in and out of the data, rather than imposing a pre-existing set of criteria on to it. To do this, we have made use of different rounds of initial/open coding (Friedman 2012) that led to final codes being established. From here, we have identified key themes and patterns in the data, which we discuss in more detail below and in relation to our research questions.

How are policies being enacted in classrooms in Botswana?

The first important observation is that in the two schools in this study, only Setswana and English feature in all the classroom recordings, even though Shekgalagarhi, Ikalanga and Khoesan languages feature widely in the communities in which the schools are located. While the use of Setswana and English is outlined in the LIEP, our data show that policy and practice do not always align. For example, as discussed above, the current LIEP states that Setswana is the MOI in Standard 1, meaning that all subjects should be taught in Setswana. However, what we find in our data is a picture that is much more complicated and dynamic, with many examples of teachers using English in Standard 1 as illustrated in Extracts 1 and 2 (from a Mathematics lesson in School A). Here, the teacher was observed presenting most of the content in English with occasional uses of Setswana by both the teacher and the students.

> **Extract 1**
> Teacher: Now we are going to do half past nine. If the time is half past nine the hour hand
>   is pointing to which figure and the minute hand is pointing to which figure PM?[5]
> Learner: Nna ga ke itse go dira
>   *Myself, I don't know how to do it*

[5] PM, along with KG and TS, are codes used to disguise learners' names. Other transcription conventions used in the data discussed here include [LG], which refers to laughter, [CG] which refers to coughing, () which refers to silence and [NS] which refers to noise.

Teacher: mmh just tell us le nna I don't know what to do when the time is half past nine. Where do I put the minute hand?

Mmh just tell us, I too do not know what to do when the time is half past nine. Where do I put the minute hand?

Extract 2

Teacher: Emang pele tlogelang PM ke nako ya gagwe a dire se a batlang go se dira

Please wait, just leave PM alone it's her time, allow her do what she wants to do

Learner: you put the hour hand between nine.

The ways in which English and Setswana are used in Extracts 1 and 2 are common in the data we collected from our Standard 1 classes. These are important as the ways the languages are being used, in particular the use of English, go against the LIEP for Standard 1, demonstrating that the LIEP is not strictly adhered to. There are a number of possible explanations for this. One might be that given the high expectation by parents and society for learners to acquire English at school, teachers may feel pressured to expose learners to English at earlier stages in the curriculum. It could also be that some learners, especially those from educated and middle-income families, started school with some basic competence in English which they acquired from home or and English medium preschool and which reflects language practices they may use regularly outside of school (Mokibelo 2014b). These learners are often able to cope with the use of English by teachers. However, learners from lower income families and households where parents and carers may have had interrupted and/or incomplete education often start school without any such competence in English and often struggle to cope with the teacher's use of English. A further possible explanation is also that the fluidity we see in the use of both languages is an indication by both teachers and learners that separation of languages is difficult and to some extent unnatural. Viewed from this perspective, what we are seeing here might be a closer representation of the multilingual and/or translanguaging practices and language uses that may be characteristic of wider, everyday practices that involve teachers and learners drawing from their broader linguistic repertoires to make and negotiate meaning.

In much of our data collected from Standard 3 classes where, according to the LIEP, English is the MOI, English was found to be the predominant language—but there were translingual uses of Setswana and English, as illustrated by Extracts 3, 4 and 5, taken from a Standard 3 class in School A.

Extract 3

Teacher: KG o santse a ntse mo setilong, KG ngwanaka o santse o ntse mo setilong, wena kana o yo ke salang le ene mo classing akere?

KG you are still sitting on your chair. KG my child you are still seated on your chair; You are the one who has to remain behind with me after class, right?

Extract 4

Teacher: Ehee, at home, when you wake up akere *(isn't it)*?

Learner: Ee mma
    Yes mam

Extract 5

Teacher: We talked about this, Candy one o seo, ke gone o tlang, o reetse thata ngwanaka wa utlwa.
    We talked about this, Candy you were not in class, you just arrived, so listen properly my child okay.
    What do we say in the afternoon?
    Yes KM, what do we say?

Learner: Good afternoon

The examples above suggest that, despite what the policy says, the language practices of learners and teachers do not necessarily adhere to the fixed and rigid ways in which languages are framed within the LIEP and are in fact much more fluid and dynamic, with language operating more seamlessly and without fixed boundaries. Our data echo Mafela's (2009: 74) observation that 'the language situation in Botswana classrooms resonates with many others around the world, where code alteration strategies are more the norm than the exception, in spite of official language policies that dictate otherwise'. The presence of more dynamic translanguaging practices in the classrooms highlights that the LIEP is somewhat out of touch in attempting to keep languages apart and creating boundaries between languages. What our data show is that learners and teachers are busy bringing them together and thereby creating more linguistically fluid learning environments.

What languages are used in classes and how?

In the current study, we found many different examples of translanguaging practices in which teachers and learners draw from Setswana and English and different patterns of translanguaging are evident. For example, in our data the teachers tended to translanguage in order to present content, provide translation, give instructions and manage the classroom as well as to compliment learners (see García & Kleyn 2016; García & Wei 2014; Mazak & Carroll 2016). This is important, as teachers seem to be using available language resources to present their lessons. The use of available languages helps learners and teachers to synthesise information as well as identify and choose parallels that can help them to best express meanings in dynamic multi-layered and multi-directional ways (see Lewis *et al.* 2012).

The extracts below demonstrate the different functions that the movements between languages & translanguaging practices are performing in the classroom contexts we observed. Brevik & Rindal (2020: 928) argue that 'teachers who encourage the use of other languages during target language instruction assume that proficiency

is transferable across languages'. In Extract 6, for example, a Standard 1 teacher in School B uses Setswana in an English class for giving instructions, asking questions and translating content from English to Setswana to help learners to understand it.

Extract 6

Teacher: A re opeleng re tlhwaahetse hle bathong [NS].
   Let us sing more passionately guys [NS].

Learners: (singing) [NS]

Teacher: Very good. Who can read here? () [NS]. Gatweng? Capital letters!
   Very good. Who can read here? ( ) [NS]. What? Capital letters!

Learner: Capital letters.

Learner: Capital letters.

Teacher: Ee, in the test, in the test you will see capital letters. O tla bona go kwadilwe gotwe capital letters, [NS] jaana [CG] capital letters.
   Ok, in the test, in the test you will see capital letters. You will see capital letters [NS] written like this [CG] capital letters.

In Extract 7 below, a Standard 1 teacher in School B uses Setswana in an English lesson for explaining and translating. The teacher utilises the available linguistic resources to aid comprehension by explaining, expanding a point and translating and, by so doing, bridging whatever communication gap may exist. The teacher makes use of the learners' existing linguistic repertoire, which is important as we know that learners taught through a medium that they do not have any background in often find it difficult to speak or learn in it (Williams & Cooke 2002; Probyn 2005; Alidou & Brock-Utne 2006). Brevik & Rindal (2020) argue that making use of a learner's L1 is a recognition of prior knowledge and comprehension skills that the learner can bring to the learning environment. This knowledge and comprehension skills, once activated, can be used as scaffolding to comprehend the language of the classroom.

Extract 7

Teacher: Tla o e mpontshe [NS] (). Ee, we start with a capital letter [NS]. Fa o simolola seele hela a ke Sekgowa a ke Setswana o simolola ka thaka e tona, ra utlwana?
   Come and show me [NS]. Yes, we start with a capital letter [NS]. When you start a sentence whether in English or Setswana you start with a capital letter, ok?

Teacher: () [NS] John, John ke leina la motho le simolola ka thaka e tona. John [NS]. Katso, o simolola ka thaka e tona. Name of places. Maina a mafelo. Maina a batho, maina a mafelo. A ko o mphe lefelo.
   John, John is a name of a person and starts with a capital letter. John [NS]. Katso, starts with a capital letter. Names of places. Names of places. Names of people, Names of places. Give me names of places.

The current data also shows that teachers translanguage to manage classroom behaviour or misconduct as well as to praise learners. In Extract 8 below, the same

Standard 1 teacher in School B uses Setswana to manage classroom behaviour or misconduct as well as instruct the learners to use English, which should be the medium of instruction in this lesson. In Extract 9, they use a different language to compliment a learner who has given a correct answer.

Extract 8

Teacher: The capital letters. Tse, di simolola seele. Katso tswala exercise book ya gago and listen. Close your exercise books [NS]. Look at the chalk board [NS]. The capital letters, di simolola seele. A ko o mphe seele sa Sekgowa. A re bueng seele ka Sekgowa. [NS] a re tšhomeng tlhe bathong, Sekgowa. Ee, Winnie, ba gaise hoo, ka Sekgowa [NS]. Ee.

The capital letters. These ones, they start a sentence. Katso close your exercise book and listen. Close your exercise books [NS]. Look at the chalk board [NS]. The capital letters, they start a sentence. Give me a sentence in English. Yes, Winnie, do better than them, in English [NS]. Yes.

Teacher: Heela stop talking [NS].

Hey stop talking [NS].

Teacher: Heela sit down. Sit down.

Hey sit down. Sit down.

Extract 9

Teacher: Very good. Who can read here? () [NS]. Gatweng? Capital letters.

Very good. Who can read here? ( ) [NS]. What? Capital letters.

Teacher: Ehee good girl. Ramotswa ga a kwalwe jaana, o tshwanetse gore a bo o mo simolola ka thaka e ntseng jaana akere?

Yes good girl. You cannot write Ramotswa like this, you have to start with this letter.

Discussion and future directions

Although the LIEP promotes separation and isolation of Setswana and English (Setswana in Standard 1, English from Standard 2, Setswana for the subject Setswana and English for all other subjects), the current data show that language use in the classrooms visited in this study is much more fluid and dynamic than that imagined in, or mandated by, the LIEP. Although the data (from the recordings and observations) reflect the LIEP, in that there is more use of Setswana in Standard 1 and more use of English in Standard 3, the extracts show that rather than being separate, Setswana and English are used flexibly in all subjects across Standard 1 and 3. This indicates that teaching and learning are carried out through the use of language practices that work in and for particular classes, and these practices are often in direct contradiction to the policy.

In terms of the LIEP, what we do see powerfully reflected back in the data is the lack of use of languages other than Setswana and English in the schools and classrooms

in which data was collected. It is clear from our data that the direct sanctioning and privileging of Setswana and English above all other languages within educational policy over the last 50–60 years has played a significant role in marginalising other languages in Botswana. Although the schools in which our data were collected are located in highly multilingual areas, our recordings did not pick up the use of any languages of the wider community in the classrooms, which is striking, given the multilingual nature of the communities in which these schools are set. Such an absence shows how the LIEP has been taken up and acted upon, creating clear boundaries around the languages of school and learning and the languages of the broader communities. Our classroom recordings do not capture the use of any other languages except Setswana and English.

Within Botswana, much positive work is happening in terms of advocating for a greater use of languages that are not officially recognised in the LIEP. Currently, preparations are underway for the introduction of some minority languages (such as Shekgalagarhi, Ikalanga and Nama) in some primary schools next year. Further, some language associations are engaged in finding out what needs to be done to extend the recognition of languages beyond being simply tokens to be celebrated at public events (Mokibelo 2015; Nyati-Saleshando 2011). Mokibelo (2014a) and Nyati-Saleshando (2011) highlight the positive role that activism and language revitalisation programmes are playing in preserving the position of regional languages.

We would like to continue to build on this positive work and also see schools and classrooms as a vital space in which change can and needs to begin to take place. A key challenge is to find ways of enabling teachers and students to capitalise upon these practices in order that they are empowered to incorporate more than these two languages in classroom spaces. Our data is important here in that it shows, quite clearly, that teachers and students are already highly skilled at operating successful, flexible multilingual practices in classrooms. The data show that there is an already established precedent and framework for moving fluidly between Setswana and English in the classroom in order to facilitate teaching and learning and that this is the basis upon which further change could successfully be built.

What we see in the data is that language policies that seek to impose rigid boundaries between languages are problematic in terms of implementation as they fail to recognise the complex and fluid ways in which language is used as a meaning making resource in multilingual contexts. A policy ideology that recognises and endorses a more nuanced and fluid understanding of language practices would not only be a more accurate basis upon which to frame language but would also be much closer to the lived reality of the participants in this study, as well as those in other similar contexts. Such a policy would allow students and teachers to bring all of their resources into the classroom and see their full linguistic resources recognised as positive resources for learning, rather than deficits to be overcome, and would conceptualise schools and learning as multilingual behaviour that takes places in multilingual spaces.

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On the suitability of Swahili for early schooling in remote rural Tanzania: do policy and practice align?

Gastor Mapunda and Hannah Gibson

Abstract: This article explores the use of Swahili for education in Tanzania, focusing on rural areas where Swahili is not the main language of the community. Current language policy mandates Swahili as the exclusive Medium of Instruction at primary level throughout the country. However, findings reported here show that in parts of rural Tanzania, children learn Swahili only after a substantial period of being at school, meaning that Swahili does not support early childhood education nor equality of outcomes. Children experience difficulties with progression in learning and teacher-dominated classes can be observed. The study also finds unequal performance in national examinations based on the language of the community, and a prevalence of grade repetition in some settings. It calls for a policy which appreciates the role of community languages and an approach which sees multilingualism as a resource to be harnessed both inside and outside the classroom.

Ikisiri: Makala hii inachunguza kuhusu ufaafu wa Kiswahili kama lugha ya elimu nchini Tanzania, ikiangazia zaidi vivijini hasa ambako Kiswahili si lugha kuu ya mawasiliano. Sera ya lugha ya elimu iliyopo sasa inaipa lugha ya Kiswahili mamlaka ya kipekee ya kuwa lugha kuu ya elimu ya msingi kwa nchi nzima. Matokeo ya utafiti huu yanaonesha kwamba katika maeneo mengi ya vijijini watoto hufahamu Kiswahili baada ya kipindi kirefu cha kuwepo shuleni, na kwamba, Kiswahili si lugha wezeshi kwa elimu ya watoto wanaoanza shule. Hivyo, watoto hupata ugumu katika maendeleo yao ya kielimu madarasani, na walimu hutawala maongezi. Pia, kuna utofauti wa ufaulu katika mitihani ya kitaifa baina ya maeneo, na ukariri wa madarasa hasa kwenye maeneo kadhaa. Tunapendekeza uwepo wa sera inayotambua na kuthamini lugha za jamii, na yenye mtazamo chanya kuhusu wingilugha, na kuwa lugha hizo ni rasilimali inayopaswa kutumiwa kimanufaa darasani na nje.

Keywords: education, multilingualism, Tanzania, translanguaging, policy, equality.

Note on the authors: see end of article.

1 Introduction

In multilingual societies across the world, the question of which language should serve as the Medium of Instruction has long sparked debate. In post-colonial states, such debates are even more common (La Piedra 2006; Mapunda 2011; Trudell 2016), and Tanzania is no exception. The discussion around the Medium of Instruction (MoI) in Tanzania has been present since at least the end of the 19th century. Cameron and Dodd (1970, 75) report that in 1907, when the first Director of Education was appointed in the then Deutsche Ostafrika, he was pressurised by 'the Arab ruling classes and the Asian trading community, which constituted 20 per cent of the population, to use only Arabic and English as the media of instruction' in the education system. Despite this pressure, the Director of Education refused to declare either English or Arabic as MoI and decided instead that Swahili should be the MoI in then Tanganyika.

This debate resurfaced again during British colonial rule (1919–61), when the colonial government announced its language in education policy. Swahili was to be used in the first five years of primary education and English was to be used in the subsequent three years of primary education and throughout secondary education (Burchert 1994: 4). Some years later, the Binns Mission Report of 1950 recommended that Swahili be eliminated from the education system as it was not in 'the best interests' of the learners, an idea that was rejected by the British colonial government (Cameron & Dodd 1970: 110). The debate continued after Tanganyika gained independence in 1961 and, in 1964, formed a union with Zanzibar to become the United Republic of Tanzania.

Today, Swahili is the *de jure* Medium of Instruction in public primary schools throughout Tanzania,[1] while English is the Medium of Instruction at secondary and tertiary levels. More recently, Swahili has also gained additional influence after being adopted as one of the working languages of the Southern African Development Cooperation and one of the official languages of the East African Community (alongside English). Swahili has also received recognition in South Africa and Botswana, both of which have committed to offering Swahili as part of their national curricula.[2]

In terms of its broader linguistic ecology, Tanzania is multilingual, with around 150 languages spoken (Mradi wa Lugha za Tanzania 2009: 3). Moreover, Tanzania has what has been described as a triglossic situation, with English, Swahili and the approximately 150 community languages used in different domains on a day-to-day basis. The long-standing debate on the MoI in Tanzania has tended to focus on the suitability—or relative power of—either English or Swahili. This has included both

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[1] This contrasts with the case of privately owned primary schools, most of which use English as the medium of instruction.

[2] See 'Swahili gaining popularity globally', www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/december-2021/swahili-gaining-popularity-globally), 9 December 2021.

policy papers (e.g. a report by Criper and Dodd 1984 that was commissioned by the British Council) and a range of academic studies (e.g. Rubagumya 1989; Qorro 2004; 2013; Brock-Utne 2004; Swilla 2009; Mapunda 2015; amongst others).

Given the linguistic diversity of Tanzania, however, it is striking that the discussion has not given more consideration to the role of the community languages in education. There is a wide array of evidence which shows that children learn better in a language which they understand (Dutcher 2004; Alidou *et al.* 2006; Ball 2011). Yet, there is an implicit assumption in the Tanzanian language policy that since Swahili is widely used in the country and indeed throughout East Africa, it is known by the entire nation and therefore suitable for education. This assumption overlooks the importance of access to early years education in a language which is known to the learner. Those children who grow up speaking one of the other languages as their home language are faced with an additional challenge when they first enter schooling and are met with instruction in Swahili—the dual task of learning the MoI and learning the subject matter (Ngorosho 2011). Describing the situation in Tanzania, Ngorosho (2011: 21) further says 'Children learn better in the language they master'. Teachers often spend a significant portion of their time teaching the learners the MoI, often at the expense of other content or material. It has also been observed that not giving due consideration to learners' linguistic repertoires and the linguistic realities of multilingual settings, which are numerous in Tanzania (Wedin 2004; Mapunda 2010), creates a range of detrimental effects and outcomes for a large portion of children, including negatively impacting on experiences of education.

Community languages go quietly unrecognised in the language policy and are assumed not to be relevant for the purposes of formal education. We argue in this paper that this is an over-simplification of the issue and that these ongoing debates overlook the crucial position that community languages play in the country, including in the education system. This is particularly important at the pre-primary and primary levels, where learners are just starting out in their schooling, as well as being a point at which their Swahili skills may well still be developing.

The goal of this paper is to re-visit the question of the suitability of Swahili as the Medium of Instruction in Tanzanian, with a focus not on English as an alternative but through consideration of the role and influence of Tanzania's community languages. We seek to address two questions in relation to the use of Swahili as the MoI in primary education in Tanzania:

1 How practicable is the use of Swahili in early years education in remote rural settings in the country?
2 What are the perceptions of community members-cum-parents towards the Swahili-only policy in the education of their children?

We explore the role of community languages in education and the relationship between these languages and Swahili. The goal is to reconsider the language in education policy in Tanzanian primary schools. In doing so, we suggest that the question can perhaps be re-phrased not to ask whether English or Swahili should be the MoI, but rather whether the overemphasis and reliance on English and Swahili at the exclusion of other languages represents a barrier to education given the highly multilingual nature of the country.

The paper is structured as follows: Section 1 provides background to the topic, highlighting some of the key issues. Section 2 examines the language in education policy in Tanzania, with a focus on language practices and learning. Section 3 presents the context of the present study and describes the research methods employed. Section 4 presents findings of the study. Section 5 constitutes a discussion of the findings, while Section 6 presents a conclusion and highlights some recommendations.

2 Language policy and education in Tanzania

Before we go on to talk more about the study itself, some background on the Tanzanian school system is in order. Children attend nursery school for two years (aged 5 and 6) and thereafter join primary school for seven years. These seven years of schooling are known as Standard (or Grade) 1–7. The typical age for learners to enter school is 7 years old. Pupils may start primary school after two years of pre-primary school or may enter directly depending on their local context. The term 'Beginner classes' is sometimes used to refer to nursey up to Grade Four, and we use it in this sense in the paper. Primary school during these years involves a national examination in Standard Four and again in Standard Seven. This fourth-year exam is a formative assessment known as the Standard Four National Assessment (SNFA). The Standard Seven exam is also known as the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) and ultimately serves as an entry examination for secondary school.

In primary school, all students study Maths, English, Swahili, Science and Social Studies. While we focus on the early years of education in the current paper, it is also worth noting that the PSLE is conducted in English, thereby in many instances serving as a further barrier to progress in education. This means the transition between primary school (where Swahili is the MoI) and secondary school (where English is the MoI) is mediated via an exam administered in English. At this point in schooling, many pupils are not proficient in English, and so their attainment in the PSLE reflects not their overall achievement on the broad range of topics but their ability to undertake the exam in English.

We seek to contextualise the study by first exploring current language in education policy in Tanzania. We refer to two key policy documents which determine the MoI in the country: the 1995 Education and Training Policy and the 2014 Education and

Training Policy. The 1995 policy provided the basis of the 2014 Policy and an exploration of this is necessary to understand the present-day situation.

The 1995 Education and Training Policy, as the name suggests, provides for all education and training in the country and also set out the language in education policy adopted in primary schools in the country:

> At the primary school level, full development of language skills is vital for a fuller understanding of and mastery of knowledge and skills implied in the primary school curriculum. Children at this level of education will continue to be taught in a language which is commonly used in Tanzania. Therefore: **The medium of instruction in primary schools shall be Kiswahili, and English shall be a compulsory subject.**

> (United Republic of Tanzania 1995: 39)[3]

The subsequent 2014 Education and Training Policy *Sera ya Elimu na Mafunzo* in Swahili, is the current policy, although note at the time of writing this policy is also being revised. The 2014 Policy is heavily based on—and provided an update to—the 1995 Education and Training Policy. It also addresses the Medium of Instruction. We present the original text in Swahili, along with our own English translation:

> **Suala**
> Lugha ya kufundishia na kujifunzia
> **Maelezo**
> Kwa sasa, lugha za kufundishia na kujifunzia katika elimu na mafunzo ni Kiswahili na Kiingereza. Lugha ya kufundishia elimu ya awali na msingi ni Kiswahili. Aidha, lugha ya Kiingereza inatumika kufundishia katika baadhi ya shule.

> (Sera ya Elimu na Mafunzo 2014: 37)

> ***The Issue***
> *The Medium of Instruction*
> ***Explanation***
> *For the time being, the medium of instruction shall be Swahili and English. The medium of instruction in pre- and primary schools shall be Swahili. Also, the English language is used in some schools.*

> (Sera ya Elimu na Mafunzo 2014: 37, our translation)

These are important statements about the policy regarding the Medium of Instruction in Tanzania. Crucially, these policy documents stipulate that Swahili and English are to be the languages used in primary schooling. There is mention of pre-primary and primary levels—where Swahili is to be the MoI. There is also recognition that English is to be used 'in some schools', although exactly which schools this might be is not specified, making this quite vague. Although as noted above, many private schools opt to have English as a Medium of Instruction even at the primary

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[3] We present here an excerpt from the official English translation of the policy. Bold is as in the original.

and pre-primary level. Given the later shift to English as MoI at secondary school, some parents choose English-medium primary schools to mitigate against (or avoid entirely) the switch from Swahili to English at the transition between primary and secondary levels.

Strikingly, neither the 1995 nor the 2014 Education and Training Policy contains a single mention of the presence of community languages. There is no mention of the other languages spoken in Tanzania, nor of their relative position or potential in education. As a result, community languages are assigned no official recognition nor official status in education. It is against the backdrop of this 'silence' on community languages that the current study takes place.

3 Context of the study and methods

3.1 The schools

The study reported here was carried out in three schools in three different administrative regions of Tanzania, namely Ruvuma, Tabora and Coast Regions. For ethical reasons, the schools are represented here using pseudonyms: School X (Ruvuma Region, Songea District), School Y (Coast Region, Bagamoyo District) and School Z (Tabora Region, Nzega Town Council).[4]

School X is located about 50 kilometres northwest of Songea Town, and about 25 kilometres away from the nearest semi-urban centre, where a number of social services, including a hospital, a vocational training centre, a secondary school, a bookshop and a bank, can be found. The school was established in 1974 and in many ways represents a typically rural location. The village is accessible by a gravel road which is reachable reliably for about six months of the year and is only partly accessible for the rest of the year during the rainy season. There is no on-grid electricity in the village, no newspapers are available to buy and there are no bookshops where the inhabitants or pupils could buy reading materials. In this area, the main community language is Ngoni. Swahili is also used but in a more limited number of domains, such as in church, in government offices where workers may be based who are from outside the region and do not speak Ngoni and in the market. Swahili is the MoI in the schools in this region, as across the whole of Tanzania.

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[4] The research being reported here followed all ethical procedures which are operational in Tanzania. We received ethical clearance from the University of Dar es Salaam, which was then taken to relevant regional and district authorities. We were cleared at these levels and were allowed to proceed to village and school levels. We also obtained informed consent from the administration in the respective schools and all participants. All participants were informed of the goals of the research and their freedom to participate or withdraw, and issues of confidentiality and anonymity were discussed.

School Y was nationalised along with other schools in 1967 following the Arusha Declaration. The school is in Bagamoyo District, on the Tanzanian coast. The area is about 70 kilometres north of Dar es Salaam and is accessible via a tarmacked road throughout the year. Here the main language of the community is Swahili, and historically, this and the broader coastal region are home to the Swahili community—*Waswahili*. This means that Swahili is not only the MoI in the public primary schools in this area, but also the dominant community language.

Finally, School Z is located 38 kilometres east of the town of Nzega in the central northern Tabora Region of Tanzania. The school was established in 1984. Like School X, School Z is located in an area which is only reliably accessible for six months of the year due to the gravel access road. In the surrounding area, there is no on-grid electricity, and there are no bookshops nor newsstands where community members could buy reading materials. The main language of the community is Sukuma, and the majority of the children only learn Swahili at school.

In both School X and School Z, the main language of the communities (Ngoni and Sukuma respectively) is different from the mandated Medium of Instruction. It is only in School Y where the main community language is the same as the MoI—Swahili.

The choice of Nzega and Songea Districts was motivated by their rural location. In the context of the current study, we use the term 'remote' to refer to distance from both urban and semi-urban locations and from highways. One of the features of these remote rural locations, therefore, is that contact between the inhabitants of these villages and those outside their community is more limited. In terms of local infrastructure, both areas lack consistently navigable roads, and there is no access at all to the railway network. There is limited access to media such as newspapers, due in part to the restricted infrastructure which is required for regular deliveries. Television and internet use are also limited since neither of these locations are centrally electrified, although communities may use generators and to a lesser extent solar power, and internet is available via mobile phones. We consider all of these as important factors that contribute to 'remoteness'. While there is not a one-to-one match between areas where Swahili is dominant and those areas which are not classified here as remote, these notions do intersect.

The traditional homeland of the Swahili-speakers is the coastal area in which a number of key cities and towns are found, including Dar es Salaam, as well as the centres of Bagamoyo and Tanga. These areas have historically been better served due to their proximity to the coast (crucial for economic and transport purposes). Likewise, areas which are urban are more likely to be multi-ethnic and therefore multilingual, which in many cases means that Swahili becomes the language of wider communication between speakers who have different first languages. These factors, as will be shown, affect how the Swahili Medium of Instruction policy interacts with the broader patterns of language usage in the country.

Bagamoyo was chosen for the study since although this district is also described as rural for administrative purposes, it has other attributes which differ from those of the other two locations. Firstly, Bagamoyo is relatively close to Dar es Salaam, the business and commercial capital of the country. Bagamoyo is also part of the so-called Swahili Coast—the traditional Swahili homeland. This means that most people in the district not only speak Swahili but identify as *Waswahili* and, for the most part, are monolingual Swahili-speakers. This contrasts to the other two locations, where people speak another community language as their first language and Swahili is employed as a language of wider communication. As such, School Y represents an important point of contrast with the other two schools.

3.2 Methods used

In terms of methods used to gather data, we employed a combination of i) a photo elicitation task, ii) classroom observations, iii) focus groups and iv) interviews with teachers and parents. We also extracted the results for the three schools involved in our study from the National Standard Four assessment results, which are publicly available.

We used a photo elicitation task in both School X (Songea District) and School Y (Bagamoyo District) for comparison purposes. We hypothesised that the level of mastery of Swahili where School Z is located was lower, and so comparability would not be appropriate. In the photo elicitation task, Grade One and Grade Two pupils were shown a colour photo of a male farmer wearing trousers, a t-shirt and a hat. The man is holding items which are commonly known in the area, namely a catapult and a machete, and next to him are a hoe and a hammer. The participants were also shown pictures of chickens and a dog gnawing on a bone. Finally, there was also a picture of a man holding a pair of sheers. The pupils were then asked to name and describe the items in the photos in Swahili.

The aim of using these pictures was to see which items in the pictures the learners were able to describe. This was taken as a general indicator of their Swahili exposure and knowledge and thereby the extent to which they are likely to be able to use Swahili in their early years of schooling. We are aware that this approach is not without fault and certainly does not consist of a detailed assessment of knowledge. However, it did provide us with a stimulus for some general observations and discussion which helped us to better understand into their linguistic repertoires. In terms of data collection, the number of participants in the photo elicitation task was quite small—just two pupils in each school. However, the findings we obtained (discussed below) are in line with those identified in studies carried out with a bigger sample size (see e.g. Wedin 2008; Mapunda 2010). Moreover, we use the photo elicitation task not as the focus of a quantitative study but rather to gain some qualitative

insights into patterns of Swahili knowledge and use. We believe that, combined with the other data examined here, this task does provide informative insights and context for the broader discussion.

Classroom observations were carried out in order to see how students and teachers participate in pedagogical processes. Among the issues in which we were interested were how students responded to questions and how teachers handled the use of community languages. We also considered the use of teacher feedback, the strategies used by teachers to ask questions and elicit responses and engagement from the students, as well as the general activity of the class. We conducted classroom observations of three lessons in each of the locations. Each lesson lasts 40 minutes, so this represents 2 hours of classroom observations in each of the schools. As with the photo elicitation task, this is a relatively short amount of time for the classroom observations. However, we believe that they provided us with some insights into the classroom dynamics and the modes of delivery, language usage and student participations, even during this 2-hour timeframe. And again, combined with the other methods used here, they are informative.

We also conducted a series of interviews with teachers and parents to better understand their perceptions of the use of community languages, particularly in the beginner classes. In Schools X and Z, we interviewed two teachers and two parents. In School Y, we interviewed one teacher and two parents. We held focus group discussions with the pupils at School Z. The focus group comprised six pupils, aged 10–16 years,[5] who were in Grades Three and Four. In Schools X and Y, we did not conduct focus groups since the pupils were only in Grades One and Two (aged 7 and 8), and so we deemed them too young to be involved in focus groups. All of the learners involved in the focus group were first-language speakers of Sukuma and had learnt Swahili at school. Table 1 provides an overview of the data collection.

The focus group discussion and interviews were all conducted in Swahili, the main language of wider communication in Tanzania and the common language for speakers who have different first languages (although see Costley & Reilly 2021 for some of the challenges associated with researching multilingually). All of the parents and teachers who were interviewed had good mastery of Swahili. The use of Swahili in the discussion with the pupils may have had an impact on their answers and confidence in interacting with the researchers. However, in the absence of another shared language, this was deemed preferable. The reader will see the range of responses provided in Swahili (alongside our English translations) in the excerpts discussed below.

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[5] The age range is often the result of repeating a year after failing examinations, starting school late or having to interrupt schooling. The expected ages for Grade 3 and Grade 4 students are 9 and 10 years old since children are expected to start Grade 1 when they are 7 years old.

Table 1. Summary of the methods used in data collection.

School pseudonym	Region	Main community language	Data collection methods
School X	Ruvuma District—Songea	Ngoni	Photo elicitation—2 pupils
			Interviews—2 teachers, 2 parents
			Classroom observations—3 lessons of 40 minutes each (2 hours total)
			Standard Four national assessment data
School Y	Coast District—Bagamoyo	Swahili	Photo elicitation—2 pupils
			Interview—1 teacher, 2 parents
			Classroom observations—3 lessons of 40 minutes each (2 hours total)
			Standard Four national assessment data
School Z	Tabora District—Nzega	Sukuma	Interview—2 teachers, 2 parents
			Focus group—6 pupils
			Classroom observations—3 lessons of 40 minutes each (2 hours total)
			Standard Four national assessment data

In terms of data analysis, for the photo elicitation, our primary interest was to gain better understanding of the confidence and command of Swahili by Grade One and Two pupils. Similarly, in the classroom observations, we wanted to get an overall idea of language use patterns in the classroom by both teachers and pupils. As for the interviews, we wanted to see which themes emerged with regard to perceptions relating to the use of community languages in the rural settings under examination. The focus group discussion gave us further insights into the views and perceptions of the learners in relation to expected and real language use in the classroom and their attitudes, which impact these.

In additional to the qualitative data, |the national Standard Four Assessments allowed for a quantitative approach and enabled us to look at any trends in outcomes in these examinations across the three schools. We were also interested in other features of the examination procedures; for example, we wanted to look at rates of year repetition and non-attendance in examinations. These are discussed in further detail in Section 4 below.

4 Findings and results

In this section, we present the findings and results that emerged from the data collection. This is followed by a discussion of the findings in Section 5. The presentation of

the results and their discussion are structured with regard to the two questions which the study seeks to answer.

4.1 Practicability of the use of Swahili in beginner classes in remote rural Tanzania

Recall the first question:

> 1 How practicable is the use of Swahili in early years of education in remote rural settings in the country?

Accordingly, we present findings on pupils' performance in National Standard Four Assessments (NSFA) for the three schools. We also present findings from the photo elicitation task, which provides insights into the pupils' language use practices. We also explore the data from the interviews with parents of pupils who are studying in the schools, along with the teachers.

4.1.1 Findings from the Standard Four national assessments (2015–2019)

First, we present findings on pupils' performance in Standard Four Assessments for the three schools over a five-year period from 2015 to 2019. These results were obtained from the National Examinations Council of Tanzania's website (www.necta.org). The National Examinations Council of Tanzania uses a letter-based grading system for assessment results. The results and the corresponding letter grades are as follows:

> 1 A (75–100) (excellent)
> 2 B (65–74) (very good)
> 3 C (45–64) (good)
> 4 D (30–44) (weak pass)
> 5 Referred (0–29)

Under the Tanzanian system, students who receive a grade between 0 and 29 are 'referred' and repeat Grade Four until they pass. Table 2 presents the performance of Grade Four pupils in the three schools 2015–2019.

The data in Table 2 can be represented graphically through Figure 1 below.

Table 2 and Figure 1 show that there is variation between the schools in terms of the number of students who perform in the A grade range. School X (Songea District)

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[6] The number of students obtaining an A grade in 2019 (25) is particularly high compared to the previous years—2018 (3), 2017 (0), 2016 (0), 2015 (0). When taken alone, the 2019 figure seems to suggest that the students in this school are in fact doing quite well. However, when the year-on-year data are examined, we can see that this is not the case. It would be interesting to return to this school as data are made available for subsequent years to see whether this upward trend continues or whether this was an anomaly of sorts.

Table 2. Performance of Schools X, Y and Z in national Standard Four assessment (as percentages).

	School X (Songea)					School Y (Bagamoyo)					School Z (Tabora)				
	2015	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**
A	0	0	0	3	25	0	0	0	13	10	0	3	4	0	1
B	18	22	2	29	35	28	35	39	65	70	0	22	59	5	18
C	37	33	29	44	20	65	65	55	19	20	16	26	20	25	59
D	25	30	39	24	13	7	0	6	3	0	32	4	6	50	16
Referred	16	14	24	6	2	0	0	0	0	0	32	21	0	16	2
Absent	4	1	3	1	5	0	0	0	0	0	20	23	10	4	3
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
n	*79*	*83*	*124*	*132*	*127*	*86*	*68*	*71*	*72*	*70*	*79*	*103*	*49*	*76*	*98*

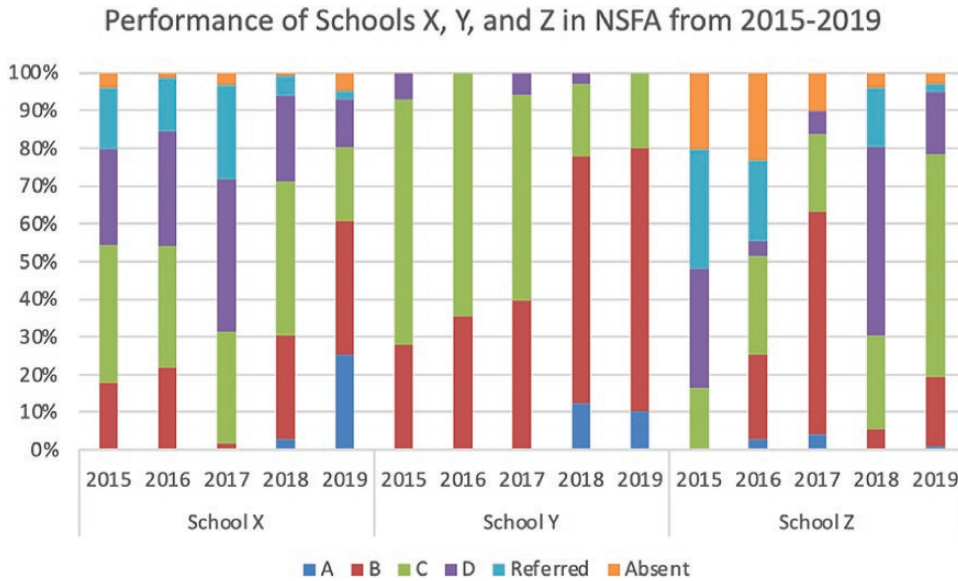(Source: Our calculations based on the data made available by NECTA.)

Figure 1. Performance of Schools X, Y and Z in NSFA (2015–2019).

had the most A grades obtained in 2019 (25 per cent)[6] and 2018 (only 3 per cent). This contrasts with the situation in School Z where in all five years, only 8 per cent got an A grade. This further contrasts with the situation in School Y (Bagamoyo), where in all five years 23 per cent got an A. Not only do the results in School Y show a good overall percentage of students obtaining an A grade, but they also show a high level of consistency of this outcome as it pertains to all five years for which we have access to the data.

While it is true that performance in examinations is a function of multiple factors, looking at the averages of the aggregate scores over the five-year period, a pattern can be identified. In Schools X and Z, where Swahili is not the language of the community, the percentage obtaining B and C grades is lower than in School Y, where the Medium of Instruction is also the language of the community. We also see that in Schools X and Z, there are cases of absenteeism from examinations and pupils being referred (and consequently repeating a year), which is not observed in School Y. We consider this to be a reflection of the impact of the use of Swahili as the medium of instruction. It appears that the students in School Y are generally better supported as a result of a higher degree of competency in Swahili and are therefore more likely to pass the exam and, in fact, to attend the exam in the first place (presumably also reflective of a more positive experience of schooling up to that point).

4.1.2 Findings from photo elicitation task

The photo elicitation task was used with Grade One and Two children (aged 7–8) in order to gain an idea of their knowledge of Swahili and as a way of structuring

discussion on this topic. Findings indicated that children in Grades One and Two were less likely to be able to sustain their description of the items in Swahili alone, or in which might be recognised as a more formal of 'standard' Swahili. In School X (Songea Rural District), where the main language of the community is Ngoni, the children showed evidence of their multilingual repertoires, translanguaged in some instances, and provided some descriptions of the items drawing on their linguistics resources in Ngoni. For instance, when asked about the name of the colour of chickens, both pupils PX1 (female, 7 years, Grade One) named the colours using the Ngoni terms—i.e., *yidung'u* 'red' and *ya msopi* 'white'. In Extract 1 below, boldface is used for works which are of Ngoni origin; italics are used for our English translation. The task was administered in Swahili.

Extract 1

Int: ……, eeh hawa ni nini? *(……, eeh what are these?)*

PX1:   Kuku *(Chickens)*

Int: Huyu ana rangi gani? *(What's the colour of this one?)*

PX2:   Ya jogoo *(Of a cock)*

Int: Rangi yake inaitwa nini? …… Wewe rangi hii ya kuku unaijua? … inaitwa nini? *(What is the name of its colour? … You there, do you know the colour of this chicken? … what's it called?)*

PX1:   **Yidung'u** *(Red) [Ngoni]*

PX2:   **Yidung'u** *(Red) [Ngoni]*

Int: Eeh, Na hii? *(eeh, and this?)*

PX1:   **Ya msopi** *(White) [Ngoni]*

Int: Wewe hizi rangi unazijua? *(You, do you know these colours?)*

PX2   Ndiyo *(Yes)*

Int: Hii rangi gani? *(What colour is this?)*

PX2   **Yidung'u** *(Red)* [Ngoni]

Int: Ehee, na hii? *(OK, and this?)*

PX2   **Ya msopi** *(White)* [Ngoni]

Int: Huyu nae ameshika nini? *(And what is this one holding?)*

PX2   Mkasi *(Sheers)*

Int: Mmh mkasi anafanyia nini? *(OK, what does he do with sheers?)*

PX2   Anakatia **matutu** *(For pruning sprouts)* ['sprouts' in Ngoni]

Int: Anakatia **matutu** ……, eeh wewe unaona huyu ameshika nini? *(For pruning sprouts... OK, what do you see this person holding?)* ['sprouts' in Ngoni]……

PX2:   Mkasi *(Sheers)*

[7] This example is interesting since pupil PX1 uses a combination of the Swahili word (and verb) *nyoa*, which, although it can be translated as 'cut' in English, is the verb specifically used for cutting hair. The second word they use, *matutu* 'sprouts', is a word from Ngoni. What we see here, therefore, is the child drawing on their multilingual repertoire and combining their knowledge of Ngoni and Swahili. Moreover, the use of the Swahili verb *nyoa* 'cut hair' to refer to the sprouts suggests some continuing overgeneralisations in Swahili due to the semantic mismatch between the verb and the noun.

Int: Anafanyia nini? *(What is he doing with them?)*
PX1:   Ananyoa **matutu**[7] *(He is trimming sprouts)* ['sprouts' in Ngoni]

It is also worth noting that in some instances, the descriptions or answers the participants provided differed from what would be expected in so-called Standard Swahili. For example, Pupil PX2 (male, 8 years old, Grade One) answered a question relating to the colour of a chicken by saying that the chicken was *rangi ya jogoo* 'the colour of a cock'.

Also in School X, pupil PX3 drew on the breadth of his linguistic resources and used a number of Ngoni words in a discussion that was taking place in Swahili. For example, when he was asked what the man in the picture was doing, he said that he was weeding *malombi* (the Ngoni word for 'corn'). Likewise, in the picture there is a person who is carrying a mat. When asked what the man was doing, PX3 said *amegega* (Ngoni for 'he is carrying') rather than using the Swahili word *amebeba*. Some participants also produced several other Ngoni words, including *lijege* (Ngoni for 'bone'), which contrast with the Swahili term *fupa* and *liganga* (Ngoni for 'stone'), instead of for example *jiwe*.

An interesting question here arises as to whether the respondents were aware or not that these words are not Swahili. It seems quite likely that the learners here do not perceive strict boundaries between named languages or codes but rather are drawing on the linguistic resources they have available to them. Although, as will be seen later, this is a distinction that is seen as important from the perspective of standard language or monolingual language ideologies which dominate the education system, at least from a formal perspective. Ngoni and Swahili are closely related Bantu languages and both *lijege* (Ngoni for 'bone') and *liganga* (Ngoni for 'stone') could be well-formed Swahili words in terms of phonology and morphology. There is nothing in these words that would indicate that they are Ngoni rather than Swahili. It is interesting to consider, therefore, the ways in which the children are using the linguistic repertoires to which they have access. In the absence of any reason to do otherwise, they are using the lexical items they know to describe and refer to the images and events they see in the photos, which in this case reflect their (at least) bilingual language repertoires. However, it is also worth noting that the responses given by the participants were also typically short, usually one-word answers. This relates also to our observations about the nature of the pupil–teacher interactions in the classroom (a point to which we will return below).

The findings in School X contrast with those in School Y, where Swahili is the dominant language of the wider community. In School Y, the pupils describe all of the items in Swahili. Their descriptions were more elaborate and extensive, and they often did not need to be prompted to expand or provide further information. They were also capable of identifying most of the items in the pictures and to explain how

the items are used. As noted above, however, this was more of a qualitative study than a quantitative study given the small sample size we worked with for the photo elicitation tasks. However, the findings here mirror those of other studies and feed into our findings from the different methods used in the current study.

4.1.3 Findings from the focus group

A focus group discussion was held with pupils from School Z, where the language of the community is Sukuma. The group involved pupils in Grades Three and Four. Pupils start Grade One when they are 7 years old, and so when they are in Grade Three, they are 9 years old. The pupils in the focus group were aged 9 years and above. The pupils had been exposed to Swahili in school for about five years (this includes two years of pre-primary school). The focus group was made up of six pupils, three girls and three boys. The focus group discussions did not involve teachers or parents, because we wanted to try and create conditions in which the pupils could talk freely. The focus group was conducted in Swahili.

The questions prompted the pupils to talk about their language use in general and their ability to use Swahili in their studies. One of the main areas of discussion was which language they usually speak in the classroom. Two of the pupils said that they speak Swahili, and that this is because Swahili is our *lugha ya taifa* ('national language'). Pupil PZ3 (female, 16 years, Grade Four) said that they always speak Swahili at home. Pupils PZ4 (male, 14 years, Grade Three) and PZ6 (female, 10 years, Grade Three) reported speaking Sukuma at home, and PZ5 speaks both Sukuma and Swahili at home.

The fact that some pupils reported using Swahili exclusively at home in the discussion raises issues which are central to our study here. The school is located in a predominantly Sukuma-speaking area. It was observed by the researcher during the focus group discussion that the pupils spoke Swahili with what might be described as an influence from Sukuma. For example, one of them said, '*tunacháp-ág-wà*[8] *tuki-ongé-ág-à Kisúkúmà*' ('we are caned if we speak Sukuma'). That the pupil felt it was important—or perhaps expected—to report that they speak Swahili at home reflects broader assumptions and patterns relating to language use in education and widespread ideas that Swahili is what they *should* be using. If it is indeed the case that the pupils (and their parents) speak Swahili at home despite identifying as Sukuma, this

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[8] Luhende (2018: 56) describes [-ag-] as a typical habitual morpheme in Sukuma. This is also what we found in pupils' Swahili, as a feature of language transfer. It can also be seen that the Swahili used by these students exhibits tone (indicated by the accents on the vowels). While Swahili does not have tone, Sukuma does. Again, suggesting evidence of influence of the students' first language and from a translanguaging perspective, perhaps a blurring of boundaries between named codes.

would suggest that parents are making an active decision to support the use of Swahili in the home, perhaps in the interests of perceived educational benefit or to facilitate future employment opportunities. Indeed, one of the parents does report speaking Swahili at home (discussed below), although this does not seem to be a widespread practice amongst those who were interviewed. However, if it is not the case that the students speak Swahili at home and yet they feel the need to report that they do, this suggests wider pressures again to be perceived to be using Swahili at home, especially perhaps to the (Swahili-speaking) researcher and in the contexts in which the interview is taking place (i.e. at school).

The question of why pupils might feel the need to report using Swahili at home also links to the comment reported by two of the students that Swahili is the national language. The suggestion here is that Swahili is something to be proud of, that if you are patriotic and loyal to Tanzania, you would choose to use Swahili, even at home. Some of the students also reported being punished by their teachers if they speak Sukuma in the classroom, while others reported being forced to communicate in Swahili. Extract 2, from the focus group discussion, shows this in more detail:

Extract 2

Int: Mwingine? We unaongea lugha gani darasani?
        Another one? Which language do you speak in the classroom?

PZ3:   Kiswahili
        Swahili

Int: Kwa nini?
        Why?

PZ3:   Ni lugha ya taifa.
        It's the national language.

Int: Sababu nyingine? Semeni … kama walimu wanawakataza kuongea Kisukuma.
        Any other reason? Just speak out … if teachers stop you from speaking Sukuma.

PZ4:   Tukiongea Kisukuma tunachapwa.
        If we speak Sukuma we are caned.

Int: Mnachapwa kwa sababu mmeongea Kisukuma? Lakini si ndiyo lugha yenu, utambulisho wa asili yenu? Mlitangaziwa kwamba msiongee Kisukuma?
        You get caned because you speak Sukuma? But is it not your language, your ethnic identity? Were you informed that you should not speak Sukuma?

PZ4:   Hapana, wakati mwingine tunaongea tu Kisukuma, wengine wanaongea tu Kiswahili, na hawachapwi.
        No, on some occasions we just speak Sukuma, others just speak Swahili, and they do not get caned.

While one pupil reports speaking just Swahili at home and school, two report speaking both Sukuma and Swahili, while three say they speak only Sukuma by default at home. From Extract 3, pupil PZ6 (female, 10 years, Grade Three) admits that she

does not understand Swahili, and that is the reason why she prefers to use Sukuma, her community language.

Extract 3

PZ3: Tunaongea Kiswahili.
      We speak Swahili.

Int: Na nyinyi?
      And you?

PZ4: Wengine Kisukuma.
      Others speak Sukuma.

Int: Eti ee?
      Is that correct?

PZ4: Ndiyo.
      Yes.

Int: Sasa … nyumbani huwa mnaongea lugha gani?
      So … which language do you speak at home?

PZ5: Kisukuma na Kiswahili.
      Sukuma and Swahili.

Int: Na wewe, nyumbani mnaongea lugha gani?
      And you, which language do you speak at home?

PZ6: Kisukuma.
      Sukuma.

Int: Kwa nini usiongee Kiswahili?
      Why don't you speak Swahili?

PZ6: Sielewi.
      I don't understand.

As can be seen in Extract 4 below, a parent from School X, Parent PX1 (male, 41 years old, who did not complete primary school education), who grew up in the same village, has chosen to speak only Swahili with his children at home.

Extract 4

Int: Watoto wanaoanza darasa la kwanza hapa kijijini, wana ufahamu wa kutosha wa kutumia lugha ya Kiswahili darasani …?
      Are the children who start Grade One in this village sufficiently capable of using the Swahili language in the classroom …?

PX1: Nafikiri hawana uwezo huo.
      I think they do not have that ability.

Int: Kwa nini unafikiri hivyo?
      Why do you think so?

PX1: Kwa kuwa watoto wamejengeka kuongea lugha ya kienyeji kutoka kwa wazazi nyumbani. Labda akifikia hatua za juu baada ya kufundishwa shuleni.
      Because the children have grown up speaking the ethnic language from their parents at home. Maybe, after reaching higher levels after being taught at school.

He does not want his children to speak Ngoni, but he acknowledges the fact that in Rural Songea District the main language of the community is Ngoni. His own children only speak Swahili with him, but when they go out to play with their fellow children, and when they are with their mother and other community members, they speak Ngoni rather than Swahili.

In School Y, Teacher TY1 (female, 32 years old) had taught in Singida Region before being transferred to this school in Bagamoyo. According to her, she is happy that all the pupils in beginner classes in School Y have good mastery of Swahili, and she finds her classes active and enjoyable. She says, 'I think because many parents in the Coast Region speak so much Swahili, all the children have good mastery of Swahili'. She notes, however, that when she was in Singida Region, children used to speak Nyaturu, and their mastery of Swahili was quite poor. And because of this, her classes were difficult to conduct and at times the level of participation was quite low.

> **Extract 5**
>
> Int   Je, unadhani kwamba hawa watoto wanafahamu lugha ya Kiswahili kuweza kujifun-zia; hawa watoto wa Darasa la Kwanza?
> *Do you think those children have enough mastery of Swahili for learning; those Grade One children?*
>
> TY1   Ninafikiri hivyo kwa sababu hapa katika mkoa wa Pwani wazazi wengi wanaongea sana Kiswahili, nadhani wote wanafahamu vizuri Kiswahili.
> *I think that because here in the Coast Region many parents speak Swahili a lot, I think all have a good understanding of Swahili.*
>
> Int   Unadhani ni kwa nini kuna tofauti kati ya Mkoa wa Pwani na Singida ulikokuwepo kabla ya kuja hapa?
> *Why do you think there is a difference between the Coast Region and Singida where you had been before?*
>
> TY1   Kwa maoni yangu kuna tofauti, kwa sababu nilipokuwepo Mkoa wa singida nilikuwa nikipata shida sana katika ufundishaji. Wakati mwingine ilinipasa kutumia maneno ya lugha ya asili ili watoto waweze kunielewa. Lakini jambo hilo halipo hapa Mkoa wa Pwani.
> *In my opinion there is a difference, because when I was in Singida Region I used to have a lot of trouble teaching. There were times when I had to resort to words from the community language in order for the children to understand. But I don't see this happening here in the Coast Region.*
>
> Int   Kwa hiyo unadhani kwamba matumizi ya lugha ya Kiswahili ni tatizo kwa madarasa ya mwanzoni mkoani Singida?
> *So, do you think that the use of Swahili can be a problem in beginner classes in Singida Region?*
>
> TY1   Nadhani kwamba ilikuwa ni tatizo nilipokuwa kule. Sifahamu kwa sasa hali ikoje.
> *I think that it was a problem when I was there. I don't know what the situation is like now.*

Int　　Sawa, kwa hiyo watoto walikuwa wanaongea lugha gani zaidi wakiwa nyumbani?
　　　　OK, so which language did the children use most while at home?

TY1　Kule Singida?
　　　　In Singida?

Int　　Ndiyo
　　　　Yes

TY1　Zaidi Kinyaturu
　　　　They used Nyaturu most.

Likewise, Parent PY1 (male, 43 years old, born in Kilimanjaro Region) from School Y has travelled to various regions in Tanzania. His children, who are in Grade Two and Four, speak Swahili at home because that is the language they have grown up with in the area of School Y. He admits that in Rural Kilimanjaro the use of Swahili in beginner classes is a problem because children are not used to it and tend to have had relatively low exposure to Swahili before starting school.

Extract 6

Int　　Watoto wadogo huwa wanaongea lugha gani kule Moshi?
　　　　What language do the little children use in Moshi?

PY1　Kama kule kwetu, huwa wanaongea tu lugha ya nyumbani. Ina maana, wengi kule wanaongea lugha ya asili, hata shuleni, au wakiwa wanacheza nyumbani. Lakini hapa hata watoto jirani wanapocheza huwa wanaongea Kiswahili. Kila mahali ni Kiswahili.
　　　　Like at our home there there, he would just speak the home language. It means, there people most would speak the community language, even at school, or while playing at home. But here even when the neighbouring children play, they speak Swahili. Everywhere, it's Swahili.

Int　　Kwa hiyo hali ikoje mkoani Kilimanjaro?
　　　　So what is the situation like in Kilimanjaro Region?

PY1　Kwa sasa, kule Moshi, Mkoa wa Kilimanjaro, … wakiwa na bibi zao, babu, shangazi, na wajomba, wanaongea tu lugha ya asili …
　　　　At the moment, in Moshi Kilimanjaro Region … when they are with their grandmother, grandfather, aunts, uncles, they only speak the community language …

Int　　Sasa, kwa wale watoto kule, hali inakuwaje wanapoanza tu Darasa la Kwanza? Huwa wanakumbana na ugumu wowotw katika matumizi ya Kiswahili, ambayo ndiyo maelekezo ya Sera kwamba kitumike wanapoanza shule?
　　　　Now, those children there, what is the situation like when they just start Grade One? Do they face any difficulties using Swahili, which the policy directs to be used when they join school?

PY1　Wale watoto kule?
　　　　The children there?

Int　　Ndiyo
　　　　Yes?

PY1   Wale watoto kule Moshi huwa wanapata ugumu wanapoanza shule, lakini pale tu mwanzoni.
Those children in Moshi face difficulties when they start schooling, but mostly just at the start.

4.2 Community members' and teachers' perceptions of the Swahili-only policy in the education

The second question driving the current study relates to community perceptions. It asks:

2 What are the perceptions of community members-cum-parents towards the Swahili only policy in the education of their children?

In all three schools, both parents and teachers were asked about how they perceive the suitability of the Swahili-only language in education policy for the children as opposed to if community languages were used in beginner classes. Six parents were interviewed, two from each location. Recall that two teachers were interviewed in both Schools X and Z and 1 teacher was interviewed in School Y. The parents were asked about language use in their families, and whether they thought their children were capable of using Swahili in their studies. Parent PTC1 (female, farmer, 40 years old) has completed primary education. She speaks Sukuma as her first language, but also speaks Swahili. She reported that the language most used at home is Sukuma. Her child, who is in Grade Two, knows Sukuma well but struggles with Swahili. She tries to teach him Swahili from time to time. However, she insists that Sukuma should not be used in the schools:

Extract 7

Int: Je mtoto wako aliye Darasa la Pili anafahamu Kiswahili vizuri?
Does your child who is in Grade Two know Swahili well?

PC1:   Hapana, anafahamu Kisukuma vizuri.
No, he knows Sukuma well.

Int: Je unadhani kwamba lugha ya Kisukuma inafaa iruhusiwe kutumika kwenye mada-rasa ya mwanzo?
Do you think the Sukuma language is suitable to be allowed for use in beginner classes?

PC1:   Haifai.
It is not suitable.

Int: Kwa nini unadhani hivyo?
Why?

PC1:   Kwa sababu hata mwalimu anapofundisha hafahamu mambo ya Kisukuma, ndiyo sababu anapaswa kutumia lugha ya taifa [Kiswahili].
Because even when the teacher teaches, he does not know Sukuma issues, it is why he should use the national language [Swahili].

A related view in terms of views on the use of community languages as MoI in remote rural areas is held by Parent PX1, who thinks that children should be taught in Swahili and not in the community languages. He proposes that, in cases where the communication is severely impacted, maybe teachers could consider using both languages:

> Kama ingewezekana, na ili watoto waweze kuelewa masomo yao haraka, labda wafundishwe kwa lugha zote mbili: zaidi kwa Kiswahili, lakini aweze kuchanganya kidogo na lugha ya asili. *… if it were possible, and in order for them (pupils) to be able to quickly understand the subjects, maybe they should be taught in both languages: mostly in Swahili language, but could be mixed slightly with the ethnic language.*

PX1 also claims that if teachers stick to the Swahili-only policy, '*Matokeo ni kwamba mwaalimu anaweza kuwa anafundisha upepo*' (The result is that the teacher may be teaching the air), meaning that what the teacher is saying may not be understood by the children.

Teacher TX1 (male, 42 years old, born in Songea), who speaks Ngoni as his first language, admits that most children in their early years at school in the village have not mastered enough Swahili to be able to use it in their studies. He has also worked in Arumeru District in Arusha Region and thinks that the MoI situation in Arumeru is even worse than it is in Songea District. Although he starts by saying that Swahili should be used in the classroom, he also reports being open to—and perhaps himself using—a slightly more flexible approach in which the key aspect is being responsive to the learners' needs.

Extract 8

Int: Je una maoni gani juu ya lugha yenyewe ya kufundishia hasa kwa madarasa haya ya mwanzo?
What opinion do you have about the MoI itself, especially for these beginner classes?

TX1   Naona hiki Kiswahili kingeendeshwa kama inavyotakiwa lakini siyo kwa mkazo wa juu zaidi kwa sababu pale mtoto anakuwa bado ana matatizo ya kujua kile Kiswahili. Kwa hiyo bado inabidi kwenda nae taratibu.
I think that this Swahili should be used as required, but not so strictly; because at that stage the child still has problems regarding knowledge of Swahili. So there is still a need to move slowly with him or her.

Int: Mh, kwa hiyo katika kwenda nae taratibu unafikiri mwalimu afanyeje labda ili kumuelewesha mtoto?
OK, so in going slowly, what do you think the teacher should perhaps do in order to make the child understand?

TX1   Ee, mwalimu ni kujitahidi tu kumsogeza mtoto akijue kile Kiswahili na kumpa mwongozo mwongozo fulani, mifano mifano fulani ambayo inaweza ikamsaidia aka-kifahamu Kiswahili.
Yes, the teacher should committedly work hard to bring the child close so as to know Swahili, and giving her certain guidance, certain examples, which can help the child understand Swahili.

Likewise, even though Teacher TY1 admitted that children in Singida Region, where she had taught before, face difficulties with Swahili as the MoI, she does not accept

that a community language should be used in the education system. This position is also held by parent PY1 (male, 43 years old, first language Chagga), who admits that in Moshi Rural District children have poor mastery of Swahili. Despite this, he does not support the use of community languages in beginner classes, and thinks that teachers are to work harder to help the pupils master Swahili.

5 Discussion

Regarding the practicability of the use of Swahili in beginner classes in remote rural Tanzania, it was found that the overall performance in Grade Four national examinations in School X and School Z was not as good as that in School Y, where the MoI is also the language of the community. We saw, for example, that in School Y, in the whole period of five years, no single pupil repeated a year, while in School Z, grade repetition was the highest, followed by School X. Other variables, such as absenteeism in examinations which were also non-existent in School Y, the highest in School Z followed by School X are also likely to have had an impact on grade outcomes, students' engagement and overall experience of formal education.

Another aspect worth comparing is the quality of the pass grades in the NSFA. Of the three schools, it is School Y in Bagamoyo District which is first, with an aggregate average of 47.4 per cent, followed by School X (21.2 per cent), and last School Z with an average score of 20.8 per cent of B grade in the five years. In contrast, Schools X and Z had more D grades (a weak pass) than the D grade found in School Y. More specifically, over the period of five years (2015–19) an average of 24 per cent of students got a D grade in School X; whereas in School Z, 26.7 per cent got a D grade. However, in School Y, where Swahili is also the language of the community, only 4.4 per cent received a D grade. While other factors may compound the challenges that the learners encounter in their schooling, the impact of the MoI cannot be underestimated.

The classroom observations revealed the lessons in School X and School Z to be also somewhat dull, with only a handful of pupils participating in answering questions. Only a few of the more able pupils were nominated by teachers to answer questions in the classroom, thereby reducing the possibility for the other pupils to participate in classroom activities and interactions. Rather than reflecting a shortcoming on the part of the teachers or the learners, we argue here that this reflects the impact of the language in education policy which, by excluding the other community languages from the classroom, disadvantages a large proportion of the learners and acts to marginalise those with lower levels of competency, exposure or simply confidence in Swahili. Some parents and teachers, while recognising the issues that learners face in the classrooms, still think that Swahili should be the only language used in the beginner classes, including in remote rural Tanzania, as reflected in the excerpts above.

While parents and teachers recognised that translanguaging between Swahili and community languages does exist, they suggested that this should only really be permitted in cases of failures in communication. That is, these other languages should be used as a 'last resort' rather than being regular parts of the daily interactions in the school setting and the classroom in particular. Dixon and Lewis (2008, 46) also reported similar views from teachers and parents in this regard:

> It is also not surprising that if teachers have narrow views of literacy, these are shared by parents. Many parents have also been educated in a system in which school literacy is valued and have little sense of the value of their own non-school literacy practices.

According to Gee (2001: 537), cited in Dixon and Lewis (2008: 42–43), 'schools fail to take the literacy practices of a range of communities into account' because their discourses are not the 'socially accepted ways of thinking, speaking and acting'. Indeed, in some of the explanations provided above it appears that neither teachers nor parents fully appreciate the resources that children take with them to schools and, more so, to the classrooms. Parents and teachers may well see the potential benefit of allowing a wider range of languages to be used and encouraged in formal educational contexts. At the same time, however, they often also acknowledge that this is in many ways impractical and that there are other factors which impact on language use and the language in education policy in the country. While parents may agree that the use of other community members might help their children in the short term in relation to transition into formal education, they also recognise that exams take place in Swahili and that the children will ultimately benefit from developing a high level of competency in Swahili for educational purposes, as well as for future employment purposes and for wider communication. This is the tension which we see replicated across much of the continent (see also Bagwasi & Costley, this volume) and indeed much of the multilingual world.

Parents consider future employment and wider benefits when it comes to making a decision on investment in language learning and only 'put efforts towards an investment that is likely to yield returns', as noted by Mapunda and Rosendal (2021). For these teachers and parents, community languages are not seen as offering substantial future prospects, and certainly not when compared to Swahili. While parents did share positive views and attitudes towards the other community languages, these were linked primarily to identity, sense of belonging and the role of these languages in the community and particularly within the home.

6 Concluding remarks and recommendations

The current study addressed two questions with regard to the position of Swahili in the language in education policy in Tanzania. Although Swahili is the official language, there are approximately 150 languages spoken in Tanzania. The first question

related to the practicability of using Swahili in remote rural Tanzania. The second question related to the perceptions of community members towards the Swahili-only language in education policy.

The key observation in this regard is that, while it is true that Swahili is known in many parts of the country, there are settings where the language is used to a lesser extent and where pupils, upon entering school, do not have a strong command of Swahili. Our data suggest that Swahili does not support the learning of all pupils in their early years of education in Tanzania, particularly those in remote rural schools where Swahili is not the language of the wider community.

Differences in attainment were reflected in the results from the Grade Four assessments as well as levels of grade repetition. However, here we have focused on the broader views, attitudes and experiences of learners, teachers and community members in relation to this language in education policy. As such, the insights from the photo elicitation task showed us that the students moved fluidly between Swahili and Ngoni during the task. In the focus group discussions (which were conducted with somewhat older pupils, who by this age had acquired more Swahili), pupils reported using Swahili and Sukuma—in some cases in different contexts. Some pupils noted that they would get caned—or threatened—if they used Sukuma in the classroom, as teachers were training to enforce a Swahili-only language classroom environment. However, in the interviews, both teachers and parents reported that the children really struggled with Swahili, particularly in the early years. They acknowledged that the Swahili-only classroom brings with it obstacles in terms of learning and requires children to learn both the language and the subject matter. Despite this, teachers and parents still considered it important that Swahili was used as the main language of instruction, acknowledging that this would be the language of examinations and that the learners would need these language skills later in life, too. Broader notions relating to Swahili being the 'language of the nation' were reflected amongst teachers, parents and pupils.

Finally, in terms of recommendations, we suggest that language in education policies should show an appreciation of the value of community languages in education in Tanzania and the potential for community languages to enhance learners' experiences of education. We suggest that rather than focusing on the respective merits of an English-dominant or a Swahili-dominant language in education policy, we should consider the benefits of a policy which actively encourages and supports the use of a wider range of languages in education. This would in fact be a more accurate reflection of the translanguaging practices that do take place in the classroom, albeit informally. And we believe this would also further provide a more supportive and effective educational experience for all. Failure to do this will likely continue to marginalise and disadvantage those students who speak languages other than Swahili.

Acknowledgements

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