

African Languages Development in Education -Bilingualism and African Languages

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Abstract

The issue of teaching in the mother tongue has generated significant and controversial debates among decision-makers and has engendered different policies aiming to enhance the use of mother tongues into educational curricula. Africa is a perfect illustration of a continent where mother tongues have been marginalized over years to let the place to foreign and colonial languages to expand and become official languages. This article reviews the current situation of African languages as means of instruction and provides some anticipation for the use of mother tongues in educational systems designed in future national strategic plans. The study of these plans has been conducted in order to examine whether African countries have been able to achieve the significant resolutions derived from the UNESCO conference in 1953 and whether they apply bilingual approaches properly without ignoring the importance of mother tongues. Results have demonstrated that most African countries have been able to use their own mother tongue as the language of instruction together with a foreign language, and seek to adopt the same strategy in the coming years. Few countries on the other hand plan to change from using the mother tongue into applying one foreign language only.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is the nations' built-source in all areas' of development; powerful countries have tremendously invested on the educational field aiming to shore up their educational and economic status through emphasizing mother tongue teaching along with other school subjects, in addition to encouraging and promoting scientific research in all fields of sciences and technology. Besides, good quality learning and teaching are imperative to the success of education and the generation of competent citizens and managers. Learning methodologies and educational pedagogies determine educators' proficiency along with the success or failure of the entire educational system.

Moreover, languages are preeminent factors determining the success of a particular educational system and the divergence in educational levels between nations; they have a dominant role in achieving successful learning in schools and universities. In this token, language policy has

been a perplexing issue in Africa, where first languages are being marginalized, and foreign languages are continually present in governmental, educational, and economic affairs.

Therefore, this article aims to draw attention to the marginalization of African languages as means of instruction over foreign languages. For that purpose, mainly, a study has been undertaken to analyze African educational policies over languages during the last decades and those which have elaborated strategies for the future to decipher the different language policies that would be most appropriate to preserve African linguistic heritage through education.

Hence, the problem is the marginalization of local African languages in education and the use of foreign languages as the first languages of instruction, which is believed to affect education during the early stages negatively. The rationale behind addressing this topic is primarily to raise awareness about the situation of African languages and their relationship with the development of education. It is important to turn attention toward major factors that could negatively influence education development in African countries and discuss related issues to bring about alternate solutions for African education.

The principal objectives are:

1. To shed light on the position of African languages in education.
2. To review and synthesize previous and future educational strategic plans on African education.
3. To reflect on the bilingual policies and practices regarding the quality of education and mainly on the development of languages.

The hypothesis suggests that:

1. The language used influences learning and teaching practices.
2. Foreign languages remain significantly present in African educational systems.
3. Recent national reforms do not contribute enough to raising mother tongues and African indigenous languages.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Concerning learning methodologies, plenteous studies have been carried out to bring about concrete, potent, and adequate learning and teaching sources, as well as methods and techniques in the teaching of languages (Howatt&Widdowson, 2004), Cliquez ou appuyez ici pour entrer du texte. Explicitly elucidated the changes in methods' designs and structure throughout history. In the Reform era, new teaching methods have emerged in schools as one form of educational transformation, followed by the Berlitz methods, which brought the concept of connected texts and non-translation of the first language in learning second language acquisition. This model generated a few years later the Direct Method.

During the period of the First World War, copious controversial theories emerged, including behaviorism with descriptive linguistics in opposition to the Universal Grammar with Noam Chomsky in the mid-1970s. This disparity in approaches and doctrines has influenced the learning and teaching processes around the world spawning thereupon bountiful learning methodologies that have been either successfully implemented or which have been falsified providing different contexts. Furthermore, the field of education is very wide and consists of multiple theories of learning all related to specific disciplines; research nowadays is studying education together with psycho-education, neural education, linguistic- education, and socio-education in as much as this field correlates with various areas and it is prerequisite hence to encounter the educational field from all dimensions and perspectives to come up with pertinent and opportune methods of teaching and learning.

According to (Albaugh, 2005); most countries in the post-colonial era and particularly during the 60s adopted one European language only; a few countries were using several local languages due to the heterogeneity of the country. Otherwise, in the 90s, few countries have maintained only one European language of instruction as Angola and Congo Republic. However, countries such as Algeria, Mauritius, and Chad have included the mother tongue as an official language of instruction with French and English. Finally, countries like Rwanda, Uganda, and Nigeria have adopted one or several local languages of instruction in schools. Besides, in 2004, most African countries incorporated their mother tongue as the language of instruction and another European language. Algeria and Morocco, for instance, have involved classical Arabic as the primary language of instruction; students from elementary school are introduced to spoken and written Arabic. Nonetheless, the French language is still dominant as a language of instruction in North African educational systems.

Table 1 : Coding of language use in Education (Albaugh, 2005)

0	European Language Only
1	European and Foreign African Language (e.g. Classical Arabic)
2	Foreign African Language Only
3	One Local Language – Experimentation
4	Several Local Languages – Experimentation
5	One Local Language – Expansion
6	Several Local Languages – Expansion
7	One Local Language – Generalized
8	Several Local Languages – Generalized
9	One Local Language – Exclusive
10	Several Local Languages - Exclusive “Experimentation

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Country	Indep or 1960	1990	2004
Algeria	0	1	3
Angola	0	0	0
Benin	0	0	0
Botswana	5	5	3
Burkina Faso	0	0	6
Burundi	7	7	7
Cameroon	0	0	4
Cape Verde	0	0	0
Central African Republic	0	0	0
Chad	0	1	4
Comoros	1	1	1
Congo, Dem. Rep.	0	8	8
Congo, Rep.	0	0	0
Cote d'Ivoire	0	0	6
Djibouti	0	0	4
Equatorial Guinea	0	0	0
Eritrea	10	n/a	10
Ethiopia	9	9	10
Gabon	0	0	4
Gambia	0	0	0
Ghana	8	8	0
Guinea	0	0	4
Guinea-Bissau	0	0	3
Kenya	0	6	4
Lesotho	7	7	7
Liberia	0	0	0
Madagascar	5	9	9
Malawi	8	7	7
Mali	0	3	6
Mauritania	1	1	1
Mauritius	5	5	5
Mozambique	0	0	6
Namibia	8	8	6
Niger	0	4	6
Nigeria	8	8	8
Rwanda	7	7	7
Sao Tome e Principe	0	0	0
Senegal	0	0	4
Seychelles	0	7	7
Sierra Leone	0	4	4
Somalia	0	7	5
South Africa	10	6	8
Sudan	1	2	4
Swaziland	7	7	5
Tanzania	5	9	9
Togo	0	0	0
Uganda	8	8	6
Zambia	6	0	4
Zimbabwe	4	0	0

In a nutshell, the African continent currently witnesses a crisis in education and language policies; this crisis affects the internal development of African countries and the position of African languages at the international level. Since most African countries adopt bilingual education to enable future graduates to integrate in the international world market and acquire

intercultural skills, this perspective neglects the importance of mother tongues. Notwithstanding the redundant national and international conferences on the optimization of African languages, unfortunately, a little has been achieved and accomplished in this regard. Therefore, the necessity to rethink about the issue of bilingualism in African classrooms is crucial for moving a step forward with African education.

2.1. The impact of bilingualism on African languages development

Acquisition of language and cognitive development

The famous linguist (Chomsky, 2006) discussed the issue of bilingualism from a cognitive perspective to decipher how the brain could shift in different languages and how the brain system can be simultaneously in different states. He explicitly affirms that the second language influences the first language at many levels, notably when the second language is taught and learned at a young age and in prolonged language contact situations. The former confirmed that the native language competence is impacted by some means, but it would always be internally placed in the unconscious mind. When a person moves into a foreign language environment, there are lower grammatical standards due to the differences in syntax, sentence structures, and verbal and non-verbal communication.

With regard to the classroom context, learning in the mother tongue and a foreign language could be challenging insomuch as languages have different grammatical structures and opposite linguistic rules. For instance, in Turkish language, the sentence's meaning is only understood when finished as the verb occurs at the end; whereas in English, subject and verb are placed at the beginning. These differences could generate some learning complexities during children learning process where the child has not yet developed all linguistic and cultural patterns of his mother tongue. In consonance with (Pavlenko, 2013) -who based his study on the analysis of Sapir and Wolf hypothesis and who has been inspired by Humboldt thoughts in his analysis of the bilingual mind – assumed that the process of learning a new language affects categorization, memory, perception and self-perception.

Learning a new language can reshape these processes and reorganize the structure of the mind. Hence, it is prerequisite for children to learn only in one language until the age of six where a second language can be gradually introduced. At that stage of child development, children are ready thus to speak, make analysis, ask questions, observe, react to peoples' sayings, and receive primary and elementary language ground in the language they have encountered during their first years. This period is the most appropriate to input children with the basic rules and notions of their first language through the medium of competent teachers who are knowledgeable enough about children brain development and first language teaching in addition to elementary education principles.

Therefore, it is recommended for African schools to incorporate the mother tongue in the teaching and learning process at a first level, followed by the second language at a more advanced age where children have already reached mental development and cognitive acceptability of a new grammatical structure and new vocabulary that could be either more or less developed and descriptive than their own, and in which children would be capable of adjusting their pre-existing representations, linguistic and cultural notions. This operation is referred to as the cognitive restructuring, where a child or an adult is exposed to new language learning and tries to adjust the pre notions of his or her mother tongue into the second language. This process requires a certain mental training and effort to restructure referees, concepts, forms with meanings and the various connections between words in the new language.

Since African schools teach in two to three languages; it is supposed that these connections; organizations, and structuring of different grammatical principles could not be carried out at the same time but there should instead be separately realized; and if children learn different languages simultaneously, it is assumed that some linguistic patterns would be lowered or misguided in children basic age. Additional research has explored the differences between native bilingual children from two linguistic backgrounds compared to children who have acquired two languages successively one after another. In consonance with (Werker&Lalonde, 1988), children raised in a bilingual environment establish phonetic representations for each of their languages in the same manner, mainly when languages are close to each other at the vocabulary and grammatical level.

Nonetheless, bilingual children may have some difficulties distinguishing similar sounds appropriately in the two languages in terms of sounds and listening. Their capacity to perceive sounds may take a bit more time to learn, but children would ultimately manage to deal with this difficulty with much more exposure to the language. Bilingual infants' cognitive skills are not delayed compared to monolingual children, and onset milestones are normally acquired to all types of children.

However, the point behind discussing issues of bilingualism is not to compare monolingual to bilingual children but rather to encourage further the use of the mother tongue instead of second and foreign languages in African classrooms. The crucial key is to help empowering the mother tongue in African classrooms from elementary school and including other languages gradually over academic years standing therefore on adequate materials, skilled teachers and advanced curriculum.

Moreover, (Krashen, 1985) states that there is a huge interface between acquisition and learning; the former is subconscious and requires implicit knowledge, the latter on the other hand is conscious and requires explicit knowledge and a one way input from the instructor. Learning should be achieved in a way that learners are provided with rules; paying attention to grammatical features and learning them subconsciously. (Higgs & Krashen, 1983) assume that learners should have already acquired the basic rules of grammar through their interaction in very first ages where acquisition has been unconsciously accomplished and where meanings have been constructed implicitly. Learning then, comes at a second stage to complete children learning and provide them with additional knowledge and skills.

Therefore, it would be more interesting for African children to use their mother tongue firstly and independently of another language to assimilate the basic grammatical features appropriately and introduce them to a second language gradually. Having said that, it is denial to admit that bilingualism is not appropriate for children, the claim is that this method could bring many advantages for the development of African languages but at the same time could be non-efficient if applied in another context. On the other hand, (Vygotsky, 1978, 1992) and (Piaget, 1962) recognized the close relationship between language and cognitive development and found evidence that accelerated cognitive development occurs more among bilingual children. However, this cannot be achieved only if proper instructions, adequate programs, curricula and materials are respected to develop children mental capacities.

Finally, if children and young students master their first language in a young age, they would be more capable to embrace other languages with full confidence and readiness along with preserving their own. This would also raise sense of identity among African children and

students, in addition to sense of belonging to Africa and sense of responsibility toward their language and country.

The learning in the mother tongue and its benefits on employability, social integration and scientific research.

Using mother tongue as a language of instruction promotes national languages among its native speakers, and raises sense of identity and pride among students. This would be a favorable step to break with the past and fend off the pressure of colonial languages through adopting new curricula and syllabi. Furthermore, studying in mother tongue throughout educational levels would generate graduates competent in their own language and hence capable to produce knowledge in their mother tongue. This would encourage university students to fulfill doctorate programs and conduct scientific research in their mother tongue. (Tijssen, 2007) found out that African countries contributed with 1.4% of the worldwide publication for the years 1981–2000. Luckily, contribution has risen 38% of its productivity to attain 46.000 articles in the years of 2001-2004.

Moreover, the same writer has been reported in (Nordling, 2018) article to state that currently, only 2% of African contribution is estimated worldwide. One of the reasons goes principally to educational system and it is believed that graduates ‘competences could be developed and enhanced through teaching foreign languages, science, technology and focusing on mastering mother tongues and producing in African languages. Besides, the causal relationship between all of education, scientific research and employability underlines the fact that if African students manage to get a constructive learning of second languages along with mastering their mother tongue; they would therefore be capable of spreading knowledge in their first language and develop it through scientific research, they would also raise their chances to work in multinationals and integrate effectively in the world market by preserving their language, identity and culture.

3. METHODS

The study is explorative, informative and analytical seeking to analyze the situation of African local languages in African educational setting and whether bilingualism is in favor of developing these local languages or in the contrary decreases its propagation. It is also a qualitative study as it is based on the analysis of official documents, official papers and reports of international organizations related to the topic.

The instruments encompass official declarations by African ministries related to their educational plans, official reports from educational higher institutions and a wide range of opinions of experts in the field of education, linguistics and pedagogy. Precisely, the study relies on an official report of the UNESCO concerning African local languages in education, which states the current situation of these local languages in each country, how and when they are being taught in African educational systems, in addition to reporting on some experts positions and opinions. It also gathers the latest reports coming up from recent international conferences held in different countries to discuss the resulting conclusions and ideas on the development of local languages in Africa.

Moreover, this article presents some latest educational strategic plans of African countries delivered by African ministries in which they demonstrate their vision for education, gender equality, rural areas education, the promotion of local languages and the situation of foreign languages in their educational system. In addition to that, an important document indicating

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the use of local and foreign languages in African education has been used as a key document to reveal the development of these languages over years in educational settings.

Therefore, data collected from these documents has provided a global view on the situation of African local languages and how they have developed in education; it has also laid out an insight on future policies regarding the use of African mother tongue in education. In this regard, a coding has been established by the researcher to describe the different language status in each country with their first languages of instruction, in order to reveal local and foreign languages and their presence and development over years. This has been indicated through maps designed by the researcher herself based on a set of information. Finally, the interpretation of data has been supported by theories, doctrines in language and linguistics, further articles and theses with the aim to comment and decipher the situation of African local languages and their relationship with bilingualism and how the former affects the development of African mother tongues.

4. RESULTS

The table below is a review and a global summary of major reports on strategic plans; it gathers 51 countries indicating their recent and future situation with regard to the use of languages in the educational setting.

Table 1 : Review of strategic plans with regard to the use of languages in the educational setting

0: One foreign language only 1: One African language only 2: Bilingual with mother tongue 3: Bilingual without mother tongue

African countries	Recent/Current situation	Future strategic plans (>2020)	French	English	Spanish	Portuguese	Arabic
Algeria	2	2	x				x
Angola	0	0				x	
Benin	0	0	x				
Botswana	2	2		x			
Burkina Faso	2	2	x				x
Burundi	2	0	x				
Cameroon	0	0		x			
Cape Verde	0	0				x	
Central African Republic	3	3	x				x
Chad	3	3	x				x
Comoros	3	3	x	x			x
Congo DemRep	0	0	x				
Congo Rep	2	2	x	x			
Cote d'Ivoire	0	0	x				
Djibouti	3	3	x	x			x
Equatorial Guinea	3	3	x		x	x	
Eritrea	3	3		x			x
Ethiopia	2	2		x			

Gabon	0	2	x				
Gambia	2	2	x	x			
Ghana	2	2		x			
Guinea	2	2	x				
Guinea Bissau	0	2			x		
Kenya	2	2		x			
Lesotho	2	2		x			
Liberia	0	2		x			
Madagascar	2	2	x				
Malawi	0	2		x			
Mali	0	2	x				
Mauritania	2	2	x				x
Mauritius	3	3	x	x			
Mozambique	0	2			x		
Namibia	0	0		x			
Niger	2	2	x				
Nigeria	0	2		x			
Rwanda	2	0		x			
Sao Tome y Principe	0	0		x	x		
Senegal	2	2	x				
Seychelles	3	3	x	x			
SierraLione	0	0		x			
Somalia	2	2					x
South Africa	2	2		x			
Sudan	2	2					x
Swaziland (Eswatini)	2	2		x			
Tanzania	2	2		x			
Togo	2	2	x				
Uganda	2	0		x			
Zambia	2	2		x			
Zimbabwe	2	2		x			
Morocco	2	2	x				x
Tunisia	2	2	x				x
Egypt	2	2		x			x

Mother tongue use in Africa- Recent and current period



Figure 1: Mother tongue use in Africa -Recent and current situation

The figure above shows the distribution of mother tongue implementation in different African countries currently. It appears that the majority of African countries are using bilingual approach with the use of mother tongue, few countries such as Angola, Namibia, Democratic Republic of Congo and other countries -marked in red- only use one foreign language like English, French and Portuguese. Finally, countries such as Chad, Central African Republic, Eritrea and Djibouti are bilingual to multilingual. Moreover, as shown in the map, the distribution of countries with the same colors are mostly positioned in the same area which could explain that some of them may take overall decisions taking into account the political, economic and social development of the region. Countries in red are close to each other as Namibia, Angola and Dm.r¹ Congo which are part of EAC² and all using only one foreign language.

Mother tongue use in Africa - indicated in future educational plans-

¹Dm.r: Democratic Republic

²EAC : East African Community



Figure 2: Mother tongue use in Africa- Future plans beyond 2020

The second map shows the distribution of mother tongue use estimated beyond 2020 and indicated in future strategic plans on African education. As stated above, some countries would switch from one foreign language only to bilingual with using their own mother tongue (ex: Mali and Mozambique from red zone to green zone). These maps are helpful as a transcription for the result’s first part; through highlighting each country and its language status regarding mother tongue use. Finally, Libya and South Sudan are left blank due to lack of resources and literatures in this topic.

Pie charts on mother tongues in Africa

The following results are displayed through charts and based on table 1.

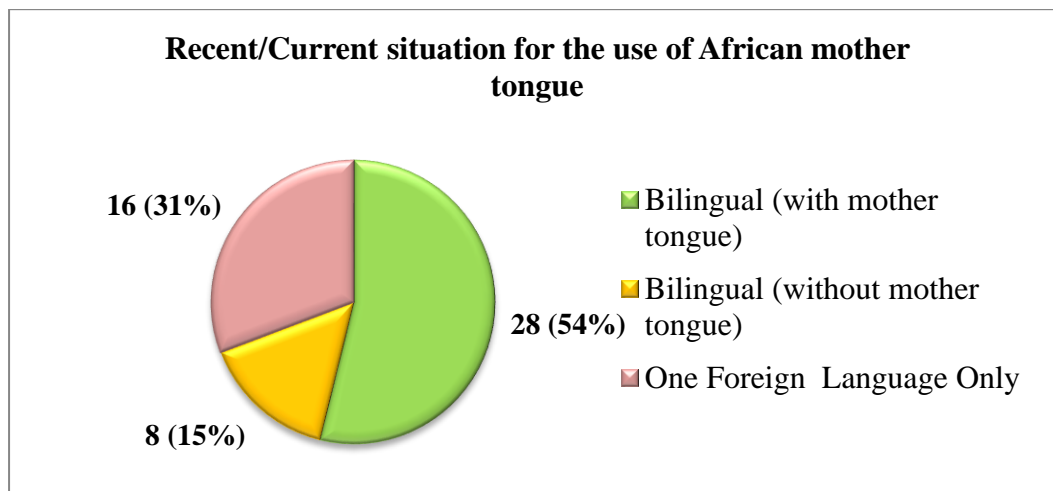
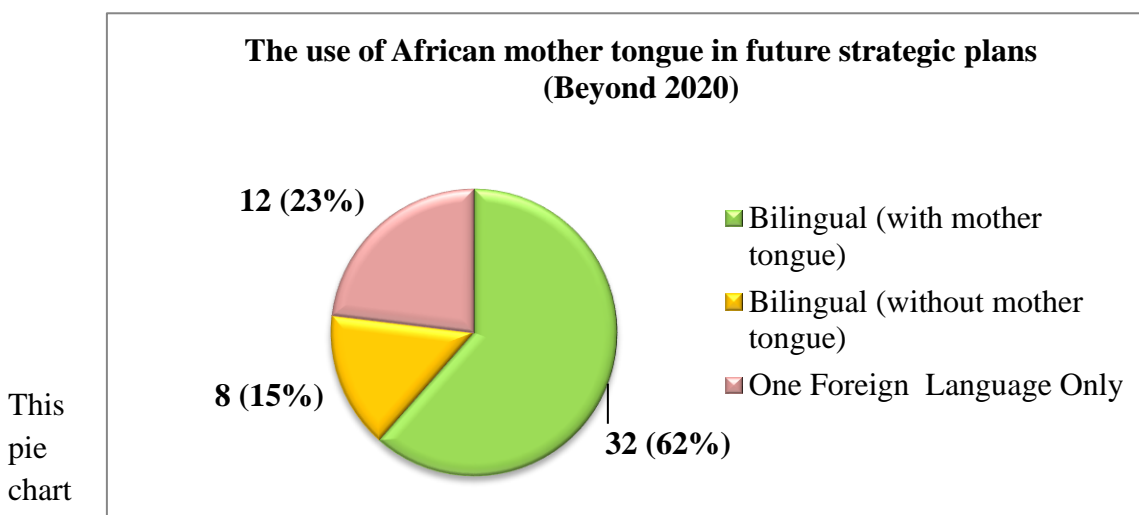


Figure 3: Recent/Current situation for the use of African mother tongues

The chart above demonstrates that recently and in the current era, 28 African countries equivalent to 54% do use their mother tongues as languages of instruction in their educational system, 8 other countries equivalent to 15% adopt bilingual education with the use of two foreign languages such as the case for Chad, Comoros and Mauritius. Finally, 16 countries equivalent to 31% use only one foreign language (French/English/Spanish/Portuguese or Arabic) as medium of instruction.

Figure 4: Future strategic plans for the use of African mother tongues



This pie chart shows that 32 African countries equivalent to 62% tend to use their mother tongues as languages of instruction along with the use of a foreign language. Besides, 8 countries equivalent to 15% decided to keep using bilingual approach without the use of mother tongues, 12 countries equivalent to 23% tend to be using monolingual approach with one foreign languages.

5. DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

Interpretation of the results

According to the results provided in figure 3; it is demonstrated that 54% of African countries are adopting their mother tongue as a medium of instruction in their educational systems including Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Madagascar, Lesotho, Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Senegal and others. Moreover, comparing to figure 4; it is proclaimed that this number would increase suggesting that more African countries would include their mother tongue to move from 54% to 62% in

general. This suggests that 10 countries in overall plan to change their status including 7 of them which would adopt bilingualism with mother tongue: Gabon, Guinea Bissau, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria, Mozambique and Liberia.

Language Status\Number of Recent/Current countries	situation	Future plans (Beyond 2020)	strategic Transition
Bilingual (with mothertongue)	28	32	+4 (7-3)
Bilingual (without mothertongue)	8	8	0
One Foreign Language Only	16	12	-4(3-7)

Table 2: African countries change (Beyond 2020)

It would be interesting to mention that all of Mali, Nigeria, Liberia and Guinea Bissau are part from the ECOWAS³ which has been established in May 1975 with the purpose to promote economic integration in all fields of activity of the concerned countries. This may probably suppose that the decision to incorporate the mother tongue in future educational policies could contribute positively to the development of the region at many levels. Besides, countries such as Senegal, Togo, Burkina Faso, Cote d’Ivoire, and others are also members of the ECOWAS community but have not planned to incorporate the mother tongue in their bilingual approach, as this transformation necessitates a huge investment not only in terms of financial budget but also in terms of teachers’ training and school materials.

On the other hand, it appears from the results that 3 countries plan to switch from the use of their mother tongue as a language of instruction to keep using only the foreign language such as Burundi which plans to switch from Kirundi language to French as well as Rwanda and Uganda to English.

Report on current and future educational strategic plans regarding the use of mother tongue and foreign languages as languages of instruction.

Congo, Cote d’Ivoire, Cameroon and Burkina Faso are examples of countries where French remains a rooted language in education. After independence, these countries have failed in making French a second language rather than a language of instruction in language policy, it is believed that the failure of incorporating mother tongue goes back principally to teachers’ competence. According to (Alidou&MallamGarba, 2003), most teachers in African schools do not really understand the phenomenon of bilingualism and the process by which children develop linguistic and cognitive capacities through the acquisition of another language. This unfamiliarity and lack of knowledge lead to a huge disparity in the educational system, and the lack of adequate training on bilingual education generates students struggling with both languages or choosing a foreign language that is perceived superior to others.

Furthermore, in the case of South Africa and Guinea for instance, (Heugh, 2002) argues that the failure of the mother tongue as a language of instruction was due to the ignorance of civil society and policies which were manipulated by an undemocratic government. Until the present day, English and French remain the main languages of instruction in these countries. Moreover, (ADEA, 2005) article reports the results of a research project that assesses the experiences of mother tongue and bilingual formal and non-formal education in 25 sub-Saharan countries. The authors of the study highlights that advancement in educational quality and learning outcomes

³ECOWAS : Economic of Western African States

is determined by adequate multilingual language models and curricula which use African languages as media of instruction in the first six years.

Besides, in consonance with (Ouane & Glanz, 2011); African schools are heavily constituted with untrained teachers; some teachers have not undertaken specific and qualified training on bilingual and multilingual teaching; hence, their teaching methodology is not based on bilingual teaching theories and second language acquisition principles. These factors contributed to the non development of African mother tongues within the African educational system for many years. Furthermore,(Albaugh, 2005) studied language policies in African education and analyzed several languages used in African countries; the study embodies all languages status in the African continent from 1960 to 2004 showing the development of languages over years. The results derived demonstrate that African mother tongues have been marginalized allowing foreign languages to expand in the educational area and to monopolize language teachings.

After independence, African countries were already rooted and filled with foreign languages that have been imposed in educational systems from elementary and primary schools. Hence, decision makers in the post colonial era have tried to replace foreign languages by their own mother tongue but the lack of financial and scientific resources in addition to the lack of consulted policies and research led to further marginalization of native languages.

Considering Angola as a matter of case, the country has been under the Portuguese occupation for the official language was Portuguese. In consonance with(Gorham & Duberg, 1985); despite the independence, the country maintained Portuguese as the main language in education with little contribution in local languages and mother tongue. Currently, Angola is teaching in Portuguese despite the 39 other languages spoken around the country, and according to the report progress 2010; national language are planned to be introduced in the future seeking to overcome dialogue difficulties between teachers and students, but would not be implemented as languages of instruction.(Republic of Angola, 2010)

In Burkina Faso, French language was predominant in education in the pre independence epoch and in the mid 90s. According to an article published by (Oeuvre Suisse d'Entraide Ouvrière, 2005);French is currently the language of instruction along with specific national languages that have been added in education through the mean of NGO⁴'s and international associations whose vocation is to re establish mother tongue and bring back local languages. This is to note that the ministry of education in Burkina Faso in its report on educational changes occurring between 2017 and 2030, declared that French would remain the language of instruction in all subjects from primary level to higher education, along with promoting the teaching of national languages separately through designing new curricula with appropriate pedagogy enhancing bilingualism at all levels. (Ministry of Education of Burkina Faso, 2017)

In the same token, Cameroon has marked the beginning of educational transformation till 2004 where decision makers have agreed to incorporate national languages for African languages promotion. As stated by the (Ministry of Education of Cameroun, 2003); local languages are currently media of instruction in public schools. This planning action by the ministry urges to improve education quality for the acquisition of competences in various school subjects.

According to (Leclerc, 2005); in 1978, the Chad government required obligatory bilingualism with French and Arabic and since 2004 till 2020; three other languages were added to the

⁴NGO: Non Governmental Organization

educational system. Hence, this policy was more directed toward a multilingual education including European languages and Arabic, and it would remain the same with empowering local languages as separate subjects in schools (Ministère de l'Economie du Tchad, 2021). Similar to Comoros, students in basic age are taught in French, English and Arabic, however, French is mainly the language of instruction. Likewise in Congo Republic which plans -by the end of 2025- to use French and English as languages of instruction, along with enhancing national languages.(Ministry of Education of Comores, 2016). Additionally, Gabon which was under the French occupation did consider the teaching of local languages till 2000s along with French as the main language. In consonance with (Leclerc, 2005), a private organization called Raponda Walker foundation created new handbook materials in local languages which have been used in several schools.

In a nutshell, according to the results most African countries have incorporated mother tongues with foreign languages for instruction. However, as mentioned in future educational plans examined in this article; no country plans to make its mother tongue the only medium of instruction. The point is that – for a significant educational development- all African countries ought to apply their languages in teaching and learning and make foreign languages accessible as second languages.

Bilingualism and African educational systems

It is acknowledged that bilingualism may have ominous consequences on educational advancement; as it has been proven to develop children's brain capacities from a young age and enhance students' competences in advanced years enabling them to become multilingual. It is implausible thus to refer to bilingualism as worthless since the only criteria for the former being successful and constructive is to be administered conveniently during appropriate schooling period. The report on (*The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education - Unesco - Google Livres*, n.d.) demonstrated the great importance of using mother tongue and the necessity to protect vernacular languages from marginalization. The report emphasized on the primary schooling system through including the first language as the language of instruction in schools together with a second language as a separate subject.

Moreover, (Dutcher, 2001) also confirms the valuable efficiency of the teaching in the mother tongue as a very successful mean to build children's' effective linguistic and cultural background, he assumes that the teaching in mother tongue is compulsory particularly in elementary and primary levels. Obviously, this statement does not ostracize the importance of learning a foreign language insomuch as children cultural and linguistic competency is closely dependable of the amount of exposure to foreign languages. The crucial intention hints at the fact that the mother tongue ought to be the principal language of instruction in all school subjects. Additionally, foreign language teaching should be involved at a second level through a strategic and methodical pedagogy based on accurate methodologies enhancing children to acquire both their mother tongue properly and learn a second language.

Furthermore, the (UNESCO, 1990) study on quality education demonstrated that the use of mother tongue have a better learning impact on their academic achievements. The findings indicated that African children experience difficulties particularly in reading and writing on both the mother tongue and foreign languages. This also justifies the low capacity of most students to develop adequate literacy skills after years of formal primary education. The approach of adopting mother tongue in early stages is planned to be implemented in particular countries such as Ethiopia which declared the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction

in primary school (Ministry of education of Ethiopia, 2018). Similar to Guinea Bissau, the country plans to adopt local languages as medium of instruction in early schooling. (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale de Guinée Bissau, 2017)

Besides, Africa has rather applied bilingual to trilingual language use in schools; nevertheless, it has been confirmed after few years that these models impacted negatively on the students' levels and various problems emerged in the African educational system figuring out that teachers themselves have not received a constructive training with competent knowledge and skills. (Heugh, 2002) in her analysis of language use models confirmed that few African countries use the mother tongue as a medium of instruction in first years and by then replace it completely by the foreign official language. Niger for instance declared in its strategic plan that by the end of 2016, it will adopt the teaching in the mother tongue in first years and French would be introduced gradually in the coming years.(Ministère de l'Éducation du Niger, 2013) Zambia has adopted the same approach; it has been stated in the educational strategic report that:

A major change in the curriculum has been the policy to provide instruction in the language of play from ECE through to Grade 4 in primary school and in English from Grade 5 onwards. The revised curriculum includes provision for the use of local languages in teaching and learning, which should have a significant impact on the quality of learning and of the learning experience for learners in early grades. P 55 (Ministry et al., 2021).

Nigeria as well is determined to enhance the use of national languages in education:

Many Nigerian languages are in severe crises at the moment, due to pressure from the English Language and other global and domestic factors; thus, making it imperative to develop a coherent National Language Policy (NLP) in order to protect our languages from extinction. Page 77-78(Federal Ministry of Education of Nigeria, 2013)

On the other hand, few countries claimed that foreign languages would remain the medium of instruction from the basic elementary school to higher education; Burundi states that a transition from Kirundi to French should be reinforced and empowered in order to make French more accessible to the population and adopt proper curriculum that would enhance students' linguistic level in French language.(Republic of Burundi, 2018)

Similarly, in the educational reform report in Namibia for 2022, English is presented as the official language of the country, and all subjects and examinations are and will be conducted in the former language, no Namibian languages are to be considered as official languages.(Ministry of Education of Namibia, 2017).

6. CONCLUSION

The article highlights the current situation of African languages regarding the use of mother tongue as a language of instruction and provides data about future strategic plans until 2030 to examine whether national languages would be incorporated in African education as means of instruction. An analysis is also made to see the impact of bilingualism on educational performance and language development. It seems that some African countries have managed to consider the resolutions of the UNESCO in 1953 through addressing the following points:

1. The use of mother tongue from elementary school is strongly recommended as it makes the transition from home to school more natural.
2. African governments should make the use of national languages the keystone of their linguistic policies.

3. Foreign languages should continue to play a secondary role in all educational levels.
4. In order to ensure their effective implementation, these policies should be supported by national legislation, and a plan of action drawn up to specify the timetable, the ways and curriculum.

Therefore, it is deducible according to the educational strategic plans adopted by different African countries – for 2020 and beyond-that most of African nations would remain bilingual through using mother tongues and foreign languages in teaching. A minority would apply bilingual approaches without the use of mother tongue whereas some countries would keep using only one foreign language.

This is to confirm the first hypothesis that colonial languages are still present in African education but fortunately, lots of work has been considered to improve national languages, which would help in getting better performances from students in their mother tongue. According to the results -in the near future-most of African countries would remain bilingual in their languages of instruction and that further research, conferences and seminars are to be conducted to discuss deeply the issue of African mother tongues and their development inside the African continent and abroad.

Ultimately, if bilingualism is intended to be implemented in the future, it ought to be applied appropriately through respecting the adequate age particularly after children would have acquired their first language, along with designing proper curricula and syllabi. Finally, teachers need to be trained according to bilingual approaches and methodologies.

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