

Language Ideologies and the Use of Mother Tongues as the Medium of Instruction and Learning in Junior Primary Schools: A Case Study of Parents and Teachers in a Namibian School

Kelvin Mubiana Katukula^{id}
Social Sciences Division, Centre for
Research Services, University of Namibia,
Windhoek, Namibia.
Centre for Research on Evaluation,
Science and Technology, Stellenbosch
University, South Africa

Beatha Set^{id}
School of Education,
University of Namibia,
Namibia.
School of Education,
University of Cape Town,
South Africa

John Nyambe^{id}
School of
Education,
University of
Namibia
Windhoek,
Namibia

Abstract

In the Namibian education system, teaching in the junior primary is supposed to be done in the learners' mother tongue. However, there is always controversy on adopting a language to be used as a medium of instruction (MoI) due to the multi-ethnic and multilingualism of the Namibian society. To make matters worse, parents equally cast doubt on enrolling their children in schools that uses mother tongue as an MoI. Framed within the qualitative case-study orientation, this research investigated: parents' and teachers' language ideologies and beliefs; the factors that informed the embodied and expressed language ideologies and beliefs of parents' and teachers'; and how these dominant language ideologies and belief systems informed parents' and teachers' choice of language of instruction and the general implementation of the language policy in a Namibian school. The study found that both parents and teachers harbored monolingual ideological belief systems that did not only construct and perpetuate an "English-only" language zone but also banished all mother tongue languages from the school premises. Not only do the findings point to the hegemonic positioning of the English language in the minds of parents, teachers, and school principals as the only language that can lead to success, but its violation was punishable in a derogatory manner. The study concludes that, among others, parents, teachers, and school principals' language ideologies and beliefs were shaped and informed by the prevailing English language hegemony. The liberal and duality stance of the Namibian language policy, and its decentralization, partly resulted in parents, teachers, and school principals' neglect of the multilingualism and heterogeneity that the very same policy purports to advocate. The study recommends raising parents' and teachers' awareness of embracing the heteroglossia of language practices and for the ministry of education to consider a more inclusive language policy.

Keywords: English, heterogeneity, monolingualism, mother tongue instruction, multilingualism

Introduction

This study aims to demonstrate how complex language policies and ideologies affect the attitudes, preferences, and choices of a medium of instruction (MoI). It elucidates how language ideologies lead households to adopt particular language preferences in response to the complexities of language policy. This situation, especially in the Namibian junior primary phase, fits the narratives argued by several linguistics scholars that language policies are both an outcome of power struggles and an arena for those struggles (Li, 2017; Ndhlovu, 2018; Ráková, 2018; Tollefson & Tsui, 2014). The Namibian linguistic landscape is filled with tensions around language policy (Ashikuti, 2019; Frydman, 2011; Ministry of Basic Education Sport and Culture [MBESC], 2003).

The Namibian school language policy seems still rooted within the legacy of German colonization from 1885 to 1915 and

apartheid South African colonialism from 1920 to 1990 (Chavez, 2016; Trewby & Van Graan, 2000). During these periods, German was introduced as the official language, which Afrikaans later replaced, and to a limited extent, English as the official language during the colonial era. As a result, Afrikaans was the adopted language used in colonial administration and as the MoI and learning (Chavez, 2016; Frydman, 2011; Iiping, 2018; Trewby & Van Graan, 2000). In the early 1980s, English was added as a medium of instruction and learning in the north and north-eastern regions of the country. However, Afrikaans continued to be used in the southern regions of Namibia (Frydman, 2011; Iiping, 2018; Trewby & Van Graan, 2000). Whilst this was happening, it was observed that indigenous Namibian languages were not opted for and or thought of as possible languages of the medium of instruction and learning. This study, therefore, sought to: (a) explore parents' and teachers' language ideologies and beliefs; (b) the factors that contribute to the embodied and expressed

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Acknowledgment: The authors would like to thank all the research participants who participated in the study. **Authors' Contributions:** All the authors contributed to the design and implementation of the research, the analysis of the results, and the writing of the manuscript. **Conflict of Interest:** There are no conflicts of interest in this research. **Funding Source:** The authors funded the study.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Kelvin Mubiana Katukula, Social Sciences Division, Centre for Research Services, University of Namibia, Windhoek, Namibia. Email: kkatukula@unam.na

language ideologies of the parents and teachers; and (c) how these dominant language ideologies impact school's choice of MoI and Language policy implementation. In the next section, the language policy context in Namibia is outlined.

Language Policy Context

When Namibia gained its independence in 1990, English was chosen as the sole official language of the country to be used in all its formal domains. The adoption of English was mainly influenced by its global superiority, which has seen it being accepted and adopted by many countries (Phillipson, 2008, 2011; Rao, 2019). However, only a tiny percentage (.8%) of Namibians were English-first-language speakers at independence, and about 4% used English as a second language (Frydman, 2011).

Frydman (2011) further argues that the country's socio-political situation also informed the impetus of choosing English as the sole official language over most indigenous languages. Linguistic diversity equally influenced the choice during the drafting and adoption of the constitution and when the Language Policy was being formulated (Chavez, 2016; Frydman, 2011; lipinge, 2018; Trewby & Van Graan, 2000). While English was considered a neutral language that could play a decisive role in unifying all Namibians (Beck, 2014), Afrikaans was, and still is, perceived as a language of oppression. As the world's language of communication and commerce, English effectively connects the South to the North and the East to the West (Rao, 2019).

The constitution's drafters failed to choose an indigenous language out of fear that such an act could trigger ethnic conflicts and division. Such conflicts and division could have even derailed the much-needed national social cohesion among Namibian ethnicities and polity groups (Brock-Utne & Kofi, 2005; Frydman, 2011). Also, English was preferred because of its global trade position and suitability in harnessing Science and Technology in the new Namibian dispensation. Unfortunately, this could not be said of the indigenous languages, considering they were not developed in scientific and technological terminologies (Frydman, 2011).

Nonetheless, English as the sole official language does not reflect the diversity of Namibia as it is primarily a multilingual population (Buschfeld & Kautzsch, 2014). In 2003, the Ministry of Basic Education Sport and Culture (MBESC) adopted a Language-in-Education Policy (LiEP) for Namibian schools as a guide to language issues. This policy stipulates that the junior primary (pre-primary to grade 3) MoI shall be in the learners' mother tongue or the language predominantly spoken in a specific community (MBESC, 2003). The advocacy of the dominant language entails that learners get access to additional languages through additive bilingualism or multilingualism. Therefore, from the Fourth grade, the shift is made from mother-tongue instruction to English instruction. Equally, the mother tongue becomes a subject instead. In this process of language exchange, the mother tongue loses its language status and power as it becomes a mere subject (MBESC, 2003).

The rationale behind the mother-tongue instruction in junior primary is the ideality and practicality for learners to learn and study through their mother tongue (MBESC, 2003). What the drafters of this policy and the Namibian government failed to grasp is that moving away from using the mother tongue in the fourth grade regresses the very purpose mother-tongue instruction was introduced in the first place (Bajqinca, 2019; Heugh, 2005). The LiEP further states that all National examinations must be written in English, excluding the mother tongue as a subject. The decision to make English the only language of assessment makes the Namibia education system impose a monolingualism system in a society of multilingualism.

Furthermore, it rejects Namibian languages' dynamic nature and creates a monolingual identity for learners and, subsequently, the Namibian society by silencing the bilingual and multilingual voices (Blackledge & Creese, 2017; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Makoe & Mckinney, 2014; Mckinney & Tyler, 2019). Thus, the English monolingualism policy substantially has affected the Namibian education system, with effects that have manifested in poor academic results (Brock-Utne & Kofi, 2005; Frydman, 2011; Madrid & Torres, 1986; Peña *et al.*, 2011). What makes this scenario worse is the fact that several Namibian

teachers seem to equally have inadequate competencies in the English language due to a lack of adequate training (Altinyelken, 2010; Antoni, 2007; Ola-Busari, 2014).

Even though the Namibia language policy encourages teaching and learning to take place in the mother tongue in the early years of schooling, the implementation of the policy seems not to be evenly, equitably, and or adequately applied throughout the country (Ankonga, 2018; Wolfaardt, 2005). This is partly due to the lack of clarity in the language policy recommendations regarding how national languages (mother tongues) should be used in schools (Wolfaardt, 2005). However, in practice, the policy spells out that "in a school where there are a substantial number of learners (20 or more) from different language groups, the school must make arrangements to provide instruction in the different languages" (MBESC, 2003, p. 5).

The fact that the choice of the MoI and learning is decentralized has seen several urban schools opting to use English as an MoI and learn from pre-primary upwards. Some of the reasons for this option include sentiments among parents and educators that believe the earlier use of English in instruction helps learners develop and acquire mastery of the English language (Ghozali & Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa, 2018; Hill & Miller, 2013; Karabenick & Noda, 2004). In addition, proficiency in English provides learners with the advantage of easy admission into tertiary institutions as several universities require a good command of English, and also, the job market demands applicants to be at least fluent in English (Frans, 2014; Shikalepo, 2020). However, as a result, there are discrepancies in implementing LiEP from region to region due to policy misinterpretations. Moreover, most parents and school principals prefer English over mother tongues (Töttemeyer, 2010).

Proficiency in English is a matter that affects learners in most public schools, as many teachers and learners in the primary phase were found not to be fully conversant (Shikalepo, 2020). This confirms Kisting (2011)'s report that 98% of Namibian teachers are not fluent in English; 70% of teachers in the senior secondary phase could not read and write Basic English. In the junior secondary phase, 63% were found to be not sufficiently proficient, 52% of lower primary teachers struggled with English, and about 61% faced English language difficulties. The lack of proficiency in English threatens clear facilitation and profound mastering of other subject contents taught in English.

The study of the Namibian language policy by (Wolfaardt, 2005) reveals that most seventh and eighth graders were functionally not conversant in English, just as Shikalepo (2020) argued. This implies that neglecting mother tongue instruction beyond junior primary could cause poor reading and numeracy results in Namibian schooling (Van Wyk & Louise Mostert, 2016). Accordingly, this official monolingual language policy promotes the notion of a 'single standard language' at the expense of multiple linguistic resources. It also continues to neglect the benefits that come with the advantages of multilingualism. These are adding academic and educational values, enhancement of creativity, cultural awareness, adjustment in society, and general appreciation of local languages (Okal, 2014).

Furthermore, multilingualism could improve the variety of modes during classroom discourse and materials development (Mckinney & Tyler, 2019). Following this, the Namibian education system fails to meet learners' needs and demands of not learning in their mother tongue in early grades and beyond. This goes against the MBESC (2003) expectations that the fourth graders will have acquired adequate proficiency to read texts in English for concept comprehension; very few achieve that (Trudell, 2016). This could be the reason why the majority of Namibian learners from rural and township schools have difficulty comprehending and processing reading material, decoding meaning, show less participation in learning, and often resort to rote learning (Hartney, 2011; Liswaniso & Mubanga, 2019; Mule, 2014; Nalisa *et al.*, 2019).

Review of the Related Literature

In order to gain clarity on the subject of the study, the following section reviews and analyses relevant literature and antecedent studies that addressed the same subject.

Language Ideologies: Monolingualism and Heteroglossia Practices

Applied linguists are now challenging the monolingual language policy for schooling in the advent of multilingualism globally (Banda, 2010; Bianco, 2010; Johnson, 1991; Truscott & Malcolm, 2010). This challenge criticizes the practice of relegating native languages in favor of the one-language policy. It is even sadder in previously colonized countries that have adopted the languages of their former masters at the expense of their native languages (Varma, 2010). Most languages adopted as MoI in formerly colonized countries are mainly taken as a second (L2) or Foreign Language (Ouane & Glanz, 2010). These languages pose several adverse effects on learners' self-perception and self-esteem as 'knowers' (Devos *et al.*, 2012) because this MoI silences the identity of mother tongues (Owens, 2006). Mother tongues in a multilingual approach are essential components of quality education as they play a massive role in developing personal, social, and cultural identity (Rovira, 2008; Savage, 2015).

Conversely, the exact positioning is also reflected in the "curricula textbooks and assessments available in English. Additionally, schoolteachers are asked to refrain from 'code-switching' in classrooms (Mckinney & Tyler, 2019). Following this, linguistic scholars are exploring several advantages that push for innovative multilingual approaches to learning (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Johnson, 1991; Owens, 2006; Truscott & Malcolm, 2010). Poststructuralist scholars do not view languages as acquiring bound entities and discrete grammatical structures (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Urzedo Freitas & Pessoa, 2020; Makoni & Pennycook, 2005; Mckinney & Tyler, 2019). Instead, they question the boundaries between the languages within which specific standards exist for language to comply with and be recognized (Mckinney & Tyler, 2019). As Larsson (2019) argues, the primary purpose of a MoI and learning is not reducible to language or communication. However, multilingualism or bilingualism MoI and learning can bring socially produced forms of knowledge. These socially constructed forms of knowledge can establish the limits of what is "possible to think, write, or say about any given social object or reality" (p. 329).

Therefore, scholars have called for a paradigm shift from focusing on a single named language(s) or which language should be used as an MoI and learning (Giraldo Aristizábal, 2017; Hunt, 2015; Larsson, 2019; Savage, 2015). Their main argument is that the paradigm shift should instead be centered on using multiple linguistic resources or 'language for learning' (Guzula *et al.*, 2016). In the same way, (Busch, 2010) argues against the idea of mastery of a single standard structure of a named language. She further contends that linguistic practice differing from the normalized standard, such as language crossing or appropriating elements across language boundaries, is understood as a resource rather than a deficiency.

A standard orientation within this innovative body of research embraces and uses multiple languages and modes productively as tools for learning. It challenges the deficit perspectives regarding bilingual or multilingual learners as less capable of learning the subject-specific content. Ideally, bilingual and multilingual speakers have a complete set of a single 'linguistic repertoire' at their disposal when engaging in given situations (Baker & Lewis, 2015; Ennis & Taylor, 2021; Shin & King, 2020; Valdiviezo & Nieto, 2015). Monoglossic ideologies inform aspects of the 'linguistic rights paradigm' (Mckinney *et al.*, 2015), underpinned in the Namibian constitution and the postcolonial language in education policy. There is a narrative of the benefits of 'mother tongue instruction' versus the 'English MoI and learning in the African schooling contexts.

This narrative upholds the notion of the 'single standard language' while ignoring the multiple varieties of linguistic resources and semiotic modes. Sadly, they are not recognized in classroom discourse materials development and assessment (Makoe & Mckinney, 2014; Mckinney & Tyler, 2019). This phenomenon of what language should be used as an MoI and Learning was meant to exclude African languages from the education discourse for political reasons (Shoba & Chimbutane, 2013). Therefore, there is a visible tension between monolingual and multilingual and translingual ideologies in bilingual and multilingual classrooms. This tension comes from the mandates

that seek adherence to school MoI policies while facing multilingual learners' linguistic needs (Kiramba, 2016).

However, (Kiramba (2016) points out that these practices demonstrate the possibility of teacher-constructed, flexible multilingual strategies that can address the linguistically structured inequalities in Kenya. The same is echoed in multilingual South Africa (Makalela, 2015; Makoni, 2012) and elsewhere in the world (Blackledge & Creese, 2017; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Wright *et al.*, 2015), where the MoI is characterized by the positioning of children from non-dominant groups and bilingual non-English native speakers as linguistically wrong. It is for similar injustices that empirical studies are calling for the radical shift from the monolingual paradigm to that of heteroglossia practices which are commonly referred to as the 'multilingual turn' (Guzula *et al.*, 2016; Kiramba, 2016; Mckinney *et al.*, 2015; Mckinney & Tyler, 2019; Wright *et al.*, 2015).

The multilingual approach is particularly relevant to postcolonial Africa, where native/indigenous languages were marginalized and oppressed in the past in favor of the European languages of the colonial masters. Multilingual studies employ linguistically ideological lenses; consider teachers' and learners' beliefs about language to highlight the challenges of reproducing linguistic inequality in postcolonial African schooling, where multilingualism is highly visible. Despite the body of contemporary studies advocating for recognizing the heteroglossia nature of language, the Namibian LiEP, assessment methods, teaching materials, and textbooks are monolingual and treat languages as bounded entities.

This Monoglossic approach can profoundly deter learners from active classroom participation, potentially denying them access to quality education (Mckinney *et al.*, 2015). In addition, the Namibian LiEP is silent on the possible language conflicts that might emerge from how the languages should be used simultaneously in the bilingual/multilingual classroom. Despite the reported challenges of the Monoglossic ideology that shaped the African postcolonial LiEP and its effect on teaching and learning in the bi/multilingual contexts, there are no studies of this nature in the Namibian research community. Most research has looked at English as a MoI and learning without paying attention to the Monoglossic ideology that shaped the Namibian LiEP and the overall monolingual orientations to language practices in the school contexts.

Given that schools are sites where knowledge construction is contingent upon the language ideologies that shaped the discourse and language practices (Kiramba, 2018) this study interrogates these articulated ideologies and practices within the Namibian bilingual schools. In addition, this investigation is warranted to understand the ongoing debate of unequal positioning of local African languages and the perception that it is not valuable and presents a barrier to learning. Therefore, the ecological perspective underpins this present study as it stresses 'the relationships among languages, language social contexts, individual speakers and their languages, and inter-relationships among these three dimensions' (Hult & Hornberger, 2008, p. 282). Moreover, it considered the ideologies that "pervade language choice and language policy" (Blackledge & Creese, 2017; Creese & Blackledge, 2010). Language ideologies are "the values, practices and beliefs associated with the language used by speakers (Makoe & Mckinney, 2014, p. 2). The discourse constructs values and beliefs at state, institutional, national, and global levels. Furthermore, language ideologies link social structures, power relations, and language use at the micro-level (Iiping, 2018; Kiramba, 2018; Ráková, 2018; Singer & Harris, 2016).

The Aim of the Study

The study aims to investigate the dominant language ideologies held and perpetuated by parents and teachers and how these ideologies inform the choice of medium of instruction and implementation of the language policy.

Objectives

The objectives of the study were:

1. Explore the parents' and teachers' language ideologies and beliefs.

2. Investigate factors contributing to the parents' and teachers' embodied and expressed language ideologies.
3. Examine how the dominant language ideologies and beliefs of parents and teachers inform the school's choice of medium of instruction and language policy implementation in general.

Research Questions

The following key research questions guided the study:

1. What are the parents' and teachers' language ideologies and beliefs?
2. What factors contribute to the parents' and teachers' embodied and expressed language ideologies and beliefs?
3. How do these language ideologies and beliefs inform the school's choice of medium of instruction and its language policy implementation in general?

Methodology

Participants

A case study sample was purposively selected to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. The size and selection of the sample were thus guided by established case study research approaches where it is argued that: the case may be an individual, a role, a small group, an organization, a community, or a nation. It could also be a decision, a policy, a process, an incident, or an event of some sort (Punch, 2005, p. 144)

In total, thirteen (13) participants, including one principal, six teachers, and six parents, were purposively sampled for the study. Purposive sampling entailed deliberately choosing sample members with a purpose in mind. This study aimed to select participants involved with matters about the medium of instruction and language policy implementation in general. Thus, the sample members consisting of parents, schoolteachers, and a principal were, in one way or another, involved as parents in deciding on the medium of instruction for their children or as teachers or school principals who were to implement the language policy.

Thus, the sample members were selected because they possessed a particular ideological belief system that informed their choice of medium of instruction. Therefore, the sample size of thirteen participants enabled the researchers to study the phenomenon in depth, dig deeper and yield detailed, vivid, and thick descriptions of the participant's beliefs about the medium of instruction and the official language policy in general.

Design

In order to understand parents' and teachers' language ideologies and beliefs, the factors that contribute to these language ideologies and beliefs, as well as the influence of such beliefs on the choice of medium of instruction and language policy implementation, the researchers needed to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon by generating 'detailed, vivid and thick' descriptions of a qualitative nature (Cohen, 2000). Therefore, a qualitative case study research design was deemed the most appropriate to realize this depth and focus for the study. Furthermore, the study was situated within the qualitative-interpretive paradigm because it pays particular attention to the social construction of knowledge (Creswell & Poth, 2018), and it allows the description of the phenomenon from the lived experiences of the research participants. Therefore, given the above reasons, a methodological choice was to focus on an in-depth case study to understand the participants' ideologies, beliefs, and experiences.

Data Collection

Teachers and parents frequently become the primary agents through which ideology spreads (Ganuza & Hedman, 2018; Laursen, 2006; Shohamy, 2006). It was, therefore, essential to examine how their personal beliefs and language practices inform and are shaped by the 'dominant language ideology' (Kroskrity, 2006). This study draws on interviews and document studies as sources of data. However, interviews constituted the critical data

source. They enabled the study to better understand the participants' language repertoires and ideologies regarding which languages should be used in different situations, when, why, and how.

Johnson and Christensen (2014) argued that a planned interview protocol usually covers interview issues in a specified and outlined format. Thus, an interview protocol allows researchers to be well prepared and follows a guide on exploring the topics of interest. In addition, it allows researchers to freely reorder how the questions can be posed while maintaining their focus and the study's objectives. An interview protocol was thus maintained as a flexible guide for the study.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the tradition of socio-cultural discourse analysis (Mercer, 2010), paying attention to what the speakers say. We thought to take the linguistic ethnographic procedure to reduce, organize, and index the data before starting the analysis. We identified the critical instances that had caught our eyes during the data analysis before we engaged in deeper analysis and theorizing.

We further adopted the thematic content analysis to analyze the narrative data gathered from the participants. Moretti *et al.* (2011) argued that content analysis is more suitable for scrutinizing and classifying textual and oral materials into identified categories of similar meanings. We analyzed the data systematically and meticulously to create categories and themes while guided by the research questions and the theoretical framework. This was done flexibly to accommodate the themes that might develop during the processes of the data analysis. We executed this process with open and flexible minds, allowing numerous themes and ideas to surface. Verbatim quotes were incorporated and italicized during the data presentation.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical accountability is one of the important requirements in social science research (University of Namibia, 2019; Wang *et al.*, 2020). The present study realized this requirement by, first and foremost, seeking ethical clearance from the university's Ethical Clearance Committee. Once the ethical clearance certificate was issued, the researchers sought authorization from the various gatekeepers to access the research site. In addition, informed consent was also sought from the research participants. Informed consent entailed clarification of the research objectives to the participants.

Furthermore, the participants were assured of their right to withdraw from the study if they felt threatened. In addition, research participants were anonymized so that data could not be attached to a person or entity in a disadvantageous or harmful manner. For instance, a parent is referred to as Parent A or Parent B. Similarly, a teacher is referred to as Teacher A or Teacher B. In this way, the use of their identities is avoided.

Limitations

Like any qualitative case study research design, one of the limitations of this study is its lack of generalisability. Instead of seeking generalization, the study was driven by the need to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon within a bounded context of a school and the area where the study was conducted. While the in-depth understanding within a bounded context constitutes one of the strengths of case study research, a survey study could be conducted if there is a need for generalization in the future. However, such a survey may not yield the needed in-depth understanding.

Results

As alluded to earlier, the objectives of the study were to investigate and understand parents' and teachers' language ideologies and beliefs, the factors that contribute to these language ideologies and beliefs, as well as the influence of such ideologies and beliefs on the choice of medium of instruction and language policy implementation. To this effect, participants were asked if

they had a specific rule and their preferences regarding the medium of instruction. For example, one of the participants had the following to say when asked whether he had a specific rule regarding the medium of instruction and the reason for it:

Extract 1.1

Researcher: Do you have a specific rule regarding which language should be used in this school and why?

School Principal: Mhh, I always remind the teachers and the learners that when they enter the school premises, I say we leave all other languages behind. In this school, only English matters. I always encouraged them only to speak English in school, as it is the only language that can liberate them from poverty. English is everything, my friend; you will be impoverished if you do not own it. Learners must be proficient in English to succeed in their entire school career and have a decent job. If you allow them to speak their mother tongues at school, they will suffer in the future because the mother tongue will not take them anywhere. You cannot trade internationally using native languages, and how do you expect learners to cope at the university if there were instructed in their mother tongue throughout their early years of schooling?

Parents were asked why they enrolled their children in an English medium school to establish their language choices. This was important to establish how parents' language ideologies shaped their choices of a medium of instruction. The following is an extract of how the parents responded regarding enrolling their children in an English medium school:

Extract 1.2

Researcher: Why have you enrolled your child in an English medium school?

Parent A: "I want my child to be proficient in English and excel well in her entire school career and get a nice job one day and become a boss." Nowadays, you are nothing if you do not speak English fluently."

Parent B: "English is everything. Therefore, my child must be educated in English medium for him to become very successful and wealthy one day."

Parent C: "English is the only language that can unlock all the closed doors to personal success. I have enrolled my child in the English medium school because I want my child to become a boss one day."

Parent D: "I want my child to be instructed in English medium from Grade 1 because English is everything, and I want my child to be a genius. I want my child to be fluent in English so she cannot struggle throughout her school career."

Parent E: "I enrolled my child in an English medium class because I want my child to be proficient in English; hence I believe that English as a language of instruction would positively influence my child's academic performance in his entire school career."

Parent F: "I chose to enroll my child in an English medium because they perceive communicating in English as a sign of intelligence and civilization."

It is evident in the narratives presented above that both the school principal and the parents advanced a strong belief in English as the language of instruction. For instance, the principal spoke about leaving "all the other languages behind" when one enters the school premises and that "only English matters." Further to this, as evident in Extract 1.1, the principal was of the view that English should be used because it is "the language that can liberate them [the children] from poverty," that "English is everything," and that "mother tongue will not take them anywhere." Not only was English believed to be the language of university instruction, but one cannot trade internationally using a native language.

Data sourced from parents echoed similar views and beliefs as the school principal (see Extract 1.2 above). In their responses pertaining to why they chose an English medium school, parents narrated that they did so because they saw English as the language that would ensure "success and wealth for their children" and that English would make one's child "a genius," and that it is the language of "intelligence and civilization." However, while the school principal and the parents' beliefs converged against using mother tongue instruction in favor of English as a medium of instruction and communication around the school premises, the participants were further probed to establish their beliefs regarding language usage during lessons. The findings are presented in extracts 1.3 to 1.5 below:

Extract 1.3

Researcher: Do you think teachers should allow the use of local Namibian languages during their lessons? Why?

Principal: I do not support the teachers using their mother tongue during the lessons because learners will speak Namlish [a Namibian variant of the English language] instead of Standard English. I always encourage my teachers to stick to English during their lessons. If learners have a poor command of English, it will hinder their academic performance. Oshiwambo [one of the indigenous languages] is available everywhere: home, community, neighborhood, church, etc. So why do we need to use it again on the school ground?

When asked a similar question, teachers like the school principal argued against using Namibian languages during lessons. Instead, they supported the use of English.

Extract 1.4

Researcher: Do you think teachers should allow the use of local Namibian languages during their lessons? Why?

Teacher A: No, the learners need to be instructed in English only from Grade 1 onwards because teaching them in their mother tongue will not do any justice to these learners since their mother tongue will block their road to success, and they will also get a low paid job like domestic workers & shop attendant.

Teacher B: "I strongly believe that local languages should be banned during the lesson because only English as a medium of instruction would increase the prospects of the learners to become successful."

Teacher C: I say no local languages should be used during the lessons because when children grow up and progress to higher education, English will be used as a medium of learning, so they should be taught in English medium only so that they can have a strong foundation in it and for them to excel their studies.

Teacher D: "No local languages should be used in the classroom; English is the only language of power associated with success as opposed to using local Namibian languages."

Teacher E: "The world is moving towards the fourth industrial revolution, artificial intelligence, and the Internet of things, and none of the African languages can drive that agenda. Therefore, only English should be used in the classroom over Namibian local languages."

Teacher F: I say no local Namibian languages should be used in the classroom because learners will struggle to comprehend subjects throughout their school career and the fact that assessment is only conducted in English from Grade 4 to high education level, and this can harm the learners.

Two parents who responded to the same question shared views similar to those held by teachers on using Namibian languages during lessons.

Extract 1.5

Researcher: Do you think teachers should allow the use of local Namibian languages during their lessons? Why?

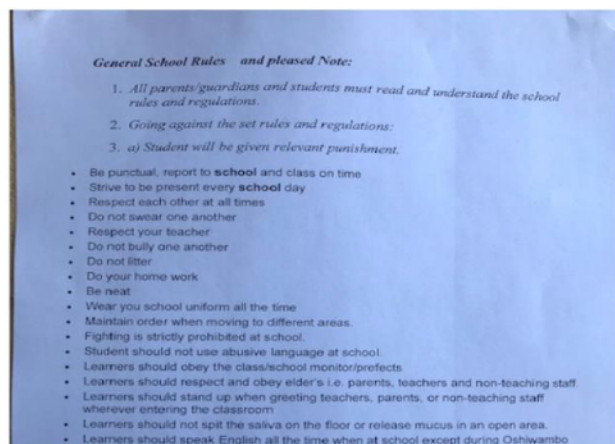
Parent A: I firmly believe that learners should be instructed in English to have a strong foundation and get a well-paid job in the future. So, what is the need to allow my child to be taught in the Khoekhoewab [one of the indigenous languages] that will not contribute to my child's success?

Parents B: "Nowadays, good command of Oshiwambo does not necessarily enhance the child's prospects. Nowadays, English is everything. English fluency guarantees a child a high-paying job, unlike Oshiwambo" [one of the local languages].

Once again, extracts 1.3 to 1.5 above echoed the sentiments expressed in extracts 1.1 to 1.2, namely: a strong belief in English as the medium of instruction. In extracts 1.3 to 1.5, ideas such as "mother tongue will block access to success" or that learners should receive instruction in English from Grade 1 throughout were prevalent. One teacher in Extract 1.4 above expressed strong views about "banning mother tongue from lessons," while another teacher believed that English is the language of the "fourth and fifth industrial revolution, artificial intelligence and internet of things."

The school principal, parents, and teachers do not support using mother tongue instruction. The views and beliefs advanced by the school principal, teachers, and parents were supported by documentation produced by the school, such as the School Rules and Regulations, which also advocated the use of English not only as the language of communication around the school premises but also during the lessons. This was evident in the School Rules and Regulations as per the following document:

Extract 1.6: School Rules and Regulations (Notice Board in a Namibian School Classroom, Image taken by Katukula, 2021)



It can be seen in Extract 1.6 above that the last bullet point at the bottom of the School Rules and Regulations points out that "learners should speak English all the time when at school except during Oshiwambo" classes. The School Rules and Regulations reinforce and perpetuate the views and beliefs advanced by the parents, teachers, and the school principal. The School Rules and Regulations tended to privilege English in comparison and relegated the use of indigenous languages to the periphery of the school.

Discussion

From the initial presentation of data, it is clear that parents and teachers harbored monolingual ideological belief systems that constructed and perpetuated an "English-only zone," banishing all the indigenous languages from the school premises and its surroundings. The language ecology of the school, shaped by parents' and teachers' language ideologies and beliefs, remained hostile to indigenous languages and denied the heterogeneity and multilingualism and the benefits it offered to classroom learning. It is interesting to note that Extract 1.6, School Rules and Regulations,

provide a mechanism for reinforcing the monolingual ideologies subscribed to by parents and teacher through evoking punitive measures towards transgressors of the English-only policy. The school policy is reminiscent of a situation in Kenya that was described by Ngugi wa Thiongo in his seminal work titled, *Decolonising the Mind: the politics of Language in African Literature*

In Kenya, English became more than a language: it was the language, and all other languages had to bow before it in deference. Thus, one of the most humiliating experiences was being caught speaking Gikuyu near the school. The culprit was given corporal punishment – three to five strokes of the cane on bare buttocks – or was made to carry a metal plate around the neck with inscriptions such as I AM STUPID, or I AM A DONKEY. Sometimes the culprits were fined money they could hardly afford (Wa Thiong'o, 2005).

Therefore, to ensure that school regulations towards English language usage and to perpetuate the ideology and belief system of the parents and teachers, punitive measures are adopted and applied. In the Kenyan context, as described by Ngugi, a transgressor of the school's "English-only zone" who was caught speaking the native Gikuyu language on school premises faced corporal punishment. Corporal punishment included three to five strokes of the cane on bare buttocks or moving around the school premises with a plate around one's neck written: I AM STUPID, or I AM A DONKEY, or one was made to pay a fine. Therefore, the monolingual language ideology was enforced through school rules which carried corporal punishment.

Using local Namibian languages around the school premises was positioned as a defilement of the school rules similar to other school violations such as littering, swearing, stealing, absenteeism, and other directives. Through the monolingual ideology, learners were denied the space to freely draw from their linguistic repertoires. This action demonstrates how this particular school continues to be deeply rooted in a 'monolingual habitus' (Buschfeld & Kautzsch, 2014; Gogolin, 2013) while trying to keep languages as bounded, separate entities and preferably leave the multiple languages and varieties out of the school premises. We argue that monolingual ideologies negatively affect the positioning of learners and deny them access to quality education through mother-tongue instruction. Learners' linguistic repertoires must be considered a resource for teaching and learning rather than obstacles to school success.

Apart from establishing the language beliefs and ideologies of the parents, teachers, and school principal, data were analyzed to determine what factors contributed to the beliefs and language ideologies of the parents, teachers, and school principal. Evident from the interview narratives was the hegemonic positioning of English as the language of wealth, success, and international trade. Furthermore, English was hegemonically positioned among parents as the language of peace and harmony in a context where the choice of one of the native languages as a medium of instruction would lead to ethnic violence. However, this matter has not been proven.

Therefore, from the data, it can be concluded that the hegemony with which the English language had been packaged and delivered constituted one factor that shaped monolingualism's beliefs and language ideology among parents, teachers, and school principals. The term hegemony is used in this study along the lines of (Apple, 1990, p. 5), who described it as a situation where a particular ideology has saturated our minds to such an extent that the world we see and interact with becomes the only world that can ever be. It expels any possibility of alternatives, making the current world the only possibility. Therefore, the English language has become the only possibility, the only world that can ever be, with no alternatives.

Further to the hegemonic positioning of the English language, in monolingual ideology, other Namibian languages are stigmatized and viewed as unfit to acquire employment opportunities successfully. It is observable that the principal's view on the use of English only is influenced by her ideologies that 'proficiency in English enables learners to succeed in their entire school career and to have a decent job,' arguing that English is the only language that emancipates people from poverty. To follow this line of argument, English is associated with the language of wealth and prestige, while other Namibian languages are aligned with poverty.

In the principal's words, "Learners need to be proficient in English to succeed in their entire school career and have a decent

job." If you allow them to speak their native languages at school, they will suffer in the future because their mother tongues will not take them anywhere". While it can be argued that the parents, teachers, and school principal appear to misinterpret the policy in privileging the use of English only rather than treating all languages equally, as enshrined in the Namibian LiEP document and the Namibian constitution, it should also be noted that the privileging of English is a result of the decentralization of the choice of mother tongue instruction in the policy. To a more considerable extent, the decision on which medium of instruction to use at a school appears to reside with parents, teachers, and school principals. Thus, given the hegemonic positioning of English and the purported benefits it offers, there is a likelihood that parents, teachers, and the school principal will choose it as the medium of instruction.

Similarly, extract 1.2 underscores the symbolic power of English and the parents' dispositions concerning the use of English medium only and subsequently supports the relegation of mother tongue education. Parents believed that good command of English enhances prospects of getting a better-paying job in the future as opposed to mother tongues. Parents' strong advocacy of monolingual ideologies succinctly echoed in extract 1.2 in the commonly used phrase "English is everything." The above view shows that parents associate success and wealth with learning through English as the medium of instruction while viewing the use of the mother tongues as unhelpful to their children's successes.

It is clear that the participants' language ideologies are tied up with their views of the power of English from an economic perspective but not from an epistemological perspective (Kiramba, 2018). The language ideologies observed here align with earlier studies that reported on the power of English-only ideologies for constructing socioeconomic and language hierarchies (Makoe & McKinney, 2014; McKinney et al., 2015). Probyn et al. (2002) made a similar observation in their study conducted in South African multilingual schools where South African teachers hold the ideology that 'English puts bread on the table' (p. 39). This ideology further positions English as a language of access to wealth instead of epistemological access (Muller, 2014).

Given the participants' view of an English-only language ideology in this school, it is unsurprising that the school did not implement the Namibian LiEP's guidelines of treating all Namibian languages equally in schools (Ashikuti, 2019). Once again, this could be attributed to the duality of the LiEP and the lack of enforcing the policy implementation within the school system. Furthermore, the devaluing of African languages in schools is linked to negative attitudes towards and stereotypes linked with these languages (Makalela, 2015). It can therefore be concluded that the dominant language ideologies and beliefs held by parents, teachers, and the school principal worked against the implementation of the language policy in terms of recognition of the mother tongue languages as per the policy. As a result, mother tongue languages were constructed in deficit terms in the school. Most participants expressed a Monoglossic ideology that construed Mother tongues as obstacles to good English command and socioeconomic mobility.

All the participants strongly believed that being instructed in English is the only route to proficiency in English. They also saw the goal of schooling as developing proficiency in English rather than acquiring knowledge, skills, and concepts. The monologic approach that underpins various states' official LiEP has come under scrutiny from scholars who view it as instrumental in silencing the voices of learners in the classroom, thereby constraining their voices to be heard while promoting 'epistemic injustice' in which learners are positioned as monolingual beings, often labeled as deficient 'English monolinguals' (Fricker, 2012, 2007; McKinney & Tyler, 2019).

Based on the arguments presented thus far, we argue that the prevailing monoglossic orientations to the current Namibian education system are a significant contributing factor preventing Namibia from realizing its educational goals of access, quality, and equity social justice in classroom discourse. The data presented in this study on the ideologies of intelligence being conflated with English proficiencies confirms a study conducted by Makoe and

McKinney (2014) and McKinney et al. (2015), whose research reported similar findings in the South African multilingual contexts. These studies reported how African languages were devalued with negative perceptions placed against them and constructed to hinder learning, while good proficiency in English was aligned with intelligence.

Although the Namibia language policy recognizes all the local Namibian languages to be treated equally in national schooling and calls for the embracing of cultural diversity and indigenous knowledge (MBESC, 2003), in principle, there is no drive to recognize the dynamic nature of Namibian languages, and also to maintain learners' mother language and ethnic identities in this school. There is a dire need to deconstruct how all local Namibian languages are positioned in the education system since coloniality is still persuasive in Namibian education system schools, namely the restrictive monolingual language policy that is not accommodative of multilingual learners. The data has shown how the school community is instituting and creating English-only zones with its ruling of communications to be conducted solely in English.

A key finding of the study is that both parents, teachers, and the school principal harbored monolingual ideological belief systems that did not only construct and perpetuate an "English-only" language zone around the school premises but also banished all mother tongue languages from the school premises.

Conclusion

In conclusion, English continues to be viewed as a powerful commodity. Its position in this school is inevitably allied to socioeconomic forces, while multilingualism and practices are not equally acknowledged as valuable resources for general communication, teaching, and learning. Therefore, we strongly argue to decolonize English as the only instructional language in the Namibian education system. Furthermore, we emphasize that English is one of the causes of epistemic injustice in which the learners are treated as if they are English Native language speakers.

Recommendations

To address the current monolingual ideologies, the study recommends raising teachers' and parents' awareness of embracing the heteroglossia of language practices and considering a more flexible and inclusive language policy. Teacher education should develop in teachers the autonomy to exercise their agencies to establish more deliberate spaces for heteroglossia and multimodal practices in classroom discourse and written assessments in general other than blindly advocating a particular monolingual approach. Student teachers should be empowered to transition from treating the English language as common-sense and start to question its dominant hegemony. Finally, there is a need for curriculum developers and policymakers to purposefully embed multilingual and multimodal pedagogical practices into the Namibian schools that are currently dominated by monolingual language ideologies. These recommendations could improve the adoption and implementation of language policies in contexts beyond Namibia, where the official language policy is implemented in a context dominated by the English language hegemony.

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Received: 24 April 2023

Revised: 26 May 2023

Accepted: 05 June 2023