‘Kinyarwanda doesn’t have a place in communication at our schools’: linguistic, psychosocial and educational effects of banning one’s mother tongue

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/rj.v3i1.3B

E. Sibomana, E. Uwambayinema, University of Rwanda

Abstract

French and English have the status of official languages in Rwanda alongside Kinyarwanda and have been taught and used as media of instruction for relatively long time in this country. However, the proficiency in these languages by educated people in Rwanda has been found limited. This situation resulted in a variety of official and unofficial decisions and strategies aimed at enhancing Rwandan learners' proficiency in these languages. With a particular focus on English, some of the official decisions include, but not limited to, increasing the time for the English subject on school and university curriculum and using this language as a medium of instruction straight from nursery school. The most prominent ‘unofficial’ decisions has been the 'English only at school' micro-policy which prevents learners, teachers and other school staff from using Kinyarwanda at school. This micro-policy received support in speeches by some officials in the Rwandan Ministry of Education. One reason for this ‘micro policy’ is the belief that the use of Kinyarwanda will interfere with the development of proficiency in English. In this article we explore the possible linguistic, psychological, pedagogical and social effects of the move to ban the use of learners’ and most teachers’ mother tongue, Kinyarwanda, in Rwandan schools. We argue for Kinyarwanda to be given the place it deserves in education and in communication at school as a national language and a mother tongue to virtually all Rwandans: it should be taught adequately and used as a medium of communication like any other language. Instead of having a negative effect on proficiency in English, such a move will enhance learners’ school performance in all subjects including English.

Key words: *Language, identity, language proficiency, medium of instruction, language acquisition, code switching, code mixing*

This article entitled *“Kinyarwanda doesn’t have a place in communication at our school: linguistic, psychosocial and educational effects of banning one’s mother tongue”* has been published in Rwanda Journal Series B, Volume 3, Number 1, 2016 and can be accessed online from http://www.ajol.info/index.php/rj/article/view/145353 However, due to a technical error, Mr.Emmanuel Uwambayinema’s name does not appear on the manuscript that is available on Google scholar.

1. Introduction

English is becoming more and more dominant in all areas of life globally to the extent of becoming a global lingua franca (Bhatt 2001; Altbach 2004). In addition, the ability to use this language proficiently is associated with numerous educational, social and economic gains. This situation has led to the need for proficiency in this language, which is more strongly felt in the educated community. Thus several countries have introduced and/or reinforced the teaching of English as a school subject while others, including Rwanda, decided to use this language as a medium of instruction as well. Given the slowness which characterizes the process of accessing proficiency in English in Rwanda, some people, including education officers, have suggested additional means to speed up the process. One of these means has been preventing teachers and learners from using Kinyarwanda on school premises and this 'strategy' has been 'unofficially' used by many schools especially private and/urban ones (Gakwaya 2014; Sibomana 2015). One of the authors of this article recently took his daughter to a new school and, in order to show him how good the school is, the Head Teacher said: "Sir, don't worry about hearing Kinyarwanda around here; it is because it is the first day of school. Otherwise Kinyarwanda doesn't have a place in communication at our school."

More recently, one high ranking official in the Rwandan education system also supported this move by announcing that, except for the teachers of Kinyarwanda, who are allowed to speak this language 'in their classes', teachers should stop speaking Kinyarwanda at school (Uwishyaka 2015). Given that Kinyarwanda is a mother tongue to virtually all Rwandans and the main medium for daily communication, this decision has sparked a heated debate among people of different categories through media and social interactions, with some supporting the move and others opposing it. It is interesting to find that all those who engaged in the debate based their arguments on personal feelings and judgments: their loyalty for Kinyarwanda which was being victimized and the passion for English for those who wanted it at any cost. While it was prompted by a good intention, this decision is speculative: its initiators could not explain, from a scientific and/or research perspective, how it could help in achieving the intended outcome. The same applies to the supporters and the opponents of the decision. The lack of scientific basis, which also characterizes some other decisions which are made in the Rwandan education (Rwanda Ministry of Education 2015; Sibomana 2015), may limit the effectiveness of the policies and decisions which are made in the education sector. This is the reason why we have thought about writing this conceptual article in order to enlighten the Rwandan community about the linguistic, psychosocial and educational effects of the 'monolingual bias' (Makalela 2015) which pushes some people to marginalise Kinyarwanda and other languages in favour of English in Rwandan schools.

Language is more than a tool for communication

Language has been commonly defined as 'a tool or a vehicle for communication' (see Locke 2002; Turuk 2008; Xiao Qing 2000). While we

agree to the fact that the primary function of language is communication, this definition may bring some people to retain only its superficial and narrow aspect: treating languages as tools which one can drop and/or pick up anyhow and anytime and choose to use and/or dispose of anyhow to suit their communication needs. This understanding may imply that there is little or no relationship between a language and its speaker. However, language is more than a tool for communication because, as Jaspal (2009, p. 17) argues, it constitutes "a means of asserting one's identity or one's distinctiveness from others." In other words, language is a means of acquiring and performing identity as it "creates the medium for its negotiation" (Val & Vinogradova 2010, p. 1). Thus, as Ferris, Peck & Banda (2013) suggest, language is actually one of our main identifying resources. In this regard, the mother tongue is believed to be an important aspect of identity because it is immutable and inherited from birth (Fishman 1991). If identity is understood as 'an individual's self-concept' (Tajfel 1978) or an individual's understanding of who they are, and language and identity are linked (UNESCO, 2003) then, as Cummins (2001) argues, language cannot be separated from us, its users. It should be noted that considering language as a defining aspect of identity goes beyond the individual level; as Jaspal (2009) indicates, nations brandish their language as the emblem of their distinctiveness from other nations.

It then follows that if people are to be valued and respected for who they are, their languages (especially mother tongues) do not deserve less. This may be why some linguistic human rights activists consider the mother tongue as part and parcel of human rights (see Ishida, Magga et al. 2005; Skutnabb-Kangas 2008; Yonetani & Kosaka 2003; 2005). Emphasising this point, Skutnabb-Kangas (2008) points out that "language rights are linguistic HUMAN rights which are so basic for a dignified life, that everybody has them because of being human; therefore, in principle no state (or individual) is allowed to violate them" (2008, p. 108, capitals in the original). These activists state that people (especially children) have the right to learn and use their language in schools and later in their working life (Skutnabb-Kangas 2008). Unfortunately, very few of the people among education policy makers at different levels (country, universities, schools, companies, etc.) have this knowledge, which may be why some of their decisions have negative effects on languages and their users/owners. Such decisions include banning people's mother tongues in schools for 'so-called' pedagogical purposes such as faster acquisition of the schools majority language(s) and achievement of quality education.

Banning children's mother tongue in/at school may have devastating effects on both learners and on the quality of the education which they receive. First of all, given the link between language and its speakers, Cummins (2001) argues that rejecting the child's language in school is rejecting the child. In this case, learners can be so strongly attached to their language and fight back by hating school altogether. But this is very rare. What mostly happens is that, according to Cummins (2001), learners internalize the decision and feel ashamed of their mother tongues, which affects the way that people look upon themselves, their languages and their culture; they are made to believe in the superiority of the language of instruction (which is other than

the mother tongue). In some schools in Rwanda learners laugh at their friends who dare to speak Kinyarwanda. Phrases such as 'listen to this one! He/she speaking vernacular…' are frequently heard on primary school premises especially during break time. This situation limits learners' communication space in the schools, which restricts their movements in the teaching-learning process. As Cummins (2001, p. 19) goes on to argue, learners feeling this rejection "are much less likely to participate actively and confidently in the teaching/learning process." In fact, it is not just their language which is rejected but their past as well. Indeed, learners come to school with their histories, established language proficiencies, preferences, behaviours, values, etc. and, according to Spolsky (2009, p. 91), "these preschool practices and beliefs [should] provide the basis on which school language management must build." Unfortunately, these practices are always overlooked in many African schools and, therefore, pedagogical approaches which are believed to be effective (for example, learner-centred pedagogy, active learning, etc.) are hardly possible.

Frustration is not the only factor which limits learners' space and 'movements' at school. The rejection of mother tongue always goes with imposing a second or foreign language, which learners are not always comfortable with, as a medium of instruction. Therefore, learners are doubly challenged: they have to deal with (i) the frustration resulting from the rejection of their mother tongue and (ii) the burden of using a language which they do not know well to express themselves and access content (which content is in itself not easy to grasp). Thus, the situation is rather unproductive. Indeed, it is widely accepted that learners learn better when they learn in a language which they understand best (Brock Utne 2000 & 2014; Qorro 2006) which, we suggest, is usually their mother tongue or home language, and learning is severely affected when learners use a language which they do not understand well: they can hardly understand what the teacher is saying (Makalela 2015). Spolsky (2009) calls this situation submersion instead of immersion.

Second/additional language acquisition by multilinguals

The field of second language acquisition (SLA) has been explored extensively in language education literature with different theories of language acquisition being developed mainly by western scholars. Most of these theories were developed in monolingual contexts and focused on monolingual (and mostly minority) speakers acquiring a second (mostly majority) language (Creese & Blackledge 2010), hence, adopting a model of monolingual communication as the norm for its theorization (Canagarajah & Wurr 2011). Therefore, as Canagarajah and Wurr (2011) note, the assumption on which modern linguistics is based "reflects homogeneity and monolingualism and fail to take account of multilingual realities in diverse contexts" such as those in Africa. As these scholars continue, "as we see the way people negotiate language relationships and develop proficiencies in diverse languages, we begin to realize that traditional models of language acquisition and competencies lack the capacity to explain contemporary experiences" (Canagarajah & Wurr 2011, p. 1). One may wonder what it is that is not accounted for by the modern linguistics. Before answering this

question, we need to understand how traditional linguistics explained second and/or additional language acquisition.

Canagarajah and Wurr (2011) indicate that the process of language acquisition is traditionally treated as linear, cumulative, unidirectional, and monodimensional. It is clear that this conceptualization did not give room for a possibility of acquiring two or more second languages at the same time. In other words, only one language (the target language, which was mostly English) received all the attention from both SLA scholars and teachers; it had to remain protected against the impurities which may come from learners' previous language(s). Thus as Creese and Blackledge (2010) indicate, languages were supposed to be kept separate in language learning and teaching. This, traditional linguists and language teachers argued, would help to avoid cross-contamination (Jacobson & Faltis 1990). This has led to classroom practices in which teachers use the target language only and boundaries are put up around languages (Creese & Blackledge 2010). The boundaries are also put around the acquisition process giving prominence to cognition and protecting it against the influence from the world and social context (Canagarajah & Wurr 2011). This is a result of the understanding by traditional linguists that:

> *"We formulate and store language norms detached from the situations and environment in which they are embedded. Also learning is considered more effective when it takes place separately from the context where multiple languages, communicative modalities, and environmental influences are at play"* (Canagarajah & Wurr 2011, p. 7).

This 'protectionism' which characterizes traditional SLA may be the one that gave rise to the emphasis on correctness in learners' speech and writing. This concept of correctness has been one of the key aspects of second language teaching in Rwanda, receiving more attention than the act of communication itself. Many will remember that French teachers in Rwanda would not let you finish a sentence when you made a mistake in French. This 'get it right or keep silent' pedagogic approach, which gave more significance to grammar, would bring some people to keep quiet even when they had something to say, thus shifting their 'investment' (Norton 2000) from speaking to other areas of the curriculum. This situation is further confirmed by Duff (2002) in a study conducted in a multilingual secondary school in Canada, and reported in Norton and Toohey (2011).

The study found that some learners with limited command of English chose to remain silent and invest heavily in written activities of the classroom because they were afraid of being criticized or laughed at by native English speaking peers. While it is still yet to be confirmed by further research, this may be one of the reasons why some Rwandan students have been reported to do better in writing than in speaking foreign languages (Sibomana 2010). However, it is now being recognized that "pragmatic strategies enable one to communicate successfully irrespective of the level of grammatical proficiency" (Canagarajah & Wurr 2011, p. 6). This may lead to the conceptualization of communication as a means to learning: communicating to learn rather than learning to communicate. Indeed, if people wait until they are fully proficient in a given language before they can communicate,

they may never communicate. After all, traditional linguists themselves acknowledge that a fully-fledged user of a language is ideal (Herdiner & Jessner 2002) and does not and cannot exist (Bell 2016).

This 'separation ideology' was not conceptualized just as external to the learner; it was also believed to exist internally as well. In other words, traditional linguists argued that languages are kept separate in the brains of multilinguals. Several scholars have discussed this separation and referred to it using several terms. Gravelle (1996) called it 'two monolinguals in one body", Cummins (2005) referred to it as 'two solitudes', Swain (1983) talks of 'bilingualism through monolingualism' while Creese and Blackledge (2008) use 'separate bilingualism'. This conceptualization contributes to making some language practices (code-switching and code-mixing) blacklisted and, as Creese and Blackledge (2010) indicate, many teachers and learners (including those in Rwanda) feel guilty about these practices. This is because, among other reasons, they think that the use of learners' previous language(s) interferes with the acquisition of the second. Now the question which may arise is what the problem is with this understanding.

As has been noted previously, modern linguists (for example Canagarajah & Wurr 2011; Garcia, 2009; Creese & Blackledge 2010) argue that traditional linguistics has failed to account for the acquisition of second and/or additional languages by multilinguals. These linguists totally reject the 'separation ideology' and the concept of 'linearity' and cumulative nature in traditional SLA literature. Canagarajah and Wurr (2011, p. 5-6) synthesized the arguments of modern linguistics as follows:

- For multilinguals, languages are always in contact and mutually influence each other;
- Multilingual users treat all the codes in their repertoire as a continuum, and not separated from each other and draw from all of them for their communication.
- Multilinguals do not have separate competences for separately labelled languages, but an integrated competence that is different in kind (not just in degree) from monolingual competence;
- Text and talk do not feature one language at a time; heteroglossic, they are intermeshed and mediated by diverse codes;
- In the midst of such diversity, meaning does not arise from resorting to a common grammatical system, but through negotiation practices in local situations;
- Systems of language are always open to renegotiation and reconstruction as multilinguals mix other codes in the repertoire for voice.

From the above synthesis, it can be argued that in addition to being unproductive, the 'separation ideology' is hardly possible for multilinguals. In fact, their languages are integrated and, as a result, their competence is not separated for different languages (Cook 1999). Therefore, when they call on one language, the others also come along with it and trying to stop them again limits the users' space and movements. This modern linguists' argument also shows that 'linearity' in SLA does not have a basis. Garcia

(2009) argues that acquisition does not progress linearly from L1 to L2, with L1 influencing L2 or one placed on top of the other without implications for either. On the contrary, this scholar continues, SLA is a recursive process: the languages learnt later influences the competence of those learned earlier, and the two influence each other to move in new directions. Therefore, saying that L1 (for example Kinyarwanda) does not have a role to play in the acquisition of L2 (for example English and/or French) is erroneous.

What lessons for education stakeholders in Rwanda?

National census statistics indicate that Kinyarwanda is a mother tongue for virtually all Rwandans and more than 91% of the Rwandan population speak Kinyarwanda only (NISR, 2002). This language is the only national language and also serves as an official language alongside English and French. These two are used in Rwanda not as second but foreign languages: they are used to a very limited extent in daily communication in the country, including in academic institutions (Sibomana 2006). This limited use is not only because the number of Rwandans who can speak these languages is limited, but also because their proficiency in these languages is generally limited (Kagwesage 2012, Sibomana 2006, 2010). Thus, Kinyarwanda plays a pivotal role in the daily life of Rwandans including those in schools and universities. Indeed, research indicates that Kinyarwanda occupies considerable space in daily communication even in the discussion of academic matters within universities (Kagwesage 2012).

It then goes without saying that banning the use of Kinyarwanda in certain spheres of life such as education is putting many Rwandans at a disadvantage. First, it may reduce the 'amount' of communication because people with limited proficiency may choose to keep silent to avoid criticism. Second, it may create a gap or a 'transactional distance' (Gorsky & Caspi 2005; Moore 2007) between the community (which largely speak Kinyarwanda only) and learning institutions which are made to become hubs for English where 'Kinyarwanda (and Kinyarwanda speakers) does not have a place'. Thus parents, community leaders, local teachers and other members of the community will not feel welcome to the schools.

The gap may replicate between learners and their families/parents in case these are not able to speak English. A good example is that of two children who, when taken by their father to the village, refused to greet their grandfather just because he could not speak English (Tabaro 2013). This kind of education which, according to Cummins (2001), destroys children's relationship with parents and relatives is against the very essence of education.

The gap depicted in the above paragraph is also likely to have implications which reach the national level. Indeed, Williams (2011) argues that policies to use English as a MOI in countries where it is a second/additional or foreign language have created divisions between those who have good access to English and those who do not. This scholar indicates that the former are typically members of the reasonably well-off urban groups while the latter are typically members of poor urban and especially rural groups.

In Rwanda, the schools of which learners have access to good quality English are mainly private ones and only very few parents can afford to send their children to these (Tabaro 2013). It is always the children from the same families who have access to English in their homes, which implies a short transactional distance between their home and school life. This situation creates what Myers-Scotton (1990) terms 'élite closure', or a situation whereby children from a small and rich group of people will have access to high standards of English and quality education which the majority will not be able to access. In such cases, schools will be reproducing class inequalities (Bernstein 2000): instead of being a tool to help the poor to rise it may be a means for the rich to maintain their power.

Stigmatizing Kinyarwanda and its speakers and associating it with backwardness and limited usefulness (Tabaro 2013) and portraying English as means to social upward mobility, power, smartness and several other advantages also has sociolinguistic effects in the Rwandan community. For instance, it has resulted in some people being 'ashamed' of Kinyarwanda and identifying more with English. Today, any smart person (including high government officials) must show that they know English and always codeswitch[1] between Kinyarwanda and English even when addressing people who are not conversant with English. The amount of English in these 'switch' and 'mix' can be so high and involves key terms that people who do not understand both Kinyarwanda and English can hardly understand the message communicated to them. We will use two examples to illustrate this point. In a recent televised talk about the insufficiency of soya for a soya factory, one Minister said:

"*Twashyizeho ingamba zikomeye kugira ngo soya ibe* ***collected*** *ishobore kugezwa ku ruganda, ariko noneho hari na* ***plan*** *ubu twamaze* ***kwidentifayinga*** *[****to identify****] hegitari zirenga ibihumbi mirongo itatu muri* ***Eastern province*** *na gahunda zo kugira ngo duhingire ruriya ruganda soya muri iyi* ***season*** *itaha. Ibyo ngibyo ni ibintu biriho, ubungubu inzego za Leta zose zarahagurutse* ***for that purpose****. Dufite* ***the same problem*** *mu nganda zitunganya imyumbati; dufite* ***the same problem*** *mu nganda zitunganya ibigori. Ariko ni ikibazo* ***sometime*** *kiri* ***complex****, kuko hari n'igihe ibintu bishobora kuba biriho ariko ugasanga uburyo* ***value chain*** *yubatswe, kugira ngo* ***umanaginge*** *[****to manage****] umusaruro kuva ku muhinzi kugera ku ruganda, inzira zitanoze. Ibintu bijyanye no kubaka ayo mayira, kugira ngo tugire* ***linkages*** *muri za* ***value chains*** *zitandukanye*".

We provide a translation in English putting the words in bold in Kinyarwanda to illustrate how difficult it is to understand the message when one does not know the meaning of these words.

We have established strong measures for soya to be **gukusanwa** and taken to the factory, but there is also an **umugambi**: we have already **kubona** more than thirty hectares in **Intara y'Uburasirazuba** and we want to plant soya for that factory in this coming **igihembwe cy'ihinga**. This is the

[1] Kamwangamalu (2010) notes that although a distinction is traditionally made between codemixing and codeswitching, current literature generally uses the term codeswitching.

current situation, and all government organs have been mobilized for that **Intego**. We have **ikibazo nk'icyo** in cassava factories, we have **ikibazo nk'icyo** in maize factories. But **rimwe na rimwe** the problem is **kigali cyane** because you can sometimes find that the crop is available but the way **inzira umusaruro unyuramo** is built and the way the crop can be **gucungwa** from the farmer to the factory are not well organized. So we need to build those value chains so that we have **imikoranire** between the different **inzira umusaruro unyuramo**.

The following is an extract of a speech by one Vice-Rector talking to media about the achievements of his university after a graduation ceremony. We will also translate it in English putting the highlighted phrases in Kinyarwanda.

"*Icya mbere ni uko dufatanije n'abandi bari muri iyi* ***sector****, hakozwe* ***campain*** *yo kumvikanisha ko gutanga serivise nziza ubwabyo,* ***it's all about attitude****.* ***Company*** *nini muri iki gihugu zakoreshaga abanyamahanga muri* ***service industry****.* ***I can cite Airlines, take even Rwandair, I can cite different hotels, all managers were from outside. The good thing is today,*** *ni uko dufite* ***managers*** *basohotse muri iyi kaminuza.* ***Managers of those hotels****. Ahakiri ikibazo ni iyo* ***motivator from the policy level*** *ituma hakoreshwa abantu babyize kuko ntiwasaba umuntu icyo utanamuhaye*."

An English version of the above paragraph is provided below:

The first thing is that we jointly worked with other people in this **urwego** and had an **ubukangurambaga** to make people understand that good service itself, **iterwa n'uko abantu babona ibintu**. Big **ibigo** in this country employed foreigners in **inzego zitanga serivisi. Navuga ibigo bitwara abantu bikoresheje indege, navuga ndetse na Rwandair, navuga amahoteri, ababicungaga bose bari abanyamahanga. Ikintu cyiza kiriho uyu munsi** is that we have **abacunga ibigo** who graduated from this university. **Abacunga ayo mahoteri.** The problem we still have **ni iyo mpimbaza iturutse ku bagenamikorere** which will make it possible to employ qualified people because you cannot ask someone to give you back what you have not given them.

Reading these extracts one may wonder whether the speakers took the linguistic background of their audience in consideration. This is because anyone who speaks Kinyarwanda or English only will not understand fully the intended messages. Only bilinguals can understand and, if these were his target audience, either Kinyarwanda or English would have been a better option. But it is unlikely that the audience was just bilingual especially because the speakers were speaking in public and journalists were there to record and broadcast the talks/speeches on different radio and TV stations of which audience mainly speak and understand Kinyarwanda only. This practice goes against two defining aspects of code switching: (i) being "an in-group phenomenon, restricted to those who share the same expectations and rules of interpretation for the use of the two languages" and "no violation of the norms that govern language use in the community of which the participants are members" (Kamwangamalu 2010, p. 120, 121). The

result is likely that many people will not get the message. The Association for Human Rights and development (AJPRODHO Jijukirwa) also found English to be a barrier to people accessing messages from the government: 65% of Rwandans are not aware of government policies because most of these are written in English only (Ntakirutimana 2014a). Now, if the officials, who are supposed to 'market' those policies and make them more accessible for the ordinary people, also use a language which is not easily accessible by the same people, things get worse and the country's development is hampered.

The linguists who have written about the phenomena of code-switching and code-mixing have identified a number of reasons for these phenomena. These include showing solidarity with the people who speak a different language, to reflect social status, self-pride, prestige (Bokamba 1989; Holmes 2000), modernisation, westernization, efficiency, professionalism, social advancementt (Kachru 1989; Kamwangamalu 1989) to cite but a few. Some of the most common causes of codeswitching in Rwanda have more to do with prestige and westernization and/or modernization because speaking English in Rwanda has 'become cool' (Kwibuka 2013). This reason was also identified by one of the officials of the Rwanda Academy of Language and Culture (RALC) [2]. Indeed, some of those who codeswitch between Kinyarwanda and English struggle to get the right English words and expressions.

So, they may not be using codeswitching as an easier way of getting the messages across, but as 'a discourse strategy' or 'a linguistic capital' (Kamwangamalu 2010; Myers-Scotton 1993) to indicate that they belong to a certain social status or to achieve social goals respectively. As Rihane (n.d.) points out, codeswitching can be looked upon as a way to distinguish oneself as a well-educated person who is competent in two languages or even more. In such a situation, one language is likely to be more dominant than the other, which may bring people to switch always to the dominant language (Cheng & Butler 1989). In Rwanda, the dominant language (not in statistics but in ideology) is English and this situation may jeopardize the future of Kinyarwanda (see Sibomana 2015).

As has been mentioned previously, the decision to ban the use of learners' and most teachers' mother tongue (Kinyarwanda in schools) came as a supplement to the adoption of English as the only medium of instruction from Grade One in 2008 and, subsequently, from Grade Four in 2011. However, before making further decisions which favour English at the expense of Kinyarwanda, decision makers at different levels should investigate whether the use of English as a MOI has produced the expected fruits: to enhance learners' proficiency in English. We will use examples from the texts which are produced by Year 3 university students who used English as a medium of instruction from high school to argue that the policy and/or related practice may not be working as expected because of reasons which still need to be investigated. These students are completing a BEd

[2] Retrieved from http://www.kigalitoday.com/spip.php?article26089, on 20 January 2016.

degree with English as a major subject at the University of Rwanda's College of Education. The following paragraph was extracted from one student's assignment, explaining why language teachers need to play a central role in language policy making processes.

It is seenable that who know the weakness of the learners even strength due to those language policies are those who next to them for instance, the language teachers may be requested to use English only in class and because they know weaknesses of their learners in English even teachers, so they start to create, recreate and resistance in order to achieve the gol even learners perform well. Applied linguists are light again because teachers aren't given the time to involve in making decision about language policies as those who know the problem of their learners even unqualified teachers of English.

It appears that the student has understood the question and has a correct answer: teachers are the ones who know best the weaknesses and strengths of their learners and, therefore, know what language teaching approaches and methods work best for them. However, the student has found it difficult to express it in such a way that the reader understands it clearly.

Following are three more paragraphs from another student's assignment. The student was answering the question asking why "the East African Community needs applied linguists among its staff".

Here in interpretation, as in East African Community need interpreter as applied linguistic because there many countries involved in that didn't know language selected to use and as applied linguistics need to know what language can use in general and to know the problem of that language to use with different country then applied linguistic need to select at least one language to use as medium of instruction this language need to be very simple, common, interested for all country that is involved in East African Community.

East African Community need applied linguistics for just select language that can usable for all involved as medium of instruction and then interpretation for those who are not familiar to that language selected for example Rwanda or Congo are not familiar with English that means that if East African Community select to use English it can a hinder for Rwandan or Congo or Burundi people that applied linguistics need is to interpreting for those who are not familiar with that language.

The second reason for need applied linguistics in East African Common to identify some alternative that help some problems that will meet in that language select as usable for all country involved in. Here as Applied linguistic needs help them for creating terms to use it, create some strategies to use in know it or go hand in hand with other country for achieving their purpose.

We are not intending to delve into a deep analysis of these paragraphs, but anyone who understands English will agree with us that this kind of writing is not that expected from a student who will soon be going to teach English. It should be noted that these students who wrote the above paragraphs are

among the best high school leavers. In fact, only very few high school leavers make it to Rwandan public institutions of higher learning. For instance, of the more than 32 thousand students who completed high school in 2013, only ten thousand were accepted by the University of Rwanda on the basis of their performance (Ntakirutimana 2014b). Given that English was the language of instruction (and de facto of assessment), and students writing is one factor of school and academic achievement (Leki and Carson 1994; Norman & Spencer 2005; Ralfe 2009), it can be argued that, all things being equal, those who manage to get to the university write better than those who could not. Therefore, if Year 3 university English students who used and are still using English as a medium of instruction and are studying this language as a major subject write the way they wrote the above paragraphs, it appears that the English language-in-education policy (as is applied today) still has a long way to go before it achieves (if it will) the intended purpose: to equip learners with proficiency in English.

However, this dream may never come true because many researchers (for example Brock-Utne 2015; Bunyi 2008; Qorro 2006; Senkoro 2003; Williams 2004) have shown that using English or any other language as a medium of instruction in a foreign language context is not an effective strategy to equip learners with proficiency in this language. In actual fact, some scholars (Krashen 1985; Pattanayak 1986; Qorro 2006; Sibomana 2015) contend that using a foreign language as a medium of instruction (English in this case) results in poor performance not only in other subjects taught in English, but also in English itself because learners lack proficiency in it.

It should be noted that the impact of banning the use of Kinyarwanda in Rwandan schools as a medium of communication and instruction is not just social and psychological. It has pedagogic implications as well. Researchers in language education have established that learners who cannot communicate effectively in their first languages may find it difficult to acquire second languages. As Cummins (2000) states, the Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) that people learn in their mother tongues help in acquiring the second language, and in developing Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) which refer to formal academic learning.

Moreover, "the level of CALP in the second language depends on its stage of development in the first language" (Dalvit, Murray & Terzoli 2009, p. 38). In other words, if one cannot communicate successfully in their mother tongue, they will find it difficult to learn a second language and learn through it. That is why a solid base in mother tongue is required before learners can shift to English as a medium of instruction and use it appropriately to access the curriculum[3]. If we prevent our children from communicating in Kinyarwanda at a young age, by imposing English both as a MOI and a medium of daily communication, we will be hampering the

[3] This is the reasons why Rwanda Ministry of Education has changed the language-in-education policy in 2011 to recommend the use of Kinyarwanda rather than English as a MOI from P1 to P3. The question is, as discussed more extensively by Sibomana (2015), whether learners are ready to learn in English after finishing P3.

development of their BICS in their mother tongue, which will affect the development of CALP in both Kinyarwanda, English and other additional languages which they may learn (such as French and Kiswahili).

Moreover, preventing people from using some of their linguistic codes is limiting what they can do in communication. Indeed, as Canagarajah and Wurr (2011) note, multilinguals adopt different codes for different contexts and objectives. In other words, there are some communicative functions which can only be played by certain codes and, therefore, "there is no need to develop proficiency in all the languages for the same purposes—or the same language for all purposes" (Canagarajah & Wurr 2011, p. 3).

In addition, Canagarajah & Wurr (2011) suggest, texts and talk do not feature one language at a time because they are heteroglossic and are, therefore, intermeshed and mediated by diverse languages. As a result, believing that English can suffice for all Rwandan children's (and other people's) communication needs is a fallacy. Thus, people should be encouraged to use all the codes at their disposal for various needs and, at the same times, helped to acquire as many codes as possible instead of reducing the number of those they already have or making them believe that some are less important than others.

Luckily, some Rwandan government officials and other people with authority have understood this and have pushed for more value and space for Kinyarwanda in the Rwandan education system. Indeed, one of the resolutions of the 13th Umushyikirano (the National Dialogue[4]) recommends the teaching of Kinyarwanda at all levels of education in Rwanda in order to preserve it. We suggest that the recommendation should not just be about teaching and learning Kinyarwanda; some people may study it just to meet curriculum requirements without being necessarily interested in using it for the various roles which a mother tongue can play because some people think that 'Kinyarwanda will not take you anywhere' (Tabaro 2013).

This language needs to be given the place which it deserves as a national language and the main identity resource and unifying factor for all Rwandans. More specifically, learners and other Rwandans should be encouraged to use their mother tongue and affirm their linguistic identity by "developing an environment where their linguistic and cultural experience is actively validated" (Cummins 2000, p. 5). Rwandans need to be proficient in as many languages as possible, but this is in no way a reason for them to sacrifice their mother tongue: it is very possible to be proficient in additional languages without compromising one's mother tongue.

Conclusion

The attachment between people and their mother tongues is so strong that it is hardly possible to have one without the other. No wonder UNESCO argues that using one's mother tongue (or home language) for a variety of functions, including using it to learn, is one of the basic human rights.

[4]Umushyikirano is an annual forum that brings together leaders and citizens to discuss the country's development (http://umushyikirano.gov.rw/). It is during this forum that the President presents his National Address.

Unfortunately, this right is not usually respected in pedagogy, especially in developing countries. In these countries, children are forced to learn in a language other than their mother tongue (usually English) and, in some cases and schools; children are punished in several ways for speaking their mother tongues at school. This is happening in some schools in Rwanda and some high ranking educational officials encourage this practice. This practice has negative effects on learners' personality and learning. These include feeling rejected in school, refraining from engaging in communication due to lack of proficiency in the school's language, failure to understand what the teacher is saying and, as a result, poor school performance.

These effects go beyond the personal level to reach the societal level: people tend to value a foreign language (English) more than their mother tongue (Kinyarwanda). Thus, Kinyarwanda is seen as a language of uneducated people and English for the smart and highly educated ones. Therefore, cases of code-switching of which aim is to show that the speaker belongs to a class of smart people or to claim that belonging are on the rise. This situation puts the future of Kinyarwanda at stake, which is one of the reasons why we recommend the recognition of Kinyarwanda as a language which dignifies and unites Rwandans and of which they are proud.

The strategies which can be used to achieve this should not only be limited to the teaching of this language; people with various kinds of authority need to preach by example, avoiding to switch to, or mix Kinyarwanda and foreign languages unnecessarily. All the languages spoken in Rwanda have their roles which they play individually and, therefore, none of these can and should replace or be replaced by another. We argue for a situation which gives Rwandans access to proficiency in as many languages as possible in order for them to be involved in as many communicative events as possible and to have as many resources as possible to draw on in different communicative events.

References

1. Altbach, PG 2003, Globalization and the university: Myths and realities in an unequal world. *Current Issues in Catholic Higher Education*, vol. 23, No 1, pp.5-26.
2. Bell, AA 2016, *English as a Foreign Language – The "Native Speaker Ideal". Morocco World News.* Viewed 10 February 2016 from http://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2016/01/177404/english- as-a-foreign-language- the-native-speaker-ideal/.
3. Bernstein, BB 2000, *Pedagogy, symbolic control, and identity: Theory, research, critique*, Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, MD
4. Bhatt, RM 2001, World Englishes. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 30, no 1, pp.527-550.
5. Bokamba, EG 1989, Are there syntactic constraints on code-mixing? *World Englishes*, vol. 8, no 3, pp.277-292.

6. Herman, HD 2002, Brock-Utne, B 2000, Whose Education for All? The Recolonization of the African Mind. *International Review of Education*, vol. 8, no 1, pp.131-144.
7. Brock-Utne, B 2015, Language, Literacy, Power and Democracy in Africa. *Education and Society*, vol. 33, no 2, pp.5-24.
8. Bunyi, G 2008, Constructing elites in Kenya: Implications for classroom language practices in Africa. In M. Martin-Jones, AM de Mejia & NH Hornberger (eds), *Encyclopedia of language and education* (pp. 899-909). Springer, New York.
9. Canagarajah, A & Wurr, A 2011, Multilingual communication and language acquisition: New research directions. *The Reading Matrix*, vol. 11, no 1, pp. 1-15.
10. Clarke, MA & Handscombe, J 1983, *On TESOL'82. Pacific Perspectives on Language Learning and Teaching.* TESOL, Washington DC
11. Cheng, LR & Butler, K 1989, Code-switching: a natural phenomenon vs language 'deficiency'. *World Englishes*, 8(3), pp.293-309.
12. Creese, A & Blackledge, A 2008, March, *Flexible bilingualism in heritage language schools.* Paper presented at Urban Multilingualism and Intercultural Communication, Antwerp, Belgium.
13. Creese, A & Blackledge, A 2010, Translanguaging in the bilingual classroom: A pedagogy for learning and teaching?. *The Modern Language Journal*, vol. 94, no 1, pp.103-115.
14. Cummins, J 2001, Bilingual children's mother tongue: Why is it important for education? *Sprogforum*, 19, pp.15-20.
15. Cummins, J 2008, Teaching for transfer: Challenging the two solitudes assumption in bilingual education. In J Cummins & NH Hornberger, Encyclopaedia of Language Education, vol 5, pp. 67-75), Springer.
16. Dalvit, L, Murray, S & Terzoli, A 2009, Deconstructing language myths: which languages of learning and teaching in South Africa. *Journal of Education*, vol. 46, pp.33-56.
17. Ferris, FS, Peck, A & Banda, F 2013, Identity. In Z. Bock & G. Mheeta (Eds). *Language, Society and Communication*. Van Schaick Publishers: Pretoria
18. Fishman, JA 1991, *Reversing language shift: Theoretical and empirical foundations of assistance to threatened languages*, Multilingual matters: Clevedon.
19. Gakwaya, J 2014, Nta kigo cy'amashuri gikwiye kubuza abanyeshuri kuvuga Ikinyarwanda - Dr Kayishema. *Izuba Rirashe*. Viewed 05 April 2014 from http://www.kigalitoday.com/spip.php?page=ocslevel3&id_rub=15987.
20. García, O 2011, *Bilingual education in the 21st century: A global perspective*. Wiley & Blackwell: West Sussex.
21. Gorsky, P. & Caspi, A 2005, A critical analysis of transactional distance theory. *The Quarterly Review of Distance Education*, vol. 6, 1, pp.1-11.

22. Gravelle, M 1996, *Supporting Bilingual Learners in Schools*. Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books.
23. Herdina, P & Jessner, U 2002, *A dynamic model of multilingualism: Perspectives of change in psycholinguistics*, Multilingual Matters: Clevedon
24. Holmes, J 2013, *An introduction to sociolinguistics*, 4th Edn, Routledge.
25. Ishida, AY, M & Kosaka, K 2003, Determinants of Linguistic Human Rights Movement. *Social Forces*, vol. 84, no 4, pp.1937-1955.
26. Jacobson, R & Faltis, C 1990, *Language distribution issues in bilingual schooling*. Multilingual Matters, Clevedon, UK.
27. Jaspal, R 2009, Language and social identity: A psychosocial approach. *Psych-Talk*, 17-20.
28. Kachru, Y 1989, Code-mixing, Style Repertoire and Language Variation: English in Hindu Poetic Creativity. *World Englishes*, vol. 8, no 3, pp.311-319.
29. Kamwangamalu, N 1989, Code-mixing and Modernisation. *World Englishes*, vol. 8, no 3, pp. 321–332
30. Kamwangamalu, NM 2010, Multilingualism and codeswitching in education. In NH Hornberger & SL McKay, 2010) (eds), *Socilinguistics and Language Education* (pp. 116- 142). Multilingual Matters, Bristol, Bufalo, Toronto
31. Leki, I & Carson, JG 1994, Students' Perceptions of EAP Writing Instruction and Writing Needs Across the Disciplines. *TESOL Quarterly*, vol. 28, no 1, pp.81-101
32. Kimberly, AN & Spencer, BH 2005, "Our lives as writers: examining pre-service teachers' experiences and beliefs about the nature of writing and writing instruction." *Teacher Education Quarterly*, vol. 32, no 1, pp. 23-40.
33. Krashen, S 1985 *The input hypotheis: Issues and implication*, Longman, New York
34. Kwibuka, E 2013, Speaking English becomes cool. *Global: the International Briefing*. Viewed 20 June 2016 from http://www.global-briefing.org/current-issue/
35. Magga, OH, Nicolaisen, I, Trask, M, Dunbar, R and Skutnabb-Kangas, T 2005, *IndigenousChildren's Education and Indigenous Languages*. Expert paper written for the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, New York, United Nations.
36. Makalela, L. (ed.) 2015, *New Directions in Language and Literacy Education for Multilingual Classrooms*. Cape Town: CASAS.
37. Moore, MG 2007, The Theory of Transactional Distance. In MG Moore (ed), *Handbook of Distance Education*, (pp. 89-107), Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. Publishers, New Jersey
38. Myers-Scotton, C 1990, Elite closure is boundary maintenance: The evidence from Africa. In B Beinstein (ed), *Language Policy and Political development* (pp. 25-41). Ablex, Norwood, NJ.
39. Myers-Scotton, C 1993, *Social Motivations for Code-Switching: Evidence from Africa*, Clarendon Press, Oxford

40. NISR 2002, *National Census of Population and Housing Report of August 2002*. Kigali, Rwanda.
41. Norton, B 2000), *Identity and language learning: Gender, ethnicity and educational change*. Harlow, England: Longman/Pearson Education.
42. Norton, B & Toohey, K 2011, Identity, language learning, and social change. *Language Teaching*, vol. 44, no 4, pp.412-446.
43. Ntakirutimana, D 2014a, *Icyongereza cyinshi cyaba gituma Abanyarwanda batamenya gahunda za Leta.* Viewed 20 January 2016 from http://mobile.igihe.com/amakuru/u-rwanda/article/icyongereza-cyinshi-cyaba-gituma?url_reload= true.
44. Ntakirutimana, D 2014b, March 03, *Abanyeshuri ibihumbi 10 bazemererwa kwiga muri Kaminuza y'u Rwanda mu 2014/2015*. *Igihe.com*. Viewed 20 January 2016 from http://igihe.com/amakuru/u-rwanda/article/abanyeshuri-ibihumbi-10.
45. Pattanayak, D 1986, Educational use of the mother tongue, in B Spolsky (ed), *Language and Education in Multilingual Settings* (pp. 5-15), Multilingual Matters Ltd, Clevedon.
46. Qorro, M 2006, Does language of instruction affect quality of education? *0730 People and Policy Debates*, HakiElimu, Dar-Es-Salaam
47. Ralfe, E 2009, From the Creative to the Transactional and everything in-between: Teaching Writing. In A Ferreira (ed), *Teaching Language* (pp. 148-176). Macmillan South Africa, Northlands
48. Rihane, WM 2010, *Why do People Code-switch: A Sociolinguistic Approach*. viewed 15 January 2016 from https://www.scribd.com/doc/135035100/Why-Do-People-Code-Switch-a- Sociolinguistic-Approach.
49. Rwanda Ministry of Education (2015). *National education for all 2015 review*. Kigali.
50. Senkoro, F 2005, Language of instruction: the forgotten factor in education quality and standards in Africa. *Paper presented at the CODESRIA general assembly, Maputo, Mozambique,6-10 December 2005.*
51. Sibomana, E 2006, *A Sociolinguistic Analysis of the English Language Use at Kigali Institute of Education.* Unpublished BA Dissertation, Kigali Institute of Education.
52. Sibomana, E 2010, *Challenges faced by postgraduate French speaking students who are learning in English: a case study of Rwandan students in the School of Education at theUniversity of the Witwatersrand.* Unpublished MA Research Report, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.
53. Sibomana, E 2015, The roles of Kinyarwanda and English for High Quality Education: New Directions for the Future. In L Makalela (ed), *New Directions in Language and Literacy Education for Multilingual Classrooms* (pp.123-151). CASAS, Cape Town.

54. Skutnab-Kangas, T 2008, Human rights and language policy in education. Language policy and political issues in education, Volume 1. In S May and N Hornberger (eds), *Encyclopedia of Language and Education*, 2nd edn (pp.107-119), Springer, New York
55. Spolsky, B 2009 *Language management*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
56. Swain, M 1983, Bilingualism without tears. In M Clarke & J Handscombe (eds.), *On TESOL '82: Pacific perspectives on language learning and teaching* (pp. 35–46). TESOL, Washington, DC
57. Tabaro, J 2013, What should be the language of instruction in lower primary? *The New Times*, 25 June.
58. Tajfel, H 1978, *Differentiation between social groups: Studies in the social psychology of intergroup relations*, Academic Press, London.
59. Turuk, MC 2008 The Relevance and Implication of Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory in the Language Classroom. *ARECLS*, vol. 5, pp.244-262.
60. UNESCO 2003, Education today: The mother-tongue dilemma. *The Newsletter of UNESCO's Education Sector*, No 6, July-September.
61. Uwishyaka, JL 2015, Teachers are banned from speaking Kinyarwanda at school. Makuru ki? 26 August. *Viewed 10 December 2015 from http://makuruki.rw/en/spip.php?article407&recher=oui&forum=oui*.
62. Val, A & Vinogradova, P 2010, What is the identity of a heritage language speaker? Heritage Briefs. Viewed 07 March 2016 from http://www.cal.org/heritage/pdfs/briefs/what-is- the-identity-of-a-heritage-language-speaker.pdf.
63. Williams, E. (2004). Research and policy on language in education in Africa. In K King & B Trudell (eds), Language politics and the politics of language in education. *Network for Policy Research Reviews and Advice on Education and Training (NORRAG) NEWS*, vol. *34*, pp.34-37.
64. Williams, E 2011, Language policy, politics and development in Africa. In CH Coleman (ed), *Dreams and Realities: Developing Countries and the English Language* (pp. 2-18). British Council, London.
65. Xiao Qing, l 2000, *Communicative Language Teaching: Approach, Design and Procedure*. US Department of Education, Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC). Viewed 10 February 2016 from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED444382.pdf.