

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: UNLOCKING EFFECTIVENESS OF EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

The choice of the language of instruction in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is a fundamental educational issue with ramifications for educational access and effectiveness and ultimately national development. Indigenous SSA languages have suffered devaluation in colonial and post-colonial SSA education, and this devaluation alienates the majority of SSA people, thus preventing them from participating in their own economic and political growth. Developmental policies that neglect to utilize local people's talents and knowledge are failed policies. The language of instruction, specifically the use of the first or native language (L1) as the medium of instruction, is the key to unlocking these talents and knowledge because doing so will foster knowledge acquisition and preservation of SSA cultures and identities. This will in turn liberate SSA from neocolonialism and pave the way to true progress.

This is a literature-based, position paper that redresses common arguments against L1 instruction, defends the notion of linguistic rights, and demonstrates the ways in which SSA languages can be integrated into instruction via examples that have been successfully implemented throughout SSA.

INTRODUCTION

Under the Human Development Index 2010 Rankings section of the United Nations Human Development Reports website, 35 out of the 41 countries ranked as having the lowest human development were Sub-Saharan African (henceforth

SSA) countries (United Nations, 2010). These figures indicate that the majority of SSA nations are underdeveloped, and even though billions of dollars in foreign aid have been poured into this region, it seems as though development, in terms of the “improvement of the social..., economic and political lives of the people” (Bunyi, 1999, p. 338), has struggled. According to Alidou (2009), aid and international lending organizations have tended to neglect utilizing SSA’s greatest resource in finding sustainable solutions to development—its people. Instead, these organizations have historically taken a patronizing stance, making policies “on behalf of ‘poor Africans’” (p. 112) with little regard, whether intentionally or not, to the lived realities of the people and of SSA scholars’ research.

National and economic development requires the engagement of every citizen, but, in the SSA situation, only an urban, educated minority in each nation bears the burden of development (Simango, 2009). The word *educated* is key to having the social and economic access and ability to transform the status quo, but quality education remains out of reach for the majority of SSAs. Schools modeled after European systems are designed to train students for administrative work, a practice which does not reflect the reality that most SSA citizens are subsistence farmers (Lavoie, 2008). Various SSA associations and international forums have convened to discuss ways to make education in SSA more effective in terms of accessibility, quality, and meeting stated objectives of various ministries of education. In these professional, intergovernmental, or national conferences, the language of instruction (LOI) in primary schools has been viewed as a separate, less urgent educational issue, when, in fact, it is a fundamental issue (Alidou, 2009; Qorro, 2009; Roy-Campbell, 2001; Webb, 2010). At least 10 languages are spoken in most SSA countries, and yet language policies in education favor utilizing the least prevalent language, a European language such as French or English, as the LOI (Roy-Campbell, 2001, p. 269). For example, only 5% of the Tanzanian population speaks English, and yet English is the LOI for everyone (Mwinshikhe, 2009, p. 224). Education in SSA can be improved in many respects, such as teacher development, but the LOI should be a major consideration because it “is the means by which learners come to access and understand information that ultimately leads to their further acquisition of life skills” (Commeyras & Inyega, 2007, p. 266).

Students do not fully benefit from foreign language medium education (FLME) when they do not understand the concepts being taught in the LOI, and, as a result, they either fail or drop out due to feelings of inadequacy before completing primary school (Qorro, 2009). In Niger, for example, more than half the school-aged population do not attend school, and over 70% of those who do have academic problems (Alidou, 2009, p. 107). Not only does FLME contribute to economic and social inequality, but it also maintains gender inequality. Because female lives are more restricted to the private sphere, they are less exposed to foreign languages and thus begin on unequal footing with male students. This situation may cause them not to participate in class, which may result in teachers

assessing their behavior as indicative of limited academic ability (Lavoie, 2008). When the majority of the people are alienated by their own education systems that fall short in integrating SSA languages, knowledge, values, cultures, and philosophies of learning and teaching, this alienation feeds into a cycle of poverty that leaves the nation's talents and creativity untapped. Thus, LOI plays a pivotal role in access to education and the effectiveness of education, which in turn impacts participation levels in the development of SSA nations. If improvement of the social, economic, and political lives of the people is to be successful, the creative and sustainable methods of education leading to development must begin with local SSA ideas and languages.

The Legacy of Colonialism

The mismatch between LOI and the language of the surrounding community stems from the colonization of SSA. After colonizers arbitrarily divided the African continent and discovered that their territories did not correspond with linguistic boundaries, they established their own languages as the common language, either to assimilate and *advance* Africans (typically the French, Spanish, and Portuguese style) or to separate themselves from the people they colonized (commonly the British, Dutch, and Belgian way of divide and rule) and allow only a select few the *privilege* of learning the colonial language to ensure that this minority would uphold colonial interests (Barkhuizen & Gough, 1996; Bunyi, 1999; Lavoie, 2008). Missionary schools that originally taught in indigenous languages with successful results changed to colonial languages in order to receive funding.

Within this historical context, this literature-based, position paper: 1) addresses common arguments against first or native language (L1) instruction; 2) defends the notion of linguistic rights; and 3) provides examples of successful multilingual education models; furthermore, this paper maintains that the LOI in SSA primary schools plays a key role in education effectiveness and true national development. This argument is based on Paulo Freire's (1970) theory of critical literacy and pedagogy, in which teachers and students engage in active dialogue and reflection, which is facilitated when students are learning in a language with which they are most familiar, rather than in rote memorization of foreign concepts. This paper draws on existing and recent studies from a variety of disciplines in the social sciences (comparative and international education, linguistics, and African studies) to support its case.

THE DEBATE ON MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION

Common Arguments and Educational Effectiveness

The past and present decisions to continue to use European languages in government, law, media, development, and education derive from various reasons and can be interpreted through different lenses. First, for SSA leaders, it seemed practical not to favor any one indigenous language over another, so in effect, the colo-

nial language was perceived to be the neutral one (Akinnaso, 1993; Heugh, 1999; Lavoie, 2008; Qorro, 2009; Simango, 2009; Roy-Campbell, 2001; Trudell, 2000). In order to preserve national unity, it was important not to stir ethnic tensions. This attitude became the basis for viewing multilingualism as being detrimental to unity. Second, it was important to establish a *lingua franca*, a language that could be used “for cross-ethnic communication” (Commeyras & Inyega, 2007, p. 262) and transnational commerce, amidst all the languages that were argued to hinder this from happening. The effects of globalization elevated colonial languages into world languages, creating the notion that, in order to attain well-paying jobs and to succeed, one must be proficient (if not fluent) in a world language (Qorro, 2009). Third, indigenous languages are not now considered developed enough to be used in literature, science, technology, and international relations, and in regards to LOI, they are deemed unsuitable for teaching complex subjects (Bunyi, 1999; Lavoie, 2008; Qorro, 2009; Roy-Campbell, 2001). Furthermore, changing the medium of instruction is costly, since education materials are already in a world language (Commeyras & Inyega, 2007; Vawda & Patrinos, 1999).

A widely held belief among SSA nations is that if students are not exposed to a world language through LOI, they will not be able to use it effectively or pass national exams, which are in a world language (Trudell, 2007). Parents also fear that children will not take their education seriously if they are not taught in a world language. Misguided about effective learning, many parents are wary of changing the LOI because they believe that this will prevent their children from learning the world language that is seen as a form of social capital (Albaugh, 2007; Bunyi, 1999). They become suspicious that officials and teachers do not want their children to succeed and want to prevent them access to power, symbolized by the world language that was denied to them during colonial times. In fact, this belief has manifested itself in tangible actions, such as parents threatening to transfer their children in response to attempts to start Kiswahili-medium schools in Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya, even though they knew their children were learning little in English and that if they did, they would probably not return to their communities after having found employment internationally or in the government (Qorro, 2009).

These are all compelling concerns and reasons, but they can be overcome. The first step is recognizing that teaching world languages as a subject should not be conflated with using them as the LOI (Qorro, 2009). When new concepts or terminologies are defined in a foreign language to students who are studying a subject, they do not learn the concepts. Freire’s (1970) vision of meaningful or transformative thinking and learning cannot take place if the LOI bars communication between teacher and students. Many linguists contend that the best medium for a child to learn is through the L1, and this view was endorsed by UNESCO in 1951 (Bunyi, 1999). According to Bunyi (1999):

Psychologically, it is the system of meaningful signs that in his mind works

automatically for expression and understanding. Sociologically, it is a means of identification among members of the community to which he belongs. (p. 339)

If the goal is to communicate proficiently in a world language, using an L1 throughout primary school as the LOI while teaching the world language as a subject by a specialist teacher would serve that purpose. Having a strong foundation in L1 literacy promotes the same abilities in a second language. In fact, English literacy and speaking levels dropped significantly in Zambia and Botswana after English was adopted as the LOI following independence (Miti & Monaka, 2009). Furthermore, knowing a foreign language is not requisite for learning science; science subjects performance in Tanzania began to decline in the 1970s (Mwinsheikhe, 2009).

Akinnaso (1993), Arthur and Martin (2006), Bunyi (1999), Clemons and Yerende (2009), Dembélé and Lefoka (2007), Lavoie (2008), Mwinsheikhe (2009), Qorro (2009), and Yohannes (2009) cited numerous studies which show that students perform well academically when they are proficient in the LOI; conversely, students suffer academically and cognitively when they do not understand the LOI. When the participants of a study in Burkina Faso were asked in French to calculate one stick plus one stick, only five out of 54 students were able to answer it (Lavoie, 2008, p. 671). In the same study of a bilingual school, 20 out of 24 students were able to answer a more difficult math problem. The 2004 National Second Learning Assessment of Ethiopia, which examined a representative population of students, indicated that students who were instructed in their L1 had higher mean achievement in all subjects, including English, and those in English medium instruction had the lowest mean scores. The National Organization of Examinations, which conducted the study, concluded that the English language was the “single variable...that negatively contributed to achievement” (Yohannes, 2009, p. 195). In 2000 repetition and drop-out rates were lower in the bilingual programs in Mali at 3.7% compared with 18.1% for monolingual French schools, and more of the bilingual program students passed the national exam (Dembélé & Lefoka, 2007, p. 545). The International Research Centre conducted a study in six SSA nations that suggested that L1 instruction “not only facilitates students’ learning capability but also...students’ acquisition of second and third languages” (Yohannes, 2009, p. 195). This study indicates that students can transfer the knowledge and concepts acquired from the L1 to a world language.

The use of foreign language medium education (FLME) disregards everyday life for many SSAs, especially for those who live in rural areas that are not conducive for practice of the foreign language. Therefore, the use of L1 instruction creates a bridge between home and school for many rural students. SSA languages are rendered minorities only in schools, but outside of school, they become the majority again (Alidou, 2009). Radio shows are broadcasted in people’s L1 or SSA *lingua francas* like Hausa or Kiswahili. The multilingual realities of SSA countries make it difficult to enforce a monolingual method of instruction. Code

switching—a linguistic phenomenon in which different languages are used in the same utterance—is common in schools (Arthur & Martin, 2006; Banda, 2010; Barkhuizen & Gough, 1996; Commeyras & Inyega, 2007; Mwinsheikhe, 2009; Simango, 2009). Although frowned upon in the school setting, this happens typically because students and teachers both “lack adequate command of the European language to communicate effectively” (Simango, 2009, p. 205). Students and teachers need to be able to interact verbally and express themselves clearly in order for students to understand the concepts being taught. Additionally, it is not uncommon to find teachers code switching with each other. Even school inspectors and politicians will address important issues in L1 and deliver the rest of a speech in a colonial language (Albaugh, 2007).

In a study of two Tanzanian schools, Mwinsheikhe (2009) discovered that the classroom atmosphere was tense and students were less confident in the school that only taught in English; on the other hand, students and teachers of the Kiswahili-medium school claimed that concepts were easy to understand, and that teachers were able to teach efficiently. In the English medium class, there was minimal participation, creating a learner-unfriendly environment. The coping or mediation strategies teachers used here were to ask students if they understood (which did little to promote learning because students always answered positively), to punish students if they did not respond (which only intimidated students and consequently affected their learning), or to code-switch, especially when teachers needed to convey important information.

Critical literacy—the ability to reflect actively on information in texts—can only be attained through true dialogue between teacher and students (Bunyi, 1999; Qorro, 2009). Freire (1970) would describe the FLME classroom as teachers viewing students as empty vessels that need to be filled with information. As a result of students’ lack of active participation in this banking system and the fear instilled in them, they copied illegible words from the board incorrectly instead of asking the teacher what was written. This can be seen in a sentence from a student’s history notes: “By the end of the 18th some at the States had become beig sertralised king doms” (Qorro, 2009, p. 67). This is evidence that students are not learning English, which is one of the purposes of schooling for many SSA nations. Alarming, this particular student had one more year to complete secondary school to be eligible to teach primary school English if s/he wanted to do so. If students do not understand the basic functions of language, such as syntax, then they will not be able to move beyond that to grasp the underlying messages.

Both students and teachers need to understand the LOI in order to make education meaningful. A Tanzanian headmaster reported that 94% of his teachers were not proficient in English (Qorro, 2009, p. 69), and teacher training programs are problematic because they are delivered in colonial languages (Miti & Monaka, 2009). “Every subject teacher...dabbles in English teaching,” (Mwinsheikhe, 2009, p. 232), regardless of whether s/he is proficient. When teachers themselves are not competent in the LOI, they are unaware of their own errors and make

mistakes in teaching grammar and reading to their students. If children are to learn a language, they must first hear it used correctly in an authentic situation. "It is through this process of recycling poor-quality education and poor English language into the school system that the levels of education and that of English language proficiency have kept falling over the years" (Qorro, 2009, p. 68). In one study of teacher training cited by Qorro (2009), the teachers submitted unintelligible answers in English when asked how their education will be of use to them, such as "My name secondary education is a treal secondary school for education in Dodoma region in Tanzania" (p. 65). However, there was a remarkable clarity when the students answered the same question in Kiswahili.

Colonial languages that are the property of a few cannot form the national cultures of SSA nations. Those who argue that LOI should be world languages because they are the equalizing factor that gives people social and economic capital do not recognize that the cultivated prestige given to world languages "can be allocated to any language" (Alidou, 2009, p. 112). Linguists declare "that all languages have the capacity to develop to meet all the communicative needs of their users" (Bunyi, 1999, p. 348), but SSA languages were never given that chance. Using FLME creates self-depreciation instead of self-confidence. SSA policymakers lack faith in the "wisdom of instituting local language education" (Trudell, 2007, p. 553); they argue that English is the language of the labor market and science, but the reality is that the SSA labor market serves people who do not speak any English (post offices, hospitals, schools, etc.) (Qorro, 2009). Students have rarely been able to use the scientific knowledge acquired in a world language to solve their everyday problems. SSA languages are marginalized because they are not well taught; if they are to intellectualize and become world languages, orthographies or writing systems need to be developed, and widespread use of the new orthographies via literature needs to be encouraged (Trudell, 2007). "Languages develop when we make the right inputs and provide the necessary resources for their development...All languages develop because societies and communities consciously and with political will develop them" (Prah, 2009, p. 103). If Afrikaans, which did not become official until the 1920s in South Africa, could be elevated to a language of science and technology, then it is possible to do the same for indigenous languages (Prah, 2009).

Although it is important to preserve the oral traditions, such as proverbs and storytelling, of indigenous languages (Reagan, 2000), Prah (2009) argues that SSA languages need written standards to challenge the world's written cultures. Quoting Goody, he remarks that, even though major Asian nations were colonized, their "written traditions have provided them with a more solid basis for cultural resistance than is the case with most oral cultures" (p. 85) and have given them the ability to adapt Western technology and sciences. Ninety percent of SSA intellectual production is written and archived in foreign languages, allowing the West easy access to the information but remaining inaccessible to the majority of SSAs (Qorro, 2009, p. 73). In fact, this was one of the reasons the colonists

educated Africans in the colonial language. In Nigeria, a country of about 400 indigenous languages in which three function as *lingua francas* (Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo), the library and archival language is English (Akinnaso, 1993, p. 257). Perhaps SSA policymakers and parents “insist on FLME because they cannot access what researchers have written” (Qorro, 2009, p. 78), which makes it all the more imperative to translate research findings regarding the efficacy of L1 instruction into SSA languages. SSA scholars must reconnect with their communities. Quoting Okrah, Alidou (2009) acknowledges that “Western knowledge systems are now part of African people and societies but we also need to develop and encourage a pluralistic view of knowledge...This will not only help us [to] re-claim our education but also to reconstruct the knowledge-generation process we call ‘research’” (p. 120).

In regard to the cost of changing the LOI, scholars maintain that L1 instruction is more efficient and less costly in the long run (Alidou, 2009). As the literature suggests, time spent on ineffective FLME has ultimately led to the un-education of SSA. The initial costs of L1 instruction—“the salaries of linguists, specialized teams to assist in the development/ standardization of the language, as well as expenses incurred to prepare specialized materials suitable and acceptable to the local language communities” (Vawda & Patrinos, 1999, p. 291)—and the time taken to introduce L1 materials into the education system should be viewed as investments in human resources and in the achievement of societal goals. The argument that no teaching materials exist is unfounded, for indeed they do exist, as will be discussed later. Large-scale producers of L1 materials are lacking because the market is still limited, but the cost- saving benefits of inter-country partnerships may be incentive for producers because they expand the demand base for widely spoken SSA languages found in more than one country, such as the Niger-Congo language family (Vawda & Patrinos, 1999). The creation and standardization of orthographies and availability of L1 experts also affect production costs.

Linguistic Imperialism and Neo-Colonialism

With all the evidence to support L1 instruction, why has it not yet taken root in SSA? Conflict theorists would suggest linguistic imperialism (Mwinsheikhe, 2009). The medium of instruction in formal education is used to reproduce the power of the privileged class, and only members of the same class have amassed material and ideological properties from the education system throughout the generations. Furthermore, they have a vested interest in keeping their comparative advantage that brought about their leadership roles through the justification that, if they could successfully negotiate FMLE, others can too (Trudell, 2007). With the potential to succeed economically, subjugated groups voluntarily consent to the education systems that are failing them because they are unaware that the system of rote memorization in a foreign language does not allow critical questioning of the status quo. When people do not have a firm grasp of what is happening, they fail to see situations as they really are and are excluded from participating in the

development of their own countries (Qorro, 2009). This can lead to bad practices such as valuing schools only for the certification in the end, which can result in buying examinations and producing “graduates who are unwilling and unable...to provide alternative solutions to different problems facing communities in Africa” (Qorro, 2009, p. 73). FLME bars people from acquiring any knowledge, not even of any language. Unfortunately, rights-based language policies have never gained momentum in SSA, which is why much research has focused on the practical learning benefits of multilingual education (Heugh, 1999).

On a macro-level, some theorists argue that colonialism never quite ended, calling it neo-colonialism. Western countries have ensured that they will continue to benefit from ex-colonies by trading with them and pressuring them to depend on Western knowledge creation and distribution (Alidou, 2009; Heugh, 1999; Prah, 2009; Qorro, 2009). The English Language Teaching Support Project, introduced in Tanzania in 1986, was an agreement that English teaching materials would be published only in the U.K., even if materials originated in Tanzania (Qorro, 2009). As Qorro acknowledges, “Education and schooling in FLME to a large extent foster dependency on donors for financial aid, experts for technological know-how, and ideas for development models imported from outside” (2009, p. 73). SSA educational policies are tied to developmental policies: Because SSA nations are heavily reliant on IMF and World Bank loans, they must adhere to the stipulations of the loans. World Bank experts and policymakers tend to “undermine the availability of solid research based on field work in African classrooms” (Alidou, 2009, p. 113) of unbiased researchers, educationists, and linguists and instead advocate for transitional programs that are based on bilingual programs for linguistic minorities in the Americas. This wholesale program borrowing assumes that SSA languages are minority languages when in reality they are the dominant ones (Alidou, 2009). Furthermore, the majority of SSAs are multilingual, and to “advance a policy of bilingualism...will give automatic advantage to the supremacy of the colonial language. The concept of bilingualism...ignores... the linguistic landscape of Africa” (Prah, 2009, p. 101).

THE VALUE OF LINGUISTIC RIGHTS

Since language is a part of culture and also the means through which culture is transmitted, it is important to discuss the value of SSA languages. By devaluing indigenous languages, colonial education eroded SSA pride and self-esteem (Qorro, 2009). Corporal punishment and the shame of wearing a metal inscription of I AM STUPID for students caught speaking their L1 in school effectively deterred any desire to associate with it, which in turn erased SSA values associated with that language (Bunyi, 1999). By 1953 UNESCO declared that the use of L1 in primary school is “the birth right of every child” (Yohannes, 2009, p. 190). Proponents of this policy have extended the declaration to infer that people have a right to learn in their L1 to preserve their own cultures and identities, that

“people’s language rights affect all their other human and people’s rights” (Miti & Monaka, 2009, p. 214). Subject matter taught in a certain language is based on that language’s culture and values, so to teach in a colonial language is to present information based on Western knowledge (Prah, 2009; Simango, 2009; Trudell, 2007). The hijacking of language and subsequently cognitive processes lead to what Commeyras & Inyega (2007) refer to as “cultural hijacking” (p. 276).

Compared with the rest of the world, SSA nations are inconsistent in their language policies in education. No other country developed through using a foreign language as the primary LOI; rather, the L1 was always taken for granted as the LOI (Prah, 2009; Simango, 2009; Yohannes, 2009). Even multilingual countries like India and Switzerland have adopted multilingual education frameworks (Roy-Campbell, 2001). By not optimizing local linguistic resources, “Africa has not, to date, produced a single state that has achieved national integration and established national identity on that basis of the... ‘neutral’ ex-colonial language” (Simango, 2009, p. 203). Further inequalities are created by testing students in a language that is foreign to them (Commeyras & Inyega, 2007).

SSA Ministers of Education and Heads of State have recently become increasingly aware of language rights and the necessity of elevating the status of SSA languages as the medium of transmitting culture and knowledge. This realization has fueled the trend towards adopting bilingual educational policies. Cameroon has produced six language planning institutions (Webb, 1999). Botswana, Malawi, Kenya, Burkina Faso, and Zimbabwe have allowed L1 instruction in the first few years of primary school before switching to English and teaching the L1 as a subject afterwards (Dembélé & Lefoka, 2007; Lavoie, 2008). The multilingual program in Mali has expanded to 11 languages (Dembélé & Lefoka, 2007). South Africa has adopted a laissez-faire attitude by allowing schools and parents to choose one of the eleven official languages to be used as the LOI for the first three years, with the L1 being taught as a subject afterwards (Barkhuizen & Gough, 1996; Heugh, 1999; Simago, 2009; Taylor, 2002; Webb, 1999). Nigeria has required students to learn at least one major Nigerian language in addition to English (Ufomata, 1999).

Despite the change in policies, the prevalent attitude still regards the L1 as a “necessary evil” (Simango, 2009, p. 204) for the ultimate purpose of learning a world language. The common feature across bilingual programs in SSA is the decrease in the use of the L1 in the later years of primary school and the increase of the use of a world language. Although second language research shows that there may be “threshold levels of language competence which...children must attain in their L1...in order to avoid cognitive disadvantages when the medium of instruction switches” (Akinnaso, 1993, p. 265) to the second language, many nations choose the early-exit model for political reasons, causing students to be proficient neither in a world language nor their L1. Proponents of FLME erroneously cite this problem as being the result of L1 instruction itself rather than of violating the critical period, or best learning years, for language acquisition

(Akinnaso, 1993; Heugh, 1999). In South Africa “the increase in the pass rate may very well be partly attributed to the maintenance and development of the home language for 8 years of formal education, during which time English and Afrikaans were introduced and taught as subjects” (Heugh, 1999, p. 303). The results continued to improve until 1976, when students rebelled against their perceived inferior education in the apartheid system (Taylor, 2002). The government then changed its policy to reduce L1 instruction. Black failure in South Africa can be attributed to the timing of the switch from L1 to English; decreasing pass rates correlated with decreasing L1 instruction (Heugh, 1999). Because indigenous languages are stigmatized as ignorant and backward, the school system has produced people who cannot conceive of education except in a European language, which is the main resistance to L1 instruction (Simango, 2009). Knowledge and language are equated as one (Roy-Campbell, 2009). In Zambia and Botswana, newspapers were previously printed in indigenous languages, but now, if people are literate, they are only printed in English (Miti & Monaka, 2009).

World languages have been “overestimated in their capacity to serve the interests of the majority on the continent as useful vehicles of communication” by serving “only the interests of the ruling elites” (Heugh, 1999, p. 306). Having world language status need not be played out in a zero-sum field, where the elevation of European languages means the devaluation of SSA languages. The “language of the masses should be used to educate the majority of the population” (Simango, 2009, p. 206) so that they can preserve their heritage and linguistic diversity as well as participate in the dominant discourse of the world language. Not only will L1 instruction benefit students, but also their parents. In Burkina Faso, the language barrier removed by bilingual schools made school meetings more accessible to the community, and, because parents were able to understand and critique school practices, they became more involved in their child’s education (Lavoie, 2008). L1 instruction will “contribute to the emergence of a new kind of African citizen who accepts and experiences bilingualism and biculturalism as assets” (Dembélé & Lefoka, 2007, p. 543).

SUCCESSFUL MULTILINGUAL ENDEAVORS

In an increasingly globalized world, one in which countries have become more interdependent and integrated due to trading and communication, it is important to recognize that globalization does not necessarily have to mean a monoculture or monolingual world (Qorro, 2009). In fact, globalization actually requires flexibility in communicating in non-European languages (Heugh, 1999). For “most African contexts, one requires proficiency in at least two African languages plus a colonial language” (Banda, 2010, p. 224), and multilingualism is a valuable resource. Multilingual education, which connotes education that values diverse cultures, described as multicultural education, is about teaching “practical skills and building character among learners, preparing them to become productive and

active citizens in their own communities” (Alidou, 2009, p. 125). Trudell (2007) contends that “schools in Africa ‘destroy cultural values and personality’, turning out graduates ‘who are foreigners in their own society’” (p. 559). L1 instruction can be successfully implemented within SSA countries. The following cases are evidence that it is possible to use indigenous languages effectively in instruction and wean SSA from Europe’s paternalistic influences that have resulted in the loss of SSA’s “own identity and sense of direction” (Simango, 2009, p.208).

First, in order for a language to be used as a medium of instruction, it must have a standard orthography, and immense progress has been made in that regard, enabling local communities to be knowledge producers. A Guinean businessman, Kanté, invented the N’KO alphabet in 1949 (Clemons & Yerende, 2009). By codifying indigenous languages in dictionaries and in educational materials, these languages may be elevated into the formal sphere and be recognized as LOI. In Nigeria, the National Language Center developed a glossary of science and math terms in 12 languages, and the Rivers Readers Project created primers and readers in at least 28 languages at minimal cost (Akinnsaso, 1993, p. 262). A sufficient number of SSA scholars exist to translate textbooks and create or refine scientific terms for the further development of indigenous languages (Prah, 2009). The expansion of indigenous orthographies contributes to sustainable development by stimulating “local private publishing that is supportive of the promotion of multilingual and multicultural education in” (Alidou, 2009, p. 126) Burkina Faso, Ghana, Madagascar, Mali, and Niger. In 1988 the Nigerian Education and Research Council published *A Guide for Creating Metalinguistic Terms for African Languages* (Akinnsaso, 1993,). In East Africa, the East Africa Book Development Association and others like it have strengthened cross-border trade and established a culture of reading in Kenya (Commeyras & Inyega, 2007). Countries that share a language family or SSA *lingua franca* can look to East Africa for cooperation in maximizing the benefits of L1 print materials.

A second step in using an SSA language as the LOI is addressing the large numbers of different languages and dialects within each country, which Simango (2009) argues are already highly related. Languages should be grouped “into clusters of mutually intelligible language varieties” and teaching materials should be “tailored for clusters” (Simango, 2009, p. 208),—a system which the Centre for Advanced Studies of African Societies has actually implemented in South Africa with the standardization of Nguni, a group of Southern Bantu languages spoken in southern Africa (Hadebe, 2009). Similarly, a version of Kiswahili has been standardized through its use in formal education (Commeyras & Inyega, 2007). These existing practices can be imitated in neighboring countries, such as the use of Sesotho for liturgical materials by speakers of other varieties within the Sotho cluster, which can be expanded to other reading materials, or using a SSA *lingua franca* to teach other more localized SSA languages (Simango, 2009). For example, Ndebele speakers use Zulu literature, which is also used to teach the ciNgoni language (Simango, 2009, p. 208). Linguistic diversity is not necessarily equated

with disunity, especially when SSA children already tend to be bilingual or multilingual in SSA languages (Simango, 2009). If anything, colonial languages have created disunity by dividing SSAs along class lines (Bunyi, 1999).

The third successful L1 instruction endeavor includes the alternatives to formal education systems in the form of bilingual community schools. For example, Guinea's N'KO schools locally publish and distribute L1 literacy materials based on the same skills found in formal education materials, but with an emphasis on "basic life skills and production-oriented experiences...sensitive to the local context...to enable learners to transcend historical, structural limitations" (Clemons & Yerende, 2009, p. 416). These informal programs developed as a local response to the "systemic inequalities that have defused the transformative role of formal schooling" (p. 417), and their success is attributed to the fact that they are locally controlled. Similar to N'KO schools, Senegal's Basic Community Schools function as bridges to formal schooling (Clemons & Yerende, 2009). Results from experiments such as the Nigerian Ife schools, Écoles Expérimentales in Niger, Zambia's Primary Reading Program, and Écoles Bilingues in Burkina Faso prove that students learn better when SSA languages are used as the LOI, especially if used throughout primary school (Akinnaso, 1993; Alidou, 2009; Dembélé & Lefoka, 2007; Yohannes, 2009). Early exit transitional programs adopted by many SSA nations are not as effective, so another way to use L1 instruction successfully would be to extend it to higher levels or throughout the duration of primary school while teaching the foreign language as a subject. The common denominator for the success of these programs, measured by retention, completion, and learning achievement, is the holistic engagement of "local identity for students, curricular content, and learning goals perceived by local communities as self-generated and nationally supported" (Clemons & Yerende, 2009, p. 423).

Finally, successful implementation of national multilingual policies significantly depends on community will and support, as already witnessed conversely in the South Africa uprisings against L1 instruction. Teachers who have been trained in L1 programs can explain to parents and communities the value and practical efficacy of L1 instruction. Cameroonian teachers who were specifically trained in the PROPELCA L1 program strongly favor L1 instruction: "They believed that if teachers advocate a certain pedagogy, then parents' support would follow" (Albaugh, 2007, p. 12). Persuading parents that L1 instruction will aid in the learning of the world language will foster initial acceptance. In Mozambique, parents' attitudes began to change once they saw the positive academic results of the program (Trudell, 2007). These parents will more likely view indigenous languages as valuable in and of themselves and will support policies that argue from a rights-based standpoint.

CONCLUSION

Learners' acquisition of knowledge, the preservation of and confidence in

SSA cultures and identities, as well as liberation from neocolonialism are dependent upon the LOI in schools. The LOI “is not only a major condition for development, [but] it is also the most fundamental guarantee for a true evolution in the direction of development and democracy in countries of the South” (Webb, 1999, p. 365). The European models are not based on reality and have failed because the majority of the people are not being educated. Simango (2009) described it best when he said that the weaning process is painful and difficult at first, but necessary for the development of independence and responsibility for self. Education should be a political act (Ramirez, n.d.) for the transformation of SSA societies. The FLME that has been the norm since SSA independence has done little but to prevent many populations from participating in the economic, democratic, and social affairs of their countries.

The myth that learning in a world language will give students a head start in that language within an SSA linguistic setting has been dispelled by linguists and research data, and these findings need to be translated into SSA languages so that people will support the more inclusive multilingual methods of instruction. The message sent by FLME is “that if [students] want to be accepted by the teacher and society they have to renounce any allegiance to their home language and culture” (Lavoie, 2008, p.673). Negative attitudes towards indigenous languages can be changed, and the languages “can attain economic value” (Webb, 2010, para. 6) if they are harnessed for economic development. A wealth of knowledge that is beyond the material lies dormant in the majority of the people, and the LOI is crucial to unlocking this treasure.

NOTES

Because this paper focuses on Sub-Saharan Africa, the term world languages will refer to French and English since they are not indigenous to all Africans.

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