

MOTHER TONGUE-BASED MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION IN  
SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: LEARNING FROM WITHIN

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## **ABSTRACT**

**KOZUE ARAKI: Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education in  
Sub-Saharan Africa: Learning from Within  
(Under the direction of Xue Rong)**

After the political independence in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) in the 1960s and 1970s, most of the countries chose to retain their colonial languages as their official language despite the fact there are many African languages spoken in each country. If a language is standardized and normalized as an official language in a society, particularly when the language is believed to connect people with economic opportunities, no one would argue the use of the language as a Medium of Instruction (MOI) in school. Some sociologists, linguists, and educationalists in SSA have advocated the right to use children's native language as a MOI in the classroom. The advocates see the connection between the educational challenges that the students have been experiencing and the official languages, which are not familiar to them, taught at schools. To respond to the needs of the people, there have been attempts to introduce multilingual education.

## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Introduction.....	vi
Theoretical Framework.....	vii
Methodology.....	ix
Chapter	
I. Language Policies and Practices under Colonization.....	1
Linguistic Diversity.....	1
European Colonization from the 19 <sup>th</sup> Century.....	2
Language Policies and Practices under the European Control.....	3
II. Language Policies and Practices after Independence.....	4
Decolonization of Africa.....	4
Marginalization of African Languages in the Post-Colonial Societies.....	5
III. Mother Tongue Education.....	6
Defining Mother Tongue.....	6
Advantages of Mother Tongue Education.....	6
Mother Tongue Education in Sub-Saharan Africa.....	7
IV. Multilingual Education.....	9

	Background: The Time and the Timing? .....	9
	Why Mother Tongue-Based Bilingual Education Helps the Second Language .....	11
	The Current Bilingual Education in Sub-Saharan Africa .....	12
	Neo-Colonial Form of Bilingual Education.....	14
	Best Bilingual Model? .....	15
V.	The Case Study of Tanzania .....	17
	Language Policy under Colonization.....	17
	Education under Ujamaa.....	18
	Kiswahili as the Medium of Instruction for Secondary School.....	19
	English- The Great Barrier for Children.....	19
	Abrupt Policy Change.....	19
	The Involvement of the Western Publishers in the Textbook Industry	20
	The Current Language Policy .....	21
	Background.....	21
	Challenges to Use English as the Medium of Instruction.....	23
	Significant Growth of Private Schools .....	23
	Background.....	23
	English as a Global Language.....	24
	What may be Learned from Tanzania's Experiences .....	24
VI.	Linguicism and Linguistic Imperialism.....	27

	Linguicism among Parents.....	27
	Linguistic Imperialism and Western Notion of Education .....	28
VII.	Challenges for Using African Languages as Medium of Instruction .....	30
	Framing the Challenges .....	30
	Linguistic and Technical Challenges .....	30
	Financial Challenges.....	31
	Political Challenges .....	32
VIII.	Towards Student-Centered Education-Learning from Within.....	33
	Inheritance of Colonial Education and the Western Values on Education.....	33
	Formal Education.....	34
	Holistic Approach .....	34
	Locally and Culturally Informed Education .....	34
	Towards Learner-Centered Pedagogy.....	35
	Power of Non-Formal Education.....	36
IX.	Conclusion and Discussion.....	38
	References.....	40

## Introduction

Children in economically disadvantaged countries are less likely to have educational opportunities. In order to reach these children, many international educational policies such as *Education for All*<sup>1</sup> or *Universal Primary Education*<sup>2</sup> have been created. These policies are mainly aimed at raising primary enrollment rates and literacy rates in the world. However, little attention has been paid on how to institute these policies. If children are in classrooms, are they actually learning something meaningful? If children are learning to write, is the education justified to be good? Unfortunately, many educational programs under these slogans have not considered in what language and in what environment education should take place to achieve the goals.

In sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), colonial languages have been mainly adopted as a Medium of Instruction (MOI) at schools since the political independence. It is because colonial languages are retained as official languages in the post-colonial societies and the languages are used in schools under the government policy. The educational policy in the region contradicts the fact that the majority of the children, particularly the ones in rural areas, hardly speak the official languages. As a result, many children in rural areas begin school in a language that they are not familiar with and/or do not fully understand. In this sense, this paper generalizes and focuses on the schools in rural areas, where official languages are rarely spoken outside the schools.

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<sup>1</sup> At the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000, 164 governments pledged to achieve the identified six goals to be met by 2015. The goals are related to early childhood education, eliminating educational disparities, especially for girls and minority children, adult education, and quality education. Governments, development agencies, civil society and the private sector have been working together to reach the EFA goals.

<sup>2</sup> It is one of the Millennium Development Goals, which was established at the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000. The goal aims for children everywhere completing a full course of primary schooling by 2015.

Some sociologists, linguists, and educationalists in SSA have been advocating the right to use children's mother tongue as a MOI at schools (Alidou, 2004; Desai, 2000; Prah, 2009). If the MOI is not a first language of all the students, it should at least be a more familiar language to the students. As this paper illustrates, different languages are spoken in each community, and it may not be practically possible to utilize all students' mother tongues as the MOIs at one school. For this reason, a MOI may not be some students' mother tongue, however the language of instruction should rather be rooted in their community than an unfamiliar colonial language. The advocates see the connection between the educational challenges that the students have been experiencing and the usage of the official languages at schools, which are not familiar to them. To respond to the needs of the children, there have been attempts to introduce multilingual education with students' mother tongues.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Through the counter-hegemonic perspectives against post-colonialism and neo-colonialism, Wright and Abdi (2012) emphasize the importance of investigating and analyzing the tension between progressive African academics currently located in the West and predominantly Western discourses of empowerment and Euro-American paradigms<sup>3</sup>. They argue for “*appropriation, ambivalence, and alternatives*” to examine the current educational issues in Africa, often times criticizing the Western-constructed progressive theoretical frameworks and discourses that are meant to address sociocultural and economic justice. While *appropriation* employs and appreciates some of the discourses that are helpful and supportive to analyze the

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<sup>3</sup> e.g., critical pedagogy, multiculturalism, feminism, antiracism, queer theory, critical approaches to philosophy of education, special education, and giftedness, etc. (Wright and Abdi, 2012, p.11).

educational issues in Africa, *ambivalence* warns that representation of Africa, Africans, and blackness is marginalized even within the Western progressive discourses. They consider the frameworks are inadequate or contradictory to articulate their positions. *Alternatives* then refers to African or more African-informed choices to respond to the discomfort through incorporating indigenous philosophy, content, and approaches. They loosely imply “West” by Western Europe and North America where power and wealth are situated, and the continuing dominant relationship from the colonial era exists.

Abdi (2012) reminds us that when educational issues in African countries are discussed, we tend to focus on formal education in schools. Formal schooling, which the majority of us in the West take part in, is assumed as an ideal model of education and this presumption has been reinforcing attempts to reach Africa through a particular kind of education. The critique of Western discourse and theoretical frameworks aim towards the verticalization of the unbalanced relationship between the West and Africa, decolonizing themselves, not only their “physical existence but as well, their mental well-being, self-esteem, and subjective intentions” (p. 18). Under the theme, motives to reconstruct post-colonial education focusing on medium of instruction (MOI) at schools (Alidou, 2004; Brock-Utne, 2002; 2010, Heugh, 2006; 2009; 2011), curriculum development (Woolman, 2001; Antal, & Easton, 2009), and globalization and education (Tikly, 2001) have emerged.

An important aspect of colonial philosophies of education was the supremacy of colonial languages that are used as the main MOI at schools. Only those who were able to master the colonial languages attained better higher-educational and economic opportunities. Here, language is not only a medium of communication, but also access to social mobility.

This is, beyond its mechanical implications, a language represents the worldview of people, and by imposing colonial language as the medium of education on Africans, colonizers have achieved so much more in the deductive programs of cultural imperialism where the European center remains the cultural, educational, and technological pull for the natives. (Abdi, 2012, p. 19)

“Linguistic imperialism”, as Phillipson (1992) named it, the globalization of English and the other European languages which maintain the status of “world language”, interplays with the inherited colonial education and prevents the decolonization of people’s minds.

I consider these frameworks are important to analyze the current situation of mother tongue-based multilingual education in SSA, which up until now has been largely influenced and dominated by the presence of Western cultures, philosophies, and languages.

### **Methodology**

The research methodology requires gathering relevant information from articles and books to analyze the current situation and discourses on the mother tongue-based multilingual education in sub-Saharan Africa. Since multilateral agencies such as UNESO and World Bank have been largely involved in the educational assistance in the region, their reports will be widely used in this paper.

Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is a region that lies south of the Sahara. It does not include countries such as Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Sudan, and South Sudan, which are generally considered as a part of the Arab world or the Middle East. All these countries use Arabic as an official language or as a co-official language.

When SSA is mentioned in this paper, these countries are not included. Considering that challenges and dilemmas regarding the MOI at schools are similar in the region, this paper attempts to find the common issues and the causes in SSA. Due to the limitation of the deductive approach applied in this paper, a sample study of Tanzania is included. The study of Tanzania provides a more concrete and deeper understanding of the complex issues of mother tongue-based multilingual education in SSA. Analysis of Tanzania's experience may also verify, complicate or contradict the common experiences synthesized in this paper.

The five questions listed below will be studied through this paper.

1. What type of multilingual education is currently taking place in SSA?
2. What are the challenges to use an African language in the educational environment in SSA?
3. How is the Western notion of education (and bilingual education) hindering multilingual education in SSA?
4. How are the dilemmas and challenges in Tanzania similar and/ or different from those found in SSA?
5. How could multilingual education be strengthened in SSA?

## **Chapter 1**

### **Language Policies and Practices under Colonization**

#### **Linguistic Diversity**

It is estimated that there are more than 2000 languages spoken in the African continent (Batibo, 2005). According to Greenberg (1963 in Batibo, 2005), African languages can be classified into four major families, Niger-Congo, Afro-Asiatic, Nilo-Saharan and Khoesan. Each major family has sub-families, from four to ten respectively. The sub-families are then broken down into approximately 2000 languages. Most people both in urban and rural areas are multilingual, meaning that they select and speak different languages depending on the context. For example, a Tshivenda speaker in South Africa may speak Tshivenda to their parents but use IsiZulu to their colleagues, and then communicate with their employer in Afrikaans. They may use English at a bank and switch to Fanagalo in a pub with their friends (Batibo, 2005).

More languages are spoken in urban areas in SSA where substantial number of people from rural areas, migrants and refugees from other countries relocate. Minority languages brought from outside of the urban areas become absorbed into the dominant African languages that are spoken in the areas and usually in contact with colonial languages (Mc Laughlin, 2009). This also causes a generational language shift. Even if parents from a rural area fluently speak an African minority language, their children may not continue to speak that language fluently. The younger the generation goes, the less they speak their heritage language.

## **European Colonization from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

European colonization of Africa has a long history and the expansion of the control was rapidly accelerated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Under the New Imperialism (1876-1912), the African continent was partitioned by Belgium, Germany, Spain, France, Great Britain, Italy, and Portugal at the Berlin Conference held in 1885. France obtained a large part of West Africa, Great Britain for the eastern and southern part of Africa, and Germany, Portugal, Belgium, Italy, and Spain colonized small parts of the rest. In 1870, barely one tenth of the African continent was under the European control. However, by 1914 Abyssinia (Ethiopia) and Liberia, which account for one tenth of the continent, were the only lands that were not occupied (Chamberlain, 2010). The colonial power occupied and colonized the land in order to obtain raw resources and access to labor force for advancing their economy and in order to civilize the people living in the region. Subsequently, creating linguistically and culturally coherent political units was not taken into account in the division of the continent.

A wide range of quite distinct ethnic groups became artificially assembled as the demographic co-constituents of European protectorates and colonies, while other groups found themselves divided by new borders and separated into two or more Western-administered territories". (Simpson, 2008, p.1)

The borders between countries were created regardless of ethnic groups, languages, and cultures. This contributed to the establishment of multilingual countries and cross-border languages in the region.

## **Language Policies and Practices under the European Control**

The language policies and practices including education in SSA during the colonial era were closely related to the colonial philosophy adopted by each colonizing country. It is important to mention the different colonial language policies in SSA; whether the colonizing country permitted the use of African languages in the official domains or not. In terms of formal education, the “anti-users” such as France and Portugal imposed the colonial language as a medium of instruction in schools while the “pro-users” Belgium, Britain and Germany accepted the use of African languages, especially for the first few years of primary school (Ansre, 1978).

During colonization, missionaries had the motivation to learn African languages in order to communicate with potential converts and build trust with indigenous people. They usually compiled grammars and dictionaries from a chosen language, which was spoken around the mission station. This led to the authoritative version of the language of a whole tribe and propagation through their schools (Rassol, 2007). In other cases, missionaries compiled different languages into one language. Oftentimes, translations of the Bible into local languages created different orthographies and spellings, depending on the translators. As a result, in some cases, the need for the converts to read the Bible encouraged literacy in African languages and catechism-based education.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Language Policies and Practices after Independence**

#### **Decolonization of Africa**

After political independence in the 1960s and 1970s, most of the countries in SSA chose to retain colonial languages such as English, French, and Portuguese as their official languages despite the fact that there are many indigenous languages spoken in each country. The justification for preserving the European languages in the public sphere was to unite citizens in a country overcoming ethnic, linguistic, and religious divisions (Djité, 2008). The use of the European languages also enabled the elites in the region to maintain close relationships with the former colonizing countries and hold onto the power and the resources passed down to them from the colonial era. Furthermore, they believed that the use of the languages would lead their countries toward modernization by connecting them with the science and technology developed in European countries (Batibo, 2005).

If a language is standardized and normalized as an official language in a society, particularly when the language is believed to connect people with economic opportunities, fewer would argue the use of the language as a MOI at schools- even if the language had been used to suppress their culture and the use of their own native languages. This is a common phenomenon observed in many post-colonial societies in SSA.

## **Marginalization of African Languages in the Post-Colonial Societies**

As a result of the language policies from the colonial era, African languages continue to be institutionally marginalized in many post-colonial societies where colonial languages remain the dominant language in official settings. Democratization can be a challenging process in many societies in SSA. It is difficult to fully exercise civil rights in a society where the colonial language is used in the judiciary system, government, and higher education and when the majority of its citizens do not understand the language. Some sociologists, educationalists, and linguists believe that using mother tongues in the public sphere is a fundamental human right and they have begun claiming the right of students to use African languages as MOIs at school. They have also postulated that the high rates of students' academic failure are derived from the current education system, which utilizes unfamiliar languages as MOIs. To respond to these issues, there have been attempts to introduce multilingual education with students' mother tongues.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Mother Tongue Education**

#### **Defining Mother Tongue**

Among other agencies, UNESCO particularly argues for the pedagogical imperative of using a child's own language as the medium of instruction, at least in the early years of formal schooling (UNESCO, 1953; UNESCO, 2003 in Ball, 2011). The ideal model, as UNESCO claims, is to use the children's first language at school for as long as possible. According to Skutnabb-Kangas (2000), mother tongue is classified into four different categories, which are origin, identification, competence, and function. Origin is the language that one has the first long-lasting verbal contact with. Identification is that the language is identified by the speaker himself (internally) or others (externally). Competence is the language that one knows the best and function is the language that one uses most frequently. Mother tongue education has been brought up quite often in the context of education in SSA without any detailed examination of the term and it seems the assumption is that it is spoken at home and familiar to the child.

#### **Advantages of Mother Tongue Education**

In general, education in mother tongue has many advantages such as stimulating students' motivation, promoting students' family involvement in school and children's learning (Benson 2002), and building confidence and self-esteem in students (Appel, 1988; Cummins, 1989, Cummins & Ada, 1990; Hernández-Chavez,

1984). Some research studies have shown that children do better in school and learn the new language better, if they are allowed to retain their home language as a language of instruction throughout schooling, beyond the primary years. This theory has been examined in developing countries as well. For example, an analysis of data from 22 developing countries with 160 language groups revealed that children who had access to mother tongue education were more likely to be enrolled and attending school, while lack of education in their first language was a significant reason for children to drop out (Smits et al., 2008).

In addition to the advantages above, Benson (2004) and Alidou (2011) claim that mother tongue education greatly benefits to girls in economically disadvantaged countries. Since girls tend to stay home longer than boys, and have less exposure to an official language, they feel more comfortable using their mother tongue. In addition, because girls tend to avoid being ridiculed for speaking an unfamiliar language and making mistakes in a classroom, mother tongue education lowers the barrier for them to actively participate.

### **Mother Tongue Education in Sub-Saharan Africa**

There are several examples of using African languages as the MOI in post-independence societies, such as Ethiopia, Somalia, Madagascar, Guinea Conakry, Tanzania, Malawi, Namibia, and South Africa (Heugh, 2009). There was a cross-country study conducted by Williams (1996) to assess the mother tongue education in Malawi. It examined the fifth grade students in primary schools in Malawi, where the MOI until the fourth grade was Chichewa<sup>4</sup> and English was taught as a subject, and the fifth grade students in Zambia, where MOI was English from the first year and

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<sup>4</sup> This language is spoken in Malawi, Zambia, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe. It is known as Chichewa, Cinyanja, and Nyasa accordingly. In this study, students' mother tongues in two countries were considered the same, though there were differences in spellings and pronunciations.

local languages were taught as a subject. In these cases teaching and learning Chichewa was emphasized more in Malawi and English in Zambia since the other languages were taught as a second language respectively. Although there were some challenges and limitations, the result revealed that Malawian students showed far better reading skills in their own local language, Chichewa, than the Zambian students in the local language, Nyanja (same as Chichewa), while there was no significant difference in reading skills in English. It is logical because Malawian students were exposed to Chichewa in different subjects through the MOI, while Zambian students had less chance to study Nyanja in their classrooms because the MOI was English. This study suggests that mother tongue education is more effective in teaching students different subjects, even when teaching English, than English-only monolingual education.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Multilingual Education**

#### **Background: The Time and the Timing?**

What it means to be a bilingual or multilingual person is defined in different ways. Different elements such as knowledge (Haugen, 1956 in Andersson & Boyer, 1970), competency, mastery (Bloomfield, 1933 in Andersson & Boyer, 1970) and the practice (Weinreich 1953, in in Andersson & Boyer, 1970) of the speaker can determine a person whether they are bilingual or multilingual. According to the UNESCO, bilingual education originally meant the use of two languages as media of instruction (Ouane & Glanz, 2011). It included, but was not restricted to, the learning of two languages as subjects, not necessarily through the languages.

Much of the research on multilingual education, including bilingual education, has been based on the studies of minority children in developed countries such as immigrant children (Lee, 2010; Farruggio, 2010; Young & Tran, 1999; Johannesson, 1975) and children from indigenous communities (Doebler & Mardis, 1980; Rosier & Farella, 1976).

As Swain (2006) claims, there is an assumption in the development of French immersion programs in Canada and bilingual programs in the US, that shifting to the second language, English, as soon as is feasible is the best way to develop children's English language proficiency. This philosophy is, for example, reflected in the early-exit transitional (or early-exit bilingual) model used in North America. The concept is to begin teaching either partially or mainly with students' native language (L1) and

switch to the second language (L2) after a short period. The model aims to bring students promptly into a L2-only classroom.

There are examples, however, which contradict “the earlier the L2 only education introduced, the better the language is developed” approach. Swain (2006) quotes the study of Navajo students at Rock Point conducted by Rosier and Farella (1976). The students’ literacy was developed in Navajo (L1) from kindergarten through the second grade. After children learned to read in their mother tongue, they were introduced to English (L2) reading. Both languages continued to be involved in the program through the sixth grade. Based on the result of the English achievement test compared with children who had not had bilingual education, they reached the conclusion below:

Data presented suggest that the effects of continuous bilingual instruction may be cumulative: that while Navajo students who have recently (in 2nd grade) added reading in English to reading in Navajo may do no better on standardized achievement tests than Navajo students who began reading in English, they do achieve better test scores each year thereafter. Nor does the difference seem to remain the same. The students who learned to read in Navajo and who continue to learn through Navajo and English appear to obtain scores progressively higher in English than those who did not. In effect, their rate of growth helps them to achieve progressively closer to the “national norms” in each grade third through sixth, instead of maintaining a “continuously retarded” level of achievement. (Rosier & Farella, 1976, p. 387-388) Another example (Hébert & Bergman, 1976) that Swain investigates is from Manitoba, Canada<sup>5</sup>. Language skills of the students in the third, sixth,

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<sup>5</sup> The presence of French in Canada goes back to the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. France settled and developed the province of Quebec as a colony until their defeat by Britain in the Seven Year’s War. The two-thirds of Canada’s French

and nine grades, whose mother tongues were French, were compared.

Although the percentage of instruction in French and English varied among the students, the students who had more French instruction did better in French than those who had less. In addition, the students who had more instruction in English did not obtain higher English scores than those who had less instruction in English.

These two studies show that mother tongue-based bilingual education is more effective than either monolingual education in a second language or education in which more time is spent on a second language. These results are contrary to the idea of the early-exit transitional model, which attempts to minimize the length of the education in children's mother tongues.

### **Why Mother Tongue-Based Bilingual Education Helps the Second Language?**

Cummins (2001) explains why mother tongue-based bilingual education helps children learn the second language better. According to his writing, children's knowledge and skills transfer between languages, therefore if they have a solid foundation in their mother tongue, it reflects on their second language. In this sense, the two languages are "interdependent" and "nurture" one another if children's mother tongues are permitted at the educational environment. Cummins explains this theory with examples. If a child knows the concept of telling time, how to identify cause and effect, or distinguish fact from opinion, they do not have to learn these concepts in the second language. These basic concepts are common across different languages and cultures.

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speakers are concentrated in Quebec, where they form some 80 percent of the province's population. The rest live in New Brunswick, Ontario, Manitoba, Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan (Battye, Hintze, & Rowlett, 2000).

It is true that young children go through critical periods in which they are more successful at learning the phonology of a new language (Fathman, 1975). Therefore some may think bringing them into a second language only classroom is beneficial to them. The problem is, as Cummins mentions, that it is also easy for children to lose their mother tongue as well if they spend substantial amount of time only in the second language. This is particularly a problem for minority children in developed countries since losing their mother tongue causes detachment from their family who may only speak the mother tongue.

### **The Current Bilingual Education in SSA**

The bilingual education adopted in SSA seems to be mainly the early-exit transitional model with some exceptions using the late-exit model<sup>6</sup>. Both of the models have been developed and utilized in North America. The early-exit model utilizes the children's mother tongues as the MOI for a small number of years. The MOI is then changed to L2, an official language of the children's country in SSA. In some cases children continue to study their L1 but only as a second language, meaning studying the language, not studying through the language. Therefore the focus is on L2 education rather than L1 education.

With the success of the Nigerian bilingual education project in the 1970s (Chimbutane, 2011), there have been a number of experimental multilingual projects using African languages in SSA, such as Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, South Africa, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau (Alidou, 2004). According to Alidou, many African states have been interested in using African languages in the educational environment, yet most implement an early-exit transitional model changing the MOIs from African

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<sup>6</sup> This bilingual model delays the transition from mother tongue as a medium of instruction to a different target language in usually five to six years.

languages to official languages. This early-exit model has not been necessarily working well in the context of SSA. Heugh (2011) explains some points why decision makers invest in models, which does not function well. The education authorities adopt the models that neighboring countries are already utilizing, assuming that it is safe to use. In addition, advisors to the government do not usually have expertise in cognitive aspects of language education. The implementation takes different forms from the actual policy.

It is not clear how this early-exit transitional model, which was developed in North America, was first adopted in SSA. It has been practiced in many countries by assuming that this bilingual education model developed in the West can be easily applied to the education in SSA. When Brock-Utne (2010) was asked by the World Bank to evaluate a consultancy report on bilingual education in Madagascar, she found the following dilemma:

The main problem with the consultancy report was found in the terms of reference given, where the consultant was asked to look at what passes as bilingual education in industrialized countries, an education developed for minority populations, and to draw lessons from this to be used for the majority population of a African country...many of the research findings referred to in the consultancy report, especially those from the US, Canada, and other industrialized countries, do not fit the situation in Africa. (p. 92-93)

As Brock-Utne mentions, the situations of the children in the West and SSA are very different. Bilingual education models have mainly been developed for the immigrant and indigenous children to integrate these “minority” children into Western society in which they live. The main purpose of the Western bilingual model, that is to say, assimilation, is to bring children into the majority educational setting

where only English is used. In contrast, the MOIs used at schools in SSA such as English, French, and Portuguese are not spoken by the majority of the citizens, particularly in rural areas but the small number of elites.

Under colonization, European countries aimed at educating and assimilating the indigenous people into the Western culture claiming they were civilizing the populace. These two assimilation models, which have been practiced under colonization and the current Western societies collaborate with each other and support the existing multilingual education in SSA. In this way, we can see that the assimilation bilingual model developed in the West attempts to solve the current language issues at formal schooling in SSA, which was brought under colonization. Fully applying the Western bilingual model to the children in SSA has fundamental problems and this clearly hinders the possibility of multilingual education in the region.

### **Neo-Colonial Form of Bilingual Education**

Similarly, some have raised questions in the way that the term “bilingual education” has been used in SSA (Brock-Utne & Hopson, 2005). Prah (2009) gives examples that there are many countries in the world advanced economically with their own languages, not with the colonial languages or European languages. He then criticizes the current discourse dominating in SSA, stating that African languages should only be used for the first few years of primary school and then the MOI should be switched to colonial languages. According to him, this is another form of neo-colonialism, which uses the African languages as a device only to introduce “real” languages.

These “bilingual” education packages are designed by donor agencies such as World Bank, USAID, and European governments and the educators working with the urban elites, as if this is the reality of the most of the children who are bilingual or multilingual but in African languages (Brock-Utne & Hopson, 2005). Although children in urban areas are more likely to be exposed to the official language, the language still remains “foreign” in rural areas with schools are being the only places that utilize the official language. The recent UNESCO report, *Optimising Learning, Education and Publishing in Africa* (2011), also supports this argument by emphasizing that the African political, administrative elites, and their expert counterparts, especially economists and social scientists without a background in sociolinguistics, are the ones who make decisions around MOI issues.

### **Best Bilingual Model?**

Heugh (2011) examined the early-exit models through studies in the US, Nigeria, and Zambia. In all cases students appeared to be progressing well for the first three to four years. However, after transitioning to second language only education, these students begin to fall behind those who were being taught in their mother tongue. She then concluded that the students in these countries faced difficulties with the transition to the second language and the early-exit model was not favorable in either situation.

With the case studies of Ethiopia, Tanzania, Nigeria, South Africa, and Guinea-Conakry, Heugh (2011) reemphasized the importance of mother tongue-based multilingual education in SSA. It should not only target the second language, but require high level of proficiency in at least two languages, meaning a mother tongue (or a familiar language) and an official (colonial) language. The best model,

according to Heugh, is utilizing mother tongue medium education at least for six to eight years. The model also includes teaching a second language (e.g. English) as a complementary medium, for up to, but no more than 50% of the day from the seventh year of school.

## **Chapter 5**

### **The Case Study of Tanzania**

#### **Language Policy under Colonization**

Like any other country in sub-Saharan Africa, the United Republic of Tanzania situated on the east coast of Africa and a part of SSA, is a multilingual country. With a population of over 40 million, many Tanzanians speak several different languages. What makes this country unique is that Tanzania has a unifying African language, Kiswahili as the official language. Almost 95% of the population speaks it as either a first or second language. As Alidou (2011) points out, Tanzania's one-party regime's strategy to impose one language, which is not a mother tongue of most of the people in Tanzania, on a multilingual country without any negotiation should not have been legitimate. However, we can learn from this case study how the term "bilingual education" is used in the country and what challenges and dilemmas exist to use an African language at an educational environment.

Kiswahili is closely related to Bantu languages in Kenya. It was developed as a means of interaction, mainly as a trade language, borrowing and absorbing vocabularies from different languages such as Arabic, Persian, Portuguese and English. Some suggest that the language was spoken in the East Africa by the tenth century (Whiteley, 1969). During the German period from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to 1920, Kiswahili was used for the colonial administration and was also promoted as the MOI for the few local students at primary school. It was also the German colonial administrators and missionaries that transliterated Kiswahili from the Arabic script to the Latin alphabet. Under this German government's policy, Kiswahili spread into

East Africa. When the British government took over the administration in 1920, Kiswahili was chosen for their administration. Although English was promoted as the official language and the MOI at schools, Kiswahili was largely spoken by the time and was still used at first years at primary schools.

### **Education under Ujamaa**

During the struggle for independence, Tanganyika Africa National Union (TANU) under Julius Nyerere used Kiswahili to mobilize people against the colonial rule. Therefore it was natural for him to select Kiswahili for one of the two official languages along with English when he became the first president. He believed that Kiswahili would help people overcome the battle against “tribalism”. In order to create national unity in Tanzania, the national language could not be English nor tribal language other than Kiswahili (Topan, 2008).

In 1967, Nyerere published the Arusha Declaration and TANU’s policy on socialism and self-reliance (Ujamaa). Under the self-reliance, the colonial education, which promoted inequality, intellectual arrogance, and individualism, was critiqued and universal primary education was guaranteed (Nyerere, 1968). Tanzania’s decision to embrace African socialism brought a wave of Africanization. In that process, anything appearing European was viewed negatively. Most of the books and literature in schools that had colonial content were banned as they were promoting “colonial mentality”. As a former teacher, Nyerere promoted the curriculum of primary education aimed at equipping students with skills for “self-reliance” required in the rural livelihoods rather than for future academic education in formal schools.

## **Kiswahili as the Medium of Instruction for Secondary Schools**

### **English-The Great Barrier for Children**

Tanzania is one of the few countries in Africa, which uses an African language, Kiswahili, as the Medium of Instruction (MOI) throughout compulsory primary school education for seven years. Beyond the primary education English is used as the MOI in secondary school and higher education. A few years after Tanzania's independence in 1961, Kiswahili was officially declared as the MOI for primary schools. English was also replaced with Kiswahili in 1970's in the teacher training institutions. Subsequently, the study conducted by the National Kiswahili Council showed that the secondary students had great difficulties learning the subjects because of the MOI, English, being a great barrier for students who did not speak it as their first language. The study recommended a shift of the MOI from English to Kiswahili both at secondary and tertiary levels. In early 1980s, the Presidential Commission reviewed the entire education system and set the date to change the MOI to Kiswahili at secondary and tertiary levels.

### **Abrupt Policy Change**

Early 1980s, publishers and educators in Tanzania were waiting and preparing for the shift of the MOI from English to Kiswahili. In 1983 however, the government suddenly "turned the tide" (Lwaitama & Rugemalira, 1990, p.37). The recommendations to change the MOI from English to Kiswahili were deleted from the official report. According to Brock-Utene (2000; 2010), the then president made the decision with the support of British Council, the cultural arm of the British government. One may assume that the former colonial power tried to maintain the colonial language because of strong economic and political interests. The president,

who was a strong supporter of the use of Kiswahili, justified the retention of English as follows;

English is the Swahili of the world and for that reason must be taught and given the weight it deserves in our country...It is wrong to leave English to die. To reject English is foolishness, not patriotism...English will be the medium of instruction in secondary schools and institutions of higher education because if it is left as only a normal subject it may die. (Roy-Campbell, 2001, p. 100)

The economic crisis and internal forces also enabled old colonial powers to return to the previous colony, greatly affecting the education policy in that country. Some studies (Daun, 2002) claim that Structural Adjustment Programs led by International Monetary Fund and World Bank severely affected African countries. Tanzania was no exception. The loans were lent under certain conditions such as liberalization of the economy, devaluation of the currency, and cuts in public spending. This made the then President Mwinyi shift from socialist rhetoric to pragmatic management of the country. In addition, some politicians and intellectuals also assisted in blocking the movement towards the use of Kiswahili at secondary and tertiary levels because they believed that learning English would be useful to children.

### **The Involvement of the Western Publishers in the Textbook Industry**

When the Tanzanian government was about to change the language policy, the British government also funded a study with a linguist from Edinburgh University. The study examined the level of English among Tanzanian students at schools and the study confirmed that the level of English among students was very low. Based on the result, the researchers concluded, “the Ministry of Education should issue an

unambiguous circular setting out the policy on English-medium education” (Criper & Dodd, 1984, p. 73). Furthermore, they recommended that Tanzania would need English Language Teaching Support Project, also funded by the British government, instead of strengthening Kiswahili-medium education. The project was introduced to Tanzania in 1987 providing a business opportunity for some well-known publishers in Britain to produce English textbooks. Although the manuscripts originated in Tanzania, none of the Tanzanian publishers were involved in the project (Brock-Utne, 2010).

The involvement of the Western publishers in education projects in SSA can be observed in different countries. Mazuri (1997) argues that a World Bank offered the loan to the Central African Republic, which was supposed to improve the quality and accessibility of primary education, came with a package to import textbooks from France and Canada. Alidou (2004) also mentions that French and British publishing companies have a monopoly on the textbook market in Africa due to the regulations imposed by the World Bank and international development agencies that finance African education.

## **The Current Language Policy in Tanzania**

### **Background**

Until the mid-1990s, the provision of primary education was under the government monopoly (Rugemalira, 2006). The Ministry of Education then took over the responsibility of admission of pupils, employment of teachers, provision of equipment, curriculum, and other materials. According to Brock-Utne (2002), the current language policy in Tanzania is best described as “confusing, contradictory, and ambiguous” (p. 28). Although it was mentioned in the Constitution of 1962 that

Kiswahili and English are the official languages of Tanzania, the languages are no longer mentioned in the current Constitution after the many amendments.

The current framework of the Tanzanian education system is not based on the Constitution but the 1995 Education and Training Policy (Bakahwemama, 2010; Brock-Utne, 2010). According to the Policy, “the MOI in primary schools shall be Kiswahili and English shall be a compulsory subject” (Brock-Utne, 2010, p. 81) and “the MOI for secondary education shall continue to be English, except for the teaching of other approved languages and Kiswahili shall be a compulsory subject up to ordinary level” (Brock-Utne, 2010, p. 81).

The structure of the formal education system is composed of 2 years of pre-primary, 7 years of primary, 4 years of junior secondary, 2 years of senior secondary, and 3 or more years of tertiary education (United, 2010). Primary education is universal and compulsory for all the children from the age 7. It is intended to equip literacy, numeracy, and life skills to be ready for the economy and higher education and training for those who continue to study (United, 1995). Children study all subjects in Kiswahili and learn English as a subject. The MOI switches from Kiswahili to English after the 7-year primary education.

Based on the early-exit and the late-exit transitional bilingual models described earlier, this Tanzania’s bilingual education should be favorable. Kiswahili-based education lasts seven years through primary education, which is longer than the definition of the late-exit model (5-6 years). As Cummins explained, the mother tongue education should establish the basic concepts in children that could be transferred to their second language. This theory raises the questions about whether children easily transitioned to English only classrooms at secondary schools.

## **Challenges to Use English as the MOI**

The use of English at secondary schools poses many challenges to both teachers and students. Brock-Utne (2011) conducted a qualitative research at a secondary school in Tanzania. A teacher taught the same topic in biology to one class in English and another in Kiswahili. The author observed in the English class that students were forced to stand by desks because they were sleeping. Students struggled with simple words such as bird or fish and failed to give answers in English. According to the author's observation, most of the students looked afraid and remained silent through the entire class because they did not understand the questions that the teacher was asking. The teacher could not finish the lesson plan. In the Kiswahili class, in contrast, the teacher and students were more relaxed and confident. There were oftentimes laughter and smiles. In some cases students even taught the teacher what she did not know. Through this class observation, Brock-Utne described the students' active participation in their mother tongue education.

## **Significant Growth of Private Schools**

### **Background**

The 1995 Education and Training Policy also greatly contributed to the privatization of education in Tanzania. The liberalization of the establishment and management of primary schools (United, 1995) was the result of the Structural Adjustment Policies. The liberalization of education brought a rapid expansion of private primary schools particularly in urban areas. In the Dar es Salaam region, there were 93 private primary schools (Mbelle, 2008) and these schools were either international schools or non-international schools. International schools are required to satisfy certain requirements to be recognized as such and do not necessarily follow

the national curriculum. Most of the international primary schools utilize English as their MOIs while there are a few schools with the MOI in Kiswahili (Rugemalira, 2006).

### **English as a Global Language**

There are reasons for parents to select costly private primary schools for their children, which accounts for only 0.9% of the population (Mbelle, 2008). Some families are wealthy enough to do so. Others are simply dissatisfied with the public schools. The public schools are usually overcrowded and suffer from lack of educational resources. Students have to share textbooks, desks, and teachers' motivation is low (Bakahwemama, 2010). In addition, the parents of the children at private primary schools tend to believe that education without English is not (authentic) education (John, 2010).

Bakahwemama (2010) mentions that some of the private primary schools are business oriented rather than being committed to providing quality education. From the interviews with parents, she also argues that people confuse quality of education with English proficiency, no matter what the actual quality of the education that their children are receiving at schools. Her study also revealed that in the Grade 4 national examination, public students' performance in mathematics was better than those in the private schools in spite of many difficulties that the public school students face, which were mentioned previously.

### **What may be Learned from Tanzania's Experiences**

As the country claims, Tanzania utilizes bilingual education at schools. Through the seven-year primary education, Kiswahili is used as the MOI while

students study English as a second language. The MOI is then switched from Kiswahili to English beyond secondary education. According to the bilingual education in the West, this model is longer than the late-exit transition model, which is supposed to be favorable for children. However, many secondary students still struggle with studying in English.

My reasoning is that 1. Even if students have basic education in their mother tongue, second-language education will not be successful without a well-designed curriculum. 2. English class (as a second language) at primary schools may not have strong curriculum therefore students never develop their second language. 3. English is rarely spoken outside of the school especially in rural areas, therefore it is difficult for them to practice and advance their language skills. I consider the first point important. In general, education can be strengthened through different approaches. Good language education needs a committed teacher with training in teaching a foreign language, well-designed curriculum, sufficient teaching and learning materials and resources. Since English is one of the official languages of Tanzania, teachers do not learn how to teach it as a foreign language to students. However, most students, especially in rural areas are learning English as a foreign language. This case study of Tanzania reemphasizes that although mother tongue education in longer years is considered favorable, there is a problem applying the Western bilingual education model to the context of SSA. There has to be more research on bilingual education appropriate for the context of the region.

I also observed that challenges and dilemmas to utilize an African language are closely related to political decision, largely influenced from the West, yet politicians and elites are not the only ones who advocate for the use of English. Many parents strongly believe that learning English leads their children to a better future.

The reversals in the Tanzania's language policy over the years demonstrate the general struggles and dilemmas that many SSA countries have been going through since the decolonization and reconstruction of the nationhood. It also exemplifies the postcolonial scholar's critique on former colonial countries' continuous domination over the former colonies in cultural, social, and political spheres. The following section is going to focus on linguicism and linguistic imperialism to further elaborate this point.

## Chapter 6

### Linguicism and Linguistic Imperialism

#### Linguicism among Parents

Parents' hopes for their children's future is one of the many reasons to sustain the current structure of the education system in SSA. Philipson (1992) explains this phenomenon as linguicism, which is defined as below:

Ideologies, structures, and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate, and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and immaterial) between groups which are defined on the basis of language".

(Philipson, 1992, p. 47)

Parents' strong belief in education in an official language (English, French or Portuguese) can be observed in different parts of SSA. For example Benson recognized parents' concerns for the experimental bilingual education conducted in Mozambique because they strongly believed in the importance of mastering Portuguese for children's future. She mentioned in the report that "the local languages are seen as languages of the communities and traditional cultures without written form...parents and guardians want their children to learn the official language so that they will have better employment opportunities" (2001, p.26).

While it may be true that speaking an official language will connect some children with better educational and economic opportunities, there are also many children who repeat the same grade and drop out of school because studying in an official language is such a difficult barrier to overcome. In this way, people have been deceived of the myth of an official language under linguicism.

## **Linguistic Imperialism and the Western Notion of Education**

An example of linguistic imperialism is English imperialism, whereby “the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages” (Philipson, 1992, p. 47). The domination of English and other colonial languages in SSA continue to maintain their superior status over the African languages. This theory also explains why the international initiatives such as Millennium Development Goals, *Universal Primary Education*, or *Education for All*, had/have been ignoring the issues surrounding MOI. As Brock-Utne (2000) argues that in order to increase enrollment rates and literacy rates, little attention has been paid to what language should be used and what kind of education should take place to improve those rates. The colonial languages took advantage of its superior status to indigenous languages when the developed countries, mainly Western countries, overemphasized basic education without recognizing other important educational issues such as children’s own languages and indigenous form of education.

Hays (2009) also argued that the educational policies mentioned above failed to acknowledge the indigenous community’s own strategies for survival, education and community cohesion. The discourse of the international education policies assume that anyone who does not participate in the particular kind of education is “uneducated” and try to help people assimilate in the Western formal education system. These policies, according to her, are depriving valuable indigenous resources without providing viable alternatives.

As Alidou (2004) pointed out, traditional education in pre-colonial Africa did not suffer from the language problems where multilingualism existed. Semali (2009) also discusses that indigenous African education entails different understanding of

education from Western education, such as social responsibility, spiritual and moral values, ceremonies and rituals, imitation, recitation, poetry, and story-telling, not necessarily taught through schools. Therefore we must be aware of the many current issues around multilingual education in SSA are somewhat the result of the Western notion of education that was introduced under the name of civilization during the colonial era and awkward efforts to bring bilingual education models developed in the West to the African education system to solve the problem.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Challenges for using African Languages as Medium of Instruction**

#### **Framing the Challenges**

Under the linguistic imperialism operated by colonial languages, there are myths that discourage the use of African languages as a MOI in SSA (Heugh, 2009; Légère, 2004). However, there are many challenges and obstacles that exist in implementing education in African languages (Alidou, 2004; Ouane & Glanz, 2011). To analyze the challenges the framework that UNESCO developed in the report, *Optimising Learning, Education and Publishing in Africa* (2011), will be utilized. These challenges are related to linguistic, technical, financial, institutional and political. These challenges will be further discussed in detail.

#### **Linguistic and Technical Challenges**

Many African languages are orally developed, and as thus are occasionally considered inferior to other languages, particularly European languages, which have extremely well founded writing systems. Furthermore the oral-based African languages are considered a barrier to the formal educational environment. However, this is not true for all the African languages. According to Obanya (1999 in Wolff, 2011), there are 217 African languages having written forms. These languages would make up just over 10 percent of all African languages, and nearly 50 percent of the African population could be reached through these languages.

In many other languages in SSA, corpus planning such as development of orthography, textbooks, and dictionaries is necessary. In order to accelerate this process, international harmonization of the cross-border languages is needed (Diallo, 2011; Akambadi, 2001; Mwale, 2001). Developing a language with neighboring countries will significantly reduce the publication costs and also strengthen the relationship among the countries. In fact, international harmonization of cross-border languages is already on the agenda of the African Academy of Languages under the auspices of the African Union, providing a platform for NGOs and donor organizations (Wolff, 2011).

### **Financial Challenges**

Mother tongue-based multilingual education in SSA tends to be considered too costly to be implemented. However, this argument is rather based on a “fear of change” (Ouane, & Glanz, 2011) and “flimsy perceptions rather than empirical evidence” (Heugh, 2006). The examples of Ethiopia, which has introduced mother tongue-based multilingual education in 21 different languages (Wolff, 2011) and inexpensive locally-produced materials for multilingual education in Papua New Guinea and Nigeria (Klaus, 2003; Williamson, 1985 in Benson, 2004) support that claim that mother tongue-based multi lingual education can be less costly.

Taking into account the relatively poor academic performance of students in SSA, if mother tongue-based multilingual education is the key to improve the current educational issues, someone needs to take the first initial step forward. Westcott (2004, in Ouane & Glanz, 2011) concludes that the poor performance of the current education system should be compared to the better performance generated by good quality programs with mother tongue-based education, which would be less cost-

effective in the long-term. Additionally, a study in Mali found that bilingual education was 19 percent cheaper than monolingual education due to the lower dropout and repetition rates (World Bank, 2005).

### **Political Challenges**

The language issue in Africa is all about power, a political choice that governments and global players of geopolitics make not to distribute the power and resources. A choice of an African language as language of instruction will redistribute power from the elites to masses. (Semali, 2009)

Politics is one of the many obstacles in implementing mother tongue-based multilingual education and is the main challenge. The example of Tanzania showed that it is not the only issue of domestic politics, but also a matter of relationship with former colonial countries, which still takes advantage of the use of the European languages in the post-colonial societies. Politicians and policymakers rely on the “flimsy perceptions” and “myths” under linguicism to create excuses not to adopt mother tongue-based multilingual education. In order to ensure a supportive political environment, the policies should aim towards multilingual education as an integral part of both formal and non-formal education systems (UNESCO, 2007).

## **Chapter 8**

### **Towards Student-Centered Education- Learning from Within**

#### **Inheritance of Colonial Education and Western Values on Education**

The people in the West who provide educational assistance to SSA are likely to have a particular kind of education in their minds, that is, formal education. That also applies to the current discourse of the mother tongue-based multilingual education in the region. Bringing local languages to public sphere such as formal education has a significant meaning to lift the status of the languages because mother tongue education is still viewed by many Africans as a second-class education (Alidou & Brock-Utne, 2011). However, overemphasis on formal schooling may hinder the potential of mother tongue-based multilingual education in the region.

As discussed previously, before Western formal education was introduced during colonization, “each group used its own language to educate its children, essentially making education linguistically and culturally responsive within each tribal or ethnic setting” (Alidou, 2004, p. 197). Furthermore Wright and Abdi (2012) are critical of some progressive Western discourses and theoretical frameworks used to address educational issues in Africa and suggest creating more African and African-informed alternatives to respond to the discomfort. In the case of mother tongue-based multilingual education in SSA, these alternatives should be explored not only in formal education but also in informal education.

## **Formal Education**

### **Holistic Approach**

In order to enhance the effectiveness of mother tongue-based multilingual education, educational support must be holistic. Without solving the common educational problems in SSA, such as lack of educational resources and materials, poorly developed curriculum, teachers with little teaching experience or training, multilingual education would not be successful. Furthermore, teaching in a foreign language is a different skill from teaching in a mother tongue. It would be imperative for the SSA governments to recognize that official languages remain foreign and unfamiliar to the many citizens and provide appropriate teacher training and curriculum to strengthen the mother tongue-based multilingual education.

### **Locally and Culturally Informed Education**

It has been stressed throughout this paper that formal education systems in SSA have been inherited from the colonial past. Therefore the structure of the school system, the reliance on certain form of assessment, and school curriculum continue to resemble those developed by British, French, or Portuguese educators and colonial administrators (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2011). The more the support for mother tongue-based education has been strengthened in the region, the more the importance of the content of the curriculum has been raised.

People are realizing that using students' mother tongue is not sufficient to reconstruct the education system in SSA. The content of the curriculum and textbooks also must be closely related to students' cultures and local communities. For instance,

Namibian government reviewed the junior secondary certificate examination and they found a clear cultural bias towards urban lifestyle and European culture, (Brock-Utne & Alidou, 2011). In Mozambique and Mali, the colonial textbooks and curriculum have been gradually replaced by more Africanized ones to respond to local and national needs (Woolman, 2001).

### **Towards Learner-Centered Pedagogy**

Education in a mother tongue or a familiar language is not only a matter of how well students understand what they learn, but also closely related to identity and self-esteem issues. This point should be well considered in the post-colonial societies, since the African languages, cultures, and traditions were positioned consistently inferior to the colonial ones under colonization. Hence it will be argued that mother tongue-based multilingual education have the potential to transform classrooms in SSA to more learner-centered spaces, which may also play a significant role in helping students develop their own identities and self-esteem (Brock-Utne & Alidou, 2011).

Brock-Utne and Alidou (2011) reported that classroom observation conducted in several different counties (Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, South Africa, Tanzania and Togo) revealed that the use of unfamiliar languages forces teachers to practice teacher-centered teaching methods. When children do not understand the languages that are used in classrooms, teachers are likely to use coercive teaching techniques such as chorus teaching, repetition, memorization and so on. This point was also confirmed in the case study of Tanzania.

So what would happen in classrooms, which utilize students' mother tongue or

a more familiar language? Ilboudo (2003) and Ouédraogo (2002, in Alidou & Brock-Utne, 2011) indicate that the use of national languages facilitates the learner-centered pedagogy in classrooms. In Niger, Chekaraou (2005) describes the puzzlement of teachers who were transferred from a monolingual school to a bilingual school. They believed that students in the bilingual school were expressing themselves too freely and being too impolite. One of the bilingual schoolteachers refuted their idea:

I do not think it is indiscipline. Children feel at ease when in bilingual classes. They make use of their own language. Therefore, they do not feel blocked and intimidated. They understand what they are saying and what they hear from the teacher perfectly. I think it is a freedom of expression and an ease that characterize the behavior of these children. (Chekaraou, 2005, p. 188)

This example illustrates that students express themselves more freely and participate actively when their mother tongue is utilized in a classroom.

### **Power of Non-Formal Education**

Hoppers (2000) recognizes the limitation of formal schooling because formal schools cannot necessarily respond to the diversity among the students in terms of background, circumstance, age and gender, learning styles and specific learning needs. In addition, by borrowing the critical perspective on Western formal schooling in SSA (Odora, 1996 in Hoppers, 2000), Hoppers emphasizes that the Western formal schooling in SSA “endorses patriarchy, endangers disempowerment, and reinforces authoritarianism” rather than creating a vehicle for democratizing society through the redistribution of power (p.8). He then recommends that non-formal education<sup>7</sup>, which

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<sup>7</sup> According to UNESCO, non-formal education is defined as any organized educational activities that do not correspond to formal education. The education takes place both within and outside of educational institutions and

tends to be considered as supplementary or compensatory of formal schooling, can be the alternative to formal schooling.

By taking the similar stance of Hoppers, Clemons and Yerende (2008) argue that non-formal mother tongue education can be a “true alternative” to the mainstream formal mother tongue education. Based on the studies of community schools in Guinea and Senegal, they reveal that the community members’ expectations do not “only imply hope for an education that serves as a compensatory provision...but also an alternative one that reaches beyond convention and impacts and transforms lives in the village” (p.8).

As I argued previously, bringing students’ mother tongues to formal education may lead to lifting the status of local languages. Additionally, non-formal education has a potential to introduce mother tongues not through the Western valued-education system but in their own ways. In this sense, as Hoppers, Clemons, and Yerende emphasized that non-formal education is not only a supplement of formal schooling but a true alternative to formal education.

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serves to people of all ages. The examples of non-formal education is adult literacy, basic education for out-of-school children, and programs to equip life-skills and work-skills (1997).

## Chapter 9

### Conclusion and Discussion

This paper discussed the current attempts to introduce mother tongue-based multilingual education in SSA. The international education policies, parents' expectation for children, domestic and international politics, and the power dynamics between colonial languages and African languages have been hindering the active discussion on the issues around MOI. As the goals under the educational policies such as *Education for All* have been reviewed in recent years, language issues have been discussed more as one of the important elements of quality education. Yet bilingual models that were developed in the West have been applied to the children in SSA without question.

The two assimilation models, which have been practiced under colonization and the current Western societies collaborate with each other and support the existing multilingual education in SSA. The assimilation bilingual model developed in the West is being used as an attempt to solve the current language issues at schools in SSA, which are at their root of colonization. Fully applying Western bilingual model to the children in SSA has fundamental problems and is hindering the possibility for multilingual education in the region.

Although successful mother tongue-based multilingual education does exist in SSA, it is questionable to discuss the potential only through formal schooling. The formal schooling in SSA, which was inherited from the colonial era may not be sufficient to respond to the needs of the local students. As some African authors suggest, more African/indigenous alternatives can be explored through non-formal

schooling.

For example, French-based Creole is a language that was locally developed and evolved in different French colonies around the world. The speakers are mainly located in the Americas and in the Indian Ocean. Some people may think French-based Creole is unauthentic because it has adopted the local cultures and vocabularies. It has moved away from the “authentic” French. As this example shows, even if people have substantial knowledge in a language, they are often times considered inferior if they have different accents, pronunciation, and vocabulary. This can be seen in where people of SSA who have fluency in localized colonial languages and their language abilities are still considered poor.

Mother tongue-based multilingual education discussed in this paper is a dominant view supported by older generations who experienced and still remember the colonial past and resistance against it. Young generations, on the contrary, may not see the colonial languages as oppression as older generations do. Many young people do not know or did not experience colonization. People move forward sometimes leaving an important history behind. It will be eventually the decision of the young generations who will choose the language(s) and form the language(s). Language education should be flexible for change and responsive to their needs.

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