

LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES AMONG PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BURUNDI: AN APPRAISAL OF LANGUAGE POLICY IN BURUNDI

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Abstract

This study investigates the language ideologies held by pre-service teachers with regard to language use in education and official settings in Burundi. It also investigates whether there is a mismatch between pre-service teachers' language ideologies and what is articulated in the top-down language policy of Burundi. The study employed mixed methods- a questionnaire and a content analysis. The results revealed that pre-service teachers' language ideologies were connected to the perceived importance of a particular language. They believed that learning or having competence in English and French is similar to building a bridge to reach an elite, educated and global community. They also believed that Kirundi language should be a medium of education alongside English and French. These beliefs were in line with what is articulated in the official language policy of Burundi. However, it was shown that what is articulated in the language policy conflicts with the reality of language practices. Therefore, other studies are needed to investigate this conflict.

Keywords: Language ideologies; language policy; language practice; multilingualism

1. Introduction

Many countries adopt a language policy that is geared towards multilingualism in education for different reasons. One of the reasons is that multilingualism is a means by which countries employ to address the problem of linguistic diversity (Gorter & Cenoz, 2017). Another reason is that multilingualism is a means for a broader integration into a global community (Bacon & Kim, 2018). Predictable, scholarship on multilingual language policy in education has tended to focus on the reasons for the adoption of multilingual language policy and on the consequences of multilingualism on students and indigenous languages (e.g., Hornberger, 2009; Heugh, 2013; Samuelson & Freedman, 2010; etc.). In this scholarship, there has been an attempt to understand the decision-making processes that lead to the adoption of multilingualism in education. It is shown that in many countries language policy formulation is a top-down process, with most decisions regarding language use in education and in official settings made by a higher authority such as the minister of education (e.g. Maseko, 2021). It is also demonstrated that in many countries language policy formulation is closely connected to language ideologies. This suggests that in many countries the choice of language to use as medium of education and as official language represents the beliefs about language that the

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decision-maker has. In this regard, existing scholarship analyzes and critiques this top-down process of language policy formulation (e.g., Ndlovu, 2014).

Burundi has adopted a multilingual language policy since its integration into the East African Community. As a result, four languages namely Kirundi, French, English and Swahili are listed as languages in use in Burundi. Among these, Kirundi is a national and official language while French and English are official languages. Although Swahili is not legally recognized as an official language, it is taught as a subject from primary school to university and is a native language to some Burundians. This language policy was motivated by Burundi integration into international and regional communities which use English and Kiswahili as official languages and into communities which use French as an official language (Bigirimana, 2018). As a result, studies on sociolinguistic situation of Burundi have tended to analyze the challenges multilingualism presents to primary and secondary school learners (e.g., Toyi, 2015; Nsengiyumva, Oriikiriza & Nakijoba, 2021; Nsengiyumva, 2022; etc.). Other studies have tempted to unpack the multilingual language policy in Burundi to show how this policy affects the identity of Kirundi speakers (e.g., Bigirimana, 2018; Mazunya, 2016). However, a little attempt has been made to analyse the decision-making process that has led to multilingual language education in Burundi and to the ideology that has informed this decision-making process. In Burundi, language policy is a top-down affair, with most decisions made by the higher-ups. In addition, no attempt has been made to understand the issues of pre-service teachers' agency in bottom-up process of policy planning. Pre-service teachers, as future teachers, may have belief about language that challenges, resists and conflicts with top-down language policy. Therefore, the present study attempts to fill this gap by examining the language ideologies held by pre-service teachers with regard to language use in education and in official settings. It also analyses whether the beliefs about language held by pre-service teachers' conflict with Burundi language policy. It provides answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the language ideologies held by pre-service teachers with regard to language use in education and official setting in Burundi?
2. Is there a match between University of Burundi students' language ideologies and Burundi language policy?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Unpacking Language Policy in Burundi

The language policy of Burundi is very keen on promoting Kirundi language- the native language of almost all Burundians (Mazunya, 2016). This is clear in the 2018 constitution which informs language policy in Burundi. It is stated in article five of the constitution that Kirundi is the national language of Burundi and the official languages are Kirundi and other languages allowed by the law. Consequently, the language policy of Burundi recognizes three official languages: Kirundi, French and English (Burundi language policy 2015). This language policy was formulated mainly for two reasons. First, it was designed to preserve Burundi culture and identity through improving the status of Kirundi language. Second, it was formulated in order to meet Burundi geopolitical demands (Mazunya, 2016). Burundi is a neighbor to Francophone countries and is a member of communities which use French as an official language. Burundi is also a neighbor to Anglophone countries and is a member of communities which use English as an official language. Thus, Kirundi, French and English enjoy an equal status of being official languages in Burundi.

However, although the language policy of Burundi promotes Kirundi language and gives an equal status to three languages, the implementation of this policy may be different. Burundi language policy expands the role of Kirundi language and efforts are undertaken to make of Kirundi a springboard for cultural and economic development through the creation of

Rundi Academy. But, in reality the role of Kirundi language did not really increase. Kirundi language is the language of instruction from first grade to fourth grade of public primary school. From fifth grade to university, Kirundi becomes a subject and the language of instruction becomes French. In the administration, the language that is used is French. In the language policy of Burundi, French and English enjoy an equal status of being official languages. However, the reality shows that only French is the medium of education and the language of administration. English is taught as a subject from primary school to university and it is not used in the administration. This shows that what is stated in the language policy of Burundi does not really match with what occurs in reality in terms of language practice. In this context, the question that arises is the following. Since the language policy of Burundi is a top-down affair, does this mismatch result from opposing beliefs about language between Burundi language planners and those who are supposed to implement the policy?

2.2 Language Ideologies and Language Policy

Language ideologies are ‘systems of belief, performed in context, at the intersections of language and social power structures’ (Becon, 2018, p.2). The study of language ideologies can be traced back to linguistic anthropology (Kroskrity, 2004; Wortham, 2008), beginning with Silverstein (1979) who defines language ideologies as ‘beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use’ (p.134). From this conceptualization, study on language ideologies foregrounds the social situated nature of language, viewing language as inseparable from the historic, economic and social cultural context of its use (Irvine, 1989; Martínez, 2013). This focus also draws attention to the way in which beliefs about language maintain, resist or conflict social institutional hierarchies (Blommaert, 2005; Bourdieu, 1991).

Therefore, through this focus, some research on language ideologies explores the ways in which individual beliefs about language agree or conflict with what is articulated in a top-down language policy. For example, the study by Maseko (2021) examines teachers’ self-reported language ideologies and how these ideologies conflict with the top-down language-in-education policy in Zimbabwe. Drawing on Spolsky’s (2004, 2009) innovation on language policy, the study found that teachers’ ideology about African languages and colonially inherited English predispose them to use English as a default language of instruction, contrary to the provision for the use of African language in Zimbabwean language-in-education policy. These results agree with the results in the study by Phyak (2013). This study examines the ideologies and practices of local languages as the medium-of-instruction policy in a multilingual school in Nepal. The findings reveal that the language ideologies and practices at school resist the Nepal language policy which aims at promoting linguistic diversity.

Other research on language ideologies investigates the ideologies which inform language practices. For example, the study by Bacon and Kim (2018) investigates language ideologies among South Korean adolescents. Using a questionnaire, Bacon and Kim found that participants’ language ideologies positioned them to use English in relation to economic status, perceived intelligence and employability in both global and local contexts. Another similar study by Shank-Lauwo (2020) investigates how language ideologies of parents in Tanzania inform their decision to enrol their children in Kiswahili-medium public school and in English-medium private school. Using interview, the results in the study revealed that parents in Tanzania prefer to enrol their children in Kiswahili- and English-medium school because Kiswahili is a national language and enables learners to become member of national community while English is gatekeeper to employment opportunities.

In summary, language ideologies are central to language policy and practices. Language ideologies may inform policy makers in their decision to select the medium of education and official languages. It is found that this top-down decision may conflict with bottom-up language practices. In addition, language ideologies inform language practices. It is important however to note that language ideologies are not fixed characteristics reflective of individual's core value (Becon, 2018). Language ideologies are changeable, that is, individuals draw on different ideological orientations at different times based on contextual and historical factors (Rosa & Burdick, 2017).

3. Methodology

3.1 Context of the Study

The study was conducted at the Institute of Applied Pedagogy (IPA) of the University of Burundi. The Institute of Applied Pedagogy of the University of Burundi prepares future teachers of basic and post-basic school. Therefore, the language ideologies of students at this institute may provide information about their future language practices in classroom. Further, students' belief about language may provide information about whether their future language practices agree or conflict with what is articulated in Burundi language policy.

3.2. Research Design

The study adopted a mixed-method research design. First, it followed a quantitative approach, whereby a questionnaire was used as an instrument to collect the data. The questionnaire consists of 12 Likert-scale questions. The Likert-scale questions were designed to measure the respondents' language ideologies. Regarding language ideologies, statements in the questionnaire were classified according to whether they express particular beliefs about the ideological functions of the language. These beliefs included language as a tool for communication with a local and a global audience, language as a cultural capital for competition in a global job market and language as a medium of education and as a national treasure. With respect to language as a tool for communication with a local and a global audience, the respondents were asked to indicate whether they agree with the following statements on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 meaning strongly disagree and 5 meaning strongly agree.

- LIS1: Having competence in English and French is important because English and French are international languages.
- LIS2: English and French are important because I can use them to communicate ideas to people in Burundi.
- LIS3: French and English are important because having competence in these languages is associated with the prestige of being educated and intellectual.
- LIS4: Kirundi is important because it is our national language.
- LIS5: Kiswahili is important because it is a regional language.

With regard to language as a cultural capital for competition in a global job market, the respondents were also asked to indicate whether they agree with the following statements on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 meaning strongly disagree and 5 meaning strongly agree.

- LIS1: French and English are important because having competence in these languages allows people to compete in international job markets.
- LIS2: English is more important than French because international job markets require competence in English.

With respect to language as medium of education and a national treasure, the respondents were also asked to indicate whether they agree with the following statements on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 meaning strongly disagree and 5 meaning strongly agree.

- LIS1: French is more important than English because French is the medium of Instruction and official language in Burundi.
- LIS2: French and English should not be official languages in Burundi because they do not match with Burundi culture and identity.
- LIS3: Kirundi should become the medium of education in Burundi because Kirundi language is connected to our identity, history and culture.
- LIS4: Kirundi is important because it is associated with Burundi culture.
- LIS5: Kirundi and Kiswahili are important because they reflect African identity.

Second, it followed a qualitative approach, whereby a content analysis of Burundi language policy was conducted.

3.3 Participants

The participants (N = 97) were pre-service teachers of English at the Institute of Applied Pedagogy of the University of Burundi. They were selected for two reasons. First, they are future teachers of languages. Therefore, their responses to the questionnaire may provide information about their beliefs about language and their future classroom language practices. Second, they have similar educational background. They graduated from secondary school in languages. They are majoring in English education to become English teachers. In this regard, their responses to the questionnaire may be generalized.

3.4 Procedures

To collect the data, the researchers themselves administered the questionnaire to students. All students in class were requested to fill in the questionnaire. The total number of copies obtained after administration of questionnaire added up to 97.

To analyze the data, the researchers assigned scores to each Language Ideologies Statement (LIS): (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) undecided, (4) agree, (5) strongly agree. These scores were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The statistics were computed using the statistical package for social sciences SPSS 22.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

4.1.1 Language as a Tool for Communication with a Local and a Global Audience

Table 1 presents results of the descriptive statistics of pre-service teachers' belief about language as a tool for communication with a local and a global audience. It can be seen that pre-service teachers scored particularly high on statements (LIS1 and LIS4). They scored moderately high on statements (LIS3 and LIS5) and they scored moderately low on statement (LIS2). The results show that pre-service teachers believe that learning English and French is important because French and English constitute a bridge which helps them reach an educated and global community. The results also show that teachers believe that Kirundi and Kiswahili are important because they are tools for communication with a local and a regional community.

Table 1.

Pre-service teachers' beliefs about language as a tool for communication with a local and a global audience.

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Range
LIS1	4.40	.82	1-5
LIS2	2.36	1.21	1-5
LIS3	3.69	1.17	1-5
LIS4	4.62	.68	1-5
LIS5	3.60	.96	1-5

4.1.2. Language as a Cultural Capital for Competition in a Global Job Market

Table 2 presents results of the descriptive statistics of pre-service teachers' beliefs about language as a cultural capital for competition in a global job market. It can be seen that pre-service teachers scored particularly high on statements (LIS1) and moderately high on statement (LIS2). These results show that pre-service teachers believe that learning English and French is similar to accumulating capital for global employment.

Table 2.

Pre-service teachers' beliefs about language as a cultural capital for competition in global job market

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Range
LIS1	4.55	.74	1-5
LIS2	3.80	1.10	1-5

4.1.3. Language as a Medium of Education and a National Treasure

Table 3 presents the results of pre-service teachers' beliefs about language as a medium of education and a national treasure. It can be seen that pre-service teachers scored particularly high on statement (LIS4) and moderately high on statements (LIS1 and LIS3). They scored moderately low on statements (LIS2 and LIS5). The results show that pre-service teachers believe that Kirundi language is a national language connected to Burundi culture, history and identity. Therefore, it should be the medium of education alongside French and English.

Table 3.

Pre-service teachers' beliefs about language as a medium of education and a national treasure

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Range
LIS1	3.86	1.16	1-5
LIS2	2.80	1.30	1-5
LIS3	3.84	1.24	1-5
LIS4	4.53	.79	1-5
LIS5	3.13	1.41	1-5

4.2. Content Analysis of Burundi Language Policy

The language policy of Burundi recognizes four languages- Kirundi, Kiswahili, French and English. In education, Kirundi is a medium of education from first grade to fourth grade of primary school. From fifth grade to University, Kirundi language is taught as a subject and the

medium of instruction becomes French. English and Kiswahili are taught as subjects from primary school to university. In official settings, Kirundi, French and English are recognized as official languages in Burundi. Kirundi is also recognized as a national language. The results show that in education four languages are taught. The reason that is given for the integration of four languages in education is to develop learners' linguistic competence to compete in national and international job market. The results also show that three languages are recognized as official languages. The reasons that are provided for the choice of three official languages are (1) to preserve and promote the national language- Kirundi, (2) to open Burundi to two global communities- a community which uses English as an official and native language and a community which use French as an official and native language.

5. Discussion

The objective of this study was to examine the language ideologies held by pre-service teachers with regard to language use in education and in official settings in Burundi. This study also analyzed a mismatch between pre-service teachers' language ideologies and what is articulated in the language policy of Burundi. The results obtained for the first objective indicated that pre-service teachers' language ideologies are connected to the perceived importance of a particular language. It was found that pre-service teachers believe that learning English and French is similar to building a bridge and accumulating capital to reach an elite, educated and global community and to have access to a global employment. The global community that pre-service teachers implicitly refer to is (1) the community which uses French as an official and native language and (2) the community which uses English as an official and native language. In addition, it was found that pre-service teachers believe that Kirundi language is connected to Burundi culture, history and identity and therefore it should be the medium of education and official language alongside French and English. These results concur with the results in the study by Bacon and Kim (2018). Although the study by Bacon and Kim (2018) was conducted in a context which is different from Burundi context, the findings showed that participants were motivated to learn English because they could leverage English to communicate with a global audience and to secure future employment. These results suggest that foreign languages; those inherited from colonization, French in Burundi and those introduced for strategic reasons, English in Burundi and South Korea; are considered in many countries as a bridge which connect local people with a global community.

The results obtained to meet the second objective indicated that pre-service teachers' beliefs about language match with what is articulated in the language policy of Burundi. In the language policy of Burundi, Kirundi is a national language and official languages are Kirundi, French and English. This matches with pre-service teachers' beliefs that Kirundi language is connected to Burundi culture, history and identity and therefore it should be an official and a medium of education alongside French and English. These results run counter to the results in the study by Maseko (2021). It was found in the study by Maseko that teachers' language ideologies and practices resist the top-down language policy in Zimbabwe. The differences in results may be due to the fact that the study by Maseko analyzed teachers' language ideologies from their language practices. Nevertheless, the results in the study by Maseko and in the present study suggest that what is articulated in a top-down language policy may agree or conflict with bottom-up language ideologies and practices.

6. Conclusion

This study was conducted to analyze pre-service teachers' ideologies with regard to language use in education and official settings in Burundi. It was predicated on the view that pre-service teachers' beliefs about language may agree or conflict with the official language policy of Burundi. The results of the study revealed that pre-service teachers believe in what

Mazunya (2016) calls functional multilingualism. They believe that learning or having competence in English and French, which are imported languages, is similar to building a bridge to reach an elite, educated and global community. They also believe that Kirundi language, a national language of Burundi, should be a medium of education alongside English and French. These beliefs are in line with what is articulated in the official language policy of Burundi. The language policy of Burundi four languages in education and three official languages. It is articulated that this multilingual language policy is adopted to promote Kirundi language and to open Burundi to global communities- a community which uses French as a native and official language and a community which uses English as a native and official language. However, although pre-service teachers' perceived importance of language use in education and official settings in Burundi match with what is articulate in the top-down language policy, the reality of language practices shows otherwise. French tends to dominate in the administration and official settings. The medium of instruction is mostly French – the language inherited from colonization. In this regards, other studies are needed to investigate the correlation between pre-service teachers, teachers and government employees' language ideologies and their language practices. In addition, other studies are needed to investigate the conflict between bottom-up language practices and top-down language policy. The results from these studies may provide information about whether there is a problem in the implementation of the language policy of Burundi. The results from these studies may also provide information about whether the resistance in the implementation of language policy is due to one reason. The voices of individuals who are meant to implement the policy were inaudible in the process of crafting the policy. Therefore, those individuals may interpret the process of crafting the policy, as Maseko (2021) points out, as undemocratic and as a process which perpetuates a view of those individuals as obedient servants of the system.

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