

Multilingual Integration and Identity Conflict: African Youth Navigating Home and School Language Ideologies

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Abstract

This paper examines the multifaceted interaction between multilingual integration and identity crisis; wherein young Africans are forced to balance between opposing ideologies of language both at home and in school. Based on empirical studies in various African environments, such as South Africa, Mozambique, Kenya, Burundi, and Namibia, the analysis explains how the youth negotiate the institutional language policies, which tend to privilege the use of colonial languages over native mother tongues, and at the same time, negotiate more than one linguistic identity. They indicate that the youth in Africa employ superior forms of translanguaging and develop pliable language as methods of constructing their identities and resisting the notions of monolingualism. However, the outcomes of such practices are often tension between school-based linguistic hierarchies and home-based multilingual norms, which affect educational experiences and cultural identity. The paper not only identifies those structural issues created by colonial legacies of language and education policies not looking at African multilingualism as an asset, but the paper also integrates various theoretical perspectives, such as translanguaging theory, language ideology and postcolonial approach, to demonstrate how the agency of young people is manifested through creative language practices.

Keywords: ideology, multilingualism, African youth, identity, cultural belonging.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Among young people in post-colonial African situations who are transitioning between worlds of different languages, language is a significant component of identity, cultural belonging, and social positioning. Another characteristic feature of the sociolinguistic situation in the continent is African multilingualism. Nonetheless, learning systems that were inherited during colonial rule still prefer the use of European languages, which leads to a high degree of conflict between domestic and school language use. In the case of adolescents who are faced with the dilemma of choosing to learn the languages of colonialism that are valued in school or college and their native mother languages that they used in family and community settings, these tensions become an identity crisis. Multilingual incorporation in the youth of Africa has complicated processes of making identities, cultural bargaining, and also resisting the linguistic forms of hierarchies that give priority to African languages over European languages, which goes beyond simply code switching or being bilingual. According to the recent literature, the young

Africans form complex linguistic repertoires that combine various languages and thus lead to forms of hybridity and urban youth vernaculars that demonstrate the current African identities. However, the institutional ideologies of language that have propagated monolingual ideals and downgraded native multilingualism tend to conflict with these new forms of language practice. This research paper explores the ways in which African youth find their way through the language ideologies that conflict in both domestic and school settings. It also considers the issue of identity conflicts that are the result of such tensions and the way young people cope with the fact of speaking different languages. The discussion can explain common patterns and context-based differences in the linguistic practices and identity development of youth, based on empirical studies carried out in different contexts of Africa, including South Africa, Mozambique, Kenya, Burundi, and Namibia. What are the ways African youth navigate and reconcile differences between home and school language ideologies? What is the role of multilingual activities in identity construction among young people? What is the impact of institutional language policies on

the degree to which young people are engaged in school and their views concerning their cultural identity? These are the central questions this study attempts to address.

This research is significant not only academically but also for its important implications for educational policy. In order to come up with more fair and culturally responsive educational approaches that view African multilingualism as an asset and not a liability, one needs to have an understanding of how language ideologies determine the youth identity and their educational experiences. Observing youth language practices can also demonstrate how to dismantle colonial language structures and create learning environments that support, rather than constrain, indigenous languages and multilingual identities.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 African Educational contexts and language ideologies.

The influence of language ideologies- ideas and assumptions about languages and people who speak them on the functioning of schools and rules that are adhered to has a huge implication in Africa. Although Africa has a large number of people who speak more than one language, English, French, and Portuguese have remained the most significant languages in schools due to the colonial history. According to research carried out in South African settings, language ideologies perpetuate colonial power regimes by marginalizing African languages and raising English as the language of opportunity and progress (Hurst, 2017). These hierarchies are examples of what researchers refer to as coloniality, which is the continuity of the knowledge production and power dynamics that outlived formal colonialism. In most African nations, their education language policies are founded on ideas that do not coincide with one another. The rights of indigenous languages and multilingualism are officially accepted in many countries; however, in practice, they are not used, and more preference is given to colonial languages, primarily in secondary and postsecondary education. According to Heugh (2009), the gap between the policy rhetoric and the practice creates an underlying tension: the monolingual practices challenge bilingual or multilingual policies. The dominance of the colonial languages in education is caused by a number of factors such as perceived economic advantages, lack of resources to produce materials in the African languages, and the ingrained beliefs of linguistic modernity and progress. Such ideologies of language affect more general issues of knowledge production and epistemology, not to mention curriculum and instruction. The author is sure that the undifferentiated language policies (based on the assumption about middle-class kids speaking English) perpetuate inequality of children speaking African languages who are represented as necessarily underdeveloped instead of effective multilinguals (Guzuela, 2018). It is through this deficit ideology that African languages appear as a hindrance to

learning rather than as instruments of cultural identity and cognitive development during learning.

2.2 Developing Youth Identity by Multilinguals.

African youth construct flexible identities in response to their multilingual experiences as they make their way in multifaceted linguistic situations. Studies have shown that teenagers use the superior language-based identity formation techniques, whereby they use various language resources to place themselves in relation to their colleagues, parents, schools, and society in general. The term linguistic repertoires has been used to describe this complexity, and it brings the whole of linguistic resources that people have and can use in different contexts and purposes. The language practice of young people is studied and proves to have creative language manipulation and appropriation. Nassenstein's discussion of Kirundi slang in Burundi is given as an example of the creation of new types of language that can become symbols of rebellion against the adult world and institutions, while at the same time they may also symbolize youth identity and unity.

Similarly, studies on young people in Cape Town show that identity is fluid between isiXhosa, English, and Afrikaans, with their language choices reflecting intricate processes of negotiating race, social status, and cultural belonging in the post-hegemonic South Africa (Bristowe, Oostendorp, and Anthonissen 2014). The connection between language and identity is particularly evident in adolescence, a period when individuals are exploring their identity and finding out with whom they want to associate themselves. According to Rudwick (2004), in South Africa, the post-apartheid era teenagers that speak Zulu, when asked to explain what they mean by their culture, they say, Zulu, we need [it] because they know that English is necessary in business. This is a typical thing in the ideologies of young language in the various African contexts. It appreciates the indigenous languages as a source of cultural identification, but acknowledges the uses of colonial languages. Urban youth languages in particular are relatively important arenas of language innovation and identity construction. Youths engage in extensive code-mixing and imaginative manipulation of various language resources to come up with novel forms of language as is the case in Sheng in Kenya and Tsotsitaal in South Africa. According to Brookes (2014), Tsotsitaal is a multifaceted linguistic system which means the opposition to traditional rules of the linguistic norms, intra-group communication, and outlines identity of urban youth. These urban vernaculars are good examples of what scholars refer to as polylinguaging or metrolingualism--linguistic practices that are dynamic and cross traditional linguistic boundaries--and thus challenge the linguistic frontiers that have existed.

2.3 Conceptual Frameworks

The three related theoretical frameworks used in this analysis are postcolonial perspectives on power

and language, translanguaging theory and language ideology theory. The translanguaging theory characterizes the application of multilingual language as the shift between two or more distinct language systems. The Garcia/Wei formulation highlights the fact that multilingual speakers use all of their linguistic resources in identity-making and in constructing meaning, and the importance of moving towards the use of translanguaging as a practice and a pedagogical strategy. Makalela (2015) applies translanguaging to the South African contexts and assumes that it represents a type of discontinuous continuity that maintains the connection with the native linguistic practices but contributes to the development of new forms that are appropriate in the multilingual realities of the contemporary world. The notion of translanguaging theory is that fluid multilingual practice is highly standard and cognitively evolved to challenge the monoglossic thought system, which promotes the purity and separation of language. The language ideology theory looks at the way that perceptions of languages and their speakers reproduce and reproduce structures of power and social hierarchies.

The framework developed by Irvine and Gal assumes that the ideologies of language are realized through three major processes of semiotics, namely erasure (making some elements of linguistic reality invisible), fractal recursively (the reproduction of oppositions at different levels), and iconization (the transformation of the linguistic features into the symbols of social groups). The theory of language ideology can explain why the African languages are associated with tradition and retrogression as opposed to the colonial languages, which are symbolically correlated with modernity and progress. It also focuses on how language hierarchies work at national, institutional, and interpersonal levels, and how the processes of multilingual competencies erasure are common in the discourse of education that represents students as monolingual. The theory of postcolonialism gives critical insights into the existing colonial systems of power in language practices and policies. Researchers call the process of continuing power, knowledge, and life that may exist even after the official end of colonialism in a term known as coloniality. The denial of indigenous languages and knowledge systems, the internalization of linguistic superiority by those colonized, and the continued dominance of colonial languages in government, education, and other spheres of high status are all linguistic manifestations of coloniality. Postcolonial approaches accentuate the necessity of decolonizing linguistic practices and policies, which should acknowledge native languages as a valid tool of instruction and for producing knowledge. These theoretical frameworks are related to the emphasis of language as a site of power, identity, and resistance. They present the analytical tools to comprehend that African youth develop multilingual identities, manage the conflicting language ideologies, and possibly subvert

the colonial linguistic hierarchies through their creative linguistic performances.

3. METHODOLOGY

The approach to be used in this paper is a systematic literature review, as it has been used to synthesize empirical studies on language practices, ideologies, and the construction of identities among African youth. The review uses twenty peer-reviewed articles published in 2020 or later in accordance with extensive searches of various academic databases. The following terms were used in search: African youth, language ideologies, multilingualism, identity, home language, school language, code-switching, and translanguaging. This was followed by filtering of these papers to exclude anything older than 2020, since this was what the research guidelines dictated. The filtered corpus was recoded with respect to its relevance to the research questions regarding the African youth addressing language ideologies, both at home and at school and identity conflicts that emerged at the time as they were accommodating themselves into a multilingual setting. The main resource of the evidence to this review was the content of this relevance-ranked corpus. These papers are geographically very broad; however, the majority of them are in sub-Saharan Africa, where neither native African nor colonial European language dominates. Such contexts include South Africa (a number of studies), Mozambique, Kenya, Burundi, Namibia and Egypt. The chosen articles used different methodologies such as qualitative interviews, ethnographic observation, discourse analysis, survey research, and mixed methods designs. The three main aspects of the data extraction were examined:

- (1) The samples of the participants and methodological approaches;
- (2) The results in terms of language ideologies and identity development; and
- (3) The theoretical frameworks used. It was this extraction that allowed the discovery of convergent themes and patterns, as well as provided a systematic comparison of studies.

The synthesis approach is carried out according to the principles of thematic analysis, i.e., placing results into categories according to major themes that emerged in multiple studies and analyzing the variations that are unique to a particular situation. The weaknesses of this review are that it is limited to published scholarly work, which may not capture the views of youth expressed through other forms of media; its time frame, which is 2020 or earlier, and thus not covering new developments in the field, which is constantly changing; and its restriction to the English language, which could leave out other relevant studies published in French, Portuguese, or African languages. In spite of the mentioned constraints, the chosen corpus offers solid empirical data to analyze how young African people can overcome the identity dilemma and multilingual assimilation in

different

contexts.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Conflicts in Language Ideology Between Home and School

Many studies have found that the main difference between language ideologies and practices at home and in schools is a key finding. Numerous studies indicate that African youth are nurtured in multilingual households where indigenous African languages facilitate storytelling, familial communication, cultural transmission, and community involvement. In formal education, however, colonial languages like English, French, or Portuguese are usually preferred as teaching tools and signs of academic success. This causes a lot of problems for young people who have to deal with these different language environments. Spernes' (2012) study of students from rural Kenya shows this pattern. When students said, "I use my mother tongue at home and with friends, not in school!" they clearly separated language domains. This functional and spatial division is a result of institutional language policies that forbid or discourage the use of indigenous languages in schools, even when students have similar mother tongues. Colonial language-only policies send strong messages about language hierarchies and how valuable different linguistic identities are.

South Africa's official multilingualism and constitutional acknowledgment of eleven official languages contribute to particularly intricate dynamics within the country. Despite progressive language policies, English is still the main language of instruction

in schools, especially in schools that used to be for white students but are now open to Black African students. Hurst's (2017) study of the language backgrounds of university students shows that English is at the top of the institutional hierarchy, Afrikaans is in the middle, and African languages are at the bottom. Because students internalize these hierarchies, they often feel mixed about their mother tongues. They value them for their cultural identity but see them as obstacles to success in school and work. The disagreements about language ideology go beyond the way language is taught and include more general questions about how we know things and what knowledge is true. The knowledge and experiences of African language speakers are often overlooked or insufficient, as educational curricula, textbooks, and assessment tools typically reflect middle-class, English-speaking standards. Guzula (2018) posits that this results in systemic inequality, as children who speak African languages encounter educational systems that fail to recognize their cultural knowledge and linguistic resources as legitimate foundations for learning.

Young people in Mozambique have the same problems when they speak more than one language at home and with their friends as they do when they go to school, where they only speak Portuguese. Reite's (2016) research indicates that young Mozambicans employ innovative linguistic practices to establish "translinguaging spaces" that contest the historical and cultural dominance of Portuguese and advocate for the preservation of indigenous languages and hybrid forms. These practices reflect contemporary multilingual identities and resistance to colonial linguistic hegemony.

Table 1: Home-School Language Ideology Conflicts in African Contexts

| Dimension | Home Context | School Context | Resulting Tensions |
|------------------------|--|---|---|
| Primary Languages | Indigenous African languages (isiXhosa, Kirundi, Swahili, etc.) | Colonial languages (English, Portuguese, French) | Language switching stress; identity fragmentation |
| Language Ideology | Multilingualism as normal; fluid language mixing valued | Monolingualism or language separation enforced; colonial language supremacy | Devaluation of home language practices; internalized linguistic hierarchies |
| Knowledge Systems | Oral traditions; indigenous epistemologies; community-based learning | Written, standardized curricula; Western epistemologies; individual achievement | Cultural discontinuity; erasure of indigenous knowledge |
| Language Functions | Identity expression; cultural transmission; emotional connection; solidarity | Academic achievement; social mobility; institutional gatekeeping | Instrumental vs. integrative motivation conflicts |
| Enforcement Mechanisms | Informal; community norms; family expectations | Formal policies; disciplinary measures; assessment systems | Institutional power imbalances; youth agency constraints |
| Youth Responses | Comfortable multilingual practices; cultural belonging | Strategic language choices; code-switching; resistance through youth languages | Identity negotiation; creative linguistic innovation |

Table 1 synthesizes key patterns of home-school language ideology conflicts documented across multiple African contexts and synthesized from Bristowe, Oostendorp, and Anthonissen (2014); Hurst (2017); Reite (2016); Spernes (2012); Guzula (2018)

4.2 Youth Linguistic Repertoires and Negotiation of Identity

African young people exhibit exceptional language proficiency in negotiating across language ideologies and achieving flexible repertoires that will help them to overcome social and linguistic obstacles. It has been shown that young people use language in ways that are referred to as translanguaging, polylinguaging, or metrolingualism, which essentially refers to the use of their language resources in context-appropriate ways and not simply switching between their two languages. This is flexible as observed by Bristowe, Oostendorp, and Anthonissen (2014) in their study of the young people in Cape Town. Adolescents are creating complex ways in which they combine Afrikaans, English, and Xhosa by incorporating these languages into their multilingual selves as a result of their educational background, socialization, and identity ideals. The youth are well aware of the way in which various languages and dialects may display various social identities and associations. They are also aware that the language they use and the way they use it will vary depending on the individual they are communicating with, the circumstances, and the objective of the discussion. This repertoire enables the youth to know English and earn income without leaving their families and cultural background because of the presence of indigenous languages. Linguistic repertoire is a more analytically useful concept than the traditional concepts of bilingualism or multilingualism since it reflects the dynamic and diverse nature of language practices of the youth. Bristowe, Oostendorp, and Anthonissen (2014) use a multimodal repertoire framework to explore the issue of language and youth identity in multilingual settings. They show how teens develop complex social identities through combining linguistic resources with other forms of semiotic modalities, such as gesture, clothing and music. Such a perspective concedes that language practices are necessarily interconnected with the higher identity constructions and place-making. Youngsters residing in those racially and class-divided societies struggle to make use of the language to establish what they are. Language is a tool of negotiating racial and cultural identity within post-apartheid settings that Nongogo (2007) examined by conducting research on the multilingual Grade 9 students in a private, desegregated South African high school. When students converse between Afrikaans and English simultaneously, they utter *Mina ngumZulu phaqa* (I am truly Zulu) to signify that they are Zulu.

This demonstrates that cultural pride and adaptation to learning across multiple languages can be observed in the way people speak. One of the main solutions that young people use to address institutional language ideologies and how they figure out who they are is through code-switching. The studies, however, refute deficit views of code-switching as a manifestation of linguistic incompetence or a misunderstanding. Rather, research has shown that code-switching is a

complex communicative technique used to negotiate power relations, express subtle meanings that cannot be conveyed in a single language, signal in-group solidarity, and challenge monolingual norms. The exploration of Eastern Cape of South Africa bilingual students by Simango (2015) reveals the common code switching in the interactions of the students who effectively combine both English and isiXhosa, thus violating school policies that segregate the languages and at the same time asserting bilingual statuses. The interdependence between linguistic practices and identity formation is reflected and shaped by the language choices. The language is used wittily by the youth to place themselves into various identity categories, including ethnicity, nationality, class, generational differences, and urban/rural distinctions. In her study, Makalela (2014) explores how the Kasi-taal language practices in the South African townships are relevant in the development of fluid identities in the language contact zones, whereby youths find themselves thinking metacognitively about their language practices to negotiate and assert their identities.

4.3 Urban Youth and the Languages Used as Markers of Identity

The languages used by urban youth are extremely significant in comprehending the way that African youth develop their identities, and the way they can assimilate into other cultures. These are the variations, such as Sheng in Kenya, Kirundi slang in Burundi and Tsotsitaal in South Africa, as a consequence of widespread code-mixing and creative language manipulation, which act as important markers of youth identity and urban identity. In-depth research that Brookes (2014) does of the South African townships of Tsotsitaal reveals that it is an intricate language comprising of isiZulu, Afrikaans, English, and other African languages. Tsotsitaal also has numerous social roles and is very linguistically creative, a fact that does not indicate lack of language abilities. To the youth, Tsotsitaal is a means of demonstrating urbanism, distinguishing them, and speakers in rural regions, promoting group communication and cohesiveness, and demonstrating their non-adherence to social and linguistic conventions. The social meaning of urban youth language is not restricted to identification with a group of friends. They also contain larger questions such as globalization, modernity, and the identity of Africans. The study by Githiora (2018) of Sheng in Kenya shows that it has evolved since it was a youth slang in Nairobi and is now a common urban language spoken in various social situations and among people of various ages. This growth depicts the transformation of Sheng as a symbol of marginalized youth identity to a symbol of the contemporary urban Kenyan identity. The linguistic mixing characteristic of code-mixing in Sheng, Swahili, English, and a few Kenyan languages contradicts rigid ideologies of language and demonstrates the nature of multilingual Kenya in the contemporary world. In their comparative research of youth languages in Africa,

Nassenstein and Hollington (2016) see certain similarities, while at the same time some regional differences.

The languages of African urban youth typically have high levels of code-mixing in a dominant matrix language, new lexical growth through borrowing, new semantics, and morphological changes. They also show a rapid linguistic transformation as signs of the vibrant nature of youth culture, as markers of urban, modern, and youthful identity. These are the attributes that can be referred to by scholars as global repertoires and urban fluidity, since young people create their own African urban identities by incorporating local and global linguistic resources. Much is in dispute over the relationship between urban youth languages and schools. It is a type of language that is usually prohibited or looked down upon in schools, as many believe it is incorrect and interferes with academic performance. However, studies disregard such deficit views. Hurst-Harosh (2020) impresses upon the use and abuse of African urban youth languages in the academic context by stating that although it is not appropriate in academic writing styles, it is a valid linguistic system that can be used as a pedagogical tool in sociolinguistics, multilingualism, and language variation. The example of the banning of youth languages in schools is an illustration of institutional opposition to the acknowledgement of African multilingualism and the youth linguistic agency.

The youths have a profound knowledge of how language varies under various circumstances and the way of employing it appropriately. They oppose the institutional attempts to absolutely eliminate these dialects or make them appear as evidence of bad language skills, although they realize that the city youth languages have some social functions and are inappropriate in some official situations. Language is a crucial tool to negotiate power relations, and this opposition represents wider conflicts between the freedom and independence of young people and the control of institutions.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Language Hierarchies and Colonialism.

According to postcolonial theorists, the term coloniality refers to the long-standing existence of colonial power relations alongside epistemologies, even after a nation has achieved the status of political sovereignty. This is portrayed through the fact that colonial languages are still widely used in the education systems of Africa. Prioritizing English, French, and Portuguese languages over indigenous African ones in the hierarchy is an expression of and perpetuation of more far-reaching inequalities with colonial history. Although there are official policies that favour multilingualism and more people are beginning to appreciate the rights of the native languages, none of these hierarchies is very easy to alter. The analysis by Hurst

(2017) demonstrates the multiple ways in which language ideologies in the South African universities perpetuate colonial relations. English is the most prestigious language, and it is associated with being a global citizen, succeeding at school, and securing a good job. Even though the constitution acknowledges African languages, the representation of these languages in higher education is still underrepresented. The reason is that they are perceived as traditional, connected to a particular location, and not very practical. Although students consider their native languages to be a part of their culture and follow their importance, they are internalizing these hierarchies and frequently feel embarrassed or confused about them. Fanon called this internalization colonization alienation, which is the permanent psychological impacts of colonialism using language ideologies. Coloniality is an effective analytical tool for explaining how the language hierarchies persist even after policy changes. The domination of colonial languages is based on deep epistemological suppositions about knowledge, modernity, and progress, not on the practical issues like the availability of resources or global communication.

The indigenous knowledge systems, consisting of the African languages, are considered specific and traditional as compared to the Western knowledge systems, which are universal and excellent since they are communicated using the colonial languages. This pyramid of knowledge whitewashes the harm that had been done to the African linguistic and cultural heritage, as it justifies the preservation of colonial language dominance in schools. Nonetheless, studies also show that there are linguistic practices that can be used to fight colonialism. Urban vernaculars, either through youth translanguaging or through claims of the importance of indigenous languages, are all forms of decolonial resistance. The study conducted by Makalela (2015) concerning translanguaging assumes the idea that these practices are a discourse of resistance to the coloniality of language, as he argues that multilingual practices that are fluid challenge the hierarchies and linguistic distinctions of the colonial educational systems. This resistance at the practical and symbolic levels is achieved as teenagers establish linguistic spaces in which their multilingual status is legitimized and monolingual norms are defied.

5.2 Translanguaging as a Retaliation and a Resource

The theory of translanguaging offers a robust framework for reconceptualizing multilingualism among African youths as a higher-order linguistic competence which should be recognized and utilized as an educational resource rather than being viewed as a deviation monolingual norm. The translanguaging approach challenges the beliefs of the colonial language policies, such as that monolingual norms are the epitome of academic success, that languages are different, closed systems that should be kept apart, and that a language mixture is an indication of incompetence or confusion.

The use of translanguaging to South Africa in Makalelas (2015) application explains the discontinuous continuity of African multilingualism- practices that preserve their links to the indigenous languages and adapt to the new reality of multilingualism. Translanguaging appreciates the fact that multilingual people make use of a single set of linguistic resources rather than a set of discrete linguistic systems. The implications of these reconsiderations are significant to the field of education since it implies that legislation banning segregation and code-switching of languages in favor of bilingualism and multilingualism, in fact, complicate the process of learning among those students. Other studies have reported the different aspects through which translanguaging is both an asset and a means of resistance among the African youth. Translanguaging practices affirm the legitimacy of multilingualism and are a way of resistance to the institutional monolingual norm. Changing languages during classes despite being instructed not to do so is a challenge to the hierarchy in languages, and the demand to be allowed to have the entire language repertoire.

The urban youth's multilingualism is a resistance to the colonial linguistic and language purism. Translanguaging is a device that assists individuals in learning and communicating with other people faster. Research has shown that when students are in a position to engage all their language capabilities, they are able to express and convey more complex ideas, and they are able to make a link between what they learn at school and at home. A study examining multilingual literacies as a learning method by Probyn has demonstrated that once translanguaging pedagogies are adopted to substitute the ideologies of deficits, then African language-speaking children are perceived as capable multilinguals rather than poor English learners. This shift has significant consequences for the educational levels and equality. However, there are substantial issues facing translanguaging as a method of education in Africa. These are the lack of training of teachers in the area of translanguaging pedagogies, assessment systems that are monolingually oriented, insufficient resources to prepare multilingual materials, and deeply ingrained ideologies that mixing languages is an issue. With the new methods of education, correcting these issues will involve enormous shifts in the processes of school organization and cognitive attitudes towards language.

5.3 What this means for policy

The literature review used in this paper can be of great implication to the education language policy in African settings. Existing policies supporting colonial languages and monolingualism standards are evidently not suitable to satisfy the demands of multilingual African young people. This results in identity conflicts, discontinuity of cultures, and disproportionate education. There are several issues that should be addressed in evidence-based policy reform.

African multilingualism has to be viewed by the policies as an asset rather than an issue. This requires the adoption of multilingual education policies that reinforce the growth and maintenance of more than two languages along the teaching/education process, unlike additive bilingualism models, where native languages are seen as temporary tools of mediating knowledge of the colonial language. According to the policy advocacy brief by Ouane and Glanz (2010), the funding of African languages, as well as multilingual education, results in successful educational outcomes, an enhanced sense of belonging to a particular culture, and more equitable development. Second, they should be based on policies that encourage translanguaging pedagogies that allow students to learn with the help of all their language skills. This does not imply that we should cease to teach the colonial languages that are still relevant in communication and employment opportunities in this world. Implementing it is impossible without going beyond monolingual standards in curriculum development, teacher training, and assessment reform. Third, the policies must address the material and symbolic components of language hierarchies. The material dimensions involve such issues as curriculum development, instructional training of teachers, and distribution of African language materials. The symbolic dimensions can be exemplified by messages that are communicated to the public concerning the importance of the language, the application of the African languages to the high-status areas, and multilingualism as a strength. The two aspects require long-term commitment and investment. Fourth, youth should be taken into account in policymaking. Most of the studies clearly indicate that young people have definite ideas on language and education and have a profound knowledge of how language and society interact. Any policies that are formulated without consultation with the young people may fail to capture the necessary information and therefore fail to consider the needs of the young people and their experiences. Lastly, language policy changes must be included in larger decolonization initiatives of education that consider instructional practices, curriculum content, and our knowledge presuppositions. The language policy is not going to correct structural injustices that are embedded within the colonial educational systems. In order to implement any real changes, we must consider how knowledge is produced, what knowledge is valued, and how we can utilize education to contribute to the development goals of Africans rather than maintain the colonial hierarchies.

6. CONCLUSION

In the current paper, the intricate mechanism of multilingual integration and identity negotiation will be discussed with a focus on how African youths negotiate the ideologies of two languages at home and at school. As the evidence shows, the school policies that give priority to the colonial language and uphold monolingual standards, and home-based multilingual practices that are oriented on indigenous African languages, cause a lot

of conflict to youth in various contexts of Africa. When young people attempt to preserve their own culture, and at the same time pursue education and career opportunities linked to the knowledge of the colonial languages, the tensions lead to identity conflicts. However, the research also demonstrates that youth are highly inventive in the use of words, and they are powerful. The youth in Africa develop new youth languages in the urban areas, which are significant to contemporary African identities. They also acquire numerous languages and apply them in loose meanings. These are practices that exemplify opposition to the hierarchies of language as well as adaptation to the multilingual realities. Through exemplifying the intellectual richness and cultural richness of multilingual competence, linguistic innovation in youth challenges the deficit perspectives of African multilingualism as a problem. Translanguaging, language ideology, and postcolonial theory are theoretical frameworks that offer strong analytical backgrounds that can help us see these dynamics. Translanguaging challenges monolingual norms and linguistic divisions, which are legacies of the colonial school, by reframing multilingual practices as assets rather than weaknesses. The postcolonial views highlight the continuing coloniality of the language policies that still favor the colonial languages, long after political independence. Language ideology theory, on the other hand, explains the way beliefs about languages reflect and reproduce social hierarchies. The results have important implications for educational practice and policy.

The existing policies that have promoted the superiority of the colonial languages and prohibit the use of the native languages are not fair to the multilingual

African youth, and they feel like outlaws in their own culture. Evidence-based reform should support translanguaging pedagogies, realize African multilingualism as a resource, challenge the material and symbolic aspects of language hierarchies, take into account the perspectives of young people, and include language policy in the wider process of decolonization. This review has a few things that should be considered. The time constraint of 2020 or earlier is not the most recent development; the focus on published academic sources may not necessarily capture the youths' views expressed through the use of other media, and the inclusion of English language publications may overlook other potentially important research done in other languages. The future directions are to deal with particular policy interventions, longitudinal identity development, interdependence of language with other identity dimensions, and the comparison of different regions of Africa and language ecologies. Although these constraints exist, the synthesis below offers significant proof on the subject of identity conflict and bilingual absorption among young African people. The study suggests that language is an essential nexus of youth agency, modern injustices, and colonial histories. In order to address the issues raised in this review, we have to acknowledge and appreciate African multilingualism, nurture the linguistic identities of young people, and disrupt the colonial language hierarchies that continue to dominate the African educational sector. To ensure that the educational systems serve the needs and aspirations of multilingual African youth effectively, they have to undergo this transformation, though they should not disregard the linguistic and cultural diversity of the continent.

Table 2: Policy and Practice Recommendations for Supporting Multilingual African Youth

| Domain | Current Practice | Problematic | Evidence-Based Recommendation | Expected Outcomes |
|------------------------|---|-------------|--|---|
| Medium of Instruction | Early transition to colonial language; prohibition of indigenous languages | | Sustained multilingual instruction; translanguaging pedagogies allowing full repertoire use | Improved learning outcomes; reduced identity conflict; stronger cultural connections |
| Curriculum & Materials | Colonial language-only materials; Western-centric content | | Multilingual materials; culturally relevant content; indigenous knowledge integration | Enhanced engagement; epistemological diversity; decolonized knowledge production |
| Assessment | Monolingual testing; colonial language proficiency as sole measure | | Multilingual assessment options; recognition of translanguaging competence | More accurate ability measurement; reduced linguistic bias; validation of multilingual skills |
| Teacher Education | Training in colonial language instruction only; deficit perspectives on multilingualism | | Preparation in translanguaging pedagogies; asset-based approaches to multilingualism | Teacher capacity for multilingual instruction; shifted language ideologies |
| Language Status | Colonial languages in high-status domains; African languages marginalized | | African languages in official functions; representation in media, government, higher education | Symbolic revaluation; reduced internalized hierarchies; language maintenance |

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| Youth Language Varieties | Prohibition and stigmatization of urban youth languages | Recognition as legitimate varieties; use as teaching resources about sociolinguistics | Validation of youth linguistic creativity; reduced school-youth culture disconnect |
| Policy Development | Top-down policies without youth input | Participatory processes incorporating youth perspectives and experiences | Policies responsive to youth needs; enhanced youth agency and ownership |
| Resource Allocation | Minimal investment in African language education | Substantial funding for materials, teacher training, curriculum development | Material capacity for multilingual education; demonstrated policy commitment |

Note: Synthesized from Makalela (2015); Guzula (2018); Ouane & Glanz (2010); Hurst-Harosh (2020)

We must understand that there is no problem of fixing multilingualism among African youths, but rather it is a resource that could be developed. The educational systems that respect and develop the language proficiency of youths, their cultural identity, and creative language practices will contribute to the individual students as well as the overall objectives of equity, development, and decolonization. Linguistic versatility and cultural solidarity as displayed by African youth in mixing up between opposing ideologies of language gives hope that given appropriate policy support and institutional change, multilingual assimilation can become a strength instead of a source of conflict and as a result, young Africans will be able to make integrative identities that would not only honor their cultural heritage but also their present-day multilingual conditions.

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