

## **Towards a paradigm shift in conceptualizing multilingual models of language education throughout Africa: A review of literature**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper aims to critique the monolingual characterization that has informed language planning and policy throughout Africa. This entails an exploration of the utility of certain language planning and policy pronouncements, as well as models arising out of these. The paper contends that one of the major drawbacks of current policy is that it is still based on Western and colonial notions of multilingualism, which basically involves multiple monolingualisms. Further, the paper offers a critical review of the theory of multilingual education in Africa. It draws on the notion of multilingualism as social practice to critique post-colonial language planning and policies in Africa. In turn, the paper faults monolingual biases in the notions and models used to describe and promote multilingualism in Africa, which mirror descriptions of the language situation in Western socio-cultural contexts.*

*Furthermore, the paper explores the models of language education implemented in Africa. The paper unpacks the concepts and characteristics of bilingual education, ranging from subtractive and additive arrangements to the newly proposed recursive and dynamic models including the heteroglossic interpretation of bilingual and multilingual communicative practices. Moreover, the paper underscores the different Western models of bilingual education that have not worked in Namibia before, followed by a discussion of the kind of models that Namibia should adopt. It emphasizes the prospects for linguistic repertoire-based multilingual education models in Africa. The paper critiques the monolingual habitus, and advocates for a repertoire-based multilingual models for Africa. If multilingualism is to be recognized as a key model which may be followed in multilingual contexts and, as such, a crucial element in education, then we need to find ways of developing and introducing an explicit and critical pedagogy in our schools, to foster the development of multilingual and critical multilingual literacy.*

*The paper begins with the reconciliation of the main theoretical models with particular programme types and explores aspects of bilingualism from many sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic perspectives. It highlights the distortions in the conceptualization of multilingualism and multilingual education, and what it entails in Africa's socio-cultural contexts which may be attributed to the monolingual biases in the notions and models used to describe and promote multilingualism in Africa. It suggests a move towards greater flexibility, i.e. towards heteroglossic multilingualism. Finally, the paper recommends a paradigm shift in conceptualizing multilingual education models in late modern globalized societies in Africa.*

**Keywords:** *multilingual education, language education models, language planning and policy*

### **Introduction**

This paper discusses the models which are most commonly used in African settings using terminology which is currently in use in the (international) literature. It is worth mentioning that this terminology is frequently misunderstood or used in different ways by a number of people. As Heugh (2005) notes, there are three dominant education models, viz. the subtractive education models, transitional education models with earlier or

later exit strategies and additive education models which are often implemented in Africa. As she further notes, the aim of the subtractive model is to move learners out of the mother tongue (MT)/home language (HL)/first language (L1) and into the second language (L2), called here the official/foreign language, as a medium of instruction (MoI) as early as possible. Sometimes this involves a straight-for L2 medium from the first grade of school.

The bottom line is the use of the L2 mainly or only for teaching and learning. As Heugh (2005) points out, the transitional models have the same end goal as subtractive bilingual models. She further points out that it is a single target language at the end of school; and the target is the L2 as MoI. She maintains that learners may start school in the L1 and then gradually move towards the L2 as the MoI. If the transition (switch) to L2 takes place within 1-3 years, it is called the early-exit (from the L1) transitional model, and if the transition (switch) is delayed to Grades 5-6, it is called late-exit (from L1) transitional model.

The Namibian bilingual education model may fall within the ambit of early-exit transitional (or early transit) model. It may as well fall within the ambit of 'subtractive bilingualism' (Plüddemann, 2010). 'Subtractive bilingualism' refers to schooling that neglects or prematurely abandons learners' MT/HL as language of learning and teaching (LoLT) after only using it for three or four years. However, the notion of subtractive bilingualism appears to be conceptually flawed. The key question is: How can bilingualism be subtracted? The basic premise of this concept is that learners come to school with only one single mother tongue. This is tantamount to monolingualism, that is, if the mother tongue is replaced, for argument's sake with English; it means that one monolingualism based on the mother tongue is replaced with another one based on English. The question remains: What happens when these learners go back to their respective homes? To overcome the problem of 'subtractive bilingualism', therefore, Weber and Horner (2012) suggest that the best system of education might be a flexible system of additive bilingual education, giving the children access to both English and indigenous African languages (IALs).

According to Plüddemann (2010), additive bilingualism stands for the maintenance of the mother tongue as LoLT for a minimum of 6 years, either alone or alongside a second LoLT. In the South African context, as Banda (2017) notes, additive bilingualism is premised on 6-7 years of primary education in the mother tongue before switching to English or Afrikaans as the sole language of education. As Banda (2017) puts it, the African mother tongue is discarded

altogether or becomes an (optional) additional (language) subject. In terms of classroom practice, this effectively means monolingual/monoglot mother tongue practices being replaced by monolingual/monoglot English practices (Banda, 2010). Consequently, as Mohamed and Banda (2008) state, after 6 years or more of mother tongue medium of instruction, it is a waste of time and resources that the language is replaced with English in a monolingual educational system, without giving learners the alternative to a bilingual education model in which both languages are used as languages of content matter instruction.

I therefore argue that the additive bilingual model is not different from other transitional approaches, as it envisages a switch to English medium of instruction (EMoI), mainly for those that start education in an African language. The difference is that the transition from instruction in the learner's mother tongue to the L2 may take a bit longer. In my view, this makes the additive model a transitional model, just like the early- and late-exit models. The difference only lies in that the additive bilingual education model envisages the switch to take place after 6-7 years of mother tongue instruction. The assumption of the additive bilingual education model is that 6-7 years of mother tongue education (MTE) will enable learners to have acquired the cognitive competence required to handle learning in their second language, viz. English, French or Portuguese. This is tantamount to replacing mother tongue-based monolingual education with English-based monolingual education, both of which are incompatible with multilingual discourse practices that characterize the late modern multilingual spaces of Africa (Banda, 2010). Models and language development strategies, deemed suitable for Western countries with a monolingual speaker at their centre, are mistakably applied to African contexts with a multilingual speaker at their centre. For example, the concept of 'additive bilingualism/multilingualism' makes sense when a language is 'added' to a monolingual speaker's repertoire, but not when it is added to the linguistic repertoire of a person who is already bi-/multilingual (Banda, 2009b).

The fundamental question, in my view, is: In what way does one 'add' a language

when that language is already part of the speaker's repertoire? The notion of 'adding' a language only makes sense in monolingual contexts, and not in the African context with its multilingual heritage (Brock-Utne, 2009). Banda (2010) questions static models, and the appropriateness of using Western models of multilingual education in African contexts. In the light of the failures that these models have engendered, we are beginning to question the belief that there are universal truths and recipes that apply without taking specific historical situations into consideration. As Africans, we should henceforth stop the 'one-size-fits-all' approach to the notion of multilingual education. We should look for solutions to our problems stemming from the profound socio-economic and political changes inherent in Africa, rather than relying on Western models which do not necessarily fit the African context (Haingura, 2017).

### **Multilingualism and the colonial legacy in Africa**

It is notable that multilingualism is a reality in Africa. As Mchazime (2003, p. 3) points out, "Many [African] children come to school when they have already been exposed to one or two other local languages". Nevertheless, it is also worth mentioning that multilingualism does not lend itself to an easy definition, possibly, as multilingualism means many things to many people. As Aronin and Hufeisen (2009) put it, most psycholinguistic scholars define multilingualism as the use of three or more languages. I therefore argue that, if we regard multilingualism as the use of three or more languages then researchers need to be able to count an individual's languages in order to know whether the potential participant is a member of the category of multilingual individuals (Haingura, 2017). As Aronin and Hufeisen (2009) observe, counting languages is difficult and even problematic.

According to Mchazime (2003), the term 'multilingualism' refers to the situation in which a person or a group of people has some knowledge and ability to use more than two languages. As Ouane (2009) aptly points out, a number of definitions suggest that when we talk about bilingualism, we also talk about multilingualism, and that multilingualism means everything that is 'more than one language'. By way of explanation, Ouane

(2009) shows what multilingualism is by going through a list of what it is not. As Ouane (2009) argues, multilingualism is not multidialectism or many varieties of the same language. Ouane (2009) emphasizes that it is not a problem of two or three languages existing side by side, but it is that so many languages exist, and are used in one way or another within the same country.

In view of the above, and being perfectly aware of term confusion, particularly emanating from the literature, this paper, following Weber and Horner (2012, p. 3-4)

... presents an alternative view of multilingualism not in terms of 'languages' but in terms of linguistic resources and repertoires, and advocates this as a more successful way of capturing what is often an elusive and intractable linguistic reality. It takes a broad definition of multilingualism as verbal repertoires consisting of more than one variety (whether language or dialect).

This paper therefore takes a more holistic view of speakers' communicative repertoires. As Weber and Horner (2012, p. 3-4) so aptly point out, "Most speakers in the world have a repertoire of varieties at their disposal, and hence are multilingual, whether these varieties are traditionally included within the same 'language' or under separate 'languages' ...". Furthermore, Blommaert (2010, p. 102) suggests that "Multilingualism ... should not be seen as a collection of 'languages' that a speaker controls, but rather as a complex of *specific* semiotic resources, some of which belong to a conventionally defined language". As Weber and Horner (2012, p. 3) succinctly summarize:

We all have a large number of linguistic resources at our disposal, and it does not really make a difference whether they belong to only one conventionally defined 'language' or several of them. Hence, multilingualism is a matter of degree, a continuum, and since we all use different linguistic varieties, registers, styles, genres, and accents, we are all to a greater or lesser degree multilingual.

Given the multilingual trends in Africa, therefore, multilingualism should be seen as social practice with which people conduct their interactions and by which they assume new social identities and index their social experiences. Multilingualism as social practice in Africa also allows greater permeability of identities as it enables people to adopt and discard identities when there is a need to (Prah, 2010). Thus, Heller (2007, p. 1) suggests a different approach to researching multilingualism which shifts away from “a highly ideological view of coexisting linguistic systems, to a more critical approach that situates language practices in social and political contexts and privileges language as social practice, speakers as social actors and boundaries as products of social action”. Blackledge and Creese (2010) support this approach to multilingualism; because it explains how new multilingualisms emerge, as people, more particularly the young, create meanings with their diverse linguistic repertoires.

The most fundamental question is: Is multilingualism new to Africa? As Banda (2009b) points out, patterns of trans-tribal commerce and trade, and the close proximity and density of related and not-so-related dialects in several parts of Africa suggest that forms of multilingualism have been the norm in Africa for centuries, even before colonialism. According to Banda (2010, p. 231), “Colonialism merely added another dimension to the complex multilingual contexts”. As a consequence, as Banda (2017) puts it, the European (and Arab) influences only added different (colonial and religious) dimensions to the linguistic situation in Africa (Banda, 2010, 2016). As Banda (2017, p. 3) argues:

... even before Europeans came to Africa, the nature of African society in which people moved from one area to another in pursuit of new land for farming, grazing for cattle, trade and also due to wars of conquest means that language contact and multilingualism are not entirely new to the continent.

As Banda (2017, p. 3) further notes:

The click sound in the first syllable in Xhosa [... I use Xhosa without the prefix to refer to the language speakers ... as is the convention in English] and a vast amount of click sounds found in many Bantu languages are indicative of the language contact between the Bantu people and the Khoisan people. Thus, the linguistic phenomenon of multilingualism predates the arrival of Europeans and Arabs into Africa.

As far as the Namibian situation is concerned, Haingura (2017, p. 118) reminds us about “... The click sound [found] in the first syllable of the toponym Gciriku [cf. the second syllables in the ethnonym muGciriku/vaGciriku, which refers to people, and in the glossonym ruGciriku, which refers to the language]”, coupled with the many click sounds found in some of the IALs in Namibia, as indicative of the language contact between the indigenous people of Namibia and the Khoisan people. Consequently, as Banda (2017, p. 3) puts it, “The European and Arab sojourns and subsequent urbanisation in Africa only helped to accelerate multilingualism and linguistic diversity whose roots were already in place”.

### **Conceptualization of the appropriate models of multilingual education**

There are a number of challenges and contestations surrounding the conceptualization of multilingual models of language education throughout Africa. For instance, several concepts with regard to language policies and multilingual education are not always understood in the same way by all in a diverse continent such as Africa. A closer look at the conceptualization of possible models of bilingual education in institutional documents in Africa reveals ideological meanings that narrow the perspective of bilingualism (Banda, 2016).

As Mtenje (2009) argues, one of the fascinating things about multilingualism and the question of language-in-education are the differences in conceptualization of the appropriate model of multilingual education a country may implement. He further argues that this follows the fact that there are different conceptualizations with regard to possible models in multilingual education with different

consequences. As Mtenje (2009, p. 67) succinctly puts it:

... it has been generally acknowledged that the multilingual nature of most African societies has been conceived by many African governments and language planners as a source of complexity. The situation has also been worsened by the linguistic typological classification and grouping by scholars.

As a case in point, one can take Ferguson's (1966) national, sociolinguistic profile formulas which group languages into three types, according to characteristics such as language functions, status and demographic size, namely major language, minor language, and language of special status. As Mtenje (2009, p. 68) points out, "It is very difficult to use Ferguson's language classification without distorting the sociolinguistic realities of most African nations because of the inherent problems regarding the typology". As Mtenje (2009, p. 68) further points out, in the planning of languages for use in education, the classification of languages into groups such as those proposed by Ferguson has had a direct influence on the decisions on which languages should be used. Further, Mtenje (2009, p. 70) notes that:

In some cases where there have been no obvious 'dominant' languages to qualify as major languages, exoglossic (former colonial languages) have been adopted as candidates for use in schools; the argument being that there would be no justification for choosing the appropriate language(s) from among the minor languages. The foreign language in this case has been perceived as a 'neutral' choice.

In my view, this is exactly what had happened in the Kavango Region. The classification of minor versus major languages had been the biggest problem hampering the promotion of Rugciriku (now Rumanyo). For example, the South African colonial apartheid regime, of course, with the tacit support from their local henchmen, did not see the need to develop a minor language, in this case Rugciriku, using government resources if these very same

resources could be channeled to promote a major language of the region, viz. Rukwangali. I argued elsewhere (Haingura, 2017) that, in Namibia, even today, the notion of major versus minor languages still continues to be applied in the language development arena. As an example, for every donor-funded project that comes into Namibia to assist with the development of indigenous languages only the major languages are selected for piloting.

Mtenje (2009) observes that attempts to empower indigenous African languages within the domain of education, through their intellectualization, are affected by other classification terminologies. For instance, according to him, Emenanjo (1990) suggests a three-tier language developmental typology of Nigerian languages based on their participation in technological development: developed, developing and underdeveloped languages. The developed languages are those with well-established orthographies, standard written varieties, long traditions of writing, large and varied corpora of written literature, as well as sophisticated and dynamic meta languages. As Adegbija (2001, p. 3) points out, using Emenanjo's definition, "none of the more than 400 languages spoken in Nigeria would qualify as a developed language, because there is no indigenous African language which is used as a medium of teaching all the subjects at higher levels of education in the country".

Consequently, as Mtenje (2009) states, there are inherent problems with classifying languages along the parameters followed by Emenanjo. Mtenje (2009, p. 71) further states that:

Firstly, language development ... is relative to the function(s) it is intended to serve in specified contexts. This being the case, a better alternative would be to consider it as a process rather than an absolute or complete state of a language. Thus languages may be considered to be 'developed' in relation to the specific functions that they are intended to serve in the societies where they are used. Secondly, there is a danger that by classifying languages in this manner, one may provide excuses to language planners for excluding the so-called underdeveloped languages from the language planning activities on

the basis that they cannot be used in domains like science and technology, or higher education.

He maintains that:

This may result in circular arguments like some languages cannot be used in domains such as education, science and technology because they are not yet developed and that there is no need for developing them because they cannot be used in high status domains like education, science and technology anyway (Mtenje, 2009, p. 71).

As Mtenje (2009) notes, a further dimension with regard to the conceptual differences in multilingual education resides in the multiplicity of language policy alternatives, and the models of education which may be followed in multilingual contexts. Macdonald and Burroughs (1991), for instance, present an extensive classification of models of bilingual education which Luckett (1995) uses in a detailed comparative survey of sub-Saharan Africa, and group them into different categories. The first category contains models which are adopted under exoglossic language policies in countries where the principal medium of communication is a foreign language. The second category is transitional bilingualism and the third refers to models adopted under endoglossic language policies which seek to promote local or national languages which are spoken by the majority of the population.

However, this paper's conceptualization is informed by recent post-structuralist thinking (Banda, 2016) about multilingual education. Therefore, the definition and description of multilingual education, in this paper, conforms to UNESCO's (2003) definition and description. In a 2003 position paper titled "Education in a multilingual world", UNESCO discusses the following aspects of 'multilingual education' thus:

Bilingual and multilingual education refer to the use of two or more languages as mediums of instruction. In much of the specialized literature, the two types are subsumed under the term bilingual education. However, UNESCO adopted

the term 'multilingual education' in 1999 in the General Conference Resolution 12 to refer to the use of at least three languages, the mother tongue, a regional or national language and an international language ... (UNESCO, 2003 in Legère, 2003, p. 43).

As Legère (2003, p. 47) succinctly captures it, "To summarise again the UNESCO position about multilingual education ... accounts for a well-structured approach to (i) the mother tongue (MT-L1), (ii) a regional or national language (L2); and, (iii) an international language (L3)". Nevertheless, judging from the above statements, Legère (2003, p. 47) argues, "... the African response to the multilingual education issue as outlined by UNESCO is rather vague. Relevant documents on education and language policy in sub-Saharan Africa do not use this term *expressis verbis*". Legère (2003, p. 51) further points out that:

... multilingual education as ... defined and described by UNSECO (2003) does not exist in sub-Saharan Africa in the form of nationwide education programs. Whether African languages play a role as MoI in education (...) or not, their position is still weak in comparison to foreign languages like English, French or Portuguese. Even if African languages are used in school as MoI in lower primary grades, most of these languages (with the exception of Swahili) are withhold the chance of being officially accepted as MoI after Grade 3 or 4. Sooner or later in the primary cycle subtractive bilingualism is the rule, i.e. a foreign language (L3) that is hardly mastered by the learners after a short exposure to this language as a subject abruptly becomes the medium of instruction.

#### **The main models of multilingual education implemented throughout Africa**

The three main models under the category of exoglossic language policies are the submersion, immersion and delayed immersion models. As Mtenje (2009, p. 73) points out, "The submersion model usually applies to situations where a minority of children (for example immigrants) from a subordinate language are exclusively subjected to

education in a dominant language, and no teaching occurs in their mother tongue". Similarly, Kosonen and Young (2009) argue that:

Submersion education is the opposite of using learners' mother tongue in education, and refers to the deployment of a language of instruction that the learner does not understand. Submersion education commonly takes place when minority children with limited proficiency in the majority language (...) are put into the majority language classrooms without any provision for accommodating or alleviating the learners' disadvantages caused by not knowing the language (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000 in Kosonen & Young, 2009, p. 13-14).

In Africa, the submersion education model is often the opposite of what has been defined and described above. That is, submersion education ordinarily takes place when a majority of African children, with limited proficiency in the minority language are subjected to education in a minority language, and no teaching occurs in their mother tongue. As Mtenje (2009, p. 72) notes, "In the immersion model, the aim is to teach the children in a class through the medium of a second or foreign language from the first year of school. The children's first language may be used orally and it may also be taught as a subject". However, in the delayed immersion model, as Mtenje (2009) further notes:

... the child is taught basic reading and writing skills in his/her mother tongue from grade one to grade four and English, the second language, is taught as a subject from grade one up to the end of secondary education. English takes over as a medium of teaching at the primary level from grade five to the end of the education system. The local languages which were used as media of instruction may continue to be taught up to secondary school level ... (Mtenje, 2009, p. 74-75).

He maintains that:

The delayed immersion model applies to situations similar to the immersion cases, except that there is a period of adjustment before the child begins to learn in a second language. That is, in the early years of their education, children are taught reading and writing skills in their first language. As this is happening, the second language, which eventually takes over from the mother tongue, is taught as a subject. When it takes over as a medium of instruction, the second language is used across the curriculum and the children's first language usually continues to be taught as a subject in later years of primary and secondary education (Mtenje, 2009, p. 72).

Furthermore, as Mtenje (2009, p. 73-74) states, in the category of endoglossic models of bilingual education, "... there are various models of language policies in education whose common goal is to develop indigenous languages in a given country". For Mtenje (2009, p. 74), "One alternative is to use the learner's first language as a language of teaching throughout their education, with the second language being taught as a subject". He observes that an alternative approach under endoglossic models of bilingual education is to use the learners' linguistic resources which they bring to the class as a basis for the MoI. In this case, as Mtenje (2009) puts it, two or more of the languages spoken by the children are used in the same class as languages of instruction, in a structured or an unstructured manner.

Moreover, the Namibian educational system uses different 'national languages' and English as the mediums of instruction, in line with the country's language-in-education policy (LiEP) which emphasizes 'bilingualism' in these languages. However, what is meant by the concept 'bilingualism', in the Namibian context, remains controversial. In most cases, "... even the weakest two-language models, requiring minimal use of the learners' first language as a language of instruction, have been called bilingual education" (Kosonen, 2009, p. 40). Nevertheless, this seems to be the case throughout Africa. As Banda (2009a) notes, "... what constitutes a bilingual education programme is often a matter for

debate. For some, what makes a bilingual programme is a mere fact that two languages are used in the education system, that is, one as LoLT and the other as subject ...” (Banda, 2009a, p. 109).

The question remains: To what extent are the education models in vogue (throughout Africa) bilingual? As Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) notes, although these models use the term bilingual education, they do not fall within the understanding of the classic definition of such. Most of them just use the term ‘bilingual’ in “sheer rhetoric” (Holmarsdottir, 2001, p. 39), and do not justify the label bilingual education let alone multilingual education (Haingura, 2017).

Finally, I argue that, currently, the basic philosophy and ideology regarding language education policy throughout Africa is informed by monolingualism and is not so different from the policy promoted by colonialists (Banda, 2009b). I therefore suggest that there is a need to explore models in which two or more languages are used as media of instruction. As Banda (2009b, p. 2) puts it, “Current models focus on one language, while the other languages are seen as optional ‘additional’ languages”. I elaborate this point subsequently.

### **Towards alternative concepts of multilingual education**

Having briefly discussed the various bilingual models, I now explore what consequences this has on decisions with regard to language-in-education policies in Africa. For Mtenje (2009), the main issue that arises out of these models of bilingual education is that language planning, in some cases, may possibly not follow a single model. Instead, there may be a blend of aspects from exoglossic, transitional and endoglossic models in one policy which may result in inconsistencies in the application of language policy guidelines. This may be one of the reasons why Bamgbose (1991) states that language policies all over Africa are characterized by one or more of the following complications: avoidance, vagueness, arbitrariness, fluctuation and declaration without implementation. As Mchazime (2003) succinctly puts it:

It is generally difficult to implement multilingual education in Africa ... This is mainly so because policy-makers are

faced with challenges which put them in dilemmas of various kinds. Some of the dilemmas are caused by lack of credible information on which to base decisions. Language experts and practitioners should, therefore, play a special role not only in doing research but also in providing such information in a more digestible form (Mchazime, 2003, p. 23).

As a consequence, Miti (2009) suggests a few models that should be used as a form of bilingual education in southern Africa. He offers a brief explanation of some of these models, namely monolingual education, bilingual education and multilingual education, and reconceptualises what they might mean for language issues in post-colonial Africa. According to Miti (2009), bilingual education may take two forms:

In One-way Bilingual Education, the same class, which is made up of speakers of one and the same mother tongue, is taught through the medium of both their mother tongue and a second/foreign language, whereas in Two-way Bilingual Education, speakers of two different mother tongues are taught together in a bilingual classroom using the two languages interchangeably. It is expected that in the process, the two language groups will learn each other’s mother tongue in addition to receiving tuition in other learning areas through the medium of both languages ... In the southern African context, at least one of the languages may be the learners’ mother tongue (Miti, 2009, p. 163-164).

However, as he puts it:

In the southern African context, since the indigenous African languages have not previously been used as languages of learning and teaching, opting for the Two-way Bilingual Education would further marginalise mother tongue speakers of indigenous African languages. Because educators have been trained to teach in the medium of English or Portuguese, and seeing that there are currently more and better materials in these ex-colonial languages, those



learners who are mother tongue speakers of these foreign languages or those who have had better exposures to them at home will have an unfair advantage over learners from relatively poor family backgrounds. Moreover, there can be a tendency to use more English or Portuguese than indigenous African languages (Miti, 2009, p. 164).

Nevertheless, Miti (2009) emphatically emphasizes that there is a need to carefully monitor this process to ensure that IALs are not neglected. He therefore concludes that:

It would appear therefore, that for southern Africa where the use of indigenous African languages in education has been neglected, the monolingual education in the mother tongue is the best option. This, however, should be accompanied if not preceded, by a systematic empowering of these indigenous African languages to level the playing ground, as it were (Miti, 2009, p. 165).

However, advocating monolingual education (albeit in the children's mother tongue) in this day and age militates against the multilingual character of Africa. Following Banda (2009a), I argue that any move towards mother tongue monolingualism ignores the socio-linguistic realities of Africa. As Banda (2009a, p. 110) states, "... any model that assumes a monolingual perspective goes against the multilingual nature of Africa, where different languages in the repertoire, including what can be termed non-standard languages are used to perform facilitating roles of various sorts". Furthermore, as Banda (2009b) notes, the very notion of 'mother tongue' appears to be problematic in late modern times where urbanization, hybridization and multilingualism are the rule rather than the exception, even in Europe (Appadurai, 1996). As Banda (2009b) puts it, "... in late modern multilingual African societies, rather than 'a mother tongue', there are 'mother tongues' that constitute speakers' linguistic repertoires" (Banda, 2009b, p. 4).

Moreover, Banda (2009b, p. 4) argues, "Monolingualism, even mother tongue-based monolingualism, is not ideal. As Banda

(2009a, p. 107) aptly observes, "In other words, any model that champions a single language as language of instruction would not be in sync with the linguistic situation and frame of language usage in Africa". Banda (2017, p. 2) further observes that "At a time when in Africa people necessarily speak at least two languages (an African language and a colonial language) as a necessity, arguments for a singular 'mother tongue' education are out of place". I wholeheartedly agree with Banda (2009a, p. 109) when he states that "... there are problems with the applicability of mother tongue based bilingual model in multilingual contexts as it appears conceptualized and described in monolingual terms".

However, it is important to note that, thus far, no teacher in Namibia has received any formal training on the use of at least two languages as MoI, but most, if not all, have received (their) training to handle one of the two languages. Consequently, as Banda (2009a, p. 111) points out:

There is need for training, equitable funding and resources in at least three languages. Initially, teachers need to be trained to teach and use two languages. This means that teachers need to be able to teach and use two or more languages systematically as LoLT content-matter subjects as a way of enhancing multilingual competencies. The idea is to have learners that are able to speak, read, write and synthesise information at high cognitive level in two or more languages.

Likewise, there is need for multilingual models of education and language policies which are based on natural linguistic repertoires of the speakers concerned. The idea is to build and extend multilingual democratic spaces for speakers as a way of enhancing and taking advantage of multilingualism as a voice for experience and identity performance and hence, as a linguistic resource. This enables material production of multilingualism through local agency and voices across borders, be they ethnic, community-based or national. In this way, multiple languages become tools for socio-political, cultural and economic transformation of Africa, as multilingualism

becomes the means for increased socioeconomic and political participation across broad African populations. These considerations lead to the notion of ‘linguistic repertoire-based multilingual models’ (Banda, 2009a, 2009b).

Last but not least, as Banda (2010, p. 231) states, “Since the onset of colonialism, Africans have had to employ at least two languages for translocal and transnational communication needs, and for socioeconomic mobility generally; one of the languages being the colonial language”. Therefore, it can be said that the problem being discussed in this paper is common to Africa and other post-colonial contexts where one has to use more than one language, including the colonial language for communicative and socio-economic mobility (Banda, 2010).

### **Multilingualism as classroom practice**

It is noteworthy that research has started to attend much more closely to the communicative and socio-cultural dimensions of multilingual language use, particularly in school and classroom contexts. In this paper, therefore, the term ‘bilingualism’ is used with a critical recognition of the history of the concept, and of the new view of language which it now represents. It is remarkable to note that MTE and bilingual education in South Africa bear the weight of history (De Klerk, 2002). As Plüddemann (2010, p. 9) notes, “Unlike MTE, bilingual education is a contested term that has at least two meanings”. As Alidou et al. (2006, p. 4) state:

The term originally meant the use of two languages as mediums of instruction. It included, but was not restricted, to the learning of two languages as subjects. Therefore it usually means: the L1 plus an L2 as mediums of instruction. In South Africa, bilingual education is understood as mother tongue instruction (L1 medium) throughout school plus a second language taught as a subject.

Nevertheless, I argue that Plüddemann’s (2010) characterization (of L1 and L2) as mediums of instruction has a West-centric monolingual tone, as it presupposes that all learners are exposed to only one named language or that they have only one single

MT/HL, which is not the case in multilingual societies throughout Africa. As Cummins (2003) states:

...bilingual education is generally defined in terms of the means through which particular educational goals are achieved. Two or more languages are used for instructional purposes... However, the term bilingual education is sometimes defined in relation to goals, to refer to educational programmes that are designed to promote bilingual proficiency among students. When used in this broader sense, bilingual education may entail instruction primarily through only one language (Cummins, 2003, p. 5).

As Plüddemann (2010, p. 9) succinctly summarizes it, “Taken together, the two quotes capture the two traditions of bilingual education in South Africa”. In my view, it cannot be denied that the theories on which the models under discussion are based are linked to the Western ideology that learning and teaching are best done in a singular ‘standardized’ language. Nevertheless, these models do not fit the bilingual profile of the African children or the multilingual profile of the continent as a whole. As Banda (2010) notes, Western multilingualism and discourse practices are universalized to African contexts. Consequently, models such as submersion and immersion models, subtractive and additive bilingualism, etc. have been imported to African contexts with uninspiring results as they do not fit the African colonial experiences and multilingual profile (Anchimbe, 2007; Brock-Utne, 2009; Makoni, 1998; Makoni & Meinhof, 2004).

The argument is that language policy and planning in Africa is not only constructed in the image of Western countries (Anchimbe, 2007), but also retains the colonial heritage which directly associates IALs to (ethnic) tradition and culture, rather than socio-economic development and mobility. According to Banda (2009b), three observations can be made. First, African languages are promoted as autonomous and bounded systems linked to equally autonomous homogenous communities, regions and, in some cases, far flung villages. Second, even

though there is evidence of multilingual speech patterns throughout Africa, the official doctrine is to promote singular languages to the exclusion of other African languages spoken in the communities or regions. Third, although English and other colonial languages are part of the multilingual landscape and have become critical components of the linguistic repertoires of Africans (due, in part, to the advent of information technology), the policies favoured by language education scholars are those that restrict instruction in English to later stages of a child's education (Banda, 2000, 2009b; Williams, 2008; Heugh, 2005, 2006).

Furthermore, as Banda (2010) argues, the new globalized dispensation characterized by translocal and transnational mobility, requires versatile models of education to engender the learning teaching process, and to enable linguistic performative identities. One problem with the models described in this paper is that learners are prescribed a particular identity which they must subscribe to. The argument here is that learners will be better served if the language education models draw and reflect on everyday African multilingual realities of the communities concerned. Consequently, the models examined in this paper, which appear premised on multiple monolingualism, restrict the learners' use of alternative languages and hybrid codes as academic literacy mediation strategy (Banda, 2010).

Moreover, the notion of bilingualism and what it means to be bilingual in African contexts, in which languages are mostly acquired informally, has not been adequately defined in the Namibian literature. Similarly, in the conceptualization of bilingualism in the Namibian language education policy (LiEP) and curricula documents, only one language is expected to be used as medium of instruction (MoI), the rest are to be taught as first, second, third, etc. additional optional subjects (Banda, 2010). As Banda (2010, p. 223) notes, "It is not clear how teaching a language as an optional subject would lead to bilingualism let alone proficiency in the language". According to Kosonen and Young (2009, p. 13), "Bilingual/multilingual education means the use of more than one language for instruction and attaining literacy ...". Likewise, Luckett (1993, p. 76) states that "A strict definition of bilingual education requires that both the

dominant (e.g. English) and the subordinated languages (e.g. the African languages) are used at some stage in the curriculum as media of instruction". Nonetheless, Luckett's definition does not add value to bi-/multilingual education. I therefore contend that Luckett's argument advocates the teaching through the use of only one language, and not automatically the use of two or more languages as mediums of instruction at the same time depending on the repertoires available to learners.

In view of that, following Aronin and Singleton (2008), Banda (2010, p. 223) defines multilingualism as "the acquisition and use of two or more languages – so that bilingualism is treated as a particular instance of multilingualism". According to Banda (2010), therefore, multilingual education is one in which two or more languages are used as languages of learning and teaching content matter, not where they are merely taught as a subject (Banda, 2000). I therefore wholeheartedly concur with Mohamed and Banda (2008, p. 96) who put it more succinctly when they point out that "We take bilingual education as one in which two or more languages are used as languages of learning and teaching of content matter, and not one where one is designated medium of instruction and the other a marginal role as subject" (cf. Baetens-Beardsmore, 1993; Banda, 2000). Furthermore, as they observe, "The latter, which is characteristic of education, not only in Tanzania, but Africa generally, has a monolingual orientation" (Mohamed & Banda, 2008, p. 96). As Banda (2009a, p. 111) succinctly captures it:

...a multilingual model in which two or more languages are alternatively or proportionally used as LoLT throughout the child's education, would help to do away with the problems associated with transitional models, whether early transition models where learners switch to English as MoI after Grade 3-4, or late transition after Grade 6-7.

### **Towards heteroglossic multilingualism in Namibia**

Although Namibia professes to practice bilingual education, bilingual education in the country has always been (and continues to be)

conceptualized using the monolingual habitus. That is to say, the notion of bilingual education is understood as mother tongue instruction in the early years of schooling, and a later switch to EMoI from Grade 4 upwards. Moreover, even though the Namibian constitutional provisions are geared towards societal multilingualism and linguistic proficiency in more than one language, the means and practice to achieve multilingualism are couched in concepts borrowed from Western rather than Namibian multilingual experiences (Anchimbe, 2007; Brock-Utne, 2009; Makoni, 1998).

In view of the above, I fully concur with Banda (2017) when he aptly points out that, even though on paper there appears to be increasing recognition about the need to nurture and promote multilingualism throughout Africa, such sentiments are frequently based on a monoglot/monolingual understanding of multilingualism (Banda, 2010). According to Banda (2017), as a result, multilingualism is seen as a case of multiple monolingualisms (Blackledge & Creese, 2010; García, 2009, 2014; García & Wei, 2014). In this monoglossic conceptualization, Banda (2017) argues, being multilingual is perceived as incremental in the case of “adding” languages or “subtracting” languages (Banda, 2009a, 2009b; Haingura, 2017).

Consequently, García (2009) contrasts the monoglossic ideology of bilingualism and bilingual education (in Africa and beyond) with a more inclusive and plural, heteroglossic view, and paints a rather optimistic view of the development of bilingual education from the more fixed types of the past to the more flexible types of the present. As García (2009) states:

...those [...] that responds to a dynamic bilingual framework ... as people increasingly understand the need for bilingualism across groups, for all children, and beyond two languages. Thus, all types of bilingual education are extending towards the last [...] type ... as many groups attempt to develop trilingualism and other more flexible ways of translanguaging multilinguality (García, 2009, p. 385).

The question is: Does Namibia currently practice heteroglossic or flexible bilingualism? Absolutely not! I argue that this could only occur if learners are allowed the use of all the linguistic resources within their repertoire. The bilingual education practiced in Namibia does not at any rate qualify to be a heteroglossic or flexible type, as the use of Namibian African languages as media of instruction is only restricted to the ascribed mother tongues or home languages and English. That is to say, not all knowledge embedded in the speakers’ repertoires is utilized (Banda, 2009b). Namibian learners are restricted to use other linguistic resources available in their repertoires. Thus, MT-English bilingualism in Namibia is a case of double monolingualism (García, 2009), with learners encouraged to keep the two languages (MT/HL and English) separate (Weber & Horner, 2012). This casts a shadow on the label bilingual education in Namibia. The Namibian educational system is maybe only bilingual in name, that is, bilingualism in Namibia is present mainly, probably in the label.

Given the fact that the Namibian LiEP is “... strongly informed by the standard language ideology and strict compartmentalization of languages... one wonders how it could qualify as a heteroglossic or flexible type” (Weber & Horner, 2012, p. 117). As Haingura (2017) puts it, since the Namibian educational system’s language regime appears to be a fixed rather than a flexible one, there is a need for the Namibian education system to move in the direction of greater flexibility, that is to say, towards dynamic bilingualism. Therefore, Namibia must adopt a dynamic or heteroglossic bilingual education model. Adopting a dynamic bilingual framework would mean that the perennial problem about how to differentiate a language from a dialect would fall away, as both language and dialect would constitute part of the linguistic repertoire in heteroglossic linguistic practices in the classrooms.

However, it is notable that the Namibian LiEP recommends that teachers are free to explain difficult concepts using languages familiar to the majority of the learners in the class, particularly at primary level, whenever it is felt that it will facilitate learning. It is argued that:

In these transitional conditions... the use of a language understood by the majority of learners in a class can be permitted temporarily. Indeed, even where resources are satisfactory, experience has shown that the use of such a local language from time to time may help with the understanding of difficult concepts during the primary cycle (MEC, 1993, p. 10).

Consequently, as Haingura (2017) states, the unstructured use of IALs in a supportive role, albeit only at primary level, points towards the fact that the Namibian LiEP embodies some elements of endoglossic models which utilize the resources that learners bring to the classroom. Nevertheless, following García's (2009) description of the heteroglossic bilingual education model, Namibia would not qualify as practicing bilingual education, in the true sense of the word, as the two languages (MT/HL and English) are not used at the same time as mediums of instruction. Rather, they are used in the form of double monolingualism in which the MT/HL and English are seen as fixed and autonomous systems.

Consequently, I argue that Namibia must adopt the heteroglossic model, in line with the language practices of its citizens, thereby circumventing the monoglossic pressures exerted by the country's current educational system. As Banda (2009a, p. 111) points out:

...what is required [in Namibia] is [a] multilingual education [model] that takes into account local linguistic diversity and repertoires. This means education authorities need to look at speakers as language practitioners who use linguistic resources to carry out local, national and international communication needs. Monolingual biased education is therefore inadequate to capture this reality.

Thus, in this paper, I join a number of post-structuralist (socio) linguists in calling for a paradigm shift in conceptualizing multilingual models of language education in Namibia, and Africa generally. There is a caveat, though. As Mambwe (2014) succinctly captures it:

...this paradigm shift requires a balance between current sociolinguistic school of thought in which language is conceived as social practice and the structuralist-functional approach in which terminologies needed to explain recent linguistic phenomena can be drawn. For example, the current school of thought argues against language as an autonomous bounded system for language as social practice while the structuralist-functional approach provides us with the terminology as well as analytical tools to be able to explain how the social relates to the form and how the form is influenced by the social and the political (Mambwe, 2014, p. 241).

### **Conclusion**

This paper has discussed a number of suggestions on how multilingual models of language education should be appropriately conceptualized throughout Africa. The paper set out to examine a number of issues with regard to the use of languages in education which arise from multilingual contexts, and has contributed to the debate on multilingual education. The paper has shown that some of the problems encountered regarding the implementation of language in-education policies within the African countries arise from conceptions on the classification of languages and the language models to be followed. Furthermore, the paper has also shown that the typological groupings of languages into such categories as major versus minor languages and the multiplicity of education models in multilingual contexts raise problems concerning the choice of education models and the languages to be used in education (Mtenje, 2009). Moreover, the paper has argued that this has influenced progress in the formulation, adoption and implementation of bilingual education policies in numerous African countries.

Following García (2009), the paper has challenged several time-honoured stereotypes that appear to be crumbling against the new realities of globalization. Consequently, the paper has rejected the old, monoglossic interpretation, which treats the first language and the additional language as "bounded

autonomous systems” (García, 2009, p. 7), and offers a heteroglossic view of bilingual competence, which emphasizes the dynamic interrelationship of multiple language practices. Last but by no means least, the paper concludes by supporting a paradigm shift in the conceptualization of multilingual models of language education throughout Africa.

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