

Chapter 3

Revisiting the Effects of –isms in the Promotion, Development, and Revitalisation of Indigenous Languages in Zimbabwe: The Position of Sesotho in Gwanda South, Zimbabwe

Omphile Marupi

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1058-1980>

University of Fort Hare, South Africa

Erasmus Charamba

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8650-6931>

University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa

ABSTRACT

This chapter seeks to explore how colonial education was used as a double-edged sword to promote interests of colonialists while hindering the development of African cultural and multilingual ideologies. It looks at how post-colonial Zimbabwe has done no better in handling issues of -isms in the education sector. It considers problems that Zimbabwe encounters in its education systems and could be linked to colonial periods. Contemporary complications would then be a ‘colonial heritage’. Certain -isms would be evident and the paper aims at unpacking them vis-a-vis maiming of indigenous languages in Zimbabwe and the world at large by actions of colonizers. When Zimbabwe became independent, it inherited an education system that was purely in the hands of colonial masters. The education system was segregatory and planned on racial grounds in colonial times. The chapter embraces the ‘one language’ ideology concept that was used by colonialists to enhance their presence in Africa, thus Sesotho in Gwanda South is one of the many languages that has seen its demise through the numerous -isms.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-5034-5.ch003

INTRODUCTION

This scholarship cannot be discussed without looking at the effects of colonization of Africa and attainment of its independence which can be understood as political independence and not economic and academic independence. The independence of Africa gave birth to neo-colonialism which only perpetuated colonial legacies. In language and literary studies this chapter argues for the presence of linguistic imperialism as identified by Philipson (1992). Linguistic imperialism can be viewed as the extended linguistic control surviving from colonial times; extended power and dominion over a state by direct imposition of the language of respective colonial masters to continue gaining control through the language over political, economic and other areas of a country as a direct extension of power, authority and influence. Linguistic imperialism has unfortunately been accepted by African governments after independence, generating skewed interests all over leading to researchers crying foul. In Gwanda South, a multicultural and multilingual district in the Matabeleland province of Zimbabwe, Sesotho language has for long been subservient to Ndebele.

Colonizers dictated the type of education without taking cognizance of the cultural and linguistic practices of Africans who were the majority and had their existing form of schools that taught and maintained ubuntuism through the use of indigenous languages. Ubuntu is an African philosophy that shuns racism, cultural and linguistic discrimination, following morality, ethics and justice portrayed by all in the community. The term can be translated to mean ‘I am because you are. You are because we are’. In a nutshell, it portrays the interdependence of a people, including their cultural and linguistic practices. Consequently, this study emphasizes the relationship between colonial and post-colonial linguistic practices that retained the colonial tendencies that associate the colonial language with prestige and sophistication. This has led to such languages being solely used in contemporary multilingual African educational institutions ahead of indigenous languages.

BACKGROUND

The chapter identifies colonialism as the main contributor to linguistic oppression in Africa and the world in general. In other words, through colonial education the government of the day gained mental control over those it ruled. It is clear that language in post-colonial Africa is studied from both negative and positive perspectives since in other facets it is perceived as a concrete alternative to enhance inter-nation communication especially under the current globalisation mantra. Most African countries were colonised immediately after the Berlin Conference in 1885 although the ‘Scramble for Africa’ had started in the middle of the nineteenth century. The partitioning of Africa ignored the geographic placing of people by their ethnic and social groupings with borders cutting groups and placing them in different territories. Immediately after colonisation, each colonial power enforced its language on its colony. Educational policies which carried colonial ambitions determined the form of education which was desired by colonial masters.

Africa was colonized mostly by France, Spain, Portugal, Germany and Britain. For the countries under France, Spain and Portugal the colonizers’ respective languages were taught from primary level upwards which meant total immersion thus promoting assimilation. It is prudent to highlight that Britain tolerated indigenous languages at lower levels of education (mostly grade R until the third grade) and introduced English from the fourth-grade till one completed their formal education. Missionaries accepted African

13 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:
www.igi-global.com/chapter/revisiting-the-effects-of-isms--in-the-promotion-development-and-revitalisation-of-indigenous-languages-in-zimbabwe/310728

Related Content

Pronoun Processing: A Bibliometric Analysis of Research Trends and Topics

Qingxu Zhai and Lin Fan (2024). *International Journal of Translation, Interpretation, and Applied Linguistics* (pp. 1-15).

www.irma-international.org/article/pronoun-processing/334702

An Exploration of the Relationships Between Different Reading Strategies and IELTS Test Performance: IELTS Test Taking Strategies - Chinese Students

Rob Kim Marjerison, Pengfei Liu, Liam P. Duffy and Rongjuan Chen (2020). *International Journal of Translation, Interpretation, and Applied Linguistics* (pp. 1-19).

www.irma-international.org/article/an-exploration-of-the-relationships-between-different-reading-strategies-and-ielts-test-performance/245797

Paratext Analysis of Patronage Factors: An Exploration of Howard Goldblatt's Translation of Mo Yan's Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out

Hu Liu (2021). *International Journal of Translation, Interpretation, and Applied Linguistics* (pp. 30-44).

www.irma-international.org/article/paratext-analysis-of-patronage-factors/266314

Use of Game-Based Teaching and Learning to Foster Intercultural Communication in English Language Education

Zeynep Çetin Köroglu and Fatma Kimsesiz (2023). *Handbook of Research on Fostering Social Justice Through Intercultural and Multilingual Communication* (pp. 139-161).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/use-of-game-based-teaching-and-learning-to-foster-intercultural-communication-in-english-language-education/310959

Bridging the L1-L2 Divide: Learner-Centered Instruction in the Heritage/L2 Spanish Classroom

Bridget M. Morgan (2020). *Language Learning and Literacy: Breakthroughs in Research and Practice* (pp. 309-325).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/bridging-the-l1-l2-divide/233099