Language a Weapon of Systematic Domination on the Education and Social Life of the People: A Case of Four Provinces in Zambia

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Abstract

The study aimed at highlighting how language was and is used by western nations to dominate their former colonies. The language we speak affects the way we think and the way we think affects the way we speak. Therefore, adopting a new language simply means adopting a new way of thinking and a new identity. The study employed a mixed paradigm and descriptive survey design that sampled one former colony of Britain (Zambia). Government officials, University lecturers, educators, language policy makers, teachers and parents. Data was obtained from respondents by means of interviews, questionnaires and classroom observation schedules. Frequency, percentages, tables, graphs and pie-charts were used to analyze the quantitative and qualitative data obtained. Data was then analyzed by the use of software MS Access and MS Excel. The findings revealed that language was and is used by western nations to dominate their former colonies, Africa in particular, and in turn influence their way of thinking through language especially in the education sector.

Keywords: Language imperialism, language policy, linguistic consciousness, official language, systematic domination, weapon.

1. Introduction

Language can be defined as a system of communication which consists of a set of sounds and written symbols which are used by the people of a particular country or region for talking or writing (Kashoki 1998). In addition, language is also defined as a formal system that includes sounds, signs, symbols and gestures that are used as an important means of communicating thoughts, ideas and emotions from one individual to the other and language is important in that it is the primary means of interaction and communication. Language and culture are inextricably linked as no one would understand a culture without learning a language and culture is mainly transmitted by the use of local indigenous languages through story telling which may constitute proverbs, riddles, myths, taboos and narratives of social conduct, morals and great heroes of a given people's tradition (Banda 1998).

The language we speak affects the way we think and the way we think affects the way we speak. Therefore, adopting a new language simply means adopting a new way of thinking and a new identity (Brock-Utne and Birgit 1993). Based on its purpose, in order to help the reader to perceive the danger of language domination (known as *Linguistic Imperialism*) on them and

their societies, this article will try to answer in a brief way three important questions such as *What is it meant by western ideals? What is Linguistic Imperialism? What are some of the ways used to impose language domination? What are some of its negative effects on the target community?*

Western ideals refer to all those western cultural features such as practices, beliefs, way of thinking and doing things regarded as perfect, complete or absolute by the western themselves. They include things such as the way of eating, clothing, religion, education systems and practices, some concepts of human rights such as homosexuality, etc.; often these ideals are adopted or imposed to other civilizations especially through education, political systems and globalization (Appel et al 1987).

Many of these western ideals (homosexuality, lessons on the use of contraception and condoms in African classes, for example) can be easily detected and they can sometimes be or not opposed by the target society (Armstrong 1968). However, whether the common person, the educated one and the leader have ignored the most dangerous western ideal, *language*. It is the main carrier of those western ideals.

Language, why does it matter? As Von Herder observed, nothing is dearer to a people than the speech of its fathers. In its speech resides all its system of thinking, its tradition, history, religion, and basis of life; all its heart and soul, […], with language is created the heart of a people.

True, language is at the center of human life. It is, therefore, the key of success of any civilization. A people or a nation that loses its language is like a person without a heart. In a figurative way, such a nation cease to exist on its own, because adopting a new language requires the adoption of significant cultural and social features that the adopted language carries (Banda 2002). Though it takes some reasonable time, the effects of such linguistic shift (whether conscious or not) on a people's culture and social organization can be shocking. If nothing is done to offer a remedy to the situation, the entire nation, especially its youth perishes forever. The fact of dominating another people or individual through language is called *linguistic imperialism.*

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Language is at the center of human life. It is, therefore, the key of success of any civilization as adopting a new language requires the adoption of significant cultural and social features that the adopted language carries. The politicians and educated Africans don't seem to see the negative effects of language domination on a nation or they sometimes tend or deliberately choose to ignore, hoping that they will regain their linguistic consciousness, hence don't move to thoroughly investigate its effects and take necessary precautions to avoid or minimize the effects of linguistic imperialism on future generations.

1.2 Purpose of study

The purpose of this study was to highlight how language was and is used by western nations to dominate their former colonies, Africa in particular, and in turn influence their way of thinking through language especially in the education sector.

1.3 Objectives

1.To investigate the negative effects of language domination in the four Provinces of Zambia.

2.To assess how the use of a foreign language has influenced people's way of thinking in the   four Provinces of Zambia.

3.To establish the channels of linguistic imperialism in the four Provinces of Zambia.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by Gijsen's language imperialism theory (1995) is the English language imperialism in the light of Gobard's tetraglossic theory of language alienanation (Sarr 2014). According to Gijsen, linguistic imperialism is the imposition of one language on speakers of other languages. He further broadly brings it out as linguistic nationalism, linguistic dominance and language imperialism. In Zambia therefore, the expansion of English and its use as an official language is primarily an example of linguistic imperialism Mar-Molinero 2007).

1.5 Significance of the study

It is hoped that this study will highlight in a general way how language was and is used by western nations to dominate their former colonies, Africa in particular, and in turn influence their way of thinking through language especially in the education sector. The article attempts to tackle this form of imperialism in a general manner. It aims to increase the awareness of the matter in the minds of the educators, language policy makers and parents. It warns them against the negative effects of language domination on a nation that they sometimes tend or deliberately choose to ignore, hoping that they will regain their linguistic consciousness, hence move them to thoroughly investigate its effects and take necessary precautions to avoid or minimize the effects of linguistic imperialism on future generations.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Language western ideal of domination

Unlike others, *language is the real western ideal* that is used to dominate other nations, African nations in particular. In response to Alan Davies's review article '*Ironizing the Myth of Linguicism'* (1996), Phillipson in his *Realities and Myths of Linguistic imperialism* (1997) summarizes principles for the analysis of linguistic imperialism and demonstrates that the phenomenon is far from mythical. It is real and a destructive one.

 According to Edward Said, one of the cultural aspect in Africa that is at its agony is *Language*. To him, the *linguistic legacy* that imperialism has bequeathed to Africa, and the ways in which this inheritance is being enjoyed down to the present, [especially through the sector of education], is a real imperialism. Therefore, *Linguistic imperialism is not a simple matter as many think.* (Mühlhäusler, 1996; Phillipson, 1992a).

What is really meant by linguistic imperialism? Linguistic imperialism is a subtype of *linguicism*. As it is discussed in Skutnabb-Kangas (1988), Tove coined the term in order to illustrate the resemblances between the social distinctions or discrimination based on 'race' or ethnicity (racism, ethnicism), gender (sexism) and *language (*linguicism). Therefore, as Phillipson observes, *linguicism studies* attempt to put *the sociology of language and education* into a certain form of study aiming to demonstrate how language contributes to unequal access to societal power and show how linguistic hierarchies operate and how they are legitimated.

Many scholars on the continent use the terms *'language spread 'and 'language death'* to explain why African language users speak languages such as English, French, Spanish, and others and why other languages are being abandoned. These scholars do so in order to minimize the effects and the systematic imperialism through language by western civilizations. However, historical records as Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, (1996) argue, prove the contrary.

Zealous African and Indian sociolinguists have specifically contributed to identifying the mechanisms and ideologies of linguistic imperialism. The evidence that linguistic imperialism is not just a term by linguists without proper evidences that a person or a nation can systematically dominate another is the human rights law, which decrees that discrimination based on such features as race, gender and *language* is morally unjustifiable. Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, (1994).

2.2 Channels for linguistic imperialism

Linguistic imperialism' is connected to a multitude of activities, ideologies and structural relationships. It takes place within an overarching structure of asymmetrical relations between the west and the third world, where, according to many linguists, language interlocks with other dimensions, cultural (particularly in education, science and the media), economic and political systems (Brayet et al 1986).

Education: The only simple way to impose linguistic domination is through education. The reason is simple. Education is a vital site for social and linguistic reproduction. It is a real ground for the inculcation of relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes, and therefore particularly central in processes of linguistic hierarchization (Armstrong 1968).
The selection of the language of instruction: most of the languages used in the African systems of education are from the former colonizer. Children, in most instances, are not allowed to use their familiar or mother tongue at school. This practice makes the African learners in the African classes by African teachers admit that African languages are inferior (Kashoki 1990). The result is that they abandon them and do not want to use them anymore. The same attitude toward African languages in education, can lead to school dropouts, skipping lessons, and many other negative consequences.

Books or learning materials written in the master's language: when the language of instruction is selected what follow is the development of learning and teaching materials. These are written in the language that both the teacher and the learner do not use frequently at home, which implies that African children, learn how to read and write not in their own languages but in a foreign language (Brayet et 1986). They become literate (doubtfully) in the master's language and illiterate in their ancestor's language.

Research to be conducted and published in the same language: concerning research at any level of their education in any domain, African learners are required to conduct and present their research work in the language that is not theirs. They imitate their lecturers, professors who also have imitated the master. The cycle is continuous (Appel et al 1987).

Media (all forms): media are strong institutions for languages. Their input contains large data of linguistic choices and forms that people consume instantly. Most TV shows and radio programs are in English, French, and son on and only a few are in African languages. Media choose the language that people should listen to and use.

Entertainment is another route of linguistic imperialism through media. Most of the entertainment that African adults (women in particular) and children view or play are not in their mother tongue (Banda 2002). The cartoons, for example, are in English at a very large scale. Media, especially the TV, is the main source of these cartoons. African children consume English even before they are the age to go to school.

Economy (globalization): It is common today to hear people holding the argument of the world getting smaller by technology and globalization and to them it justifies the use of foreign languages rather than African languages as languages of education, official affairs and business in African countries. People with such views, often see African languages as a handicap to development. To them there is no significance of African languages in the era of globalization (Brock-Utne and Birgitt 1993).

Politics and Diplomatic relations: today many African countries have gained their freedom. They are no longer under the oppression of colonization. However, as it is for African education systems, media, and business, the African political system is another route where western ideals pass through to reach the African continent and one of such is the linguistic imperialism Phillipson 1992).

As Philipson noted, unlike the brute force of the colonial period (imposition of the master's language, corporal punishment for using one's mother tongue), in postcolonial days *language policy is much more a matter for negotiation and persuasion*. It requires legitimation, which is how it is rooted. Three important areas in African political systems are under linguistic imperialism:

The notion of official language: Languages such French, English, Portuguese, and so on, are legitimized with a label of *Official language*. An official language by virtue of law is worthy to serve in political affairs, foreign relations and other offices. The excuse until today has been the African multilingualism (Banda 2002).

African constitutions: these codes of laws, which are vital for any political and social organization of any country in the world, are written in French, English and so on. This fact is an undeniable evidence that *linguistic imperialism* is real and not a mere claim by linguists as many argue.

Political discourses and those by other African stakeholders: except some rare occasions and in some African lands, it is a tradition for African leaders and intellectuals to address their fellow compatriots in foreign languages. The speech of their fathers has been rejected as not worthy addressing important issues such as those concerning the country. In certain situation,

the choice of English, French and Portuguese is because; the educated people are no longer able to express themselves freely and fluently in their African languages (Banda 2002).

2.3 Effects of the linguistic imperialism

The effects of linguistic imperialism in the education sector can lead to many negative outcomes. These effects are not limited to academic performance but extend to other aspects of life. Here, are the easily remarkable or discernable ones:

Poor literacy, numeracy and other academic (even craft) skills: UNESCO estimates that 40 percent of the world's children do not have access to education in *a language they understand*. Therefore, as findings from myriad learning assessments have highlighted, this explains the failure of school systems to support children's acquisition of *literacy, numeracy and other critical skills (Mwanakatwe 1974).*

According to the *Handbook on Language of Instruction Issues in Reading Programs*, while many factors contribute to this learning crisis, *language is increasingly, and rightly, recognized as a key reason that millions of learners globally do not acquire the skills they need to succeed in school and in life (MOE 1996).* This is true in Africa where many school systems continue to use *languages for instruction* that children do not speak, use fluently or understand.

Poor Research and less Publication: not only students in African schools conduct less research and publish less, but their instructors also face the same challenge. Though reasons are multiple, the most dominant is language. They are requested to produce works in a language they do not use in their thinking process (French, English, Portuguese, etc.) (Mundende 1977). *Poor Social life:* the impact of linguistic imperialism in education and communities can be summarized by these words by Anderson stating that *educated men are isolated by schooling and by career, mobility from the life of their natal communities, losing progressively understanding of the local affairs from which emerge relationships that administrators must deal with (MOE 1998).*

True are those words. The educated man in Africa finds himself unable to properly communicate and understand his own people. The reason is simple. He now thinks differently because he speaks differently. Language shapes the way we think. Speaking a second language means putting on a new personality and identity (kashoki 1990). A similar suggestion is contained in Biobaku's contention that African education that will integrate the African into his community is yet to be discovered.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

The research design was descriptive survey with both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection in order to attain the comprehensive results (Armstrong, 1968). Qualitative methods was appropriate to this investigation as it produced detailed data from a small group of participants, while exploring feelings, impressions and judgments. On the other hand, quantitative method made the use of questionnaires, surveys and experiment to gather data that

is revised and tabulated in numbers, which allows the data to be characterized by use of statistical analysis Martyn, (2008).

3.2 Population, Sample and Sampling procedure

The population for the study was purposefully drawn from the four provinces of Zambia- two rural (Muchinga and Southern) and two urban (Copperbelt and Lusaka). Purposive sampling procedure was used to select Provincial Ministers (4) while the simple random sampling procedure was used to select the University lecturers (20), educators (40), language policy makers (6), teachers (30), parents (40) and learners (60), (Bickel, 2007). The sample size comprised of 200 respondents. Also, the primary data was complimented by the secondary data which was derived from government policy documents, ministerial reports and relevant literature on language use.

In the sampling of provinces and institutions, the study adopted the stratified cluster random sampling technique. Sampling was done on the basis of urban and rural province and institution and then zone by zone. Universities and schools were clustered by rural and zones. Two zones were purposively selected based on the basis of being rural or urban. The sampling was done at three levels: Sampling zones, universities and schools- level 1, Sampling University lecturers, educators, language policy makers, teachers, parents and learners-level 2, Sampling Government officials-level 3.

3.4 Data Analysis

In this research, data was analysed qualitatively as in-depth interviews, quetionnaires and observation schedules were used as data collection instruments. Thematic approach was used, where data analysis started with the categorization of themes from the structured interviews, questionnaires. Kombo and Tromp (2006). Charts and graphs were used to analyse data. The data gathered was analysed according to the themes of the study and per the order of the research objectives. Data generated from the interview guide was analysed manually and also, a combination of software MS Access, SPSS and MS Excel was used to analyse data. Analysis was mainly descriptive, that is, mean, median, mode, range, and standard deviation. Related statistics were applied where possible. Statistical testing took the form of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), correlation and regression both simple and multiple, (Buetow, 2010:123-125).

3.5 Ethical Issues

The researcher avoided pressuring respondents to take part in the research. Alternatively, permission consents, assents were obtained from respondents involved in the research and the research topic was strategically selected to ensure that there was no harm whatsoever to the research respondents. In this research, the researcher was fully conscious of the need to abide by the ethical rule of respecting the privacy of individuals taking part in the research. In the same way, all the respondents of the research were to remain unidentified to the public as all their valuable views, opinions and perceptions were only known by the researcher for use only in the research and participant's identities will forever remain hidden.

The Researcher got permission from the Head teacher to interview teachers PTA Executive members and learners. The names of respondents would remain anonymous for the sake of confidentiality, Bryman (2001) and Diener and Crandall (2008). However, the identity of respondents was concealed in the thesis but for identification in the thesis, the sixty learners were allocated numbers 1 to 60, the twenty PTA Executive members were allocated ordinal numbers 1st to 20th, the sixteen teachers were allocated letters A to P, while the four Head teachers were allocated names of primary colours of Black, Blue, Yellow and Green. Zones and schools used pseudo names.

4. Findings and Discussions

4.1 The negative effects of language domination

On the negative effects of language domination on people's social and educational lives, the study found that the University lecturers 45% looked at foreign language as not reflecting and preserving the value and prejudices of the Zambian society. Second were the language policy makers at 35% who insisted that use of foreign language as a medium of instruction and official language leads to death of local languages. Educators were at 15% who looked at people seeing less to learn their local languages while teachers were at 5% who saw learners not acquiring skills needed to succeed in school and in life as illustrated in Tablee 1 below.

Table 1: Distribution of negative effects of language of domination

Negative effects of language of domination	Percentage
Unable to preserve values and prejudices	45
Death of local languages	35
No need to learn local languages	15
Learners not acquiring linguistic skills in local languages	5

On the negative effects of language domination on people's social and educational lives, the study found that a foreign language does not reflect and preserve the value and prejudices of the society (Kashoki 1990) and as suggested by the respondents language is used to transmit values, laws, cultural norms and taboos. It should also express and reinforce culture as well as personal identity meaning a foreign language which dominates will impose its culture on the local people. They as well believed that learners fail to acquire skills they need to succeed in school and in life. Even the pupils themselves believed that the local language can help them improve their academic performance as the fully understand the materials taught to them by the teachers. Some of the advantages included; good communication between teachers and pupils due to the language, learners will be learning from known to unknown, pupils able to understand a given instruction faster and pupils have a sense of belonging since it is their language that is being used (Carmody 2004). On negative effects, people see less to learn their local languages as they are not counted as compulsory at school and are not used as criteria for getting a job. On the hand most of the respondents had a view that language domination lead to local languages death (Crystal 2003) as there is gradual shift to the use of a foreign language especially in the younger generation of the Zambian speech community.

4.2 Foreign language's influence on people's way of thinking

According to research findings, foreign language influence the Zambian people in particular and other Africans' way of thinking. The language we speak affects the way we think and the way we think affects the way we speak. Therefore, adopting a new language simply means adopting a new way of thinking and a new identity.

Zambians, especially the educated take *on the* western cultural features such as practices, beliefs, way of thinking and doing things which are regarded as perfect, complete or absolute by the western themselves and unfortunately, by the educated Zambians as well. They include things such as the way of eating, clothing, religion, education systems and practices, some concepts of human rights such as homosexuality, etc which are foreign to Zambian culture and often these ideals are adopted or imposed to other civilizations especially through education, political systems and globalization (Carmody 2004).

Many of these western ideals taught in comprehensive sexuality education such as homosexuality, lessons on the use of contraception and condoms in Zambian classes, for example can be easily detected and they can sometimes be or not opposed by the target society. In comprehensive sexuality education, learners are taught human sexuality including intimate relationships, human sexual anatomy, sexual reproduction, sexually transmitted infections, sexual activity, sexual orientation, body image and gender identity, abstinence, contraception and condoms, sexual violence prevention and reproductive rights and responsibilities which are viewed as taboos in the Zambian culture (FAWEZA 1996). Comprehensive sexuality education changes the way young people and adolescents perceive sex and other sex related issues which young ones are not allowed to know about in the Zambian culture (Carmody 2004). However, whether the common person, the educated one and the leader have ignored the most dangerous western ideal, language, is the main carrier of those western ideals.

4.3 The channels of linguistic imperialism

Regarding areas of the channels of linguistic imperialism, survey results as illustrated in Table 2 below, showed that opinions from respondents scored highly on language of instruction (78.4%), followed by teaching and learning resources at 73.6%, media (69.7%), technology and globalization at 53.6% and the least was political discourse and constitution at 49.6%.

Table 2: Distribution of channels of linguistic imperialism

Channels of linguistic imperialism	Percentage	
	Yes	No
Language of instruction	78.4%	21.6%
Teaching and learning resources	73.6%	26.4%
Media	69.7%	30.3%
Technology and globalization	53.6%	46.4%
Political discourse and constitution	49.6%	50.4%

The study found that all the respondents alluded to the following as channels of linguistic of imperialism and the first is done through education which is a vital site for social and linguistic reproduction and a real ground for the inculcation of relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes, and therefore particularly central in processes of linguistic hierarchisation. On language of instruction policy, English, the language of the former colonial masters is used from Grade five to tertiary level and most schools, children, are not allowed to use their familiar or mother tongue at school. Also children who fail English at Grades nine and twelve can not be given full certificates as passing in English is a selection as well as certification criteria (Kashoki 1990). This practice makes the African learners in the African classes by African teachers admit that African languages are inferior. The result is that they abandon them and do not want to use them anymore.

The study revealed that when the language of instruction is selected what follow is the development of learning and teaching materials. These are written in the language that both the teacher and the learner do not use frequently at home, which implies that African children, learn how to read and write not in their own languages but in a foreign language (UNESCO 2008). They become literate or doubtfully in the master's language and illiterate in their ancestor's language. Technology and globalization are used to justify the use of foreign languages rather than Zambian and African languages in general as languages of education, official affairs and business in African countries. People with such views, often see African languages as a handicap to development. To them there is no significance of African languages in the era of globalization.

All forms of media are strong institutions for languages. Most if not all TV shows and radio programs are in English in Zambia while a few are in Zambian languages. Unfortunately, even Zambian journalists whenever interviewing people use English the official language even in compounds and villages where most of the people are illiterates. Entertainment is another route of linguistic imperialism through media. Most of the entertainment that Zambian adults, women in particular and children view or play are not in their mother tongue. The cartoons, for example, are in English at a very large scale. Media, especially the TV, is the main source of these cartoons. African children consume English even before they are the age to go to school.

Today many African countries have gained their freedom. They are no longer under the oppression of colonization but the African political system is another route where western ideals pass through to reach the African continent and one of such is the linguistic imperialism. On political discourse, except in some rare occasions and in Zambia and most African countries, it is a tradition for African leaders and intellectuals to address their fellow compatriots in foreign languages. Debates and all Parliamentary etiquettes are all in English, a foreign language thereby rejecting local languages as not worthy addressing important issues such as those concerning the country. In certain situation, the choice of English is because; the educated people are no longer able to express themselves freely and fluently in their African languages. In addition, the Zambian and other African constitutions' codes of laws, which are vital for any political and social organization of any country in the world, are written in English and other foreign languages as the case might be (Phillipson 1997).

5. Conclusion

People from all sectors of the Zambian society needs sensitization on the importance of the local Zambian languages as the language we speak affects the way we think and the way we think affects the way we speak. Therefore, adopting a new language simply means adopting a new way of thinking and a new identity from the western cultural features such as practices, beliefs, way of thinking and doing things and in addition, adopting a new language requires the adoption of significant cultural and social features that the adopted language carries. These include things such as the way of eating, clothing, religion, education systems and practices, some concepts of human rights such as homosexuality, use of contraceptives and so on etc. and often these ideals are adopted or imposed to other civilizations especially through education, political systems and globalization. True, language is at the center of human life. It is, therefore, the key of success of any civilization and use of foreign language contributes to unequal access to social power and seem to legalize race, gender and human rights. A foreign language has positive and negative effects on local languages language not only on the academic performance of the learners but also on the learners' social life. Linguistic domination is one of the destructive weapon that does not fail. It systematically destroys civilizations of the people that decide to abandon their languages and adopt their masters' languages.

6. Recommendations

1. The Government through the Ministry of Education should reform the education system by unlocking the interlocking dimensions of cultural, media and political systems.
2. The Government through the Ministry of Education should chart her own destiny in education provision and take a new direction to modify the largely outmoded educational system to make it more relevant to today's and tomorrow's national needs as education is the ground for inculcation of relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes.
3. The Ministry of Education through the Curriculum Development Centre should select a language of instruction from Grades five to tertiary level among the major Zambian local languages, Zambia being a multilingual society.
4. Curriculum Development Centre should encourage the publication of more books and learning materials in Zambian local languages at all levels of the Zambian education system as well as encourage research and publications in Zambian local languages.
5. The Ministry of Information and Media should encourage more TV shows and radio programmes plus entertainments both on Tv and radio in Zambian local languages as well as give more air time to local programming.
6. Government to ensure that prominence is given to Zambian local languages in Parliament and Members of Parliament be allowed to debate in local languages they are comfortable with.
7. The Government should ensure that one Zambian language be a language of education, official affairs and business.

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