

ANALYSIS OF THE CHALLENGES OF MULTILINGUALISM IN SCHOOLS AND HIGHER/UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONS IN KISANGANI (DRC)

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this article is on the challenges of multilingualism in schools, colleges and universities. The world is multilingual, and therefore multicultural. But today, with globalization, cross-linguistic phenomena are becoming more and more systematized, extending into all sectors of societal life and, more especially, wherever several speakers of different languages and cultures come together. Of course, the meeting of several speakers of different languages always raises management issues. In educational environments, the following challenges have been identified: communication difficulties between managers and staff; languages of instruction and teaching materials; languages of communication with other partners. A number of strategies can be considered, depending on the field, context and stakeholders involved. For example, managers should adopt the strategy of relevance, i.e. using a language that is adapted to a specific category and context.

Keywords: Challenges, Plurilingualism, school, college and/or university, educational environments.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The world is multilingual; therefore multicultural. But today, with globalization, interlinguistic phenomena are becoming more systematic and spreading in all sectors of social life and, more particularly, wherever several speakers of different languages and cultures come together.

Languages are not immune to globalization. Some are on the rise, others are devaluing, depending on location, need, and policy. The language market, in which individuals or groups of individuals look for those that are most useful or profitable to them, is not the same everywhere. This makes it possible to read the aim of globalization, through its linguistic aspect, to elaborate hypotheses on the evolution of this situation and to explore the possible modes of management, between timid conservatism and unbridled laissez-faire (CALVET, J-L, 2002).

According to DUBOIS J et al. (2012); who believe that, generally speaking, multilingualism is the linguistic situation in which the speaking subjects are led to use alternately, depending on the environment or situation, two different languages.

Multilingualism offers incalculable advantages in society, so much so that it constitutes an added value in the various communication frameworks. However, some do not think of the

constraints that can result from multilingualism in particular, at the level of schools and higher education institutions and/or universities in this country, in general, and, in Kisangani, in particular, when the language policy and/or planning(s) impose several languages at the same time. This is the major concern that this cogitation addresses.

No one disputes that nothing is achieved by humans without the use of languages; and that these have no value or better survival only through the speakers. Moreover, languages are worth nothing; That's what people often say. Yet, on the ground, they are indispensable and unavoidable in the service of men.

It is in this context that we observe in some private or even public schools in the city of Kisangani, from kindergarten onwards, the teaching of languages not provided for by the Congolese legislator, which is in the interest of the students, because parents are unaware of the harmful effects of learning in foreign languages (French and/or English). However, experience shows that students who study in their mother tongue assimilate better than those who use a second language.

It is in this sense that we will focus our reflection on the following questions:

- What are the challenges that multilingualism poses in educational settings?
- How can they be met?

Through this research, the objectives are as follows:

- Identify the challenges of multilingualism in educational settings;
- To meet these challenges;

The main objective of this research is to provide a detailed and accurate account of the challenges of multilingualism in educational settings.

2.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research proceeded, through qualitative analysis through observations and documentary analysis, in order to better understand and grasp the challenges related to multilingualism attested in school and higher education institutions / universities and to propose appropriate strategies.

As GUMPERZ asserts, quoted by PHYLLIS DALLEY and SYLVIE ROY (2008, p.8), it is a sociolinguistic approach to change and ethnography; Because it is based on the recognition that social actors (pupils/students, administrative staff, teachers and other partners) undergo change, while being agents of change, and on an understanding of the educational environment, as an institution of reproduction and social production.

In the end, the data on which this research was based were analysed using the descriptive method. "It consists of gathering the information resulting from the observations made about this or that other phenomenon in order to provide as coherent and in-depth a picture as possible of it" (LOUBET DEL J-L., 200, p.208). It consisted of observing and describing the educational environments, the characteristics or conditions of learners, teachers and administrative,

technical and manual staff as well as external partners in the face of the realities of multilingualism.

To collect the data, we used observation and documentary techniques. The observation technique has served us to carry out an action or to display an attitude to be considered; with sustained attention, in order to better systematically scrutinize the challenges related to multilingualism in educational settings. And the documentary technique that allowed us to consult previous documentary data relating to our object of study.

In addition, they are complementary studies of the data by gathering several documents suitable for this research.

2.0 CHALLENGES OF MULTILINGUALISM AT THE LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL AND HIGHER EDUCATION AND/OR UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONS

The difficulties associated with multilingualism, even if they have a common background, may vary from one social sector to another. One thing is certain, in institutions where several people speaking different languages meet, there is always the problem of management. Which language(s) should be used to communicate? Let us examine this situation at the level of school and higher/university institutions.

2.1 At school, higher education and/or university level

At school and higher and/or university level, the problem concerns the organisers, teachers and pupils (school level) and/or students (higher level/university level).

By organizers, we mean the public authority, for public institutions, and developers, for private institutions. The organizers are asked in which language(s) to communicate with the administrative, technical and working staff with teachers, pupils or students? Generally, the languages of communication, in schools and higher education and/or universities, are imposed by law; It can be one language or several. For example, for our country, these languages are imposed by the State (cf. the official texts: framework laws, ministerial decrees, academic instructions, manager's vade-mecum), or by the promoters. This is the sociolinguistic phenomenon of language planning.

At the level of teachers, especially at the primary level, if several languages are imposed, there is the problem of the ability of teachers to deliver teaching in their classes with the required language skills. Let us not forget that primary school teachers are teachers in their classes and that they teach all the subjects included in the curriculum. They are masters who know everything or who must know everything.

At the level of pupils and students, "there is the problem of acceptance and adaptation to this situation. They may hate one or more languages, or they may feel saturated with languages as courses (subjects) or as languages of instruction, or even be stumbled upon the language barrier" (KUMBATULU, 2024). If their hearts are not at work, their training may suffer and it could even lead to them dropping out of school.

These kinds of challenges can disrupt the functioning of institutions, through misunderstandings or misunderstandings between organizers and agents; demotivate teachers and disorient pupils and even students.

Let's go through some examples of this kind of situation.

In Europe, we take the case of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. In this small monarchy, there is evidence of great linguistic diversity. Indeed, there are three national languages: Luxembourgish, German and French. In addition, there are Portuguese and Italian, languages spoken by many families, and English, which is taught from the beginning of secondary school and then used in higher education (Jean-Marc DEFAYS <https://jeanmarcdefays.be/les-défis>).

At the level of the administrations of schools and universities, how will those in charge manage the problem of communication with the members of the administrative, technical and manual staff who are certainly recruited in this multilingual environment? In which language(s) do they communicate with each other? And at the level of pupils and students, who have different linguistic profiles, what representation do they have of this situation? What is the profit they get from it? This is a very big challenge for all schools and universities whose teachers testified that their learners spoke several languages but did not master any of them.

In Africa, let's take the case of Morocco. In this country, Arabic, Tamazight or Amazigh and French are spoken. In education, classical (literary) Arabic is used as the language of instruction from primary to secondary school in public schools, while dialectal Arabic and Amazigh are the most commonly used. At the higher level, the situation is a little different. Some courses are in Arabic while scientific subjects are taught in French. For the organizers, the challenge is in terms of communication with the administrative, technical and worker staff. As far as students are concerned, this constitutes a language barrier for those who want to embrace scientific courses at university such as medicine, polytechnic, etc. (<https://fr.euronews.com/Monde>). Indeed, they come from high school with a language deficit in French, which is the language of instruction in these courses.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a number of public schools are recognized as having the power to use, as the language and/or subject of primary education, one or other of the four national languages in their respective linguistic areas and French, the official and instructional language, at the second level in all public primary schools as well as at the secondary level. higher education and university in the country. English is introduced as a subject of instruction in the third year of secondary school and as a language and subject of instruction in the specialized English teaching options of higher and university education. (Sociolinguistics Course Notes, 2024).

But in some private schools, English is imposed as a subject and/or language of instruction from the preschool level through elementary school to high school. At higher and university level, in all courses, it is imposed as a subject and language of instruction. This state of affairs is a great challenge for organizers, teachers, pupils and students. Indeed, the promoters of these schools often have to resort to external teachers for the teaching of English; Overworked teachers tend to rush lessons in front of pupils and students who do not master French, let alone English.

Parents, ignorant of this system, applaud it and send their children to it. However, learning remains superficial to the point that pupils and/or students have great difficulty expressing themselves. This means that the degree of teaching of this language does not succeed in forging the competence of the learners.

3.0 SOLUTIONS FOR MEETING CHALLENGES

Multilingualism generates many difficulties in several areas of life in society. We have identified a number of them at the school and higher/university levels. To do this, several strategies can be considered, varying according to the fields, contexts and stakeholders. Here are a few.

3.1 Meeting the challenges of multilingualism

3.1.1 At school and tertiary/university level

At the school and higher/university level, the challenges identified are: difficulty in communication between managers and staff; languages of instruction and subject matter; languages of communication with other partners.

- Communication between managers and agents

Leaders of schools and colleges/universities tend to have a high level of post-secondary education. They generally use the so-called scientific languages (French, English, Portuguese, Spanish) in countries whose official languages are different from the local languages (for example, most of the former colonial countries of Western countries, including ours, the D.R.C.). While the majority of staff members, apart from teachers and administrative staff and a few technicians, do not master these languages. Pupils and students have an obligation to know the official languages of their countries, which are generally considered to be "scientific" languages.

In terms of the strategy to adopt to meet this challenge, which can lead to serious drawbacks, managers should adopt the strategy of relevance, i.e. use a language adapted to a specific category and a specific context. Thus, when they address higher-level agents or pupils and students, they would use scientific languages. And when it comes to subordinate agents, they could use the languages of the environment (for example: Lingala, Kiswahili, Tshiluba and Kikongo for our country) which they also have the obligation to know. If they are talking to the whole community, they would use the official language(s) interspersed with some explanations in local languages.

- Languages of instruction and subjects of instruction

As for the issue of languages of instruction or languages as subjects of instruction, generally everything is regulated by laws that vary from country to country. But despite these laws, some challenges remain or are created even by their application, as we have seen, in examples, in Luxembourg, Morocco and in our country.

Thus, in order to meet the challenges arising from the application of laws on language planning, the following solutions can be envisaged:

- amending language planning laws to reduce the difficulties of their implementation and adapt them to different socio-cultural contexts;
- strict observance of the provisions of the laws thus amended by the heads of schools and higher education institutions;
- recruitment of qualified teachers and their continuous training for the effectiveness of teaching. This can reassure pupils and students and give them more taste or attraction to learn the imposed languages;
- languages of communication with other partners. To communicate with external partners, institutional leaders will need to categorize them. In the case of international or national partners with a high level of training or official training, it will be necessary to use appropriate scientific languages, and therefore official languages. If the partners are of low level of training, such as some parents, some suppliers, the maintenance for (ra take place in middle languages.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Our analyses are part of the continuation of many other reflections on the problem of language policies and/or planning in Congolese educational environments, using the reality of the city of Kisangani. This article attempted to analyze the challenges related to multilingualism through schools and higher/university institutions in Kisangani (DRC).

In addition, the cosmopolitanism of the city of Kisangani has led to the coexistence of differentiated languages. This is how the educational community in Kisangani (DRC) seeks to accommodate linguistically the needs or social demands of its inhabitants, in general and learners in particular.

Indeed, societal life is organized by languages, either orally or in writing. Multilingualism presents challenges in all areas, particularly in educational settings, because the meeting of several people speaking different languages and belonging to different ethnic groups creates a problem of language management. It is in this sense that languages reflect the foundation of all human activities.

In educational settings, the challenges identified are the following: difficulty in communication between managers and staff, between staff members, between pupils and/or students; languages of instruction and subject matter; languages of communication with other partners. Thus, in order to meet these challenges, several strategies can be considered, varying according to the fields, contexts and stakeholders. Leaders will need to strive to adopt the relevance strategy, which means using language that is appropriate for a specific category and context.

Thus, it has long been recognized that optimal language learning is not only about the language itself, but also about assimilating the culture of which language is the main repository and vehicle. The system of imposing English, from kindergarten to university, pushes learners to have no command of the different languages. As a result, they only learn the different languages in name throughout the course.

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