Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Language and education in Africa: a fresh approach to the debates on language, education, and cultural identity

Pinxteren, L.M.C. van

Citation

Pinxteren, L. M. C. van. (2022). *Language and education in Africa: a fresh approach to the debates on language, education, and cultural identity*. Leiden: African Studies Centre Leiden (ASCL). Retrieved from https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3446986

Version:	Not Applicable (or Unknown)
License:	Leiden University Non-exclusive license
Downloaded from:	https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3446986

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Language and Education in Africa

Bert van Pinxteren

africanstudies centre leiden

Universiteit Leiden
The Netherlands

Language and Education in Africa

Recommendations

Argumentationally succinct and crystal clear – Kwesi Kwaa Prah

Definitely strengthens known arguments in favour of generalizing the introduction of African languages in all cycles of education – Ekkehard Wolff

A solid piece of original empirical research – Gert Jan Hofstede

Language and Education in Africa:

A fresh approach to the debates on language, education, and cultural identity

Bert van Pinxteren

African Studies Centre Leiden
African Studies Collection, vol. 80

[Colophon]

African Studies Centre Leiden
P.O. Box 9555
2300 RB Leiden
The Netherlands
asc@ascleiden.nl
www.ascleiden.nl

Cover design: Akimoto | Gijsbert Raadgever
Interior design: Sjoukje Rienks
Cover photo: African little girl is learning Amharic language. Photo by hadynyah.

Printed by Ipskamp Printing, Enschede

ISSN: 1876-018x
ISBN: 9789054481928

© Bert van Pinxteren, 2022

Table of contents

Acknowledgements 7

1 Introduction 9

1.1 Africa's Absurdities: A look at Adichie's *Americanah* 9
1.2 Language, Education, and Cultural Identity in Africa: Starting points 12
1.3 Languages: The importance of numbers 18
1.4 The Function of Education 21
1.5 Identity and the Nation State 23
1.6 Identity and Internationalism 28
1.7 Identity and Culture: The need for a fresh approach 31

2 African Languages in Higher Education 37

2.1 The Position of African Languages 38
2.2 Enrolment and Language: Africa and the world 57
2.3 Conclusions 76

3 Rational Choices for Language in Education 81

3.1 Language Policy and Citizenship 81
3.2 Principles Underlying Rational Language Policies 85
3.3 Which Languages are Easy to Learn? 88
3.4 Ease of Language Learning: The ASJP database 91
3.5 Conclusions 98

4 Cultural Identity 101

4.1 Cultural Identity 101
4.2 Cross-Cultural Psychology 110
4.3 Large-Scale Cultural Differences and Similarities in Africa: Main results 113
4.4 Conclusions 125

5 Six Case Studies 129

5.1 Tanzania 130
5.2 Republic of Congo 141
5.3 Ethiopia 147
5.4 Ghana 161
5.5 Morocco 175
5.6 South Africa and Some of Its neighbours 183
5.7 Some Challenges and Conclusions 198

6 Language, Education, and Cultural Identity Revisited 211

6.1 Main Conclusions: Findings and limitations 211
6.2 The Way Forward: A research agenda 216
6.3 The Search for Empowerment 219
6.4 Concluding Remarks: Towards regaining cultural autonomy 223

References 226
Appendix 245

Acknowledgements

This book is adapted from the PhD dissertation, 'Language, Education and Identity in Africa' as published by the Netherlands Graduate School of Linguistics (LOT) in September 2021, number 595 in the LOT Series.[1] This book reproduces large parts of the text of that dissertation; however, it has been reorganized and shortened in a number of places for better readability and conciseness. The case study on Morocco was newly produced for this book and the case study on South Africa and neighbouring countries was adapted and extended from an original case study on Botswana. The support of Dr Harry Wels, publications manager at the African Studies Centre Leiden, as well as the encouragement of my promotor and co-promotor, Prof. Maarten Mous and Dr Yinka Akinyoade, and the reviewers of this text are gratefully acknowledged. In addition, I am grateful for support with editing and layout provided by Anna Yeadell, Machteld Oosterkamp and Mieke Zwart.

1 https://www.lotpublications.nl/lot-publications.

1 Introduction

1.1 Africa's Absurdities: A look at Adichie's *Americanah*

A consideration of the relationships between language, cultural identity, and education is never far away in debates on Africa. Oddly, though, there are few scientific studies that try to bring these three strands together – perhaps because it is too encompassing an issue for a scientific world that is used to cutting problems up into bite-size portions that fit neatly within the confines of discipline and funding-dictated agendas. So, for a brief introduction that outlines the problem field, we must look beyond academia and venture into the world of literature.

Fortunately, Africa has given the world a number of great cultural and literary contributions. It has produced many world-renowned musicians, artists, and writers. One of them is certainly Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and one of her world-acclaimed novels is her 2013 book, *Americanah*.[2] In the novel, she tells of life growing up in a small university town in Eastern Nigeria and of the challenges of moving to and living in the UK and the USA. Her work has been translated into many languages, including e.g. Lithuanian and Malayalam.[3] However, absurdly, the book is not available in any of the major Nigerian languages; indeed, it has not even been published in Igbo, Adichie's mother tongue.

Why is this so? Fortunately, Adichie herself provides the answer:

> I'm not sure my writing in English is a choice. […] Although I took Igbo until the end of secondary school […], it was not at all the norm. Most of all, it was not enough. I write Igbo fairly well but a lot of my intellectual thinking cannot be expressed sufficiently in Igbo. Of course this would be different if I had been educated in both English and Igbo. Or if my learning of Igbo had an approach that was more wholistic.

2 A short review I wrote at the time is still available at: https://www.africaontheblog.org/book-review-amerikanah/; retrieved 19 February 2020.

3 http://www.cerep.ulg.ac.be/adichie/cnaprim.html#translation; retrieved 16 February 2020.

> The interesting thing, of course, is that if I did write in Igbo […], many Igbo people would not be able to read it. Many educated Igbo people I know can barely read Igbo and they mostly write it atrociously.
>
> I think that what is more important in this discourse is not whether African writers should or should not write in English but how African writers, and Africans in general, are educated in Africa.[4]

But does this not mean that Adichie is estranged from her own culture? Again, she offers a clear response:

> Language is not just about communication it's about word feel. Some people argued that language is the only thing that makes a culture but I disagree. I think identity is much more complex, I think that culture is really a way of looking at the world and so there are Igbo people who do not speak the language but that does not necessarily make them any less Igbo.

However:

> Language is the constructs of culture, the end of language marks the beginning of the end of culture. And this I think is giving value to who we are and to our culture […] Having confidence in your culture does not mean you have to be ethnocentric or you feel your culture is better than others, what it means is that you are satisfied with what is yours. And so there will be no need to dehumanize others.[5]

In other words: Adichie holds that not being able to use one's own language sufficiently limits how certain feelings can be expressed. There is a relationship between language and culture, but it is not one-on-one: one can be culturally Igbo without necessarily speaking the Igbo language; however, if the Igbo language were to die out, Igbo culture would be threatened as well.

The example of Adichie's *Americanah* is one of many and it is good to see that this is an absurdity, one that is peculiar to Africa. In Africa, intellectuals are educated in a language that is not their own. However, they are educated so well that they manage to appropriate this language so that it becomes their own – to the detriment of the language of their people, whose culture they

4 https://www.vanguardngr.com/2019/01/i-am-proud-to-be-a-product-of-igbo-land-chimamanda-adichie/; retrieved 16 February 2020.

5 https://www.vanguardngr.com/2019/01/i-am-proud-to-be-a-product-of-igbo-land-chimamanda-adichie/ retrieved 16 February 2020.

still proudly share. This African absurdity, in a nutshell, brings together all the elements that this study wants to speak to: what is the status of African cultures today? What is the relationship with language and, more in particular, with language and education?

This brief excursion into the world of literature helps explain the logic of the three central questions that will be examined in this study:

- Why are African languages currently not being used more in higher education as a medium of instruction?
- What possibilities are there for rational language-in-education policies in Africa?

It is clear, also from the above, that there must be a relationship between language and language as used in education and group cultural identities. This complicated relationship cannot be ignored. In order to understand it, we need to examine what we mean with 'identity' and with 'culture'. And once we have clarified that:

- How can we describe current large-scale cultural differences and similarities in Africa?

These are questions that must be answered at the level of *societies*, rather than at the level of individuals. In order to address these questions in a way that makes sense for a social scientist, we must first start with the basics: every word in the title of this book needs to be discussed and explained, so that the field of study and the meaning of the terms to be used are properly defined. This will be attempted in the following sections. Section 1.2 starts by considering the word 'Africa' and what it entails; this provides a basic starting point for the study, in solidarity with African thinkers such as Prah. Section 1.3 then offers a basic look at languages and at the criteria generally used for counting them. Section 1.4 briefly discusses higher education and its function in society. Sections 1.5 and 1.6 look at identity: firstly, in connection with discourse on the nation state and subsequently in relation to the internationalist discourse. Section 1.7 ends this introductory chapter with a plea for building a vision on cultural identity, language, and education that explores possibilities for African agency and takes a first look at issues of cultural identity as they apply to Africa.

Chapter Two examines African languages in higher education, and introduces the concepts of 'discerned' and 'designed' languages. It uses a new examination of participation in education to explain why attempts at using African languages in education have largely met with limited success and suggests that, in future, this may have to change.

Chapter Three then looks at the possibility for making rational choices for language use in education. It proposes five practical principles that should guide such rational choices. It points to the importance of considering the ease of language learning when making choices in language use in teaching that affect major portions of the population and proposes a new way to discuss ease of language learning, based on linguistic distance between language pairs.

Chapter Four outlines the most difficult issue: how to examine and talk about cultural differences and similarities in Africa, based on a cross-cultural psychology approach. It presents new information on the current situation and the expected future evolution, building on the predictions of Vansina (discussed in section 1.7). The last section compares Africa with other areas of the world in terms of cultural identity.

The theoretical framework of Chapters Two, Three, and Four is then applied in Chapter Five through six case studies: Tanzania; Congo-Brazzaville; Ethiopia; Ghana; Morocco; and South Africa.

The concluding Chapter Six revisits the issues raised in this first chapter and suggests a new research agenda and a way forward for the future.

1.2 Language, Education, and Cultural Identity in Africa: Starting points

Every word in the title of this study must be looked at in order to understand what we are talking about here and in what context these terms should be seen. What do we mean by 'Africa'? What does 'cultural identity' mean? How about the terms 'language' and 'education'? These are all broad terms, so it is proper to start by clarifying how they are used in this study.

Firstly, the issue of 'Africa' and, related to that, the issue of who is an 'African.' The name 'Africa' itself is not a recent invention, it originates in Roman times. Another name that has been suggested for the continent is Alkebu-Lan. Ali Mazrui (1993: 10) pointed out that Europe's gift to Africa was the gift of African identity. This is probably true – it is probable that in precolonial times, the Zulu already thought of themselves as Zulu, but certainly not as Africans. Of course, as pointed out by Zeleza (2016: 17), the same holds true for everybody else – Europeans never thought of themselves as Europeans (many British still do not), likewise Asians as Asians, or Americans as Americans. In that sense, then, the gift is not so much due to the charitable nature of Europeans but rather due to the centuries-old process of increased interaction between peoples of different parts of the world, a process in which Europeans played a prominent role, although they were by no means the only ones.

The issue of who is an 'African' has several answers.[6] One is to say that 'Africans' are people with a relatively high degree of skin pigmentation. That type of reasoning is infected by racist thought and must therefore be rejected. Another is to say that 'Africans' are those who live or were born and raised on the African continent – including Arabs, but excluding African Americans. A third is to say that 'Africans' are those who regard themselves so – including African Americans but excluding Arabs. This latter position is the one taken by Prah (2014: 71). For a European, it may not be necessary to choose between these last two positions: since African unity is still a long way off in any way, shape, or form, it will be up to Africans to settle this debate. But what does that mean for identity in Africa and for African identity?

Mazrui wrote about 'identity' as a singular, but would it not be better to speak about 'identities' as plural? The example of Adichie shows that people have multiple identities – Adichie is a writer, a woman, an African, an Igbo, and more - and all these are part of her identity. This study limits itself to an examination of *cultural* identity or identities. In addition, the focus is at the level of cultural groups, not at the level of individual identification. This theme will be explored further in Chapter Two.

'Europe's gift to Africa', like so many of Europe's gifts, is not always a blessing, because in the European perception, the word 'Africa' comes with a host of preconceived ideas and peculiar conceptions that are not purely flattering – perhaps best summarized in the image of Africa as the 'dark continent' (see

6 For a discussion, see Adibe (2017).

also Zeleza, 2006: 16). Africa and Africans have been portrayed as somehow less than human, as 'other,' as 'savage,' as generally inferior, threatening and not necessarily good, as open to being tamed and civilized.[7] The classic study on orientalism by Said (1978) can also be applied to Africa, as was shown in a grandiose manner by Mbembe (2001). This type of portrayal is by no means ancient history: Apartheid as an institutionalized system was dismantled only in 1990 but elements of the ideology that underpinned it did not suddenly disappear. Overcoming this heavy historical load and turning it around is no simple task. It has three starting points:

- A radical recognition of our common humanity and a rejection of any type of dehumanising or othering discourse;
- A focus on African agency: on the rightful struggle of Africans to be in charge of their own destiny and to make their own choices;
- A look beyond Africa: consider Africa in its diversity as well as in its unity also in comparison and in relation to other continents.

These three starting points seem like truisms – they should go without saying. Why is it necessary to state them like this, at the start of the introduction? Unfortunately, it is because, to this day, thinking about Africa is tainted by a number of influential approaches that are in contradiction with one or several of these starting points, as we shall see further on in this study.[8]

These European-based perceptions of Africa have, of course, been resisted and rejected in Africa and by Africans, who have sought to develop an alternative, decolonial vision of Africa. This has been done most clearly in the various strands of the pan-Africanist movement. But what is pan-Africanism, and what can pan-Africanist thinking contribute to thinking and research on identity, education, and language?

Prah (2014: 1) gives a brief definition of pan-Africanism as a belief consisting of two parts: 1) 'that the future of Africa and Africans must lie in the hands of Africans'; and 2) 'that only unity can rehabilitate Africans from the stunting legacy of colonialism and neo-colonialism.' These are beautiful beliefs, but

7 These mechanisms have been dissected in the field of postcolonial studies. For a good introductory text, see McLeod (2010). For an analysis of the type of discourse this has generated, see Pratt (1992). Another aspect is the way in which images of Africa are gendered – Africa as the emotional, mysterious, wild, and threatening side of femininity, in need of salutary masculine moral and disciplinary intervention.

8 See also e.g. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020: 6): 'cognitive injustice is […] a social injustice that cascades from the denial of other people's humanity.'

what is their practical meaning? These two elements are relevant for this study. First, let us examine the idea of 'unity,' as seen by Prah.

Paradoxically, the issue of African 'unity' and how to achieve it has been, and still is, one of the most divisive elements in the pan-Africanist movement. Unlike the issue of 'who is an African,' this is an issue on which this study must take a position. Broadly speaking, the division has been visible from before the days of the creation of the Organisation of African Unity in 1963 and it can be characterised as the distinction between those who favoured a gradual approach to achieving unity, starting from the already-established nation states (e.g. Azikiwe) and those who favoured a quick evolution towards a 'United States of Africa' (e.g. Nkrumah) (see e.g. Prah 2014: 63-64).

The position taken here follows that of Prah (2014: 78), who takes a clear stand, one that at first sight might also seem paradoxical. For him, unity is necessary to allow for diversity and it has to be built gradually and from the bottom up. Prah is critical of the current division of Africa into its various nation states – he sees a solution in a mosaic of arrangements that transcends current national boundaries: 'To build identities on the basis of neo-colonial states without recognising the primacy of deeper historical identities is tantamount to elevating falsehood to the status of truth.' Prah believes that 'tolerance and cultivated pluralism' are needed and, indeed, possible everywhere under normal circumstances. He calls (p. 77) for decentralisation and a secular order: 'Decentralisation will enable us to give better democratic expression to localism, ethnic diversities and popular empowerment at the local level. This will help keep ethnicism in check. Secularism will permit religious coexistence […].' Prah is not alone in this opinion. Davidson (1992: 321) already felt that the nation state should be dismantled in favour of more regional participatory frameworks. Wa Thiong'o (2004: 36) calls for 'a united Africa not as a union of African heads of state but as a union of the African peoples,' borderless but based on participatory forms of democracy.[9]

Prah is not a primordialist: 'The idea is not to give a new lease of life to cultural fossils and outdated practices which have no relevance for the present and the future, but rather to build on what people have and have had for ages, adding new values and ideas to foundations that are time-tested' (p. 80). This idea is echoed, for example, by Ayittey (2015). Englebert (2005), however, shows that even though there is *some* scope for a re-purposing of indigenous political structures, this should not be overestimated.

9 For a more recent but similar example, see Oloruntoba and Falola (2018: 29).

Prah is critical of the role of African states in the pan-Africanist movement. He feels that pan-African ideals should be 'driven by civil society' (p. 95). He calls for a cultural movement that would reduce self-hatred and that would 'provide the pride and confidence necessary to forge ahead' (p. 97). In his view, this should lead to 'democratic orders which are adapted to the peculiarities of African societies; constitutions which acknowledge diversity and provide scope for the coexistence of ethnic and cultural variation; decentralized systems which allow localities and constituencies the ability to create and run their own affairs' (p. 102). This is a view that is shared by, for example, Appiah (2012).

In this context, Wa Thiong'o points to the importance of language (p. 33): 'The retrieval and use of African languages is of paramount importance.' Previously, Sow and Abdulaziz (1993: 551) had posited that African languages should 'perform or perish.' Prah agrees (p. 78): 'Language is the most important feature of culture and it provides, as a historical record, better understanding of the peoples of Africa than the colonial experience.' He therefore sees developing the different African languages as necessary for achieving African unity. He also argues, however, that the number of African languages (commonly put at over 2,000) is grossly overstated.

But there is another element that is central to pan-Africanism: the leading role of Africans. What does that mean for this study, written by a European researcher?

I hold that science is not a value-free thought experiment. Scientists should be aware of the role they play in societal debate. As a European researcher, my position is one of solidarity with those who are resisting oppression and who are trying to build an Africa based on authenticity and on the interests of the peoples of Africa, and not based on narrow self-interest. This has to be attempted in a way that is modest and conscious of the pitfalls, of which there are many: in the era of colonialism and apartheid, it was easy for a well-meaning European to choose sides against colonialism and apartheid. But today, these choices are no longer so easy, or obvious. Yet, in the literature as well as well as in person, I have found a number of Africans I can choose sides with and it is partly through their guidance that I have been able to develop some of the thoughts outlined in this work.

For the research methodology, this means that this study does not try to take on a 'mediator' or 'interpreter' role and therefore does not speak on behalf of or for Africa or Africans. The positions taken and opinions presented are

my own and do not pretend to present an 'African' point of view, even though this study can be seen as being inspired by a pan-Africanist perspective, as outlined above. Methodologically, this implies restricting the data used to those that are based on African self-representations in a way that is as direct and unmediated as possible. The data used here are not 'mine': they are in the public domain and can be used by anybody. In addition, the research methods should be transparent and repeatable and limited to those that can and have been applied in Africa and other regions as well. [10] This means that the study has limitations, but these are accepted in order to avoid an otherising gaze, also at the methodological level. Language, education, and identity are all wide fields of inquiry and, in the framework of this study, it will be impossible to go very deeply into all of them. Therefore, the research in all three areas should be regarded as attempts to deliver a 'proof of concept,' hopefully inspiring others more competent in every one of those areas to do further work.

It is in this spirit, then, that this study has been written. It fits within a broad framework that has been developed by African thinkers. It does not take a position on who is or is not an African, but does stand in solidarity with Prah and others, who see pan-Africanism as a way of building Africa on the basis of African cultures and languages and carried by civil society. African identities from this pan-Africanist perspective means a view of African identities as actually experienced and built by Africans – not as constructs that have been engineered by the various state-building and nation-building initiatives that have been imposed from above, often with limited success.

Taking this position opens up a vast agenda of research and analysis, and this study only permits a fairly limited exploration of the most important issues regarding the three central elements of language, education, and cultural identity. Within this framework, it is now possible to start with an introductory examination of the separate elements of language, education, and cultural identity in order to further clarify the remit of the study.

10 In the literature, this is characterised as an etic approach, one that looks at the subject from outside. This is in contrast to an emic approach, which tries to describe subjects from within. Both approaches have their inherent difficulties, advantages, and disadvantages – discussing them falls largely outside the scope of this study; for a good discussion, see e.g. Peterson and Pike, 2002.

1.3 Languages: The importance of numbers

Almost all discussions of languages in Africa start with a reference to the Ethnologue, which currently lists Africa as having 2,150 living languages.[11] However, this is not the only source on the number of languages in Africa. Glottolog is a database that aims to list all 'the world's languages, language families and dialects.'[12] It works closely with the Ethnologue and lists the number of languages in Africa as around 1,845 (Hammarström 2016: 23). Maho (2004: 294) argues that the Ethnologue grossly overestimates the number of languages in Africa and thinks 1,500 is a better estimate. Likewise, Djité (2008: 23) thinks that 'the multilingual picture of the continent is blown out of proportion.' The 2001 *Encyclopaedia Britannica* lists 1,055 linguistic groups (cited in Alesina et al., 2002: 159). Prah (2012) does not give a specific number, but feels the number of languages in Africa is even more grossly overstated. He quotes Lord Hailey, who gave a number of 700 in 1938 (p. 302) and also points out that, in any case, 90 per cent of Africans can be reached through their first, second, or third language in no more than 39 languages. Maris (2010) has taken the Ethnologue's description of languages in the Netherlands as his starting point; on the basis of this, he estimates that the Ethnologue overstates the number of languages in the world by a factor of two or three.

How is this possible? Is linguistics not a science that works with unambiguous, objective criteria, leaving no room for misunderstanding? Clearly, it is not. The Glottolog gives the commonly used definition that in order for a language to be considered separate from all others, it should be '*not mutually intelligible* with any other language.'[13] As the different estimates given above show, this criterion is open to different and subjective interpretations and has itself been criticised as ideological (Rajagopalan, 2010). Several attempts have been made to find tests and to establish criteria for deciding on mutual intelligibility, but no general model has emerged, as Gooskens (2013: 209) concludes in her methodological overview. Therefore, the decision on what to call a language is, in principle, not only a scientific but also a political decision. The Ethnologue is clear about this, listing two criteria in addition to the criterion of mutual intelligibility:

11 https://www.ethnologue.com/region/Africa, retrieved 20 August 2021.

12 http://glottolog.org/about/about, accessed 22 June 2020. The Glottolog database is interested in discerning a high number of languages because it uses these distinctions to attempt to show the historical evolution and the relative age of languages – their genealogical relations. This is also known as 'glottochronology'.

13 https://glottolog.org/glottolog/glottologinformation, retrieved 22 June 2020.

> Where spoken intelligibility between language varieties is marginal, the existence of a common literature or of a common ethnolinguistic identity with a central variety that both speaker communities understand can be strong indicators that they should nevertheless be considered language varieties of the same individual language.
>
> Where there is enough intelligibility between varieties to enable communication, they can nevertheless be treated as different languages when they have long-standing distinctly named ethnolinguistic identities coupled with established standardization and literatures that are distinct.[14]

This means that for English, for example, it is possible to speak of one language, in spite of the numerous varieties of English (also known as 'World Englishes') that exist in the world, with partly very limited mutual intelligibility. In this context, McArthur (2003: 56) has introduced the term 'English Language complex.'

On the other hand, this type of criteria setting allows the Ethnologue to split Oromo,[15] a language of Ethiopia spoken by more than 37 million people and widely used in the media and in education, into four different languages. By its own admittance, the Ethnologue's criteria for keeping the various Englishes together as one language but splitting up Oromo into four are not purely linguistic. Makoni and Meinhof (2006) make the point, also made by several other authors, that what is and what is not called a language in Africa has been manipulated by the needs of missionaries and colonial administrators. Makoni (1998) illustrates this in detail for Shona.

---

14 https://www.ethnologue.com/about/problem-language-identification, accessed 23 June 2020.

15 Oromo speakers themselves call their language Afaan Oromo, but it is also known as Oromiffa. It is common that languages are known by various names and spellings. Just as the decision on what to call a language and what to call a dialect can be a controversial one, about which there is not always unanimity between linguists, so also the names of languages and their groupings into families and subfamilies can be contested. Many languages have a name in their own language and a different name in the languages of those they come in contact with. Sometimes, the name by which a language is known is considered to be pejorative by the language speakers themselves. I cannot claim any detailed knowledge of the languages discussed in this and the following chapters. The designations for the languages used here are mostly taken from the Ethnologue or from the ASJP database (see Chapter 3.4). For language (sub)families, I have relied on the classifications given by Glottolog. Use of these names and classifications implies no academic or political position on their appropriateness or accuracy.

Thus, it is important to ask the question what political functions are served by the different discourses on language numbers in Africa. As Prah (2012: 303) has pointed out, the Ethnologue's owner, the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), is a Protestant missionary organisation committed to bringing the Gospel in all the 'tongues' of the world. Their desire to be complete in this may lead to overstating the number of languages.[16]

Given the political nature of these criteria, it would be possible to apply them in a different way, for example a way that is appropriate to a decolonial, Africa-centred way of analysing languages. This is precisely what has been attempted by Prah, the founder of CASAS, the Centre for Advanced Studies of African Societies based in Cape Town, South Africa (now part of the University of the Western Cape).[17] Part of its core mission is to work on the harmonisation and standardisation of African languages, based on their mutual intelligibility.[18] Their stated interest is to minimise the African language count.

It is important to note that this discussion is not a value-free academic debate: the way the number of languages is counted in Africa has real consequences in a number of ways. One is that the number of languages itself is often cited as a key reason why using African languages more in domains such as education would be impractical, if not impossible. Attah (1987) discusses this problem with respect to Nigeria. Another reason is that statistics on language numbers are often taken as a proxy for statistics on ethnicity. There is a large body of literature that tries to explain Africa's uneven development record as a function of the ethnic fragmentation that is seen in many African countries – see, for example, Michalopoulos and Papaioannou (2016). Obviously, the input data may have an influence on the outcomes. Thus, using these numbers uncritically may lead to distorted outcomes. Much of the work in this area, starting with that of Easterly and Levine (1997) is based on the Soviet 'Atlas Narodov Mira' of 1964. As Posner (2004) has pointed out, this Atlas is based on data from the colonial period. This leads to an explanation of Africa's relative under-performance, which leaves little scope for African agency.

The position taken here, then, is that the term 'language' is not politically neutral and needs to be problematised in an African context. However, this

16 For a related, much more explicit approach, counting the number of 'unreached people groups,' see the Joshua Project, https://joshuaproject.net.

17 https://www.uwc.ac.za/news-and-announcements/news/uwc-gifted-priceless-african-gem-casas-lifts-african-people-by-lifting-african-languages-622, retrieved 20 August 2021.

18 http://www.casas.co.za/History.aspx retrieved 10 July 2019.

study does not make a statement about the number of languages that exists in Africa. Instead, it proposes a more sociological approach that will be elaborated in Chapter 2.1.

1.4 The Function of Education

If the debate on 'language' is in part also a political and ideological discussion, the same holds more strongly for education. In order to understand the political functions of education, one can make use of the productive theoretical framework that has been developed by Bourdieu and Passeron (1979). These authors define education as a *field*, a system of social positions, structured internally in terms of power relations. Education helps to form the *cultural capital* of a country and provides a specific *habitus*. Together, these terms help us understand the role of education in class (re)production. Higher education can be conceptualised as a sorting machine that selects students according to an *implicit* social classification and reproduces the same students according to an *explicit* academic classification. This explicit academic classification closely resembles the implicit social classification (Naidoo 2004, summarising Bourdieu).

Bourdieu and Passeron help us understand that enrolment levels in tertiary education for a particular country give an indication of the social function of tertiary education in that country. This indication is largely independent of the quality of the education. In general: if only a low proportion of the population of a country has access to tertiary education, then that education will be key to reproducing that country's elite. If, on the other hand, a very high proportion of the population of a country has access to tertiary education, then that level of education will not be the key mechanism for reproducing the elite per se.

Bourdieu and Passeron's theory leads to a second important element to consider when analysing education: this is the relation between the elite and the rest of the population. An indicator of this is the level of selectivity in the educational process. This is about the difference in educational level between the elite and the rest of the population – in other words, about how 'steep' the educational pyramid is in a given country and at a given point in time. Highly productive societies in the Global North depend on a highly educated population. In other words, in these countries there is a broad intellectual top that is made possible by a broad base of people who also receive the best education appropriate to their capabilities.

So, Bourdieu and Passeron identify two elements that are relevant for analysing and understanding the social functions of education in a society: one element is which proportion of the population receives higher education; the other element is the relationship between that proportion and the proportion of people in education in general (the 'steepness' of the pyramid). For Africa, these two elements are crucial, although they are usually overlooked in the literature. This is also where there is a meritocratic or, one could say, demographic linkage between education as such and the medium of instruction (the language) used in education. For people at the top end of the intelligence scale, historical experience has shown that, to an extent, it does not matter what the language of instruction is. In Europe, for a long time elite education was in Latin or in other languages other than the mother tongue. In India, Sanskrit has been used as a medium of instruction for centuries. All over the Arab world, the classical Arabic used for instruction is different from the spoken languages. And in Africa, the use of colonial languages did not block the emergence of great intellectuals. For people closer to the lower end of the intelligence scale, the language of instruction may be of greater importance; this issue is examined in greater detail in Chapter Three.

At independence, Africa inherited colonial systems of education aimed at recruiting only a small elite for employment in administration and business. Therefore, the issue of which language to use for higher education was not really pressing – there were more than enough intelligent Africans to fill the few places available in the colonial education systems. However, this meant that inequalities in society were reproduced and strengthened via the mechanism of knowledge of colonial languages. However, language abilities are not distributed equally over a population. It is to be expected that as education expands, the issue of the medium of instruction can become relevant, where it was not previously relevant in colonial systems of education. This idea is examined more in detail in Chapter 3.2.

However, colonial administrators not only introduced their languages as a medium of instruction because they felt it was convenient for them. It was also always part of a project to drastically reform and 'civilise' African societies in order to better suit the colonial project (see e.g. Lebeau and Ogunsanya, 2000). It is interesting to note, as Prah has done, that there is one group of Europeans to which, to some extent, this has also happened, namely, to the Afrikaans-speaking community in British-administered South Africa. They fully understood what was going on at the time and fiercely resisted it. Prah (2010a: 141) quotes Boer leader Steyn, who, in 1913, quoted Tacitus, who wrote some 2,000 years ago: 'The language of the conqueror in the mouth of

the conquered is the language of the slaves.' The function of education in reproducing the cultural capital of a society is therefore profoundly tied to medium of instruction issues. For this reason, a discussion aimed at overcoming the problems and injustices introduced in colonial education in one way or another also needs to take language of instruction issues into account.

The task colonialism set itself of 'civilising' Africa was not a small project and it had considerable effects on African cultural identities, both intended and unintended.[19] In order to explore those issues further, they are discussed in the next sections, first within the context of the debate on the nation state and then within the context of the debate on internationalism.

1.5 Identity and the Nation State

The discussion of European versus African perceptions of the continent requires us to discuss another one of Africa's absurdities, the current set-up of Africa's states, as inherited from colonial times. Can national cultural identities even exist within the framework of Africa's colonially determined state borders? It is important here to examine some of the ideas doing the rounds, because they significantly influence the thinking on language, identity, and culture in Africa. To do so, I will use as an example the thinking advanced by Dutch author René Grotenhuis.[20]

It is important to bear in mind that current Western thinking about states and nations has a history. In 1830, forming of colonies in Africa had just started, with some French and Portuguese footholds and the Cape Colony. At that time, Europe was recovering from the Napoleonic wars. In Europe, monolingual nation states were still a marginal phenomenon: countries like Germany, Italy, Ireland, Poland, or Norway did not exist yet. The continent was dominated by a number of large multinational, multilingual empires and Kingdoms – the Austro-Hungarian, British, Ottoman, and Russian empires being the most conspicuous, together with the French monarchy. In 1815, around the time that Moshoeshoe I was struggling to form a Sotho state (covering an area much larger than the current state of Lesotho), what is now Germany consisted of a loose federation of 39 independent states. As a unified state, Germany was founded only in 1871. Its first leader was Bismarck, who played

19 Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020: 5) cites Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o in this context, who has used the image of a 'cultural bomb.'

20 His book was chosen not so much because it is a foundational text on these issues, but because it provides a useful overview and serves as a backdrop for clarifying my own position.

a key role in the later carving up of Africa. Italy came together a year earlier, in 1870, after several wars led by, among others, Garibaldi. Greece more or less came together only in 1919. In other words, the processes that went on in nineteenth-century Africa are not altogether different from those going on in Europe in the same period, albeit the power relationships and the resulting patterns of domination and resistance were very different. One term that is often used with reference to Africa is the term 'Balkanisation,' pejoratively referring to the large degree of ethnic diversity (and strife) that characterises the Balkan area of Southeast Europe. It is important to realise that, in the racist discourse rampant in Western Europe 150 years ago, the peoples of the Balkan area were not considered to be much above Africans.

The development of more or less monolingual nation states also led to or was spurred on by the forming of a number of new and influential ideas, notably ideas about how forming such nation states was a natural phenomenon (*primordialism*, see e.g. Shils, 1957). In its more extreme form, these led to fascist ideas of '*Blut und Boden*,[21] the 'inalienable' ties between a person's cultural background and the nation he or she should identify with. The reaction was likewise influential, pointing out the 'constructed' nature of nationalist sentiment (see e.g. Gellner, 1983; Anderson, 1983). These are basically the two frameworks that have been developed in analysing nation state formation in Europe and that authors have endlessly attempted to use in providing suggestions for how states should be seen in Africa and for what should be done to improve them. Either Africans should attempt to form homogenous nation states, different from the current ones (the primordialist view) (for an African view on this, see Agugua, 2018: 118); or Africans should try to turn their states into viable entities ('nation building,' the constructivist view) (for an African view, see Ugwuanyi, 2018) or Africans should not bother about statehood at all.

In my view, neither of these recipes does Africa sufficient justice. The model of the nation state is a social innovation that has been appropriated by people the world over and that offers advantages as well as disadvantages (in different combinations in different economic, social, and historical settings). Africans will have to make use of this innovation in their own way and, in doing so, adapt it to suit their own needs, needs that will not be the same everywhere on the continent and at all times.

21 The German words for blood and soil.

Grotenhuis (2016) has discussed the nation state in the context of his experiences with fragile states (not only in Africa). His main argument is that for fragile states, it is not enough to do state-building (a process of building a country's national institutions). It must be accompanied by a process of nation-building (a process of building a sense of identification with and belonging to the country). In that sense, Grotenhuis reaches similar conclusions to those of Olowu and Chanie (2016: 12), who have examined the issue of state fragility using a number of case studies, mostly from Eastern and Southern Africa and who conclude that legitimacy is a key issue with respect to state fragility.

Grotenhuis seeks to provide an answer to how the concepts of nation, nation-building, fragility, and identity are related and meaningful. He points to the idea that, in modern nation states, **people** are supposed to determine their own future (principle of self-determination), rather than rulers. For Grotenhuis: 'The nation is about identity, who we are in the sense of "self-identification"' (p. 28). But how does this identification come about? Grotenhuis puts himself in the constructivist camp. He discusses whether or not it would make sense to redraw state maps, in order to provide a better match between peoples and states, but is ultimately against this idea. He mentions the 'risk of fragmentation,' saying that it will not offer a real solution (p. 39) and that homogeneity cannot be created because of the diversity that is everywhere nowadays.

Thus, he is ambivalent or, one could say, contradictory about nation-building. On the one hand, he is against redrawing borders. On the other, he holds that 'sovereignty of people is the founding principle of the nation – without this a nation has no existential legitimacy' (p. 59). But who are the 'people'? For this, he turns to the concept of 'republican citizenship' (p. 61), which implies both rights and responsibilities in relation to the state. He discusses the 'communitarian perspective' (p. 62), which he sees as problematic. Instead, modern republican citizenship is built on a recognition of rights and obligations. It is this that gives the nation state its legitimacy (p. 70). Legitimacy 'is rooted in the affirmation of belonging by the people' (p. 75). 'The challenge is to build states using domestic capacities, knowledge and traditions' (p. 79). This also needs trust (p. 84). 'There is a pre-reflective sense of relationship that gives the confidence to ask a question or try to solve a problem: We understand each other by language but also by culture, values, accepted behavior' (p. 85).

Just letting this happen naturally could take generations and current fragile states cannot afford that, Grotenhuis argues. Therefore, a conscious effort at state-building needs to be accompanied by nation-building. The 'European road to nation-building, paved as it was by violence, is not a very feasible road for fragile states today' (p. 90). '[H]omogeneity can no longer be a goal of the process, simply because it cannot be achieved. Nation-building has to be realized in a fundamentally diverse reality' (p. 91).

He then examines what he calls the 'Scylla and Charybdis of nation-building' (p. 101). The Scylla is that nation-building 'is laying the fundaments for exclusionary politics' (p. 102). The Charybdis is denying the idea of identity altogether, which, in Grotenhuis's view, is also wrong: 'It means claiming that in essence we are unique individuals and that identity is an individual not a collective issue. I believe that such a claim presents a serious misunderstanding of our social nature' (p. 103). He believes that the solution is what he calls 'moderate patriotism' (p. 105). 'Being connected to our specific "imagined community" does not exclude the possibility of engaging with and caring for others outside that community.' He thinks a constructed, 'modern' national identity can co-exist along with sub-national cultural, ethnic, or religious identities.

Grotenhuis is against copying the European model of nation-building, even though 'research shows a relationship between (ethnic) homogeneity and economic progress' (p. 111). Yet: 'The challenge for fragile states today is to foster a sense of belonging and togetherness that is strong enough to build a stable and secure society, but that avoids the goal of homogenization.' The problem becomes how to make 'Toeareg, Peul and Bambara into Malinese without the need to discard their ethnic or tribal identity' (p. 114). In other words: 'The challenge in fragile states is to build an overarching national identity out of a range of minority identities' (p. 117). He seems to be against decentralisation of the type favoured by Quebec: 'Accepting the substate nation as a viable option will only fuel the ambition of these nations to govern themselves' (p. 120). He repeats that fragmentation is a risk, rather than a solution (p. 121). He then proceeds to provide an outline of a programme for nation-building, consisting of stressing the common elements and shared cultural features (p. 157). 'There is one cultural component that merits specific attention: Language. It will be difficult to create a national sense of belonging without a common language' (p. 157). However, this can be solved because many people are polyglots (p. 158).

In spite of this, he also points out that: 'When legitimacy is the key problem, nation-building as a complementary process of state-building seems counter-productive and impossible' (p. 174). He reiterates that 'institution building is embedded in a cultural, social and spiritual understanding that they relate to' (p. 185), and calls for further research into 'how people understand their national identity' (p. 187).

Grotenhuis deserves to be commended for his recognition of identity issues and for his plea for accompanying state-building with nation-building. He correctly points out that a state that is not understood by its inhabitants has no legitimacy and will therefore fail. However, the solution he proposes falls short of the mark, for four reasons:

- An over-confidence in the power of social engineering

Europe has always tried to re-engineer Africa and the world and Grotenhuis is part of this grand tradition. He seems to feel that any fragile state can be morphed into a nation. Even for the ones that currently lack legitimacy in the eyes of the people, where nation-building is impossible, the only solution he sees is preparatory measures, awaiting a time, which must surely come, when people will come round to the view of the nation-builders. This is where Grotenhuis is trapped between his own Scylla and Charybdis. On the one hand, he sees the importance of community and rejects the image of people as completely atomised individuals. On the other hand, he believes that any combination of cultures and ethnicities can productively be brought together in a modern nation. The fallacy here is to assume that when something is 'constructed' there must also be a 'constructor,' a distinct person or institution that does the constructing. Instead, there are social processes at work here involving so many different actors that to assume a common, conscious construction project is a gross overstatement of what is actually possible (even if it were desirable).

- An inadequate understanding of culture

Grotenhuis sees 'culture' as uniform and not allowing for diversity. He does not understand that a common cultural framework still allows for considerable diversity among individuals, as discussed in Chapter 4.1. He therefore wrongly equates nations that are characterised by a common national culture with homogeneity. This logically but erroneously leads to the conclusion that because such homogeneity does not exist (anymore) it is fruitless to strive for it. He is unable to discuss the problem in the terms in

which it deserves to be discussed, namely, to what extent cultural diversity can still be managed within a single nation state.

- Scant attention to the problem of language

Stating that because many people are polyglots the problem of a common language can be solved does not do sufficient justice to the issues at hand – this is discussed in greater detail in Chapters two and three.

- Acceptance of the status quo

Even though Grotenhuis acknowledges that states are social constructs, have not always been around, and probably will not always be around in their current form, he refuses to discuss any type of redrawing of state borders and refuses subnational decentralisation, saying this will only lead to fragmentation. In this, he differs from Olowu and Chanie (2016: 14), who see decentralisation as one of the possible solutions.[22] This is a contradiction in his line of reasoning that Grotenhuis is unable to resolve. By sticking to the status quo, Grotenhuis also ignores the insights of people like Smith (2013), who have argued that decentralisation actually gives opportunities for creating citizenship and increases feelings of belonging and does not necessarily lead to secessionism.

In sum, Grotenhuis believes that national cultural identities can be constructed within the framework of Africa's colonially determined state borders – but it remains little more than a statement of faith. He sees the problems, but does not manage to really tackle them. Before going into a more in-depth investigation of the issues, there is another element that also needs to be looked at – the influence of internationalist thinking, especially Marxist thinking, on theories of the state in Africa.

1.6 Identity and Internationalism

From the outset, Europe's supposedly civilising mission in Africa has been contested – not only by Africans, but also by Europeans. In *'Capital,'* published in 1867, Karl Marx lambasted the capitalist powers for their

22 The issue of decentralisation itself points to a rich literature that is impossible to treat within the framework of this work. For a good introduction of the possibilities and difficulties, see e.g. Erk (2015).

'undisguised looting, enslavement, and murder' in the colonies (quoted in Lamola, 2019: 56). Therefore, from an early period onwards, Africans who sought knowledge about Europe and its ways also encountered European ideas and ideologies resisting colonisation and all that it entailed. In 1917, the Bolshevik revolution proved that it was possible to overthrow the established order and to build a new one. This greatly increased the appeal of Marxism-Leninism to oppressed peoples everywhere and those who stood in solidarity with them – including to Africans.

It is difficult to underestimate the importance of Marxist thought for thinking about Africa. Yet, Marxist thought systematically underplays the role of culture and of cultural differences. This is understandable when looking at the development of Marxist thought in the context of its period. The nineteenth century was the period in Europe when more-or-less homogeneous nation states were being formed: the countries of Germany and Italy both date back to the late nineteenth century. The Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires were on the retreat. Napoleon established a multicultural empire under French leadership but was defeated, leading to France retreating more or less within its linguistic borders. These developments were ideologically supported by an increasingly nationally oriented bourgeoisie that used nationalistic ideologies and sentiments to muster support for the often violent conflicts that marked these developments. (Financially, the bourgeoisie was able to do this in part because of the revenues it obtained from the colonies.) Within this context, Marxism proposed an alternative way of looking at the world. It posited the basic similarity in interests of the dispossessed workers (the 'proletariat') in different countries and posited class struggle as the way ahead. The socialist revolution would lead to a new system, to a common, equal culture of socialism, sharing the wealth of the earth among all that inhabited it.

The Marxist prediction is yet to become reality. The collapse of the multinational states of Yugoslavia and Russia led to a resurgence of nationalism, even in former socialist countries. Differences between countries are not only based on linguistic differences, but also on differences in mentality (see Chapter four). Hofstede (1980) and others after him have shown that cultural differences are persistent over time and relevant for explaining a host of social phenomena.

In the Marxist view, 'culture' is at best a thing of the past, consisting of folkloric remnants from a precapitalistic past. The unifying effects of capitalism would lead to all workers being equal in their impoverishment (*Verelendung*) and,

after the socialist revolution, their equality in the ideal world of socialism. At worst, 'culture' is an instrument in the hands of the capitalist class, used to divide workers and to enlist their support for wars fought in the interest of capitalism and imperialism.

These views can all still be seen in current thinking about Africa – denying, downplaying, deprecating, or incriminating cultural identities is common. However, as Ake (1993) points out: 'we tend to forget that even though ethnicity might be constructed it is also a living presence, an important part of what many Africans are.'

One example of the Marxist type of analysis is Walter Rodney (1972). His *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* remains a standard text on Africa's history and a must-read for all progressive thinkers on Africa (see also Hirji, 2017). Rodney's work offers insightful analysis in clear language and debunks many myths on African (under)development. However, he employs a strict Marxist schematic, according to which societies progress from the communalist system via the feudal system to the capitalist and then the socialist system. That means that, to him, the development to capitalism is progress: it is a necessary stepping stone before socialism. Nationalism, in Rodney's approach, is a phase in social development (p. 242), occurring when large enough units are formed. As a true Marxist, he assumes that it will disappear under socialism.

The intellectual difficulties that this presents are illustrated by Neocosmos (1995). Neocosmos, himself a Marxist, discusses and criticises the 'invention of tradition' discourse that has been put forward by Hobsbawm and Ranger (1984). In looking at the history of struggle in Southern Africa, he is forced to admit that, 'not all "ethnic" movements are in and of themselves anti-democratic' (p. 43). He explains this by saying that due to the undemocratic and oppressive nature of colonial regimes, progressives were forced, almost against their will, to mobilise along ethnic lines. However, as soon as democracy appears, Neocosmos contends, progressives will abandon ethnicity and organise in accordance with their true class interests. The possibility that people might simultaneously decide to organise within frameworks bounded by common cultural identities *and* be progressive is not one that a traditional Marxist can admit to.

A more recent example of how a Marxist approach interprets ethnicity is seen in Van Binsbergen (2017). He analyses the emergence of an Nkoya ethnic feeling in Zambia as a form of 'false consciousness': in the Marxist scheme

of things, ethnic feeling detracts from the unification that must necessarily come with capitalist and socialist development and therefore goes against the 'class interests' of the oppressed – hence the term 'false consciousness.' Using this type of reasoning, Marxist thinkers (both African and from elsewhere) have consistently dismissed group cultural identities as perceived by Africans themselves as backwards, constructed, artificial and, in short, 'false.'

Lamola (2019), discussing Mbembe's *On the Postcolony*, points out how Marxism helps to explain the dehumanisation of Africans from an economic point of view – its usefulness in terms of organising economic exploitation, where Mbembe analyses the discourse at an ideological level. However, Lamola does not move beyond this – the way forward he sees is not one in which different cultural groups regain their autonomy, but again an ideal democratic society, in which all differences magically disappear in favour of a homogenised common humanity.

So, what have we seen? One the one hand, different strands of thought, either Marxist or other, all downplay the importance of cultural and linguistic differences in Africa and therefore deny and disempower African identities. On the other hand, they over-estimate the possibilities of social engineering, continuing Europe's tradition of assuming that Africa could and should be re-shaped, 'civilised.' One line of reasoning follows the pattern of Grotenhuis: because linguistic and cultural identities are 'constructed' anyway, and since the pattern followed in Europe was in some way wrong or outdated or not applicable, Africa can freely take a new path towards credible national identities that fit neatly within the boundaries drawn for it during the time of colonialism. The only thing that is needed is the right approach towards 'nation-building.' Alternatively, the reasoning is that Africa, like the rest of the world, is well on its way towards socialism and under socialism, nation states as we know them will become a thing of the past anyway and cultural differences will be eroded, until only the nice folkloric dances and handicrafts of the past are left over.

These influential ideas have a great effect on what has been written about Africa. How is this being done?

1.7 Identity and Culture: The need for a fresh approach

Culture, ethnicity, and language are important and unavoidable issues for Africa. Yet, these are also large and contentious problem spaces. It is difficult

even to get a reasonable overview of current thinking, let alone to take a position. For this reason, many scientists would rather avoid it. Instead, they fall into either one of the two traps described by Mamdani (1996: 11): 'abstract universalism and intimate particularism turn out to be two sides of the same coin: both see in the specificity of experience nothing but its idiosyncrasy.'

For example, it is common in anthropological literature that authors take issue with the compromised points of view developed by their predecessors and challenge the image of Africa as a patchwork of a large number of 'tribes,' each with their own territory, culture, and language. However, it should be realised that if the analysis stops here, it ends up doing what it criticises others for, albeit in a different way: it defines Africans by what they are ***not.*** It is this definition of Africans by what they are not that authors such as Mbembe (2001: 9) have developed an allergic reaction to. Unfortunately, the intellectual analysis stops at this point, giving way to one of two myths that are both logical consequences of defining Africans by what they are not. These are the pre-scientific 'Africa as a country' and 'Tower of Babel' myths, two contradictory and mutually excluding myths that happily exist side by side in the discourse about Africa (Prah 2008: 71). (Myths in other domains often contain contradictory and seemingly incompatible elements as well – that is part of what makes them so fascinating.)

Why is this logical? The starting point, as we have seen, is defining Africans by what they are **not**: for example, they are not like the images created by earlier anthropologists and are not like Europeans. But then what *are* they? That is a huge question for Western science, which normally does not deal with questions like this. Consequently, the answer to the question is typically not given; instead, one may see that a small area is identified and studied and described in great depth, using for example the 'thick description' approach pioneered by Geertz (1973). In itself this can be fine, but not if done in isolation. So, if the answer about African identities is not given, what general image of Africans remains? Two avenues are open to the speculative pre-scientific Northern mind: either that of all Africans as a relatively homogeneous group of 'others' (the 'Africa as a country' myth),[23] or that of Africans as an infinitely atomised and fragmented group of 'others' (the 'Tower of Babel' myth).

23 See also the insightful analysis by Mbembe (2002: 630), who criticises both the 'nativist' idea of African nationalism and Marxist-inspired 'Afro-radicalism' as sharing the same mode of knowledge production or 'episteme': '[B]oth consist of superstitions that function to persuade us that nothing is happening in Africa because history […] has already happened.'

Both myths or tropes, then, are a consequence of a line of reasoning that starts and ends by defining Africans as what they are not. Both essentially paint a picture of Africa as static and unchanging; they are defining Africans as 'other' and are therefore essentially disempowering.[24] Both also obscure an appreciation and understanding of the different African cultural identities that form part of the full spectrum of human cultural identities. Of course, in spite of the self-imposed blindfold of Northern science, people in Africa are attached to and do claim their cultural identities and this cannot all be dismissed as 'false consciousness.' Africans who celebrate their cultural identities are rewarded for this by being portrayed as eternal troublemakers: ethnicist; essentialist; tribalist; identitarian – all words that are symptomatic not of the backward nature of Africans, but rather of the backward nature of dominant Western scientific discourse.

What is needed therefore is a vision of what Africans *are* like or what they are becoming, in their unity and in their diversity, in their dynamism and in relation to other humans on the planet. This study represents an attempt at mapping out a vision, using approaches that have been employed elsewhere as well. It examines the area of group cultural identity. In doing so, it does not use an anthropological method, but rather adopts a cross-cultural psychology approach.

A starting point for such a vision can be found in the work of the renowned Belgian/American scholar on Africa Jan Vansina. In 1992, he published a little-noticed but key article, entitled 'A Past for the Future?' He started his article with words that are still relevant today, almost 30 years later (p. 8):

> Watchers of international statistics of development know that the evolution of the countries of tropical Africa north of the Limpopo and south of the Sahara including Ethiopia and Sudan differs from what is happening elsewhere in the world. […] there is no other block of countries in the world that is in as bad a shape.

In fact, Vansina's article is not the only one that starts this way – many authors over the past decades have wondered why Africa seems to be

24 The discourse on empowerment and disempowerment is outside of the scope of this study. However, I understand these terms in the sense as originally defined by feminist thinkers and movements at the end of the 1980s. In that sense, the term 'empowerment' challenges existing power relationships in society, whereas disempowerment takes away the possibility to raise such challenges. For an overview of the origins and evolution of the term, see Calvès (2009).

underperforming and have offered several different (partial) explanations. Vansina offers an explanation that is crucial to this study (p. 9):

> [T]he uniqueness of Africa south of the Sahara and its difficult situation today flows from problems with its basic cultural traditions. […] there is no longer a single cultural tradition to which all the people within each country or larger region subscribe. This means that even the basic criteria for perceiving reality are not commonly held by all […] This situation is the fruit of a cultural history unique and specific to the region as a whole.

What makes Africa unique in Vansina's eyes is not the content of its cultural traditions by themselves. Rather, it is the way these traditions were destroyed in the colonial period (p. 16):

> By 1920, the conquest had cost the lives of perhaps half the population of East and Central Africa and had ruptured the continuity of the old traditions in the whole region by breaking their capacity for self-determination. The old social order was totally destroyed by 1920 and replaced by a new social order based on European views.

So, in the Americas and in Australia, the indigenous populations were basically decimated and a settler population took over. In Asia, existing cultural traditions were largely left intact. It is only in Africa that a significant population was kept, but their cultural traditions were destroyed. The word 'destruction' here suggests that nothing was left, but that is perhaps too strong. However, a dichotomy was created between the colonially educated elites and the masses that did not exist before. Vansina (p. 18) calls the colonial period an interlude in history, 'but one that left the population of each territory in great cultural disarray between a popular tradition that was still being formed and a European tradition instilled into a small elite. From today's point of view it could be argued that either there should not have been a colonial period at all or that it did not last long enough.' In Vansina's view, the relatively weak performance of Africa is due to 'the congruence of a minority tradition with a despotic ruling group which denies the self-determination of the majority tradition that is the rootcause, even though the congruence be imperfect. This situation prevails in Africa south of the Sahara. It does not in any large block of countries elsewhere in the world' (p. 22).

However, Vansina holds that this situation is by definition unstable and unsustainable. He makes a prediction (pp. 22-23):

> There will emerge two neoafrican traditions built in part on the common Christian or Muslim cultures and in part on the legacy of precolonial traditions. These neoafrican traditions will be carried by African languages. They will not be monolithic.[25] Variants of popular culture will reflect urban and rural ways of life as well as of different social strata all within the common neoafrican tradition. But the creation of a stable common majority tradition, like all such major cultural phenomena may take a long time, perhaps two generations still, and its emergence will not end the cultural dichotomy by itself. […] In the end the rulers themselves can no longer avoid being drawn into the orbit of the majority. The baneful dichotomy between western influences and the majority tradition can then be expected to end through the absorption of portions of the western tradition, despite its continual reinforcement from outside of the region. And then Africa south of the Sahara could finally flourish […].

Where Prah's general views are abstract, Vansina adds a layer of historicity and gives a clear justification for why studying emergent cultural traditions in Africa is important: it is only once neo-African traditions have evolved that Africa will be able to flourish. This is a slow process, one that takes generations – but perhaps it could be influenced with sound policies, based on an appreciation of what is happening.

There is much in Vansina's sweeping statements that could be explored further. One thing to note is that he speaks of 'emergence,' alluding to the fact that this is a long-term societal process involving many actors. He does not use the language of 'construction' or 'building' employed by Grotenhuis and many other authors. For the purpose of this study, two aspects are of key importance: one related to cultural traditions, the other related to language.

Vansina wrote his prediction 30 years ago – we are now a generation on. According to his prediction, we must still wait another generation until the formation of 'a stable common majority tradition' is complete. If that is to happen, however, the process of forming such a tradition should already be

25 Two traditions that are not monolithic – the imprecision of this language suggests that Vansina himself was unsure about the number of traditions that will emerge and how they will be subdivided. In this study, I will not take a position on this but stick to the main idea, namely, that new cultural traditions will be formed.

underway and it should be possible to see a glimmer of where things are going. But how can this be researched?

Bekker (2001: 3) has asserted 'that there is no current elegant theory on the construction and elaboration of ethnic identities which may be applied across countries, cultures and continents.' The traditional way of discussing cultural differences in Africa is by looking at different ethnolinguistic groups, however problematic distinctions along ethnolinguistic lines may be. If Vansina is right, then cultural differences at the ethnolinguistic group level must be losing their significance and new cultural patterns will start to emerge. The assumption of this study is that it may be possible to see something of these processes by using a cross-cultural psychology approach that analyses cultural distinctions by looking at differences at the level of countries or larger groups.

A key element in Vansina's prediction is that African languages will be the carriers of the neo-African traditions that he hopes will emerge. Culture is largely transmitted through language. Language and culture are both transmitted in the home, but also in important social institutions, such as education. This ties in directly with the work of Prah, who, as far back as 1991, wrote (p. 61): 'If African languages are developed, to carry modern science and technology, transformation of the African earth would be rapidly advanced.' This is echoed in Djité's assessment (2008: 2), who asserts that the 'education systems, the health systems, governance and hence the economy are all crippled, and in no small measure, because of lack of genuine communication.' Like Vansina, Prah wants to see Africa flourish. However, he sees the increased use of African languages as a precondition for such a development and specifically points to the need to develop them for use in science and technology. For this to happen, the first step would be to use African languages as a medium of instruction up to the tertiary level. This is currently not the case and this, then, becomes the first central issue to investigate. I am not the first one to wonder about these issues – they were raised in similar terms by Djité (2008: xiii).[26] Here, they will be explored in Chapters Two and Three.

26 Djité asks: '[W]hy should Africa continue to use European languages as the sole media of instruction and administration?' and: 'How can African languages be used to improve outcomes in […] education […]?'

2 African Languages in Higher Education

As illustrated by the example of Adichie in the introduction, current language teaching practices in Africa effectively impede the production of literature in indigenous African languages. This ties in with Vansina's predictions and with Prah's plea: African language use in education will be central to the development of neo-African cultural traditions. However, in most countries, African languages are not currently used as the medium of instruction in higher education.

This chapter addresses the area of language in education, thereby exploring the first research question:

- Why are African languages currently not being used more as a medium of instruction in higher education?

The first section gives a more general treatment at the conceptual level, building on the starting points outlined in Chapter 1.4. It looks at the theory of languages and languoids and proposes a new conceptual distinction between 'discerned' and 'designed' languages. It examines existing explanations of why African languages are currently not being used more in higher education. The second section offers a new explanation, inspired by Bourdieu and based on an examination of what education systems in various countries are able to deliver, given specific levels of enrolment in education. This will lead to my answer to the question of why African languages are not currently being used more in higher education. I will also argue why this is likely to change in the coming decade or so, at least in some countries.

2.1 The Position of African Languages

2.1.1 Language or Languoid?

There is a school of thought in linguistics, with Pennycook as its best-known proponent, which questions the utility of seeing languages as 'bounded objects'. Instead, these linguists argue in favour of taking language repertoires or language registers as actually used by speakers as the starting point; they prefer to talk about 'languoids' rather than languages.

A well-developed example of this type of thinking and what it leads to is provided in the work of Lüpke and Storch (2013). Their starting point is a description of the linguistic situation in the Casamance region of southern Senegal. They show that the linguistic situation in that region is very different from that in Europe or the Americas.[27] In Europe or the Americas, young people are brought up in one language (their mother tongue) and they typically learn additional languages in school. In this part of Africa, though, young people are typically brought up in several languages and they learn to use those languages (or 'registers') in different social situations, depending on the circumstances. They argue that, under such circumstances, it makes little sense to introduce formal literacy training in standardised local languages. In day-to-day use, people need more than one language; linguistic variation within every 'language' is considerable; people have few opportunities and little utility for using formal written forms. Instead, they favour an approach that valorises the multilingual abilities of speakers and takes that as a starting point, also in classroom situations.[28] These kinds of multilingualisms, they argue, are rare in other parts of the world, but common in Africa. They therefore call for 'the adoption of an emic perspective by providing the "thick description" called for by Geertz (1973) for the related field of anthropology' (p. 229).

The approach advocated by Lüpke and Storch has advantages and disadvantages. The advantages operate mostly at the level of languages as spoken. I agree with Lüpke and Storch that the differences construed by foreign

27 Note, though, that recently they have come under criticism for over-generalising the experience from one particular area of the Casamance to the rest of the region and, indeed, to Africa as a whole: see Sagna and Hantgan (2021).

28 This has given rise to the LILIEMA project, https://soascrossroads.org/2018/01/11/liliema-phase-two-bringing-language-independent-literacies-to-an-international-forum-by-friederike-lupke/, retrieved 4 October 2019.

observers may not correspond to the differences perceived by speakers, and I also agree that those differences may be much more situational and much less absolute than what the terminology may lead one to believe. Lüpke and Storch criticise the common linkages that are made between languages and ethnic or 'tribal' entities. This criticism is partly justified, as will be shown in Chapter Four. In addition, a teaching approach that takes the actual linguistic repertoires of learners as its starting point and values them all as resources seems to make eminent sense.

The disadvantages, on the other hand, are mostly at the level of language policy, but they are also related to the general problems with some anthropological approaches, as outlined in Chapter 1.7. Lüpke and Storch's approach leads to an exclusive focus on 'what language *actually* is to speakers and hearers' (p. 347) and blinds them to the role (implicit or explicit) of language policy and language planning. In a way, they 'otherise' Africa and Africans by situating them in a type of reserve where they live their natural lives, only marginally influenced or affected by governmental or institutional policies (e.g. in the area of language). These policies are relegated to a vague 'context' that they seem to accept as unchanging and not subject to influence from Africans as actors at that level. Where some would see harmonised and standardised languages as a form of social innovation that has its benefits, they see them as a colonial imposition.[29] Even though Lüpke and Storch themselves unquestioningly make use of the advantages offered to them by a conventionalized use of the English language and take these for granted, they seem to deny the utility of conventionalised language to African languages. Yet, conventionalised languages are the medium of instruction at the levels of secondary and higher education. Following the analytical framework of Lüpke and Storch would result in a neglect of language policy and language planning and would lead to an unquestioning acceptance of the political choice to use French and other international languages as the medium of instruction in secondary and higher education. As Bamgbose (2011: 6) remarked: 'absence of a policy is indeed a policy, for whenever there is no declared policy in any domain, what happens is a continuation of the *status quo*.' The same could be said of the neglect of the policy element in linguistic research: the absence of such research is a policy choice, for neglect of this field means an unquestioning acceptance of the status quo.

29 Of course, language harmonisation and standardisation are not European inventions: these processes were around in other parts of the world long before they became commonplace in Europe.

My approach takes no issue with the analysis of multilingual situations that Lüpke and Storch make for certain areas in Africa and with the recommendations for teaching that they draw from it. However, Lüpke and Storch's approach is inadequate, and could even be called dangerous, for a discussion of the role of policy. An example of how this type of thinking can be disempowering and can confuse even the brightest minds is seen in Heugh (2016: 253). She writes:

> From a theoretical perspective, acceptance of diversity and its inevitability requires a different trajectory from one based [on] the diminishing of variability. This last perspective dovetails with a third possibly more profound consideration, an emerging debate which questions the very foundations of nineteenth and twentieth century colonial linguistics.

This creates a false contradiction. In my view, it is perfectly possible to combine a standard form of language as used in instruction with a great diversity of speech forms (as is indeed the case for the English language). If the result of 'questioning the foundations of colonial linguistics' means that language policies are rejected as irrelevant and go against 'inevitable' diversity, then this leaves African languages worse off than they were before and, inevitably, will lead to a strengthening of the position of international languages, primarily English. A stark example of such a development is provided by Chebanne (2016a: 295), who shows that the Khoisan languages are threatened because of 'the lack of an adequate language development policy.' In his analysis, '[i]t is important that Khoisan languages go beyond the insular and idiosyncratic developments that have been promoted under the guise of preserving ethnic and linguistic identity. Pursuing this separate, narrow, and myopic approach can only further marginalize these beleaguered languages.' In fact, the same holds true for almost all African languages.

2.1.2 On Discerned and Designed Languages

There is a well-known maxim that a language is a dialect with an army and a navy.[30] For Africa, one might paraphrase this as a language is a dialect with a missionary and a linguist, pointing to the large role that missionaries have played in mapping and naming African languages. In any case, this maxim points to the idea that languages are not purely naturally occurring phenomena, but what can and cannot be called a language is contested. In

30 Attributed to the Yiddish linguist Max Weinreich in 1945.

order to think about what to call a language and about what choices are possible in this area, it is productive to draw inspiration from proposals put forward as far back as 1952 by the German sociolinguist Heinz Kloss.[31] They were subsequently published by him in English in 1967.

Kloss (1967) introduces a distinction between what he calls *Abstand* and *Ausbau* languages. These words have not been translated into English in the sociolinguistic literature, giving me the freedom to propose the terms of 'discerned' versus 'designed' languages as English approximations. The term 'discerned' (or *Abstand*) languages is, according to Kloss, a *linguistic* concept that refers to all languages, whether they have a developed writing system and grammar or not. He assumes that linguists have a way of determining the 'intrinsic distance' between languages and deciding on the borders between languages using those criteria (p. 30). The concept of 'designed' (or *Ausbau*) languages, on the other hand, is not a linguistic concept: it is *sociological*. It refers only to those languages that have been deliberately shaped and built to become standardised vehicles of literary and scientific expression (which could include oral cultures). Many language names are used for both: these are languages for which the same name is used for their discernible form as spoken language and for their literary form. But this is not always the case. Kloss gives the example of Czech and Slovak: at the spoken level, he sees them as one language,[32] encompassing a number of different dialects. However, at the literary level, they have developed different standardised forms and we therefore have one *Abstand* (discerned) language at the spoken level but two *Ausbau* languages at the formal, literary level. The way Kloss describes his concept of *Ausbau* languages is similar to the concept of 'intellectualisation.' Prah (2017: 216) quotes the definition of Sibayan from 1999: an intellectualised language is a 'language which can be used for educating a person in any field of knowledge from kindergarten to the university and beyond.' This terminology is also used by Kaschula and Nkomo (2019: 604), who quote Havránek in making a distinction between 'folk and standard languages' and Sibayan in making a distinction between

31 Kloss started his career as a young scientist in Nazi Germany. His main body of work concerned minority languages in the US. There is some disagreement about whether or not he distanced himself sufficiently from his earlier thinking after the war – see e.g. Wiley (2002). The proposals in this study for English-language terms are inspired by Kloss, but the change of emphasis proposed here and their application to Africa represent a novel development that bears no relationship to the rest of Kloss's ideas or writings.

32 The Ethnologue would disagree with Kloss here, and sees these as two languages, denoted by the ISO 693-3 codes <ces> for Czech and <slk> for Slovak. However, the Ethnologue also asserts: 'All Czech and Slovak dialects [are] mutually inherently intelligible.' https://www-ethnologue-com/language/ces, accessed 30 March 2020.

'intellectually modernised' and 'popularly modernised' languages. They see intellectualisation of languages 'as a counterhegemonic process that seeks to empower communities through language' (p. 606). I agree with this approach, but prefer the terminology of 'discerned' and 'designed' languages. The term 'intellectualisation' could imply a value judgement on those languages that have not been 'intellectualised' and does not help our understanding of the importance of distinguishing between the linguistic and the sociological aspects of language.

Kloss points out that there is a degree of freedom here: forming of designed languages is a historical process that can be sped up or indeed reversed as a result of either shifts in power relationships or changes in policy or (as will most often be the case) both. Djité (2008: x) asks: '[I]sn't it the case that some languages have simply not been *allowed* to develop as others have? Isn't it the case that evidence of literacy tradition in some languages has intentionally been destroyed […], forbidden […] or ignored […]?' Kaschula and Nkomo (2019: 607) also make this point:

> The arrival of foreign traders, explorers, missionaries, and colonial settlers resulted in cross-cultural encounters and the transformation of economic, cultural, religious, and political domains, which devalued indigenous knowledge and African thought systems. This not only alienated indigenous people from the socioeconomic and political organizational structures of the new societies, but also de-intellectualized their languages.

This analysis points to the possibility that there may be scope for reclaiming or re-intellectualising languages, for example by preparing new renderings of old and perhaps partially forgotten literary texts in African languages. An interesting resource in this regard may be the Verba Africana website.[33]

Kloss stresses that a certain amount of formalised learning is always required to master a designed language. This is what Lo Bianco (2008: 114) refers to as 'secondary lingual socialization.' It also helps to explain why, in countries that use an indigenous language as medium of instruction, this language is also taught as a subject in its own right, usually up to the end of secondary school. Kloss gives the example of German (p. 35): linguists might disagree as to whether spoken high German (*Hochdeutsch*) and lower Saxon (*Plattdeutsch*) are part of one 'discerned' language or indeed two languages (it will come as no surprise that the Ethnologue is of the latter opinion). However, speakers

33 http://www.verbafricana.org, accessed 15 September 2020.

of both forms of German use standard written German as their common 'designed' language, but this standardised version is different from both spoken languages and requires learning in order to master it. However, learning standard written German is easier for speakers of high German and of lower Saxon than it would be for speakers of, for example, French.

It is interesting to tie these concepts to the distinction between Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive/Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), introduced by Cummins (1979).[34] Cummins points out that these are two relatively unrelated skill sets and that CALP only becomes fully developed in the late teens. He points out that higher proficiency in CALP in L1 makes it easier to develop the same in L2, especially if the two languages are not too different. He defines semilingualism as low CALP in any language. This concept makes it easy to understand how people can have basic communication skills (BICS) in a number of languages yet are still unable to function at a more academic level. It is also obvious that developing CALP requires a language that has been 'designed' or intellectualised to a certain degree.

Now that the concepts have been clarified, a further explanation of my shift of emphasis away from Kloss is in order. The most straightforward translation of *Abstand* into English is distance. Kloss proposes to use this term for dialects or speech registers that are so distant from one another that it is justified to speak of different languages. The word 'discerned' places a slightly different emphasis, pointing to the act of discerning – the political and social act of pronouncing a dialect to be a language. The word *Ausbau* means extension or expansion in English. Kloss thus refers to the act of extending a spoken language into a standardised language, including its written form. The word 'designed' in a way reinforces this meaning, again pointing to the social process that is involved. This reinforcement is intentional. Many languages (including French, German, Italian, but certainly also Bahasa Indonesia or Turkish) have an explicit and strong design element to them. In the Anglo-Saxon world, this design element is much less explicit and remains hidden, below the surface, to an extent. An equivalent of the Académie Française, with its strong mandate of protecting the French language,[35] does not exist in the Anglo-Saxon world (McGroarty, 2008). Yet, the 'Queen's English' or 'BBC English' is a form of standardised language developed in elite institutions in

34 Cummins's concepts have been quite influential. Although they have been criticised, e.g. for being difficult to operationalise in practice, they have also led to important new insights and research.

35 http://www.academie-francaise.fr/linstitution/les-missions, accessed 8 June 2020.

the UK and actually spoken and used in that form by only a small minority of the UK population.[36] Thus, even if there is no official body 'designing' the language in the Anglo-Saxon world, English as a designed language is (re) produced just as effectively as other languages. This process can easily be mistaken for a 'natural' development and can create a type of myopia, causing some linguists to overlook the fact that both American and British standard English are created and designed, through social, power-structure mediated processes (in Bourdieu's terms: through a *habitus* that is part of the s*ocial capital* of the English-speaking world) using different mechanisms but with the same effects as with the majority of other designed languages of the world.

The concepts of discerned and designed languages allow us to look differently at the issue raised by the Pennycook school, which prefers to view language as something people 'do' rather than as something people 'possess'[37] – this may again be related to the peculiar Anglo-Saxon myopia referred to above. At the level of discerned languages, their way of describing things may have some level of descriptive or analytical value: it is certainly true that people use different language 'registers' in different ways and in different situations and that analysing these can help in understanding different social contexts. On the other hand, their concepts fail at the level of designed languages, because they elide the institutionalised roles and functions of languages. This criticism is in line with the critique of Lecercle as discussed by Ives (2008: 163). Lecercle criticises philosophies of language to the extent that they share a methodological individualism that reduces language to a communicative function. In Lecercle's vision, language should be seen as a form of *praxis* that understands language as historical, social, material, and political.

It is tempting to use the Pennycook school as a lens through which to view languages in Africa, because there is so little institutionalisation of African languages. Yet this obscures the extent to which colonial and imperialist power structures are pervading the domain of language and language policy in Africa. Thus, the Pennycook approach actually hides the structural

36 In a curious form of English idiom, this is referred to as 'received pronunciation.' Trudgill (2002: 171) claims that it is spoken by around three per cent of the British population. Many a bright youngster who has studied English as a foreign language and who has little difficulty in following, for example, the BBC World TV station will be surprised to find on his or her first visit to the UK that he or she has great difficulty in understanding the average English person. Adichie describes a similar phenomenon for her Nigerian characters in their encounters with US English. For an overview of different varieties of spoken English, see the electronic World Atlas of Varieties of English, https://ewave-atlas.org/, accessed 19 June 2020.

37 Pennycook 2010: 2.

features of current language regimes under the guise of analysing linguistic imperialism. (See Wolff (2008b) for a nuanced but slightly different approach to the same problem.)

In Africa, there are a number of 'designed' languages, albeit relatively few. These include Arabic, Afrikaans, Amharic, Somali, and Swahili.

There have been attempts to design a standardised variety for a large number of languages that have not been taken up in any substantial way. This means that there is a huge potential for language planning and engineering in Africa. For many forms of speech, the borderline between what is a dialect and what is a language is unclear. Hence it would be conceivable to develop 'designed' languages that can serve a number of spoken languages, in the same way that standard written German serves as the designed language for a number of spoken German-like languages. The concepts of discerned and designed languages allow us to see these possibilities more clearly.

Language planning, language design, or language development is a field where much work has been done. While this is beyond the scope of this study, it is possible to briefly examine some relevant issues. Language planning is generally considered to comprise three areas: status planning (also known as prestige planning – for Africa, see e.g. Kamwangamalu, 2016)[38]; corpus planning; and acquisition planning (Kaschula and Nkomo 2019: 602). The latter area deals specifically with language-in-education. Taylor-Leech and Liddicoat (2014) provide a useful overview of the main issues and models of what they call 'Macro-language planning.'[39] They point to the importance of language-in-education, because '[n]ot only are educational institutions the formal transmitters of languages but they also transmit and perpetuate culture' (p. 354). Moreover,

> language planning decisions in multilingual educational settings are often rooted in wider power relationships and the social, economic, and political

38 In Europe, language prestige is visible through numerous bits of legislation, permeating all spheres of life – for example, the requirement to list ingredients on labels of foodstuffs in languages that are 'easy to understand' for the customer is given in EU regulation no. 1169/2011. This regulation has been published in 24 languages. See https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32011R1169, accessed 23 September 2020.

39 Macro-language here refers to the macro- or societal level, not to the term 'macrolanguage' as used by SIL for some languages it discerns that nevertheless have much in common. An example is Akan, used to cover the discerned languages of Fante and Twi. See https://iso639-3.sil.org/code_tables/macrolanguage_mappings/data, accessed 15 June 2020.

> interests of dominant groups. The outcomes of these decisions can advance the educational and life opportunities of some, while restricting those of others.

Taylor-Leech and Liddicoat do not treat the problem of the multitude of discerned languages and their relationship to designed languages, however, they do point out how this problem is handled in practice in many countries: governments and policymakers deliberately decide to use a limited number of languages as 'mother tongues' spoken in the country, ignoring the existence of other discerned languages, or relegating them to an inferior position (p. 356). Clearly, those decisions are often based on the prevailing power relationships in countries, rather than on any considerations of inclusivity or of human rights. However, this need not always be the case. Thus, Taylor-Leech and Liddicoat cite the example of Slovenia, where schools in minority areas use either Hungarian or Italian as the medium of instruction, in some cases combined with Slovenian. These are all very different languages. These models, although not identical in their outcomes, are presented as examples that 'demonstrate that well-resourced, additive approaches to bilingual education can result from language planning that recognises minority language rights' (p. 358). They conclude that a bottom-up approach, rooted in the communities, works best. This issue of *how* language design or language harmonisation should be done is largely outside the scope of this work, even though it is important per se. Suffice it here to point to Makoni (2016), who posits a distinction between language *unification*, as an artificial exercise attempted, for example, by missionaries, and language *harmonisation*, which he describes as more rooted in African approaches. He cautions that community involvement in harmonisation projects is necessary, but 'does not necessarily result in successful uptake of the projects in the long term' (p. 232).

Unfortunately, community-based examples such as those of Slovenia are hard to come by in Africa. Bamgbose (2011: 5) says:

> Ideally, proper language planning should ensure that all languages have a definite status and specified roles in a multilingual setting. The situation in most African countries, however, is that language planning processes are defective. Commonly encountered situations include policy deficit (usually referred to as absence of policy), propaganda policy, non-implementation, and lack of political will.

The distinction between languages as discerned (in a linguistic way) versus languages as designed (as institutionalised, sociological phenomena) would have helped Ameka (2017), who discusses the problems of the difference between the standardised or official language and the languages as spoken. He calls for a form of language standardisation that takes the differences in spoken language into account; this plea can be accommodated and understood using the discerned-designed distinction. Likewise, these concepts could have served Banda (2009) in developing a more clearly articulated perspective on language planning and policy in Africa. Banda contrasts monolingualism – which he sees as the normal situation in Europe – with multilingualism – which he sees as the normal situation in Africa. He then argues in favour of promoting Africa's already existing multilingual repertoires as a resource for development – so far, so good. However, Banda is silent on what this would mean in practice, for example for his home country of Zambia. I have two problems with this analysis. The first is that, in reality, the distinction between Africa and Europe may be one of degree, rather than being qualitative. Speakers in a country like Slovenia may have a language repertoire that includes Croatian, English, German, and Italian, besides one or more Slovenian dialects (of which there are many). What makes the difference is that Slovenian itself is not only a discerned, but also a designed language: there is an accepted Standard Slovene that is taught in schools. Moreover, the neighbouring countries also have standard designed languages and these are also being taught (as subjects or in some regions as medium of instruction) in Slovenian schools. This is where Europe is different from Africa: in Africa, African designed languages are not often used as the medium of instruction, except for the first few years, and the languages of the neighbours are usually never officially taught.

My second problem is that just saying that 'multilingual repertoires' need to be taken as a starting point does not lead to a practical application. For that, the distinction between discerned and designed languages is helpful and, indeed, necessary. In a country like South Africa, it would be possible (as Banda himself points out) to use a standardised form of Nguni, a designed language, as the medium of instruction for speakers of the discerned languages Zulu, Xhosa, Swazi, and Ndebele. In addition, Sotho and English (for example) could be taught as subjects (also as designed languages). This means using a limited set of designed languages. Such a strategy would obviously work to the advantage of students who already have a diverse repertoire of discerned languages that they speak (and would disadvantage monolingual speakers) and therefore would work to the benefit of most South Africans – in the same way that this would work in Slovenia. Still, it could be that

South Africans have an even richer spoken language repertoire, including, for example, youth languages or Afrikaans; these languages would not all be used as taught designed languages, even though students and teachers might use them to their advantage for spoken communication in a school setting. This type of debate is made easier using the discerned–designed terminology proposed here and therefore takes off where Banda's proposal ends. As Joswig (2020: 96) rightly points out: 'A language standard adds a written variety to a complex dialect situation, but in itself it does not remove any diversity. Spoken language diversity has proven to be very resilient in the face of written standards.'

Clearly, there is a complex relationship between discerned and designed languages. In that sense, the claim by Kloss that *Ausbau* language is a sociological concept, although correct, is not complete. If we accept that linguistics as a discipline also looks at language as written and codified, then studying designed languages can also be an object of linguistic study. It may be possible to maintain that spoken languages cannot be seen as 'bounded and countable objects'; however, for designed languages, the statement is clearly untenable: the fact that they are bounded and countable forms a defining element of what constitutes designed languages.

If an African language were to be developed as a designed language and used as a medium of instruction up to tertiary level, that would influence the way related discerned languages are used. It would also influence the status and thus the choices people make about using or not using international languages, for example with their children – and, of course, this is worth studying from both a linguistic and a sociological perspective. In this context, it is useful to point to the possibility of reverse language shift – the process whereby people revert to using a language that had previously suffered from diminishing use. Discussing the theory of reverse language shift, developed by, among others, Fishman, is outside the scope of this work but see Stroud (2004) for a discussion of reverse language shift theory in African settings.

One of the things this discussion of discerned and designed languages has shown is that learning a designed language requires some form of formal education. But how does that help us to answer the research question? In order to discuss that, it is necessary to examine the issue of 'mother-tongue' education next.

2.1.3 Is Education in the Mother Tongue Useful, and for Whom?

Sustainable Development Goal 4 calls for education opportunities for all (UN, 2015). It is perhaps good to stress that this goal itself represents a clear break with education the way it was in colonial times: in colonial times, there was never any attempt at providing education for all. Once we do consider education for all, there is no escaping the overwhelming scientific consensus that, yes, education in a designed language that is close to the discerned language spoken by the learners (the 'mother tongue')[40] gives best results at the lowest cost. This has been the consensus at least since a UNESCO report from 1953, which already recommended education in the mother tongue in Africa. Experts point to a number of advantages (see e.g. the overview by Skuttnab-Kangas (2012), but also Ouane and Glanz (2010), Heugh (2011, 2019), Benson (2015), the Education Commission Report, n.d. 2016,[41] or the impassioned plea by Wolff (2018a)):

- It makes for livelier classroom interaction.
- Children perform better and learn faster.
- It is more efficient, especially if teachers can use their mother tongue for teaching children in that same language (Walter 2008, 2014).
- It reduces the gap between home culture and school culture.
- Giving children a sound foundation in their mother tongue helps them to acquire foreign language skills more easily and to attain a better level.
- Skills requiring abstract thinking, including arithmetic and mathematical skills are better grounded and will develop more easily.

It is important to point out that formal education in a specific language always involves teaching children to use a language that is different from the spoken word: it involves teaching a designed language in the above-mentioned sense that is related to but still different from the discerned language spoken at home. Educational systems the world over manage this for most children, but not for all. According to a meta-analysis by McKenzie et al. (2016), about one per cent of all children are estimated to suffer from an intellectual disability (although there is significant uncertainty about this figure). Intellectual disability means that educational systems fail to teach these children to read

40 The term 'mother tongue' or 'L1' as used here may refer to a discerned language that is different from the one spoken by the mother of the child – in Africa, there are situations where the first language that a child becomes fluent in is not the language spoken by the mother. There may also be children who are fluent from an early age in more than one discerned language; they have more than one mother tongue or L1 in their repertoire.

41 https://report.educationcommission.org/, retrieved 12 July 2019.

or write, or only to a very limited level. This means that around 99 per cent of all children can be taught basic reading and writing skills. The number of people who can be taught to a high enough level to be considered 'literate,' in the sense that they can no longer be considered 'functionally illiterate,' is smaller. According to Schlechty (2004: 7), functional illiterates are those people who have reading and writing skills that are inadequate 'to manage daily living and employment tasks that require reading skills beyond a basic level.' According to the UK National Literacy Trust, the educational system in the UK does not teach everyone to a high enough level: one in six (16.4 per cent) of all adults in England are functionally illiterate.[42] In 2019, the World Bank launched a new indicator, dubbed 'learning poverty': 'Learning poverty means being unable to read and understand a simple text by age 10' (World Bank 2019: 6). Even in high-income countries, there is a percentage of children in this category, though fewer than ten per cent; so, even with the best education available, not all children can be taught to such a level that they are able to read and understand a simple text.

The inconvenient truth is that learning abilities are not equally divided over the population: some people are more intelligent than others. Tests have been calibrated so that the average IQ is 100 – 50 per cent of all children are supposed to have 'average' intelligence. At the upper extreme, just over two per cent of the population score 130 or above. So, some children learn more quickly than others.

For language learning, it is important to note that this division of learning abilities is not one-dimensional: there are different, although interrelated, forms of intelligence. Li (2016) has shown that language aptitude is a valid construct.[43] This construct is related to, but independent of general intelligence. What this means is that some children may be good at language, but hopeless in math. For others, it may be the other way around. Of course, there are also children who are good at both.

Two variables are relevant here from an education system perspective: the percentage of the population that receives formal education to a specific level and the distance between the discerned and the designed language. If an education system needs to reach a large *percentage of the population*, then at a given level of input, it will be most efficient if it can use a

42 https://literacytrust.org.uk/parents-and-families/adult-literacy/, retrieved 8 October 2019.

43 See also Wen, Biedron and Skehan (2017).

medium of instruction (a designed language) that is *as close as possible* to the discerned language(s) that children are already familiar with. So, there are two differentials here: teaching more children requires more effort because aptitudes for learning a designed language are not distributed equally over the population; and teaching children in a designed language becomes more difficult as the distance between discerned and designed language increases. How exactly this works in general I do not know; however, below I will examine how it works in actual educational systems.

As argued above, for those who are less gifted in languages, language of instruction matters. Almost everybody is able to master some words in a language he or she is not familiar with; many people can reach Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) in that language, at least for some domains. However, learning a designed language to a level high enough to be able to profit from increasingly advanced instruction in that language takes time and effort. It requires reaching Cognitive/Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) in that language. Lower language aptitude means more effort is required. Under colonial education systems, this was not really relevant: education was aimed at selecting those most talented and reached only a minor proportion of the population. Therefore, under colonial education systems, it was not necessary to worry about the language of instruction – any language of convenience could serve equally well. As is well-known, decolonisation also brought expansion of educational opportunities – so, one would naturally expect a shift to African languages. Albaugh (2014) has shown that this has happened to some extent in primary education, especially since 1990. She shows that this expansion was most marked in Francophone countries, and attributes it to a large extent to the work of Chaudenson and his colleagues, who managed to convince both the French authorities and authorities in Francophone Africa that learning French as a second language works better if there is a better foundation in the mother tongue.[44] Yet, in secondary and higher education, such a shift has not happened. Why?

44 Note that Djité (2008: 43) believes that this analysis is too generous to the French and denies the role of Africans in bringing about these changes.

2.1.4 Why Have Attempts at Using Mother-Tongue Education been Unsuccessful?

The literature offers many explanations. Djité (2008) discusses this in terms of old and new myths about language and development in Africa. Chaudenson (2006) also provides a useful overview. Reasons include:

- Low status

Language status is, of course, man-made, but it provides a powerful discourse. There are many examples of how African languages have been derided and portrayed as backward, undeveloped, old-fashioned, clumsy, and unscientific.

- Neo-colonialism

Former colonial powers still wield power and influence in Africa. The fact that their languages still enjoy official prestige and are still spoken in Africa adds to the prestige and feeling of self-esteem of these former colonial powers. Therefore, they actively seek to preserve the status quo in Africa.

- Low communicative value

Especially in relation to Africa, the point is often made that some countries are linguistically just too diverse. The Ethnologue, for example, discerns 517 living languages for Nigeria alone.[45] These types of arguments are used to point out that it would be very impractical to set up education systems in hundreds of languages, especially for countries that are not financially rich anyway.

Related to the point raised above: it is claimed that there are many languages that have only a limited number of speakers. It is argued that developing educational materials for them would not be cost-effective and would, anyway, be of little use, because in our globalised world teaching children a language they can only use in their own village will be a disservice to them.

- People want the best for their children – colonial languages as passport to prosperity

45 https://www.ethnologue.com/country/NG, accessed 17 July 2019.

In the current situation, colonial languages are the passports to success and upward social mobility and this is also what parents see and know. As De Swaan (2001) has shown, this has a powerful effect on the choices parents make: they will go to any length to provide their children with the best possible starting position in life. If foreign language mastery is seen as key to a good starting position, parents will do whatever they can to ensure that children learn that foreign language. Thus, parents may choose not to use their own language(s) with their children but to use their second or third language instead. In some cases, this may backfire, in the sense that 'linguistic stunting' may occur: children do not learn any language well enough to be able to easily and adequately express their thoughts, as described for Nigeria by Christopher (2008).

- Ingrained false ideas on language in education

The popular belief is that in order to teach a child a foreign language, you must start early and in as radical a way as possible. This is one reason why parents seek foreign-language education for their children from an early age or even use only their second or third language when raising their children. However, this belief is largely mistaken. It is true that it is possible to raise children to be bi- or perhaps even multilingual from an early age. However, this works only if caregivers speak their ***native*** language (and only their native language and not their L2) to the children in their care. In all other situations, multilingual environments serve to hinder, rather than to help children in their language development (Barac and Bialystok, 2012). As Walter (2008) has shown, it is generally better if children first develop Cognitive/Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) in a designed language that is reasonably close to the discerned language of the learner – this usually happens only in the teenage years (Skuttnab-Kangas, 2012). A well-developed CALP in one language helps the development of similar competences in another language. This is borne out not only by research, but also by comparing the results obtained by educational systems, as discussed in section 3.2.2.

- Elite closure: Elites safeguard their position

The colonial inheritance has built a system where elites were formed based on the possession of a scarce resource – foreign-language knowledge. This enabled them to justify (in their own eyes and to the larger population) a lifestyle that was (and is) far more comfortable than that of their fellow citizens. This means that even in the few countries in Africa that are practically monolingual (Botswana, Burundi, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar,

Rwanda) foreign languages are maintained as the official languages as elites are reluctant to give up their positions.

- Multilingual environments

In many urban and urbanising areas, harbouring an ever-increasing part of the population in many African countries, people live in mixed areas; many different languages are used. Sometimes, a creole, pidgin, or other lingua franca is used; sometimes, this does not happen. How to handle these situations is a real problem.

De Swaan (2001) shows that it is rational for people (including parents, when they make choices for their children's education) to choose languages that have the greatest communication value. He points out how rational choices at the individual level inevitably lead to a strengthening of the dominant languages, especially of English. He also describes the mechanism of elite closure and shows how, even in relatively homogeneous countries like Botswana and Madagascar, elites have a vested interest in foreign-language use. In his 2004 article, he criticises the idea that linguistic and cultural diversity are linked and censures linguists for their inclination to want to protect each and every language, calling this 'linguistic sentimentalism.' In his analysis, the net effect of this is only to strengthen the position of English.

What this means is that attempts to introduce mother-tongue education have often been resisted, undermined, and abandoned. In part, this may have been due to reforms that were introduced suddenly and without proper preparation. Bamgbose (2000) describes the common feature that reforms are discussed and proclaimed but never implemented. Altinyelken et al. (2014) describe how, in Uganda, local languages were introduced as medium of instruction in the rural areas, but English was kept in the cities – naturally leading parents in rural areas to assume that their children would only be receiving second-rate education (pp. 93-94). In other countries, such as Madagascar, foreign languages were kept as the medium of instruction in expensive private schools, which were then frequented by the children of the elite – leading to the same consequence (Chaudenson 2006: 29).

What these reasons have in common is that they paint a picture of Africa that, in essence, is both *undifferentiated* and *static* and that denies African agency: the reasons given in the literature all point to an unchanging situation that

policies will not be able to fundamentally influence or change and that is set in stone for now and the foreseeable future.

However, in my view there is another reason that explains why African languages are not being used more, one that has not yet been pointed out in the literature. It is related to the question of what one can expect an educational system to achieve, given the unequal distribution of language abilities that was pointed out above. This explanation is rooted in an analysis of the dynamics of education in Africa, and in the differences that can be seen on the continent, and points to a need for planning and for wise policies to be put in place.

An implicit but erroneous assumption in much of the literature on language learning is that the difference between the L1 and L2 language does not matter. Thus, Heugh (2011: 120), reports: 'First language speakers of Afrikaans in South Africa have become highly proficient in English, i.e. they achieve high levels of bilingual proficiency, where English is taught only as a subject for one lesson per day.' With this, she seems to imply that the same result could be reached with a similar programme for e.g. first language speakers of Xhosa – ignoring the fact that Afrikaans and English are much closer to one another than Xhosa and English are. This type of problem is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.3 and (for South Africa) Chapter 5.6.

The literature about language learning in Africa, including the works mentioned above, generally seems to subscribe to another implicit assumption: the assumption that the average effort it takes to teach children to learn a designed language to a specific level does not increase if enrolment increases. If, as argued above, learning abilities are not distributed equally across the population, then this assumption cannot be true. The following theoretical question needs to be asked: **is the number of people an education system is expected to educate up to tertiary level higher than, equal to, or lower than the number of people an education system can reasonably be expected to teach a designed language to the level needed for such education?** Obviously, the answer to this question may be different depending on the distance between the discerned and the designed languages at play. In Germany, which uses standard German as the designed language of higher education, a language that is close to the discerned languages spoken by most Germans, the answer will be different from the answer in Nigeria,

which uses English as the designed language of higher education, a language not close to the discerned languages spoken by Nigerians.

It is possible to ask this question in another way, namely, in terms of what one can realistically expect an educational system to achieve. In theory, given infinite resources, it might be possible to teach almost anybody almost anything. However, in practice, resources are never infinite. What to expect of an educational system can be broken down into two questions:

A) What percentage of the population can an education system educate to a reasonable level of proficiency in a 'foreign' designed language?

B) What percentage of the population is an education system expected to provide with tertiary education?

If percentage 'A' is greater than percentage 'B' there will be no problem in providing tertiary education in a 'foreign' designed language. If, on the other hand, percentage 'B' is greater than percentage 'A', foreign-language tertiary education will not be an option for all of tertiary education. This point is so important that it merits repeating in different words: if an education system will educate **fewer** people than the number of people it can teach a foreign language to the required level, then it can use that foreign language as a medium of instruction. However, as soon as an education system is expected to educate **more** people than the number it can teach a foreign language, then it can no longer make exclusive use of that foreign language as a medium of instruction.

This theoretical question has never been asked, in part, probably, because it is not relevant for most parts of the world; most developed countries have developed tertiary education systems that offer at least parts of the curriculum in a designed language that is close to the discerned language(s) of that country. Another reason why it has not been asked is probably because finding the answer to the question may not be straightforward. Yet, this a key question for Africa, a continent whose tertiary education system uniformly relies on 'foreign' designed languages that are very different from the discerned languages people speak. The position developed in this study is that, indeed, the number of people intelligent enough to take tertiary education is significantly higher than the number of people able to learn a foreign language at the required level. However, this number is lower than the number of people actually enrolled at the moment in tertiary education in Africa. In other words, the position of this study is that the problem that

could theoretically arise in Africa, as outlined above, does not yet occur in practice. Generally speaking, at the moment, there are not enough places in higher education to accommodate everybody who has the required language level. But in future, the situation may be reversed. The next section will show why this is a plausible conclusion by looking at selected educational systems and what they are actually able to achieve.

If, as argued above, not everybody is able to attain a level of proficiency in a foreign language (CALP) that is sufficient for them to follow tertiary education, and if, for some people, it comes easier than for others, then it seems reasonable to assume that the amount of time and effort it takes (both on the part of teachers and of learners) to reach that level increases with declining aptitude. People less apt at learning a foreign language will take longer than those more apt. At some point, the effort required will become so large as to be unrealistic. In general, it is safe to assume that training ten per cent more children to master a foreign language to a certain level costs more than ten per cent extra, because language abilities are not divided equally over the population. Again, there will therefore be a natural 'language barrier':[46] at a certain moment, training more students in a foreign language will become more expensive than training them in an indigenous language.

2.2 Enrolment and Language: Africa and the world

Section 1.4 discussed the link between the participation rate in education (the enrolment) and the medium of instruction and the section above explored this idea in greater depth. This section goes into further detail, looking at available statistical material and comparing developments in selected countries in Africa, Europe, and Asia.

Before examining the data, though, a short explanation is needed of what is meant by the various levels of education and what is meant by 'higher' education. This section follows the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) 2011 scheme, as developed by UNESCO (2012). According to this scheme, 'tertiary education' is comprised of ISCED levels 5 through to 8. Level 8 stands for 'doctoral or equivalent level,' whereas level 5 stands for 'short cycle tertiary education,' not to be confused with level

46 The term 'language barrier' has also been used by Benson (2015: 70), who writes: 'An estimated 2.3 billion people, nearly 40% of the world's population, lack access to education in their own language – a clear stumbling block to their learning that will not be removed by getting more children into the classroom.'

4, which stands for 'post-secondary non-tertiary education.' It is important to note that, in this scheme, 'tertiary education' refers to more than what is commonly understood as university education: it also includes education for example by polytechnics at the higher vocational level.

Secondary education comprises ISCED levels 2 and 3 – in some countries, this corresponds to a distinction between two phases of secondary education. Primary education then corresponds to ISCED level 1.

The indicator used here is the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER). This ratio is the total enrolment within a country 'in a specific level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population in the official age group corresponding to this level of education' (UNESCO 2009: 9). It is important to realise that, in theory, the GER can be above 100: this can happen if more people are enrolled at a certain educational level than there are people in that specific age bracket. A second indicator is the Completion Rate at a given level of education: the percentage of the school-age population that completes the education.

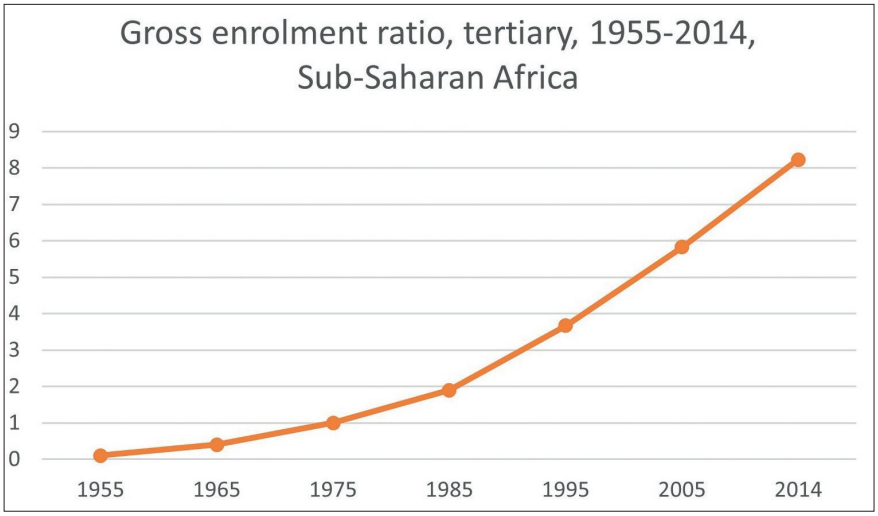
As a shorthand for characterising the functions of education, I will follow the rule of thumb that has been developed by Trow (in Cloete and Maassen 2015: 3): education that is accessible to less than 15 per cent of the population is elite education. Education accessible to between 15 and 40 per cent of the population is mass education. Education accessible to more than 40 per cent of the population is called universal education.

2.2.1 Evolution of Enrolment Data over Time

As shown in graph 1 below, the GER in tertiary education for sub-Saharan Africa as a whole has greatly increased in the past sixty years, rising from 0.1 per cent in 1955 to 8.2 per cent in 2014. However, a similar development has taken place in Western Europe, as shown in graph 2: there, GER has risen from 4.5 per cent in 1955 to over 70 per cent in 2014. In South Korea, it has risen from 6.8 per cent in 1971 to over 94 per cent in 2017. Even though the GER has increased in both regions, the growth in tertiary education in sub-Saharan Africa as a whole has been greater than in Western Europe.

Today, the GER for sub-Saharan Africa is approximately at the level that Western Europe had in 1965. In Europe, the function of tertiary education, especially of university education, has changed dramatically compared to the mid-1960s. This did not happen without friction: the wave of student protests

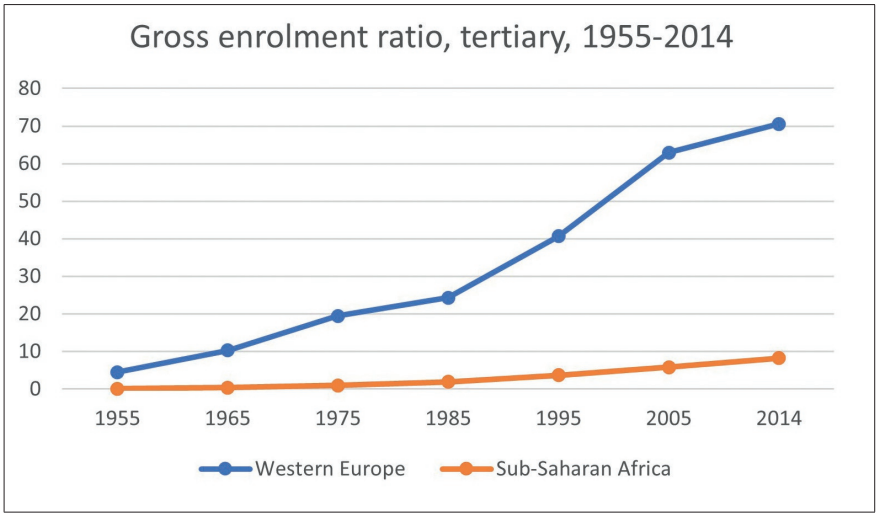
that spread over most of Western Europe after 1968 is partly an expression of the changing role of tertiary education in that period. Such frictions are likely to occur in several African countries as well, as will be clear when we take a look at the statistics of individual countries.



Graph 2.1

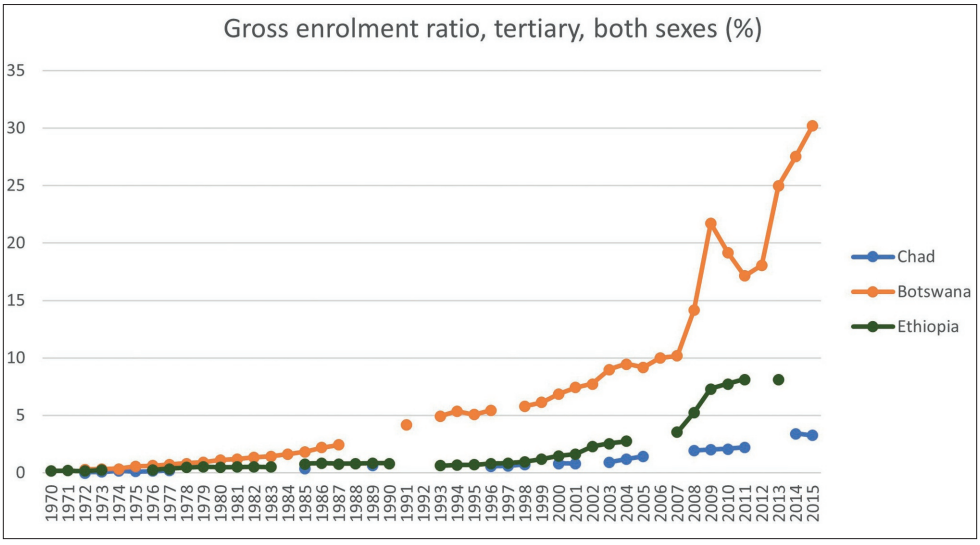
GER SSA 1955-2014. Sources: Altbach (2012) and UNESCO

Statistics that show an entire subcontinent hide the substantial differences that exist between countries. In sub-Saharan Africa, Chad holds the sad position of the African country with the lowest GER in 1972 and in 2014 as well. The countries with the highest GER in Africa include Egypt and some other Arab countries as well as Mauritius. Botswana has the highest GER in sub-Saharan Africa. A country that is near the sub-Saharan average is Ethiopia. The evolution in GER in these three countries since 1970 is shown in Graph 3, below:



Graph 2.2

GER Western Europe and SSA, 1955-2014. Sources: Altbach (2012) and UNESCO



Graph 2.3

GER, Botswana, Chad, Ethiopia

As is clear from the graph, the differences between countries are considerable. In 1972, Botswana had the highest GER – 0.3 per cent. Ethiopia stood at nearly 0.2 per cent and Chad at a mere 0.01 per cent. With figures this low, it seems safe to assume that most of the elites did not actually get their education in their own countries, but instead obtained their education abroad. By 2014,

tertiary education had expanded in all three countries, growing to a still very low 3.4 per cent in Chad, 8.1 per cent in Ethiopia, and nearly 28 per cent in Botswana.

These statistics illustrate a number of key points. For some countries, such as Chad, tertiary education is still a mechanism for elite reproduction. As in precolonial times, it is likely that these elites will be largely foreign-educated.

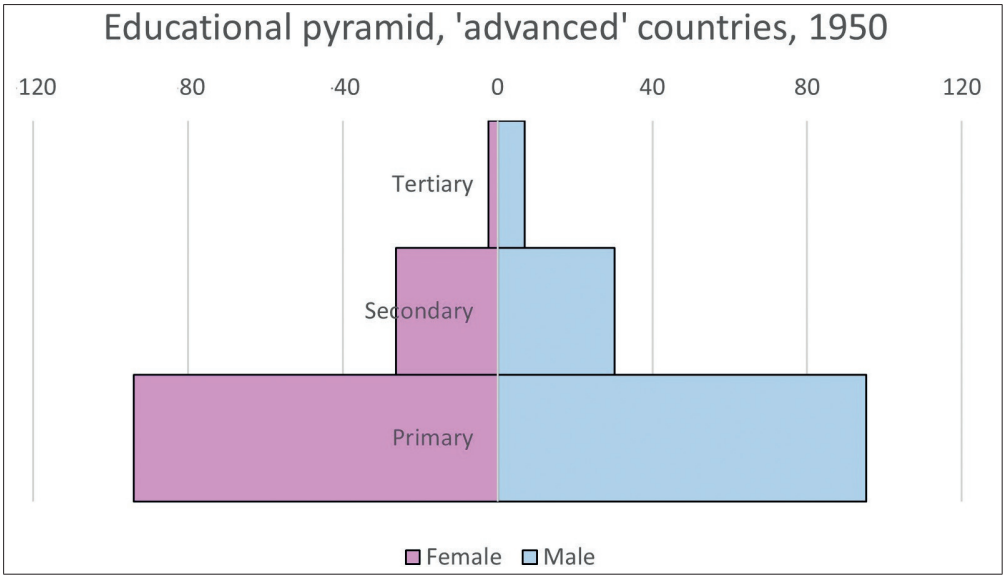
For other countries, such as Botswana but also Ghana, tertiary education is becoming more of a commodity, accessible to the middle classes. Botswana now has a GER comparable to that of Western Europe in 1975. Such countries now offer an alternative to studying abroad for a reasonable proportion of the age group – although the elite probably still invest in a foreign education.

Botswana has shown periods of rapid educational expansion, such as between 2007 and 2009, when the GER doubled. Such a rapid expansion can of course lead to a 'crisis of expectations': it is unlikely that those students who graduated in Botswana from the 2009 intake would find the same job opportunities as those who graduated from the 2007 intake.

Educational Pyramids

In addition to looking at the enrolment ratio in tertiary education, it is relevant to investigate the relationship between tertiary education and other levels of education. This relationship shows the extent to which the educational system works as a selection mechanism.

First, it is illustrative to look at the educational pyramid in the 'advanced' countries, at the time when Bourdieu entered tertiary education, i.e. c. 1950. Graph 4, below, has been constructed on the basis of material provided by Barro and Jong-Wha (2015: 16-17). Barro and Jong-Wha give enrolment ratios for three levels of education for the population as a whole and for women. From those, I have computed the male enrolment ratios as well.



Graph 2.4

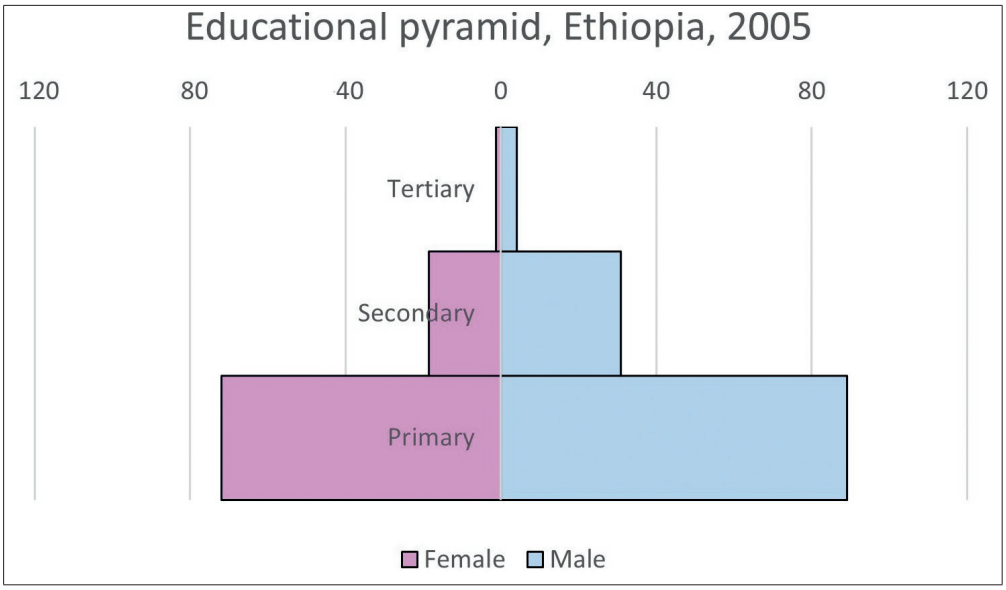
Educational pyramid, 'advanced' countries, 1950

The graph shows a number of interesting characteristics:

- Primary education at that time was universal;
- Secondary education was not yet universal, but accessible to over 30 per cent of the population, both men and women;
- Tertiary education was clearly for the elite, and considerably more accessible to men than to women.

It is relevant to look at the shape of the pyramid: selection was quite intensive: fewer than half of those who went to primary school could continue to secondary school. Less than a third of the boys and only one tenth of the girls who went to secondary school could proceed to tertiary education. In other words, there was a large educational gap between the elite and the rest of the population.

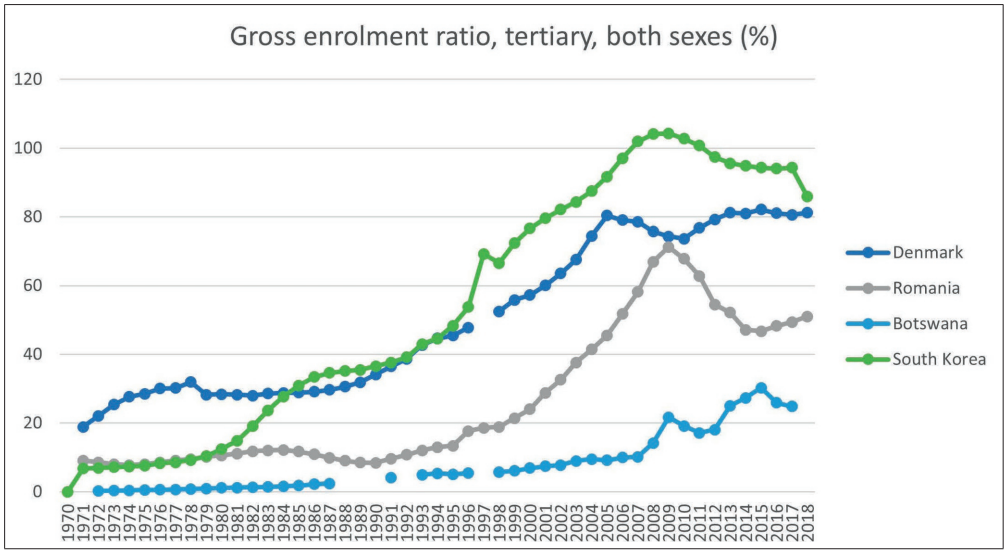
Graph 5 shows the situation for Ethiopia in 2005. As is clear from the graph, the pyramid of Ethiopia in 2005 is similar to that in the 'advanced' world in 1950, although, if anything, the pyramid is slightly steeper.



Graph 2.5
Educational pyramid, Ethiopia, 2005

The purpose of this graph is not to show that Ethiopia is half a century 'behind' Europe, but to illustrate that social processes that have been at play in Europe may also be at play in Africa, although the effects and the appearances might be different.

Further insights can be gained from comparing the evolution in sub-Saharan Africa with the evolution in Europe and South Korea. Leaving aside the European small-island states of Cyprus and Malta, which show a slightly anomalous picture, the commodification of tertiary education in Europe expanded further between 1990 and 2005, growing from an EU average tertiary education GER of 25 per cent in 1970 to 35 per cent in 1990 and around 70 per cent in 2015. The GER in Denmark (the country with the highest GER of the EU) was over 80 per cent. It was still over 50 per cent in Romania (the country with the lowest GER in the EU). In that period, South Korea has managed to overtake the EU, growing from a level of under seven per cent in 1971 to over 94 per cent in 2015, as shown in Graph 6, below.



Graph 2.6

GER, Botswana, Denmark, Romania, South Korea

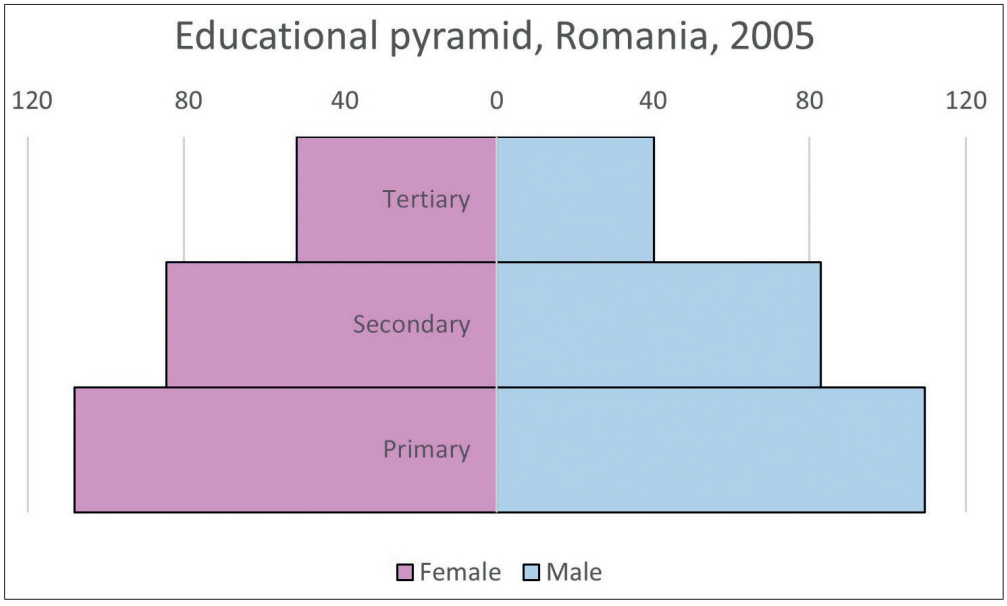
What is clear from comparing Graph 3 with Graph 6 is that the diversity in Africa in the tertiary education sector is far greater than that in Europe. The lines in the European graph show a much more parallel trajectory than the lines in the African graph. In 2014, the Romanian enrolment ratio stood at 65 per cent of the Danish ratio. However, the Chadian enrolment ratio was only 12.5 per cent of the Botswana ratio. This means that whereas it might be defensible to make general statements about the tertiary education sector in Europe, such statements about sub-Saharan Africa have much lower validity, if any at all.

Another point is this: a country like Romania was able to double its tertiary education sector from the current level of Botswana (nearly 30 per cent) between 2001 and 2007, i.e. in a relatively short period of time. Even though population growth in many African countries is higher than in Europe, it is still reasonable to expect that rapid further expansion is possible and likely in Botswana and other countries in Africa, given the right political and economic environment. There is reason to expect that, at least in some countries, such rapid expansions will indeed take place. This means that the social function of tertiary education in some African countries has changed since independence and is likely to change even more in the years to come. Such periods of rapid educational expansion are likely to lead to a problem

of disillusioned students and are likely to force changes in the educational 'habitus,' in order to cater for the changed social function of education.

In other countries in Africa, such expansion did not happen and may not happen for some years to come – meaning, of course, that social discontent might show itself in other ways.

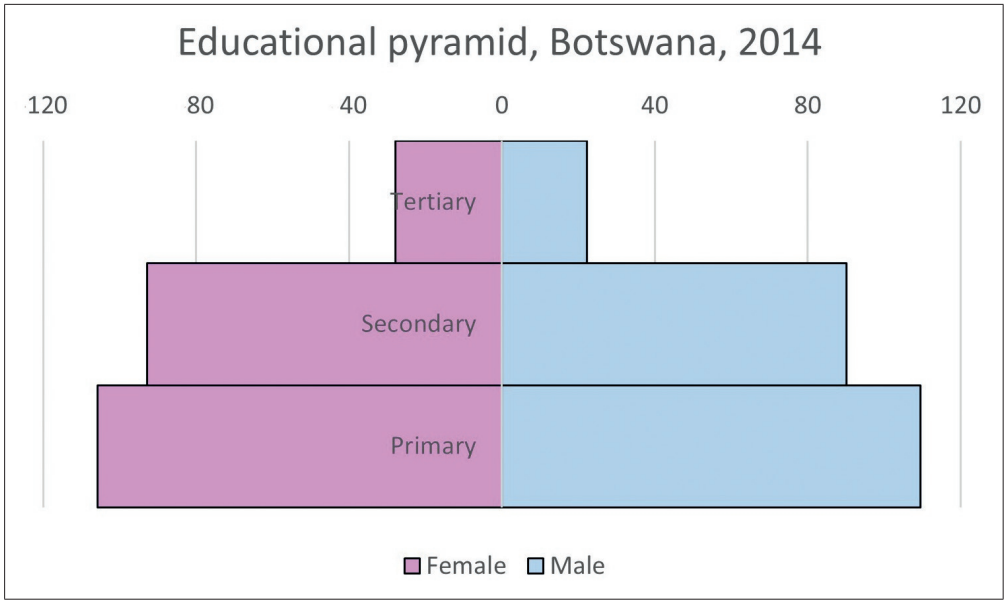
It is also illustrative to compare the educational pyramids of Romania and of Botswana, as is done in Graphs 7 and 8, below.



Graph 2.7
Educational pyramid, Romania, 2005

It is clear that these pyramids show more similarity than do the pyramids of Ethiopia (Graph 5) and Botswana. In Botswana as well as in Romania, primary and secondary education can now be said to be universal. Tertiary education has become massive. In both countries, more women than men participate in tertiary education. Even though there is still a considerable gap between those who can go to secondary education and the tertiary education level, that gap is now much smaller than it was some years ago. This also means that the relationship between the elites and the rest of the population has changed: the educational gap between the most educated and the rest of the population is now smaller than it used to be. In other words, in order to

be able to do its job of managing the country, the elites in both Romania and Botswana must now take account of and can rely on an educated population to a much greater degree than was the case a few decades ago. This is also happening in other countries in Africa: Table 1, below, shows all African countries with a gross enrolment rate in tertiary education above 15 per cent.



Graph 2.8

Educational pyramid, Botswana, 2014

Table 2.1
African countries with a gross enrolment rate in tertiary education above 15 per cent

African countries with a tertiary education GER > 15%		
Country	**2017**	**2018**
Algeria		51.4
Botswana	24.9	
Cabo Verde		23.6
Egypt	35.2	
Ghana		15.7
Mauritius	40.6	
Morocco		35.9
Namibia	22.9	
South Africa		23.8
Tunisia		31.7

Implications of GER Growth

Above, I have shown GER growth over the years, both in Africa and in Europe. Following Bourdieu and Passeron, this growth implies that as the GER changes, the social function of tertiary education also changes. As long as the GER for tertiary education remains below 15 percent, this education can be said to have elite reproduction as one of its main functions. In most countries in Africa (but not in all, as Table 1 shows), this is still the case. Thus, as Cloete and Maassen (2015: 6) state: 'There has been a common misconception that a major problem in African higher education is that it has massified without resources. In reality, nowhere on the continent is there a differentiated and massified system; there are only overcrowded elite systems.' The word 'nowhere' seems a slight overstatement in light of the statistics above, but on the whole, their statement seems valid.

It is to be expected that as the social function of education changes, the power relations within educational systems will also change. A change in power relations is almost never completely peaceful: it implies a certain measure of social strife. In the 'advanced' countries, the GER in tertiary education rose from 4.7 per cent in 1950 to 24.6 per cent in 1970 and 45.3 per cent in 1990. It is no surprise that in that period there were also waves of student unrest and protest in a number of countries in Europe and elsewhere. It is

entirely likely that such struggles will also occur in Africa. It partly explains what is happening in South Africa, struggling to increase access to tertiary education after the end of apartheid. If GER changes rapidly, for example if it doubles in under a decade, then its effect will clearly be felt within a generation: children at the end of primary school have certain expectations of what a university education will deliver that can no longer be met by the time they reach university-going age. The same is true of parents who, in many countries, need to make considerable sacrifices to give their children a good education. It would be worthwhile to study these relationships more in-depth, but that is outside the scope of this analysis.

Increased enrolment rates in Africa are more difficult to achieve than in other parts of the world, because Africa has higher population growth. However, given the rate of expansion of tertiary education in other parts of the world and given the history of expansion in Africa, further phases of rapid expansion, at least in some countries, can be expected.

As indicated above, this growth is accompanied by even greater expansion especially in secondary education: the pyramid is becoming less steep. The steepness of the pyramid can be expressed as the ratio of enrolment in primary education in any particular year divided by the ratio of enrolment in tertiary education in that year. Thus, a higher value means a steeper pyramid. For the graphs given above, that yields the picture shown in Table 2, below:

Table 2.2
Ratio of enrolment in primary education in any particular year divided by the ratio of enrolment in tertiary education in that year

Country	Year	GER primary/GER tertiary
Advanced countries	1950	20.1
Ethiopia	2005	29.2
Romania	2005	2.4
Botswana	2014	4.3

In many cases, GER growth will be achieved without commensurate budget growth. It is clear that this is likely to lead to a drop in the quality of education. However, the type of education that was offered to elites in earlier decades is perhaps not appropriate for the broader class of academics of tomorrow. In line with the ideas developed in the previous section, GER growth may also

have a bearing on pressures on the language of instruction. Let us examine that issue more closely in the next section.

2.2.2 The Language Barrier

In just about all the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, the medium of instruction in secondary and tertiary education is a former colonial language that is not the L1 of the majority of students. This is a legacy of a colonial system that was always intended to provide elite education, rather than education for the masses. Students must learn this colonial language in primary and secondary education and they should attain a level of proficiency that is sufficient for the tertiary level. But what is a sufficient level? There are three main systems used internationally for assessing foreign language ability.

In the United States, there are two, related scales: the guidelines of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)[47] and the ILR scale. The Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) scale has five broad levels, ranging from zero to five.[48] The Council of Europe uses the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) scale, which has six levels.[49] Attempts have been made to relate the US and the European scales to one another, but these alignments are approximate at best. For tertiary education, a level corresponding to at least the CEFR B2 level is considered to be necessary. This level stands for 'upper intermediate' – it is the level used by many universities, although the University of Cape Town in South Africa uses the higher C1 level as the desired level[50] – still below the highest 'C2' level. In the ILR terms, this means at least Level 3, or 'Advanced High' in ACTFL terms.[51]

Language level and the amount of effort (both from the learner and from the educational system) are often not taken into account in economic studies looking at language learning. Thus, Athanasiou et al. (2016: 214) discuss a

47 https://www.actfl.org/publications/guidelines-and-manuals/actfl-proficiency-guidelines-2012, accessed 20 July 2019.

48 https://www.govtilr.org/, accessed 20 July 2019.

49 ttps://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/home, accessed 20 July 2019.

50 http://www.students.uct.ac.za/students/applications/admission-requirements/language, accessed 25 August 2021 gives the requirement as an IELTS score of at least 6.5, which is on the border of B2 and C1 as outlined at https://www.ielts.org/ielts-for-organisations/common-european-framework.

51 https://www.efset.org/english-score/, accessed 20 July 2019.

number of economic studies and models showing that common simplifications include the assumption that an individual either 'speaks' or 'does not speak' another language and that the cost of learning another language is the same for all learners (p. 216) and independent of the similarity or difference between the languages learnt. In Europe or the US, where foreign language learning is done by a portion of the population at best and where at best only a handful of other languages will be learned, these simplifications might do. In an African context, however, where the assumption is that increasing numbers of people will learn a foreign language to a high enough level to enable them to receive tertiary education in that language, these models are inadequate.

Unfortunately, research into language levels reached in Africa and the associated cost is scarce. Still, the question needs to be asked: what percentage of the population and of the secondary school population can an educational system reasonably be expected to teach to reach at least the B2 level of proficiency at the time of school completion.

Given the dearth of material on Africa, a productive avenue might be to look at Europe, where the European Commission has a policy of stimulating learning of other European languages. Thus, in 2011, the European Commission for the first time investigated the second-language proficiency of secondary students – in reading, writing, and listening – in the last year before their final exams (European Commission, 2012).[52] They found tremendous differences in performance within Europe, ranging from Malta (60 per cent of students at B2 level) to France (five per cent of students at this level). One of the best-performing countries, doing better, for example, than the Netherlands, was Estonia, with 41 per cent of the secondary school students at the B2 level. Note that Estonian[53] is the designed language used as the medium of instruction in secondary education in the country – English is taught as a subject. Note also that over four fifths of all children in Estonia complete the second (upper) stage of secondary education: the completion rate in 2013 was 82.7 per cent. This means the Estonian education system is able to educate almost 34 per cent of its youngsters to a B2 level of proficiency in English, high enough to take tertiary education in that language. Estonian and English are very different from each other as languages – and yet Estonia

52 The survey material is still available online via http://www.surveylang.org/, accessed 6 June 2020. The survey has not been repeated.

53 The Ethnologue puts the number of L1 speakers of the two discerned Estonian-like languages at approximately 1.25 million. https://www-ethnologue-com/language/est, accessed 29 March 2020.

manages to be among the top performers in Europe. Let us therefore take the Estonian educational system as a benchmark for what an educational system is able to achieve in terms of teaching a portion of the population a 'foreign' designed language to a level high enough to allow students to be taught in that designed language at tertiary level. As we have seen, this level is 41 per cent of secondary school students and 34 per cent of all Estonian 18-year-olds. Where do African education systems stand in comparison?

Can Ghana, for example, match Estonia? Would it be possible for a third of all children to reach B2 level in an international language by the end of their secondary school career, as Estonia has managed to achieve? How ambitious would that be?

An estimate for Ghana could be calculated by multiplying the completion rate for senior secondary education by the percentage of students that obtain a high enough examination result in English. In Ghana, the final exam at the end of secondary school is the WASSCE examination.[54] In this system, the lowest so-called credit pass is the C6 pass. According to information on the sites of a number of UK universities,[55] the WASSCE C6 level is roughly equivalent to IELTS 6.0 and this is roughly equivalent to the CEFR B2 level. According to information from the US Embassy in Ghana,[56] this level is reached by 54 per cent of those who sit for the WASSCE examination. A further 27 per cent receive a passing grade that is lower than C6 (D7 or E8). UNESCO gives the completion rate for senior secondary education in 2018 as 35.7 per cent. This means that, currently, the Ghanaian education system is able to educate just under 20 per cent of its youngsters to a B2 level of proficiency in English, compared to 34 per cent for Estonia. Consequently, matching Estonia would be an ambitious goal indeed for a country like Ghana.

54 https://ghana.waecdirect.org/.

55 See for example https://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/study/international/international-entry-requirements/english-language-requirements/tier-4-qualifications, retrieved 6 November 2019.

56 https://gh.usembassy.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/175/THE-EDUCATIONAL-SYSTEM-OF-GHANA-2019.pdf, retrieved 6 November 2019. See also p. 88 of the Education Sector Medium-Term Development Plan 2018-2020, available online at https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/2019-05-education-sector-medium-term-development-plan_2018-2021.pdf.

Another approximation can be found in Albaugh (2014: 221). She gives estimates of the portion of the population in sub-Saharan Africa speaking a European language. The averages vary between 37 per cent for the 'Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking' countries and 17 per cent for the 'English-speaking' countries. Albaugh bases these estimates on a large number of sources, using any number of definitions and methodologies. The figures for the 'francophone' nations (average: 18 per cent) are the most comparable, because there she is able to use data collected by the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF).

The OIF uses what it calls a common-sense definition of a francophone in Maurer (2015: 3): 'a person able to express him/herself in French, no matter what his/her level may be or his/her mastery of other competences such as writing or reading' (my translation).[57] It is not immediately obvious how to map this on to the CEFR levels, but it clearly includes many more people than those who are at the B2 level, which stands for an ability to 'interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party.'[58] One of the interests of the OIF is clearly to make the French language look large and important. Therefore, it would probably also include those who are at the A2 level: those able to 'describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.' It is illustrative to note that in 2007, 62.4 per cent of teachers in Mauritania had level A2 or below, a level considered in the document to be insufficient for teaching in that language (p. 31). The document also recalls (p. 83) that, in order to become naturalised as a French citizen in France, the minimum level that is required is B1.

Albaugh estimates the average 'francophone' population in sub-Saharan Africa at 18 per cent. If francophone Africa were to emulate Estonia, 85 per cent of all children should complete secondary school and 40 per cent of those children should attain the B2 level. In that case, eventually, 35 per cent of the entire population would attain B2 level. In order to achieve such a level, it would be necessary to give the opportunity to all children to start secondary school and to learn French there. Probably, given differences in motivation and ability, some children would not learn enough French anyway

57 'Revenons donc au sens commun, qui entend par « francophone » une personne capable de s'exprimer en français, quelle que soit son niveau ou sa maîtrise d'autres compétences comme l'écriture ou la lecture.'

58 https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/table-1-cefr-3.3-common-reference-levels-global-scale, retrieved 7 September 2019.

to reach the A2 level. However, it is quite likely that 35 per cent at B2 level would mean a much larger base at A2 and B1 levels; perhaps as much as 70 per cent altogether. Even though this line of reasoning is speculative, it is nevertheless reasonable to conclude that, going by the OIF definition quoted above, there is potential for quadrupling the number of 'francophones' (from around 18 per cent to around 70 per cent) in sub-Saharan Africa.

Would it be possible for Ghana to go even further, and reach for example the level of Malta? Malta is unique in the EU, in that it was a British possession until gaining independence in 1964 and it has retained English as an official language, alongside Maltese. English and Maltese are very different languages. Yet, English is so present in Malta that Maltese children are familiar with English from a very early age. Perhaps one can argue that English is a Maltese language – the eWAVE considers Maltese English a separate variety of English.[59] Whereas in Estonia around 34 per cent of 18-year-olds speak English at the B2 level, this is almost 48 per cent for Malta. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in tertiary education in Malta in 2013 was only 43 per cent, compared to 73 per cent in Estonia.[60] Yet, Malta's College of Arts, Science and Technology does teach partly in Maltese and has the possibility to allow students to present assessment work in Maltese.[61]

Perhaps one could argue that in urban areas in Ghana, English is just as prevalent as it is in Malta and indeed, eWAVE also recognises Ghanaian English (as distinct from Ghanaian Pidgin English) as a separate English variety.[62] In addition, language learning does not stop at the end of secondary school – students continue to learn in their first year(s) in tertiary education. Therefore, it might be logical to keep (Ghanaian) English as one of the languages that is used as the medium of instruction in higher education, alongside other Ghanaian languages. However, continuing to use ***only*** (Ghanaian) English and emulating the Maltese education system would mean that the Ghanaian education system would have to educate three times as many children to reach the B2 level in English as it currently does. And still: if the level of enrolment in tertiary education would approximate the levels found in Estonia and in the rest of the Global North, a (partial) transition to indigenous

59 https://ewave-atlas.org/languages/12, accessed 11 June 2020. eWAVE is the Electronic Atlas of Varieties of English – see Kortmann, Lunkenheimer, and Ehret (2020).

60 The lower percentage for Malta compared to Estonia may be related to the fact that more Maltese than Estonians go abroad for their tertiary education.

61 https://www.mcast.edu.mt/wp-content/uploads/DOC_003_CORP_REV_F_-PROGRAMME-REGULATIONS-MQF-LEVELS-1-3-2.pdf, accessed 7 June 2020.

62 https://ewave-atlas.org/languages/39, accessed 11 June 2020..

languages would be necessary. If enrolment rates in secondary education stay below a certain level and selection criteria are such that all students have the required language level in order to profit from teaching in whatever medium of instruction is used, then using a foreign language as a medium of instruction is not a problem.

However, if the selection mechanism is not efficient, for example because it selects students that do not have the required language level, or if the enrolment ratio becomes higher than the percentage of students that have the required language level, then using a foreign language as medium of instruction will be problematic. At that stage, a proportion of children will not fully understand what the teacher says, even if, in principle, they have the required intellectual abilities. At that point, it will be necessary either to introduce an additional stream in which the medium of instruction is a language the children do understand sufficiently or to change to a local language for all secondary education. In both cases, the foreign language can be taught as a subject, but can no longer be used efficiently as the medium of instruction for all students.

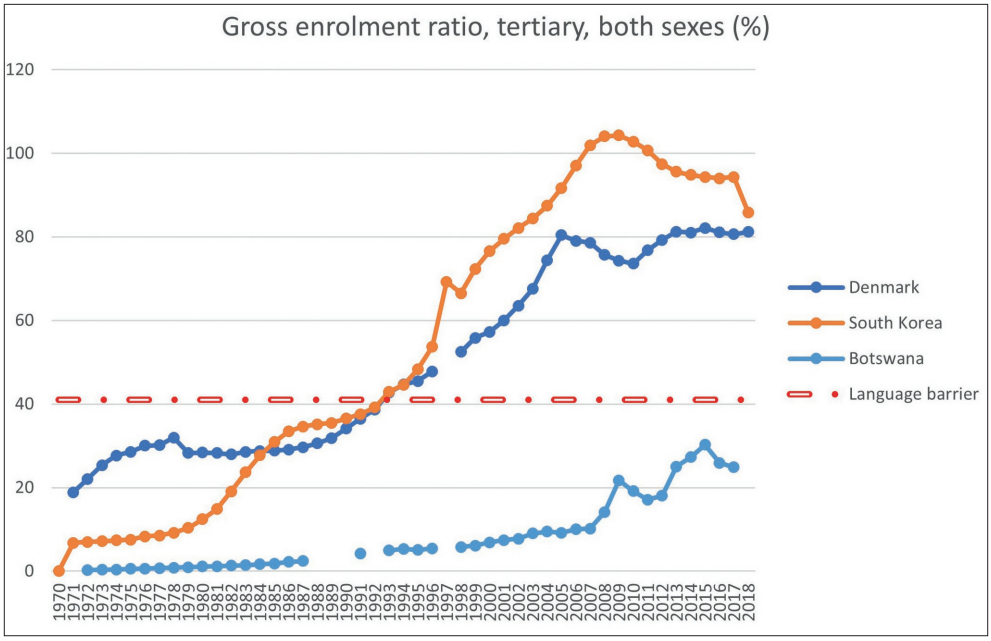
Estonia has chosen to use Estonian as the medium of instruction in secondary education (Santiago et al., 2016: 55). English is taught as a subject.[63] For Estonia, this ensures the best results not only in English, but in mathematics and other subjects as well. The Estonian system, then, offers living proof of a point that seems counter-intuitive to many Africans: not using English as the medium of instruction paradoxically leads to better English-language learning outcomes than using it as the medium of instruction. Developing CALP in Estonian is the most efficient way of developing CALP in English. Note, too, that the levels of English-language proficiency reached in Estonia are only achievable if there is a larger base of students who do not achieve this level, but still reach lower levels. This is possible because English is not used as the medium of instruction, but rather is taught as a subject.

As shown above, a level whereby 40 per cent of all students of secondary school age reach the B2 level of competence in their second language by the end of their secondary school is a very challenging benchmark to aim for in Africa. Chapter 1.4 showed at the theoretical level that there will be a 'language barrier' in any educational system that uses a foreign language

63 Estonia does have a sizeable Russian-speaking minority. Therefore, a number of schools also offer a Russian-language curriculum. English and Finnish are used as the medium of instruction in only a few schools.

as the medium of instruction. Due to the uneven distribution of language abilities over any population, there will be a point at which teaching high enough numbers of students to a high enough level of foreign language ability will put unsustainable demands on the system. For the time being, and until further research has shown things to be different, I propose as a ***working hypothesis*** that there is a 'language barrier' approximately at the level of a GER of 40 per cent for the highest level of secondary education and at the start of tertiary education. Below this level of enrolment, any language can be used as a medium of instruction. Above this level, a switch to a designed language that is close to (one of the) discerned mother tongue(s) becomes necessary. This is the 'language barrier' in tertiary education.

If we map this level on Graph 6 above, the consequences become clear, as shown in Graph 9.



Graph 2.9
Tertiary enrolment and the language barrier

It is clear that in the Global North, providing tertiary education in a foreign language to all students would be almost impossible: the language barrier prevents it. It would be very costly and inefficient to bring all students that enter tertiary education up to the required level of proficiency. In fact, they would also have this problem if the language barrier occurred at 60 per

cent. African countries do not (yet) have that problem. However, it will become a problem for a country like Botswana in the next decade or so, as Botswana approaches the 'language barrier' threshold. Of course, the precise level of the barrier is not fixed and can be influenced by the policy choices countries make. The basic point, however, is that such a barrier does exist and will become manifest through social tensions, lower pass rates for exams, disillusioned students, parents and teachers, and other ways. In Tunisia, where the Gross Enrolment Ratio in tertiary education is around 35 per cent, this transition is indeed happening: Tunisia has embarked on a phased (and not uncontested) Arabisation exercise. Most studies in Tunisian universities are currently entirely taught in Arabic, instead of the French that was used in the colonial period (Akkari, 2008). Section 5.5 further illustrates this point for Morocco.

The quantitative analysis of this section thus drives home the conclusions from the analysis presented in the previous section: if African countries aspire to provide tertiary education to their populations at levels comparable to those in the Global North, then sooner or later they will have to offer at least part of the curricula in local languages. The alternative would be to dramatically lower the standard of education being offered, but doing so would be inefficient and it would mean a great disservice both to the countries and the students involved.

2.3 Conclusions

This chapter has addressed the first research question: why are African languages not currently being used more in higher education as a medium of instruction.

In order to discuss this issue, it was important to first clarify the conceptual framework. To do that, a distinction between discerned and designed languages was proposed as a useful way of looking at languages as spoken versus languages as used in more formal domains, such as writing and writing-based activities. The term discerned refers to the human and social act of pronouncing a speech register to be a language. The term designed refers to those languages that have been deliberately shaped and built to become standardised vehicles of literary expression – languages that are protected and developed through policy and that are acquired through a process of formal learning. I call for explicit and increased attention to the

role of language policy in Africa and have criticised approaches that tend to neglect or underplay the importance of this role in Africa.

The study has reviewed the existing explanations for not using African languages more that are given in the literature, such as in Zsiga et al. (2014), and weighed these against the compelling arguments that scientists have advanced for almost 70 years in favour of 'mother-tongue' instruction. My conclusion is that the reasons given in the literature do not sufficiently explain the phenomenon and do not take account of the dynamic nature of educational systems in Africa, thus denying African agency. Instead, there is an additional explanation that points to the need for policy changes in the coming decade or so, at least for a number of African countries. This explanation is based on the fact that education systems will be unable to deliver language teaching to a sufficient level to sufficiently large numbers of students if enrolment levels in higher education start to approach those of the Global North. If enrolment increases, a transition to local languages will become inevitable. A counter-intuitive result of such a transition is that it will also lead to improvements in the learning of international languages (taught as a subject).

I asked the question what educational systems in Africa can reasonably be expected to deliver in terms of teaching children a foreign designed language to a high enough level. A benchmark is found in the Estonian education system, which is one of the best-performing systems in Europe. It is able to educate a high percentage of the population to tertiary education level (in the Estonian example: 70 per cent). This percentage is, in fact, much higher than the percentage of the population that the Estonian educational system is able to teach a foreign language at a level high enough to be able to take education at tertiary level (in the Estonian example: 34 per cent). In Europe, multilingual Malta is an outlier: its educational system is able to give 48 per cent of its 18-year-olds a high level of English-language knowledge. However, in Malta approximately 43 per cent of 18-year-olds then continue to higher or tertiary education – therefore, in Malta this education can be delivered in English. Estonia, however, with a participation rate in higher education of around 70 per cent, is not able to do that. This means that, in that country, tertiary education is largely in Estonian, even though there are only around 1 million native speakers of Estonian in the country. Currently, all African countries have relatively low participation rates in higher education. Therefore, this education can currently be delivered in any designed language. However, in future, Africa potentially has a big problem: it will not be able to develop its full human potential making use of non-indigenous languages; sooner or

later, a shift to increased use of African designed languages will become a necessity. At the moment, however, this is not the case – it is possible to continue with the colonial language in education policies. This provides my explanation of why African languages are currently not used more in higher education.

Research into the achievements of education systems and into the evolution of enrolment rates in education points to the idea that there must be a 'language barrier': a point at which a switch to indigenous designed languages becomes a necessity. However, more research would be needed to determine where this barrier lies in individual countries and how policy choices could influence it. For the time being, a working hypothesis is that this barrier is at a gross enrolment ratio in tertiary education of around 40 per cent.

It is important to stress that, for most African countries, the consequence of such a transition will be that higher education would be provided in several languages (as is already the case in a number of countries for primary education). At the start of the transition, the former colonial language might remain the single medium of instruction in a large number of fields. Then, gradually, and over time, other languages will be added as the medium of instruction for more and more fields. However, it is entirely possible that the former colonial language will be maintained as an optional or even as the sole medium of instruction for some fields of education. The end result will also not be uniform: it will be different, depending on the linguistic situation of individual countries.

Using Bourdieu and Passeron (1979) as the theoretical starting point, and after examining the available data, several additional points become clear:

- No discussion on education in Africa is complete without looking at the sociological parameters of that education. Researchers should always bear enrolment statistics in mind when studying education in countries outside of their own: if not, their research is likely to be tainted because, consciously or subconsciously, they are likely to use the situation in their home country and the time that they themselves went to university as the norm. In so doing, they will assume a form of cultural capital and a habitus in the foreign educational system that does not reflect the actual situation on the ground.

- An implicitly European frame of reference when discussing higher education in Africa can lead to misleading or even false ideas and conclusions about the nature of education in Africa.
- Tertiary education in Africa is more divergent than in Europe. Analysis must start from the country level, because generalisations are more difficult to make about education in Africa than about education in Europe.
- Differences in enrolment ratios in Africa mean that the social function of tertiary education in society is different from country to country.
- Developed societies need more than an educated elite – those elites also need an educated general population. This means that if Africa is to become more developed, it needs to educate more people to a higher level (of course, in an appropriate manner). In order to achieve that, it will need African languages.

Now that we have demonstrated that, at some point, it will become necessary to start using designed languages that are easier to learn for most Africans than the ones currently employed in higher education, the next question becomes: what instruments are there for making rational language choices? That is the topic of the next chapter.

3 Rational Choices for Language in Education

Chapter Two has shown why, in future, it will become necessary to make more use of African languages in secondary and higher education. The study has proposed a new pair of concepts, namely, the distinction between discerned languages – spoken languages as identified for example by the Ethnologue – and designed languages – the standardised forms that have been developed for some languages.

This chapter builds on the material of the previous chapter and examines the second research question: what possibilities are there for rational language-in-education policies in Africa?

3.1 Language Policy and Citizenship

In his landmark 1996 book *Citizen and Subject*, Mamdani has decisively influenced how the word 'citizen' must be interpreted in an African context. Citizens are people who are enabled to participate in democratic-decision making – in contrast to 'subjects,' who are not. However, this understanding is not specifically African. Smith (2013) uses a similar notion of 'meaningful citizenship,' derived from the works of Charles Tilly and James Tully, and asserts that 'the analytical lens of citizenship has rarely been deployed in many parts of the developing world' (p. 19). In Chapter 1.5, I pointed to the notion of 'republican citizenship' as used by Grotenhuis (2016) to denote the importance of how, as citizens, people feel they are part of a 'nation,' rather than only being subjects of a 'state.' All agree that citizenship implies access to information and to political discourse in a language that is accessible to the citizen. In this context, Heugh (2014) has used the term 'linguistic citizenship.' It is noteworthy that this is not only a linguistic issue, though: it is also a cultural issue. Teaching and learning are affected not only by the medium of instruction, but also by the cultural backgrounds of teachers and learners.[64] Thus, it is easier if teachers and learners share a similar cultural

64 For an overview, see Hofstede (1986).

background, or at least are knowledgeable about those backgrounds. This is, of course, more likely to happen if teachers and learners share the same linguistic background.

In the colonial period, the language of administration was the colonial language and this was fine, because the colonial authorities never had any intention of giving access to the administrative, court, or political systems to ordinary people – in Mamdani's terms, the ordinary people were subjects, not citizens. With independence and democracy, this changed, at least notionally. The aim became that all citizens have access to the state institutions meant to service them. If those institutions function in a national language, then all citizens should be given access to that national language. Albaugh (2014) points out that, in Europe, the reasons for developing and enforcing national languages were not primarily moral ones. She points to the differences in state-building between Europe and Africa. In Europe, rulers needed to tax their citizens (for which a common language was useful) and they needed to wage war and therefore required large conscription armies (for which a common language was also useful). This was also good for industrialisation. Albaugh demonstrates that, in Africa, citizens are hardly taxed: tax comes from trade tariffs. In addition, the colonial borders are secure, so large armies are not needed. Therefore, a common language is less necessary and the fiction of the colonial language as 'unifying' may be useful and, moreover, keeping people divided by using local languages may also be beneficial, in addition to safeguarding the rift between elite and population. Similar to Smith's (2013) reasoning, Alamin Mazrui (2019: 434) points to the undemocratic character of using a national language that the majority does not have direct access to, calling this 'denial of voice.' Chaudenson (2006) has sharply criticised existing educational arrangements in Africa and has shown how universal access to the national language has remained fictional: teaching methods are inadequate; the change from local languages to French generally happens too soon; there is no assessment of actual levels of language learning reached; and where there are such assessments they generally show that the levels reached are dismally low for most children. However, instead of concluding that the project should be abandoned, Chaudenson goes the other way: he says much more needs to be done if children are to be brought up as effective citizens who have access to the national language. Measures he proposes include better language teaching, but his main plea is for a far greater exposure of children to French through the media, for example through TV programmes aimed at helping children to learn French in a playful and attractive manner.

This brings us back to De Swaan (2001), who has pointed out how choices that may be rational from an individual point of view may lead to less desirable results from a social point of view.

In general, language learning is helped by starting early, by greater exposure to a language in many different ways, by greater time investment, by higher motivation (both on the part of children and of parents), and by a better basis in the mother tongue. However, all of this represents choices that reflect, on the one hand, preferences by individual parents and, on the other hand, replicate existing social inequalities. In general, the extent to which parents have access to these different strategies for helping language learning is different for different social strata (although there are individual differences as well).

For certain areas of Africa, it is important to take into account the prevalence of multilingualism. Many people speak two or even more languages, a point emphasised by Lüpke and Storch (2013). Dorvlo (2008: 6) has studied children who have Logba as their mother tongue in Ghana. This is a small language, spoken in an area where another, larger language (Ewe) is dominant. This means that, in fact, all Logba-speaking children are exposed to Ewe from their earliest days and can be considered bilingual from birth. It is good to note that, in general, multilingualism is an advantage: Barac and Bialystok (2012) have shown that multilingual children perform certain tasks more quickly and more easily than monolingual children. This is a situation that may occur for more people in Africa and that could help in devising equitable language policies.

Buzási (2016) has developed the Index of Communication Potential, based on information on second- and third-language knowledge taken from the Afrobarometer survey. She shows that there are several countries in Africa where the former colonial language could be dropped without any major loss to the potential of people in those countries to communicate with one another. However, this is not a general situation in all countries of Africa. Furthermore, the fact that people have a certain linguistic repertoire in more than one language may overlook the issue of at which level people can express themselves in these different languages. Some African authors have a tendency to extol the multilingual virtues of Africans. Of course, multilingualism *is* a resource, but we should not be blinded to the fact that many multilingual Africans may only have restricted repertoires in each of their many languages, suitable only for the different domains in which they speak (not: read or write) each one of them. Wolff (2016: 227)

points to the problem of 'semilingualism,' or insufficient competence in any language. Piller (2016: 124) uses the more emotive but, in my view, clearer term of 'linguistic stunting.' In addition, what multilingualism may mean for intergenerational language transmission remains an open question; could it be that multilingualism in some situations is actually an early indicator of intergenerational language loss?

In other parts of the world, the benefits of multilingualism have been pointed out. Grin (2003) looks at multilingualism in education in Western countries, notably Canada and Switzerland, and tries to employ an economic analysis. One of his conclusions (p. 39) is: 'The application of basic economic concepts then suggests that society is likely to be best off not when it tries to eliminate diversity, nor when it attempts to embrace limitless diversity.' He sees economic benefit in learning more than one language and feels the cost is moderate (p. 54):

> [I]n certain contexts, moving from a unilingual to a bilingual school system means that pupils will be able to get education in a language that they understand well, instead of a language that they understand poorly. This has the following effects:
>
> - a decline in the repetition rate (children taking the same class twice because of failing grades), which entails a reduction in costs;
> - a decline in the dropout rate (children leaving the system because of failing grades), which entails an increase in costs;
> - better results in terms of cognitive acquisition, entailing higher productivity and ultimately a more prosperous economy and higher tax revenue.

For Switzerland, he shows that the extra earnings associated with foreign language knowledge increases with level of fluency. However, these increases are not the same for every part of the country, or for both genders.

Now, let us suppose for a moment that social inequalities did not exist. Even in a world of perfect equal opportunity, language learning outcomes will be unequally divided over the population, due to differences in language aptitude that are a common feature of any human population. In fact, this is the narrative that is common to all soft power exercised through meritocratic discourse: those who are better off are better off not because of any injustice, but because they deserve it in reward for their God-given talents.

A rational language policy that aims at being decolonial will be based on creating equal opportunities for all children, and creating equal access to state institutions and to political debate for all citizens, regardless of their socio-economic status. On what principles should such a policy be based? This is explored in the next section.

3.2 Principles Underlying Rational Language Policies

Language policy is important: as Smith (2013: 94) points out, one 'of the most basic and central aspects of our daily life is choreographed by the state, regardless of whether an official language policy is formally articulated or left implied.' Moreover, 'there are significant democratic costs to ignoring language diversity or pursuing a policy of linguistic domination' (p. 118). She points out that any language policy needs to deliver three types of political goods to its citizens (pp. 95-96):

- Access to information: A democratic language policy, whatever we decide that is, should provide all citizens equal access to the information, education, and opportunities of all others, following the principle of equality.
- Autonomy: A number of multiculturalist theorists have identified autonomy as a prerequisite for democratic participation. This means that citizens must have not only the freedom to make their own choices, but also what scholars generally refer to as a sufficiently wide range of meaningful options and opportunities from which to choose.
- Recognition, as symbolic affirmation of citizen identity.

Skuttnab-Kangas (2013: 82) goes further than Smith, stating that the way people who use 'indigenous, tribal, minority and minoritised (ITM)' languages are taught constitutes a violation of human rights and can even be called a form of genocide and a crime against humanity. Unlike De Swaan, she feels 'that linguistic diversity and biodiversity are correlationally and causally related' (p. 114). Roy-Campbell (2019: 40) asserts: 'As long as African countries continue to educate the continent's future leaders primarily through foreign languages, they will remain dependent.'

Obviously, the political goods mentioned by Smith are often not delivered by language policies currently pursued in Africa. Africa is not unique in this regard. Reviewing examples from six countries in four continents, Taylor-Leech and Liddicoat (2014: 358) conclude that 'when language planning flows from top-down, centralised, non-consultative decision making motivated

by political pragmatism, it invariably results in unsatisfactory provision.' However, '[w]hen planners are motivated by the desire […] to promote social inclusion, tolerance, and/or cultural integration, the resulting programmes and provision can be beneficial.' What does that mean for education?

In the previous chapter, we have argued that education in Africa is still largely based on the colonial model, which was highly selective: it is aimed at servicing primarily those children who are gifted in language. A number of these children will also be gifted in mathematics; those children gifted in mathematics but not gifted in language will face difficulties. The system disregards those children not particularly gifted in either language or mathematics. By expanding educational systems based on the colonial model, they have become inefficient and wasteful, both in terms of resources (spending money to teach children in ways not suited for them) and in terms of talent (not making the best use of the talents of the majority of a nation's children). The World Bank (2019: 17) gives a stark statistic: in sub-Saharan Africa, no fewer than 87 per cent of ten-year old children suffer from 'learning poverty,' as opposed to under ten per cent of children in high-income countries. Systems based on the colonial model are wasteful; furthermore, they tend to reproduce and accentuate existing inequalities in society, favouring the urban and already well-to-do.

In order to get away from this, a different approach is needed, one that starts not from the needs of an intellectual elite but from the needs of the population as a whole. Put in another way, instead of conceiving the 'educational pyramid' in a top-down way, it must be thought through in a 'bottom-up' way.

But what can that mean in practice and what does it mean from the language point of view?

A first issue that needs to be explored is the issue of which languages to use. Many policymakers and scientists have tried to wriggle out of this problem by saying that all languages should have equal status, without necessarily enumerating those languages; some also say that the same institutional support currently given only to the former colonial language should be extended to 'all' indigenous languages, without saying which. This what the African Union has done by designating 'any' African language as 'official.'[65] Ndhlovu (2015: 188), influenced by Pennycook, is against seeing languages as 'countable objects' altogether and argues for basing policy on 'ignored

65 https://au.int/en/about/languages, accessed 20 July 2019

lingualisms,' without being more concrete. Kamwangamalu (2016) and others shy away from the problem: they simply keep silent about it. However, if such statements are made without becoming more concrete, the net effect is likely to lead to a strengthening of the position of the former colonial languages. The distinction between discerned and designed languages as outlined in section 2.1.2 can be helpful in overcoming this type of disempowering language discourse.

In line with the concepts of discerned and designed languages, the **first principle** proposed here is that it will be necessary to develop a **limited number** of designed languages for education. This idea was suggested already by Chumbow (2005: 177) and by Brock-Utne (2017). It is not practical, but also not necessary, to aim to develop all discerned languages into designed languages.

The **second principle** follows from the first: these designed languages should be chosen in such a way that they are **easy to learn** for as many speakers of discerned languages as possible – a principle that was already suggested by Nwoye (1978), as cited by Laitin (1992: 154).

As a complement to the second principle, the **third principle** would be to strive for **inclusivity**; in other words, to choose the various designed languages in such a way that, as much as possible, all have to exert a relatively low but relatively equal effort to learn them.[66] Thus, for speakers of Occitan, standard French might be relatively easy to learn as a designed language. For speakers of lower Saxon, standard German might serve the same purpose. Using standard German as the designed language for speakers of Occitan would place them at a disadvantage compared to the speakers of lower Saxon. Therefore, both French and German are needed in order to ensure inclusivity. Another strategy is thinkable: mandarin Chinese could be chosen as the designed language for both groups, which would make learning extremely but equally difficult for both. Such a strategy would be very damaging to France and to Germany, because it would effectively bar large sections of the population from gaining access to meaningful education and to public discourse and would therefore stunt the possibilities of both countries for

66 This principle is related to the second principle of what a multicultural state should look like, as described by Kymlicka (2003: 150). This entails the requirement that all citizens should have equal access to state institutions, without linguistic barriers imposed on some but not on others: 'The state accepts an obligation to accord the history, language and culture of non-dominant groups the same recognition and accommodation that is accorded to the dominant group.'

economic and social development. Of course, this is precisely the strategy that is currently presented as the only rational alternative for many African countries.

Then, a **fourth principle** seems appropriate: namely, that of making use of **existing bilingualism** as a resource. Multilingualism in Africa should be seen as a resource to be mobilised to advantage. As hinted above, this is probably useful only for a minority of cases: true bilingualism is difficult to achieve and depends on significant exposure to the two languages from a very early age. However, there may be areas where this exists. There could be situations where finding an easy to learn designed language for discerned language 'A' is difficult or impractical, but if those children also speak language 'B' it might be possible to find a cost-effective, inclusive solution.

Lastly, flowing from the first principle and making use of the fact that perceptions of either difference or similarity can, to a certain extent, be influenced by policy, it would seem appropriate to add a **fifth principle**, namely, to build incentives for **linguistic collaboration**, especially for related linguistic communities. How this could work will be explored in the case study on Ethiopia in Chapter Five.

Broadly speaking, the results of any system of education can be improved in two ways: by increasing the funding available to it and by improving the methods used in education / reducing the inefficiencies in the system. Applying the principles outlined above should go a long way towards improving methods and reducing inefficiency and wastage in education. They should also lead to a better use of African talent and therefore contribute to a society that offers chances for a productive and rewarding life for all of its citizens.

3.3 Which Languages are Easy to Learn?

The first and second of the proposed principles hinge on the availability in Africa of designed languages (or languages that can become designed) that are easy to learn for speakers of several discerned languages.

As a thought experiment, one could make for any language a matrix of surrounding languages, more or less like this:

La -medium	Lb - easy	Lc -easy
Ld -medium	L1	Le -hard
Lf -medium	Lg -medium	Ln - hard

(Of course, in reality, in many situations the 'borders' around these language boxes will be fuzzy to a greater or lesser extent.) A similar matrix could be prepared for La, Lb, Lc, etc. This might lead to what would, theoretically, be the best choices of designed languages for any African country to use as a medium of instruction: those languages that present the least difficulties for the largest numbers of speakers. So, ultimately, one would end up with a limited list of designed languages best suited for use in education and with an estimate of the number of L1 and (potential) L2 speakers of those languages. It might be that there are some communities speaking language isolates where bilingualism is not frequent and that have only a small number of speakers – but, then, at least we will know the size of that problem, which is likely to affect only a very small percentage of all Africans.

Of course, the actual language choice will depend on many criteria, in addition to what would theoretically be best if one would follow this model. However, this model would provide additional information relevant for making an informed choice, information that is currently lacking. Note that this approach is a departure from the idea that language choices could be based on looking for 'mutual intelligibility,' as advocated, for example, by Prah. As outlined in Chapter 1.3, the concept of mutual intelligibility itself is difficult if not impossible to operationalise. But, in addition, once we admit that learning a designed language always requires a certain amount of formalised learning, it becomes thinkable to choose designed languages that are not mutually intelligible for speakers of the discerned languages they serve, but that are, nevertheless, easy to learn.

But how can we know if a language is 'easy'? How can that term be operationalised?

The literature on language learning is fairly clear about the general principle: languages that are close to one another are easier to learn than languages that are very different from one another. In other words, the **distance** between any two languages can be taken as an indicative or rough measure for how easy or difficult it may be to learn another language for a speaker of a given language.

The measure of linguistic distance as an indicator of ease or difficulty of language learning has advantages, as will be shown later in this chapter, but it also has limitations. Thus, the relationship is not necessarily bidirectional: it may be easier for somebody who speaks language A to learn language B than it is for a speaker of language B to learn language A. This can happen, for example, if language A has more sounds (phonemes) than language B and there are no sounds in language B that do not also occur in language A. In that case, speakers of language B will have to familiarise themselves with the new sounds that language A has, but speakers of language A do not have that problem if they want to learn language B. The same can be true for the grammar of a language: if language A has a more difficult or strict grammar than language B, it may be easier for speakers of language A to learn language B than vice versa. Other factors influence ease of language learning, for example the *perceived* ease or difficulty, as related to, say, the relative status of the languages involved – for an overview, see Gooskens (2018).

Then, there are various ways of measuring the distance between languages, all of them with their own problems and imperfections. Ginsburgh and Weber (2016) give a useful overview of ways that have been found of measuring linguistic distance. One way they describe is the use of *lexicostatistical* methods. These methods are based on measuring the common roots of words in the vocabularies of various languages. These are based on a limited list of words that are assumed to exist in almost all languages with the same meaning. The most famous of these lists is the one developed by the American linguist Swadesh, last published in 1971. Levenshtein (1966, cited in Ginsburgh and Weber 2016: 148) has suggested a way of using these word lists for comparing distances between languages by computing the number of changes that need to be made to turn one word (such as the English word 'night', but spelled phonetically) into its equivalent in another language (such as 'nuit' in French, also spelled phonetically). The most precise and most comprehensive tool for computing language distance currently available uses a lexicostatistical method with a simplified 40-item word list derived from the Swadesh list and using Levenshtein distances, also known as Normalised Edit Distances (NED). As Gooskens et al. (2008) have shown for Scandinavian languages, Levenshtein distances provide a good indicator of mutual intelligibility. An early attempt at using this approach for Cameroonian languages can be found in Chumbow et al. (2007). Moran and Prokić (2013) give a useful overview of how Levenshtein distances have been used extensively in a variety of other situations and use it themselves for a classification of Dogon languages. Building on the Swadesh list and the Levenshtein distances, Wichmann, Holman, and Brown have developed the

Automated Similarity Judgment Program (ASJP) and its associated database, started in 2008.[67] It was developed in an experimental way and its results were compared with the expert knowledge of relevant linguists and refined based on their feedback. The ASJP database currently contains word lists from 5,499 discerned languages[68] and is able to compute the degree of similarity between any pair of these language, yielding for each pair a distance measure they call the Levenshtein Normalised Distance Divided (LDND).[69] To give credit to their work, I will call this the ASJP distance.

As Ginsburgh and Weber point out (p. 152), it would be better to have a system that is based on how much time it would take an average speaker of one language to learn another given language. They cite the work of Chiswick and Miller from 2007, who developed such a measure for a limited number of language pairs. However, they also point out that it would be almost impossible to do this for all possible language pairs in the world. Therefore, in order to continue with the thought experiment and to show that, in principle, it should be possible to make rational choices in this area, I will continue, using the ASJP database as a starting point in order to provide indications of ease or difficulty of language learning.

3.4 Ease of Language Learning: The ASJP database

So far, Levenshtein distances have been used to classify languages and dialects and to estimate degrees of mutual intelligibility. However, I propose to use them for a related but different purpose, namely, to estimate the ease or difficulty of language learning. Without further work, it is unclear what the ASJP distances mean in terms of ease or difficulty of learning a language. In order for them to have practical relevance for this purpose, it is necessary to benchmark them against a schema for language learning and to see if there is any relationship between the ASJP scores and such a schema. Such a schema has been developed by the US Government.[70] It has published

67 https://asjp.clld.org/, accessed 23 July 2019.

68 ASJP website, 25 August 2021. Note that SIL is the registrar for an ISO norm that tries to list all of the world's languages, ISO 693-3; this can be seen as listing all the more than 7,000 currently discerned languages of the world. See https://iso639-3.sil.org/about for more information.

69 See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Automated_Similarity_Judgment_Program for a brief explanation, accessed 18 September 2020.

70 https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/247092.pdf, accessed 25 August 2021. Cysouw (2013) has used a slightly less complete version of this schema before to assess ease of language learning, but he has not related it to ASJP scores.

a list of language pairs, giving for each the number of weeks of full-time formal instruction needed for a talented native English speaker to reach the IRL 3 proficiency level in a given other language. Level 3 is equal to basic 'vocational' proficiency, roughly equivalent to the CEFR C1 level.

In some cases, it also gives the number of weeks needed to give a student who already speaks a certain language the same level in a related language.

The mapping looks like this:

Table 3.1
US and ASJP-derived schemas for language learning

Language pair	weeks	US classification	ASJP score	My classification
Czech – Slovak	10-12	Closely related	32	Very easy
Bulgarian – Macedonian	10-12	Closely related	32	Very easy
Indonesian – Malay	10-12	Closely related	15	Very easy
Lao – Thai	14-18	Related	53	Very easy
Portuguese – Spanish	14-18	Related	68	Easy
Dutch – German	18-22		49	Very easy
Bulgarian – Serbo-Croatian	30-36		48	Very easy
English – Dutch	24	Cat I	61	Easy
English – Italian	24	Cat I	90	Medium
English – French	30	Cat I	92	Medium
English – German	36	Cat II	69	Easy
English – Haitian Creole	36	Cat II	94	Medium
English – Swahili	36	Cat II	97	Difficult
English – Amharic	44	Cat III (hard)	96	Difficult
English – Hausa	44	Cat III (hard)	98	Difficult
English – Somali	44	Cat III (hard)	103	Very difficult
English – Japanese	88	Cat IV (super hard)	98	Difficult
English – Korean	88	Cat IV (super hard)	99	Difficult
English – Mandarin	88	Cat IV (super hard)	102	Very difficult

As is clear from the table, the US Government-based classification and this classification based on AJSP scores do not provide an exact match, but they are still reasonably close. The difference between the two systems is never more than one adjacent category. What is also clear is that the ASJP scores do not form a scale with equal distances between points: at the higher end of the scale, the difficulty level increases faster than at the lower end of the scale. This is in line with Heeringa (2004: 281), who concludes that 'logarithmic Levenshtein distances […] correlate most strongly with the perceptual distances.'

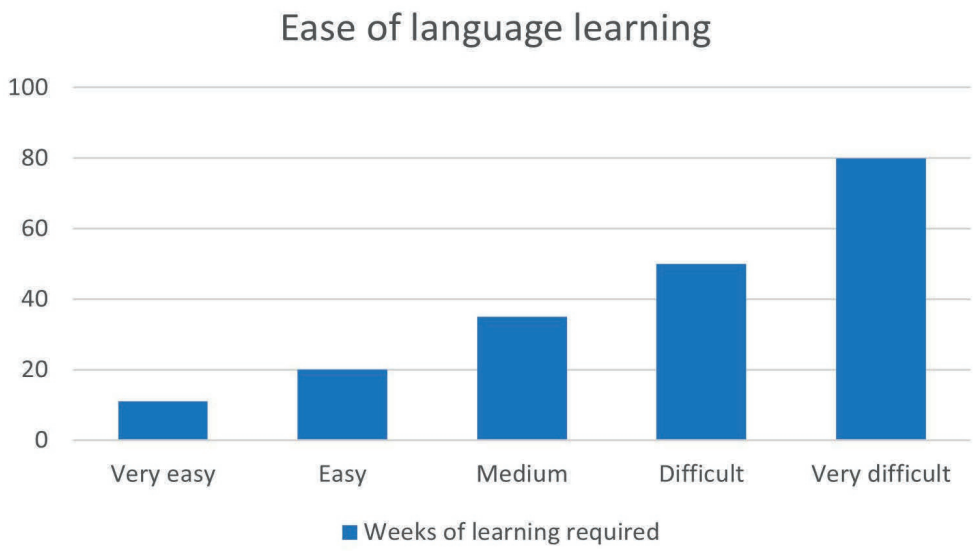
In summary, my classification is as follows:

ASJP distance score	Category
< 60	Very easy
≥ 60, < 90	Easy
≥ 90, ≤ 95	Medium
> 95, < 100	Difficult
≥ 100	Very difficult

It is important to note that the difference in language learning between 'easy' and 'difficult' represents a substantial difference in terms of the effort that is required. The graph below illustrates this, although the number of weeks should be taken as an indicative value only. In addition, this is based on language learning of US adolescents. It could be that the differential is different for African children – this is an area that has not been researched and would deserve further work. It could also be that the differential varies for people with varying language aptitudes.

We can tentatively operationalise the second principle proposed in section 3.1 above (the principle that the designed languages chosen as the medium of instruction should be as close as possible to the discerned language of the learners) as follows: ideally, the designed language of instruction should be very easy (ASJP score of below 60). In cases where this is not practical, the next best choice would be to provide instruction in a different designed language that is less close to the mother tongue but that is still easy to learn – so with an ASJP score of below 90. The ASJP score for the English-Estonian language pair (used in Chapter Two) is 99, making English a difficult language for Estonian speakers (and vice versa). In cases where this is practical and convenient, it may be possible to start primary education in a very easy language and to teach a second, easy to learn language as a subject. At some

point in time, it may then be possible to switch to this second language as the medium of instruction – as indeed suggested by Laitin and discussed in detail below.



Graph 3.1
Ease of language learning

This benchmarking and categorisation has the advantage that it leads to an approximate assessment for the easy or difficulty of learning a language for any language pair in the ASJP database. It can therefore be used in order to make a rough assessment of the equitableness and inclusivity of a given language regime and of the efficiency of developing a given discerned language into a designed language. This can be done without any knowledge of the actual languages. However, it is not more than that: any initial assessment of this type would have to be validated against the expert knowledge of local speakers and learners of the languages involved.

To illustrate the power of this approach, two examples will be given, one from Africa and one from Europe.

First, there are the Gbe languages, spoken in Ghana, Togo, Benin, and Nigeria. Prah (1998) has claimed that Gbe is really one language. The ASJP database has sufficient word lists for six discerned Gbe languages. As can be seen from Table 2, below, most language pairs are 'very easy'; some of them are 'easy.' Developing either Aja Gbe or Wudu into a designed language might yield a designed language that is very easy to learn for all speakers of Gbe languages.

Table 3.2
ASJP database output for Gbe languages

2 Synonyms, at least 28 words						
Loanwords excluded						
LDND						
	Adangbe	Ajagbe	Ewe Adangbe	Fongbe	Gen	Wudu
Adangbe	0					
Ajagbe	37	0				
Ewe Adangbe	17	41	0			
Fongbe	66	57	67	0		
Gen	36	41	40	63	0	
Wudu	24	30	21	60	30	0
	Adangbe	Ajagbe	Ewe Adangbe	Fongbe	Gen	Wudu

For those readers who have a more Eurocentric frame of reference, it is illustrative to compare this output with the results for the ten Dutch-like languages discerned in the Netherlands (plus English) for which there are sufficient word lists in the ASJP database. As can be seen from Table 3, below, Dutch is very easy to learn for all speakers of Dutch-like languages (whereas English is marginally more difficult, falling into the 'easy' category). It makes sense that Dutch is used as the designed language in the Netherlands. It also explains why the Dutch are often praised for their generally good command of the English language – it is an easy language for them to learn.

Table 3.3
ASJP database output for Dutch-like languages

2 Synonyms, at least 28 words											
Loanwords excluded											
LDND											
	Brabantic	Dutch	English	Frans-Vlaams	Frisian-Western	Gronings	Limburgish	Sallands	Twents	West Vlaams	Zeeuws
Brabantic	0										
Dutch	44	0									
English	66	61	0								
Frans-Vlaams	43	38	61	0							
Frisian-Western	57	52	67	59	0						
Gronings	58	38	71	58	56	0					
Limburgish	54	46	66	57	58	44	0				
Sallands	61	35	69	50	62	40	54	0			
Twents	63	47	63	59	64	48	55	37	0		
West-vlaams	50	43	64	29	65	55	56	48	60	0	
Zeeuws	47	37	67	27	61	51	56	48	59	34	0
	Brabantic	Dutch	English	Frans-Vlaams	Frisian-Western	Gronings	Limburgish	Sallands	Twents	West Vlaams	Zeeuws

This categorisation also helps provide a nuance to Laitin's proposal of rational language repertoires for Africa (Laitin 1992: 18). He predicts that, in a small number of African countries, there will be one national or official language – these will be the countries that are largely monolingual, such as Botswana, Somalia, and Madagascar. Some other countries, in his opinion, will move towards two languages: indigenous languages for use within each linguistic community and an international language for nationwide communication; these countries would include Angola and South Africa, for example. However, according to Laitin, most countries in Africa will move towards what he calls the 3 ± 1 model: a local indigenous language (used in primary education); an indigenous lingua franca; and an international language. For those whose mother tongue is the lingua franca, two languages would be needed; for those whose mother tongue is different from the indigenous language used in primary education, four would be needed. Laitin does not explicitly discuss the possibility of a country using multiple indigenous languages and translating between them (as happens, for example, in Belgium, Canada, and Switzerland).

Applying the distinction between designed and discerned languages, it is clear that learning to use a designed language *always* requires some level of effort and learning, no matter how close the designed language is to the learner's mother tongue. However, in order to create as much equality of opportunity as possible, it is important to use a language in primary education that is as close as possible to the discerned language of the learners. In terms of the classification proposed above, it would be important to use a language that is *very easy* but it does not have to be the discerned language itself. This does not mean that speaking the designed language in school would necessarily have to be enforced – if the registers of the learners are close enough to the designed language, then there could be sufficient mutual intelligibility in the classroom to allow children to speak in a way that seems most 'natural' to them.

For secondary and tertiary education, using an easy language will be necessary in order to efficiently reach the largest number of learners; it may not always be possible to use a *very* easy language, but it should still be as easy as possible; in many cases, such an easy language will also be a *lingua franca*; if not, if the language becomes widely used in secondary education in a particular area, it might develop in that direction. It will be necessary to introduce that language as a subject in primary school. Likewise, in later years, it might be helpful to also introduce an international language and/or a second indigenous language as a subject.

Laitin writes about the number of 'languages a citizen needs.' He does not specify *which* citizens need those languages and at *which level* (s)he needs to be able to communicate in them. Clearly, to allow citizens to participate as widely as possible in a national democratic process, all citizens need to be able to interact with state institutions (the judiciary, legislature, and executive branches) in a language they have mastered to a sufficient level. As argued in the previous chapter, this will usually not be an international language; for many African countries, the Laitin 3 ± 1 model and the two-language model may not lead to inclusive results: the ultimate solution may have to be found in using more than one official indigenous language and to translate between them.

3.5 Conclusions

This chapter has examined the second research question: what possibilities are there for rational language-in-education policies in Africa? It started by arguing that a rational language policy that aims at being decolonial will be based on creating equal opportunities for all children, creating equal access to state institutions and to political debate for all citizens, regardless of their socio-economic status.

I call into question the implicit assumption in much of the literature that anybody can learn any other language with equal ease, pointing to the fact that linguistic capabilities are not distributed equally over the population and that it is not one-dimensional. Thus, there are people who are gifted in a number of ways, but not in language learning. Because learning occurs to a large extent through language, it is important especially for those less gifted in language to use a designed language that is as easy for them to learn as possible – in other words, to use a language that is close to their discerned 'mother tongue.'

This, in combination with the possible increase in enrolment rates that was discussed in Chapter Two, requires a shift towards African languages. However, in order to make such a shift practicable, I propose five principles:

1. It will be necessary to develop a **limited number** of designed languages for education. It is not practical, but also not necessary, to develop all discerned languages into designed languages.

2. These designed languages should be chosen in such a way that they are **easy to learn** for as many speakers of discerned languages as possible.
3. Strive for **inclusivity**: choose the various designed languages in such a way that all have to exert a relatively low but relatively equal effort to learn them.
4. Make use of **existing bilingualism** as a resource.
5. Build incentives for **linguistic collaboration**, especially for related linguistic communities.

In order to develop a way of thinking about how to work with these principles, I made use of the ASJP database; the associated software is able to calculate a measure of distance between two languages that is based on Levenshtein or Normalised Edit distances; such distances have been used widely to assess mutual intelligibility of related dialects and languages. However, this study has made new use of them, by benchmarking AJSP distances to an extensive US Government schema for easy and difficult language pairs, leading to a division into five categories, going from very easy (around 12 weeks of instruction needed to reach a level sufficient for tertiary education) to very difficult (around 80 weeks of instruction needed to attain the same level). This yielded a new way of approximating which languages are 'easy' or 'difficult' and for whom.

It now becomes possible to study rational choices for language in education, choices that, as Chapter Two has shown, are bound to become inescapable for several African countries in the next decade or so.

In Chapter One, I quoted Vansina, who has discussed that there used to be a limited number of 'cultural traditions' in Africa, much more limited in fact than the number of discerned languages or of ethnolinguistic groups on the continent. He predicts that, in future, new cultural traditions will emerge, but those will also be limited in number – thus, not conflicting in principle with the idea of using a limited number of designed languages for education. However, it might be possible and would be necessary to get a bit more specific about these new cultural traditions. An exploratory way of looking at that will be presented in the next chapter.

4 Cultural Identity

This part of the study explores how we can describe current large-scale cultural differences and similarities in Africa, using insights from cross-cultural psychology. The main focus of this chapter is to provide some clarity on the conceptual framework. The research results presented here have been published in greater detail in the publications referenced in the text.

Section one starts by discussing several definition of culture and explaining the definition and position taken by this study. Section two introduces the thinking of cross-cultural psychology and shows the position this study takes within that field. The next section then offers some insights, using three different but related lenses: the lens of hierarchical cluster analysis; the lens of cultural dimension scores; and lastly, a comparison between Africa and other continents. The chapter ends with a number of conclusions and questions for further research.

4.1 Cultural Identity

Ake (1993: 1) referring to the concept of ethnicity, has already pointed out that it is 'phenomenally problematic in Africa.' Culture and ethnicity are seen as sources of problems for Africa. The premise of this study is that a different perspective is possible, one that sees African cultures as a positive source of inspiration (Ayittey, 2010).

4.1.1 Concepts of Culture

Storey (2001), following Williams (1983), gives three broad definitions of the word 'culture': as a process of aesthetic development; as a way of life; and as the product of intellectual and artistic activity (pp. 1-2). What these definitions have in common is that all of them reduce culture to a set of products: aesthetic developments; artistic works; ways of life. However, none of these definitions pay attention to what underlies these products and to what makes them specific and different: the underlying outlook on life, the underlying value systems. As Miti (2015: 3) has pointed out, referring to

Africa: 'A popular understanding of culture is that it refers to the ways in which a people's ancestors lived. In other words, culture is taken to be part and parcel of a given people's past.' This is a popular understanding of culture that is based on concepts such as those of Storey. The problems this can lead to can be seen, for example, in Ngeutsa et al. (2021). They have developed a scale that measures the degree to which individuals adhere to what they call 'traditional cultural beliefs and practices,' which they say are common to the whole of Cameroon. But they acknowledge that 'some people from Africa may have become 'culturally Westernised' to the extent that they may adhere very little to African cultural beliefs and practices.' Could it be, however, that Cameroonian culture (or Cameroonian cultures) have changed from their traditional form but that 'modern' Cameroonians have still not become culturally 'Western' (whatever that may be)? By equating culture to adherence to traditional practices and beliefs, Ngeutsa et al. unfortunately blind themselves to an understanding of any new cultural tradition that may be emerging in the country.

Appadurai (1996) criticises the use of the word 'culture' as a noun, because he objects to thinking of culture as some sort of object, as a (fixed) thing. Instead, he looks at the 'cultural' as allowing for a description of differences between different categories of people. He proposes restricting the use of the term 'culture' to 'the subset of […] differences that has been mobilised to articulate the boundary of difference' and thus to demarcate group identity (p. 13).

Seeing culture as a marker of difference between groups, based on values but expressed in various ways, points to a number of difficulties that need to be addressed.

One of the difficulties, as mentioned by Appadurai, has to do with the tendency to see cultures as static, somehow genetically determined attributes of people (the primordialist perspective). This fallacy has been criticised from many angles, partly, I suspect, by constructing strawman arguments. As Vansina (1990) has demonstrated for Equatorial Africa, cultures are not static – they are constantly reproduced in complex interactions between local and larger levels and, in that process, they also evolve. But because all cultures evolve along lines that are not necessarily or not even primarily convergent, differences between cultures remain as difference – even though the substance of such differences may change as well.

Another difficulty in thinking about culture is related to the tensions between individual values, subcultures, and cultures. There is a tendency to confuse and conflate these, but they should not be, as argued below.

Then, there is the issue of hybrid and multiple identities. It is often said that people nowadays are more mobile than ever, that they are subjected to all kinds of influences via the mass media and the internet and that this affects their sense of identity and belonging. Blommaert (2013) refers to this as registers: multiple normative orientations that people have access to and shift between. There is certainly truth in this and, moreover, it complicates the picture. It is possible for people to learn to use and be comfortable in different cultures and to use different sets of orientations. It is also possible for people to acquire a hybrid mode that allows them to navigate in different cultural contexts, although not in the same manner in each context. Other coping mechanisms are possible as well. However, this still means that those different contexts, registers, or cultures are distinguishable from one another. Even though people may be able to navigate between cultures with greater or lesser ease, this is still an acquired skill. It does not change the fact that this world is characterised, in part, by cultural difference. However, if a definition of culture as a set of products, as expressed in habits and artefacts, and as static or a thing of the past, is not satisfactory, which way of looking at culture could be more productive?

4.1.2 Culture as Value System

What would be a more productive way of talking about culture in relation to African dynamics? For me, cultures can be characterised by value systems.[71] In this view, culture can be described in terms of **a value system that serves as a common point of reference to a people**.

This means looking at culture at the level of societies, rather than at the level of individuals.[72] Yet, the two levels are linked: people who are knowledgeable about a particular culture have a certain mental 'map' of what can be considered 'normal' or 'appropriate' within that culture. How this works was well described by Peterson and Barreto (2014) through their cultural expertise and personal values proposition. Of relevance are the 'Social

71 The importance of values as elements of culture was pointed out already in 1935 by Talcott Parsons – see Camic (1991).

72 See Hofstede (1995) for a fuller discussion of the methodological significance of this distinction.

learning of expertise and values principle' and the 'Personal value principle' (p. 1135). The first states that socialisation strongly supports expertise on culture, but only moderately supports acceptance of specific aspects of that culture. In other words, individuals can be part of a culture without accepting all of it. This is further elaborated in the second principle, which states that individuals vary in their support or rejection of aspects of their society's culture.

It is worthwhile exploring these points further, especially when dealing with an African context. Many authors who write about 'culture' or 'identity' define culture as something that is shared by the individuals who are part of this cultural group (see e.g. Grotenhuis, 2016). This implies that the value systems that are supposed to characterise a specific culture also characterise all individuals that belong to that culture – it is what the word sharing seems to suggest. These authors then criticise the term culture as being essentialist – assuming that there is something in the 'national culture' of a nation that is so strong that it determines the values of all those who are born into that culture.

The principles described by Peterson and Barreto show that what is shared are not so much the values held by individuals. These can be very different as described by the 'personal value principle': individuals may have personal values that are considerably different from the dominant cultural norm – but they can still identify with that culture. This is because of the 'social learning of expertise and values principle': what is shared are not so much the values in themselves, but the *knowledge about the cultural norm*. The values may not be shared, but the knowledge about these values is. This is what makes this definition of culture *non-essentialist*: culture is defined as a common point of reference about which people as individual members of a cultural community share knowledge, but by which they are not determined, and to which they do not all need to subscribe. Of course, this concept becomes meaningless if there is no commonality – in order for a culture to be distinct from others, *many* individuals who are part of it will subscribe to and, indeed, *share* many if not all the values that are part of that culture. The boundaries between when one can still speak of a common culture, given the variety between individuals, and when this is no longer the case can be fluid – exactly how this works in particular cultures remains to be explored.

For Africa, this means that there could be countries in which different peoples live together, each with their own traditions, languages, and cultures, but at the same time with a shared knowledge about a dominant or common

culture that everyone can refer to and understand. If that is the case, then the question becomes whether or not there are limitations to such a concept – when do cultural value systems become so divergent that they can no longer be brought together under a common 'national' umbrella, but instead compete with one another?

The tradition in which this approach stands has several sources.

Geertz (1973: 44) focuses on cultures as 'recipes for the governing of behavior.' Compared to earlier approaches, this implies a shift in emphasis from concrete behaviour to values as the core elements that define cultures. In his terminology, there is a direct link between the 'recipe' (a culture) and an individual's behaviour – in that way, it is different from my approach. Geertz emphasises the role of interpretation or 'thick description' as almost the only acceptable way of describing cultures. Even though there is value in 'thick description,' the literature points to two very different objections: first, that it resists scientific generalisation (Shankman, 1984; Greenfeld, 2000). Second, that Geertz does not seem to see a role for the self-representation of cultures and for cross-cultural dialogue (Clifford, 1983: 133).

Hofstede (2001) has in a way abbreviated the definition of Geertz, seeing culture as 'the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another.' Again, it is easy to see how such a definition can lead to a misunderstanding, portraying as it does individual minds as being somehow determined by a common culture. The definition proposed here is therefore slightly different from that of Hofstede.

The approaches of Appadurai and Hofstede (2001) are different in their basic appreciation: for Appadurai, the mobilisation of cultural sentiments and cultural difference spells trouble. His focus is on explaining inter-ethnic violence and he blames 'culturalisms' for playing an instrumental role. For Hofstede, knowledge about cultures and cultural differences is important in order to improve cross-cultural collaboration.

In his ground-breaking *Paths in the Rainforests* (1990), Vansina does not use the terms culture, tribe, or ethnic group, instead he talks about cultural 'traditions.' Vansina argues for the existence and vitality of a single tradition in equatorial Africa (roughly the area now covered by RD Congo and the

DRC).[73] One of the characteristics of tradition, as outlined by Vansina, is the 'fundamental continuity of a concrete set of basic cognitive patterns and concepts' (p. 258). However, a tradition can only function if the peoples who carry them 'have the power of self-determination': 'Given its capacity to accept, reject, or modify innovation, a tradition will not be overwhelmed by another major tradition as long as its carriers still retain enough liberty of choice' (p. 259).

Vansina's definition of 'cultural tradition' is thus close to the definition given above. There is a difference, in that I do not think that it is necessary that everybody within a certain cultural area or tradition *shares* the *same* common beliefs and values – but at least everybody will be *aware* of those common beliefs and values, so that they serve as a common point of reference.

In short, then: I primarily see cultures as expressions of the different creative answers that societies have found to the problems confronting humanity. I think it would be a mistake to leave an appreciation of the importance of culture to only populists and xenophobes. However, in order to further clarify the conceptual framework, we should also explore the relationship between the concept of culture and a number of more or less closely related concepts.

4.1.3 Nations, Nationalities, Peoples, Ethnic Groups, Tribes, and Polities

A concept that is related to culture is that of **ethnicity** or ethnic group. The term ethnic group is itself not clearly defined.[74] Those that do define it generally use one of two approaches. Ake (1993: 2) and others hold to the distinction that ethnicity is descent-based, whereas culture is socially determined. Prah (2008: 67) and others feel that the concept of ethnicity emphasises cultural distinction. I will use this second approach, thereby equating culture and ethnicity.

A major criticism of the use of ethnicity as a category in African studies is the fact that ethnic designations can be seen, at least in part, as creations of colonial times, influenced by the gaze of foreigners, warped and manipulated

73 A description of some other major precolonial traditions in Africa is given in Devisse and Vansina (1988).

74 Thus, for example, Venkatasawmy (2015: 26) in his discussion of ethnic conflict in Africa does not go beyond the statement that, '"ethnicity" is an inevitably elusive concept.'

to serve the needs of missionaries and colonial administrators.[75] Raynaut (2001: 15), writing about West Africa, says:

> Frequently, West African ethnic groups first identified by colonial administrators […] exhibit strong cultural and social internal heterogeneities (in terms of language, religion, family organization, etc.). Yet there are sometimes close relations and similarities between ethnic groups labelled as 'different.'

Africans have pointed to this as well. Asiwaju (1985: 3) has already shown how colonial powers sought to separate peoples, in part by giving different names to the same peoples. He also laments the tendency to create,

> numerous artificial cover-names for language units which are, in many cases, identifiable as dialects of the same language. This practice has had the effect of exaggerating the picture of cultural diversity in the continent (pp. 252-253).

Prah (1998) has echoed and reinforced this criticism, particularly in the area of language diversity. To my knowledge, though, no alternative knowledge base has been produced: there are no contemporary African-based lists of ethnicities or of cultural areas. My position is that, in order to arrive at such an overview, an entirely different approach is needed, one that goes beyond self-designations but is still based on modern African self-perceptions. But how can this be done? How can culture be studied productively in an African setting? From what perspectives, using which methods? Before attempting to give an answer, let us first examine some other, related concepts.

'**Nation**' as a concept has different meanings. One is the meaning of the nation state: an officially recognised independent country. But 'nation' can also refer to a group independent of whether or not it is tied to a particular state. Thus, the UNPO, the Unrepresented People's Organisation, states: 'A Nation or People shall mean a group of human beings which possesses the will to be identified as a nation or people and to determine its common destiny as a nation or people, and is bound to a common heritage which can be historical, racial, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious or territorial.'[76] Here, the words 'Nation' and 'People' are used interchangeably. Ethiopia has also adopted

75 The study of borders and how they came about is a large domain that is outside the scope of this work. For a recent discussion on West Africa, see Nugent (2019).

76 Article 6 of the UNPO Covenant, http://unpo.org/section/2/1, accessed 17 July 2017.

this usage, explicitly recognising the rights of its nations, nationalities, and peoples in its constitution. 'A "Nation, Nationality or People" for the purpose of this Constitution, is a group of people who have or share large measure of a common culture or similar customs, mutual intelligibility of language, belief in a common or related identities, a common psychological make-up, and who inhabit an identifiable, predominantly contiguous territory.'[77]

In colonial days, ethnic groups were labelled as 'tribes.' Later, these same groups were labelled as 'polities' or 'ethnic groups' – so the labels were changed, but they basically apply to the same groups. Because of these colonial origins and their relevance to this day, it is useful to examine the concept of 'tribe.' Schapera (1953, reprinted in Schapera and Comaroff, 1991: 30) gives a workable definition of a '**tribe**': 'a tribe is a politically independent unit, with its own chief and territories.' Going by this definition, a 'tribe' is not the same as a cultural unit: indeed, Schapera recognises that the Tswana form one cultural whole (a people), but that in precolonial times they were divided into independent units – what he then calls tribes. Going by this same definition, then, 'tribes' ceased to exist as soon as territories came under colonial domination.

Schapera builds on the earlier work of Van Warmelo (1937, as reprinted in Hammond-Tooke, 1974). Van Warmelo mentions the difficulties of grouping peoples into tribes. However, he also discusses arranging tribes into larger groups, and mentions five such groups for South Africa, of which Sotho (comprising also the Tswana) is one. However, he immediately says that, '[i]t is a misleading over-simplification' (p. 58). He mentions that it had been suggested these were all part of a single 'culture province,' but does not venture to give an opinion on the matter.

The word 'tribe' has (rightly) become associated with racist thinking (although even today it is not perceived as such in many countries in Africa). Instead, it has become fashionable to use the word '**polity**' – but that amounts to replacing an already imprecise term with one that is even less precise. Wikipedia quotes the definition of Ferguson and Mansbach (1996): 'A polity is any kind of political entity. It is a group of people who are collectively united by a self-reflected cohesive force such as identity, who have a capacity

77 Article 39.5 of the Ethiopian Constitution, http://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/et/et007en.pdf, accessed 17 July 2017.

to mobilize resources, and are organized by some form of institutionalized hierarchy.'[78]

What this conceptual imprecision boils down to is that, in most cases, the same groups that used to be called tribes in colonial times are currently called polities, nations, or ethnic groups, depending on what the author wants to stress. A distinction that might be applied is that both the notions of 'nation' and of 'tribe' imply some form of territoriality – the existence of a bounded 'homeland' – whereas ethnicity could be seen as more fluid and not necessarily bound to territory. In any case, ethnicity is usually equated to language and culture – leading to conceptual confusion because, as I have shown, the old tribes, morphed into polities, morphed into ethnic groups cannot be equated to linguistic or cultural units.

4.1.4 Conclusions

As argued above, studying culture means studying larger units or traditions that may encompass speakers of several languages and any number of polities. As discussed in Chapter One, I follow Prah in using cultural or ethnic groups interchangeably. The definitions of Geertz and Hofstede are related and are also connected to Vansina's way of looking at 'traditions.' However, in order to avoid the idea that cultural values must be *shared* by all, the definition proposed here looks at culture as **a value system that serves as a common point of reference to a people**. This definition is non-essentialist, because it says something about what is seen as normal in a cultural area without implying that every individual subscribes to or sees him/herself as bound by that normality; it allows space for an examination of change over time.

This way of looking at culture can be contrasted to the more static artefact-oriented approach of Storey and to the more negative approach of Appadurai. Culture may be tied to nationality or to language – but it need not be. With Vansina, I do not subscribe to the one polity-one language-one culture idea. I have taken issue with the approach that denies the importance of looking at ethnicity and culture. In order to compare different cultures, one approach stands out: that of cross-cultural psychology. This approach is the focus of the next section.

78 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polity, retrieved 29 March 2018.

4.2 Cross-Cultural Psychology

Several ways of studying culture can be found in the literature. There is one that is relatively common, but that, at best, yields incomplete results: the method of asking people directly how they see their culture. This method basically consists of asking people to directly define what they themselves see as key elements of their culture, sometimes also in relation to other cultural groups that they have some familiarity with. Yet, self-assessments such as these are bound to be misleading, to say the least. Everywhere in the world, people in adjacent villages will claim that they are very different from those on the other side of the hill. Even in a relatively homogeneous country like the Netherlands, people perceive cultural differences.[79] Yet, seen from a further distance, they may in fact be part of the same cultural area. Most people lack both the perspective and the vocabulary to have a useful discussion of these issues. As Minkov (2013: 48) points out, if it were different, 'there would be no need for marketing experts, consumer behavior analysts, political scientists, and personality and social psychologists.' No study that relies on self-assessments for describing culture can be trusted.

In addition, one can think of three different perspectives from which cultures can be studied: the intra-cultural; the extra-cultural; and the cross-cultural. An *intra-cultural* perspective is one where academics basically study and explain their own culture. They may draw in theoretical concepts from abroad, but these are used to explain their own culture, possibly in its historical development and in relation to other significant cultures. They do this for an audience that forms part of that same culture. The *extra-cultural* perspective is one in which a culture is studied by somebody who is not from that culture. In cultural anthropology, it is common for a researcher to spend a prolonged period of time immersed in a culture that is not his or her own and, in so doing, to develop a deep understanding of that culture.[80] The third perspective is the *cross-cultural* perspective, which can be formed by a dialogue between academics with different cultural positions, and can take the form of a comparison between two or more cultures or a combination of both. In anthropology, this has been attempted by comparative anthropology, a field of study that tries to collect and compare information on a number of different traits, customs, and behaviours from around the world, looking, for example, at kinship systems. A large database of this kind, the Human

79 See e.g. https://mobiliteitsplein.inperson.nl/nieuws/cultuurverschillen-in-nederland.html, retrieved 23 November 2017.

80 Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (2005: 160) has aptly called anthropology 'the study of the insider by the outsider.'

Relations Area Files, is being maintained at Yale University.[81] However, the definition of culture proposed above would lead to a study of underlying values, allowing in principle for more meaningful comparisons than a study of customs and behaviours. This is the field of cross-cultural psychology.

Cross-cultural psychology was pioneered by the work of Dutch social psychologist Geert Hofstede[82] and has been used especially in international management all over the world, for example when considering the importance and magnitude of cultural differences. Other uses include preparing people for moving abroad for a period of time. In an African context, there is the example of Gervedink Nijhuis et al. (2012), who use the Hofstede dimensions for discussing the difficulties of a joint curriculum development programme in Ghana. Cross-cultural psychology arrives at descriptions of cultures and cultural similarities and differences via the use of value surveys. Instead of asking people directly to define what makes their culture different – something they generally are not able to do – cross-cultural psychology asks questions that people can answer, but typically answer differently in different countries. It is through an analysis and interpretation of these differences that aspects of cultures are described. These aspects, following the wording chosen by Geert Hofstede, the pioneer of the discipline, are usually called 'dimensions.'

However, within this field there are different approaches; there is no universal agreement and there is also criticism of the field as such. A full discussion of this would be outside the scope of this study, but a few important elements need to be mentioned.

Common to cross-cultural psychology is the use of various methods of data reduction. Thus, it does not lead to full descriptions of cultures; those have to be obtained through other methods. But they do help us understand and predict what may happen in certain situations. In that sense, as Minkov (2013: 5) has pointed out, it can be a major cognitive tool that helps us to understand the complex world around us.

Smelser (1992: 20) holds that a positivistic, objective description of cultural traits is an illusion, as it is always also determined by the viewpoint of the observer of that culture. He also points to the eternal vagueness of the concept. However, he does not go so far as to say that culture cannot or

81 https://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/ehrafe/, accessed 1 March 2020.

82 https://geerthofstede.com/.

should not be studied at all. Rather, he sees culture as a 'heuristic device' in scientific investigation (p. 23). However, he does feel that 'certain rules for the empirical description of culture' can be developed. Parts of a culture should, he suggests, be disaggregated and treated as variables, rather than as global attributes of a society or group. Hofstede (2001: 2) appears to agree with this approach, in the sense that he also holds that cultures are indeed constructs, that do not 'exist' in an absolute sense.

Fougère and Moulettes (2007) dig deeper, using a postcolonial perspective. They contend that: 'Hofstede discursively constructs a world characterised by a division between a "developed and modern" side (mostly "Anglo-Germanic" countries) and a "traditional and backward" side (the rest)' (p. 1). Illustrative of their critique is the title of one of the sections in their paper: 'Power Distance: Being modern is being equal' (p. 8). Through their critique, they hope 'to open up for an alternative knowledge production that includes rather than excludes and banalises rather than exoticises the other' (p. 16). This critique is relevant: in fact, it holds true for all approaches that aim to map or categorise value patterns across nations. There is no value-free or culturally neutral way of doing these types of comparisons. The best one can hope for is to be open to criticisms and open about one's own background. However, the same is true for almost any other type of work in this area, including qualitative work. Spivak (cited in McLeod, 2010: 222) has come up with the notion of 'strategic essentialism.' As long as the type of knowledge production Fougère and Moulettes call for has not yet gained pride of place, then some strategic – or in Smelser's term, heuristic way of dealing with cultures and their values can still be productive.

People feel and experience culture and cultural differences and hence it is a legitimate topic of investigation. Even if we maintain that people can switch between different cultural identities in our globalising world, that does not mean that those individual identities or cultural patterns disappear. With Smelser and Hofstede, the position of this study is that cultures can and should be studied as constructs that say something about social reality. This can never be done in a vacuum – the postcolonial critique of one-sided, "Anglo-Germanic" discourses should be taken into account.

The critique that it may be wrong to assume the existence of a 'national' culture especially in multicultural and multi-ethnic countries should also be taken seriously, especially for Africa. It could be that, in some countries, something akin to a distinct national culture has emerged. In others, this may

not have happened at all, or to a much lesser extent. This makes this type of research all the more necessary.

In the literature, one can find various approaches (Van Pinxteren, 2021: 43-46); this study follows the oldest of these methods, the Hofstede/Minkov approach. This is because it is the only approach that arose serendipitously: the Hofstede dimensions of culture were distilled out of a data set that was not set up with the express purpose of finding such dimensions. The Hofstede approach has proven to be open to further developments and amendments, grounded as it is in empirical methods.

Using this approach, I have used Afrobarometer survey data to provide a 'proof of concept' that has yielded indicative information on the existing and evolving cultural differences and similarities in Africa. The next section provides an overview of the main results obtained from this research, using three different 'lenses'; more detailed information is available from the references provided for each sub-section.

4.3 Large-Scale Cultural Differences and Similarities in Africa: Main results

4.3.1 Hierarchical Cluster Analysis

The first lens that cross-cultural psychology provides for looking at the relevance (or otherwise) of national culture is inspired by Minkov and Hofstede (2012). Their hypothesis was that if national culture were important, then a cluster analysis by in-country region would lead to regions clustering together on a national basis; if, on the other hand, national culture were not important, then regions would not cluster together to form meaningful national clusters.[83] They developed their argument by using World Values Survey data from 299 in-country regions from 28 countries in East and Southeast Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and the Anglo world.

The basic reasoning used by Minkov and Hofstede is sound: if disaggregated data on subnational units coalesce at the national level, then clearly this

83 The full study, including the methods that were followed, can be found in Van Pinxteren, B. (2020a). National Culture and Africa Revisited: Ethnolinguistic Group Data From 35 African Countries. Cross-Cultural Research, 54(1), 73- 91. https://doi.org/10.1177/1069397119835783.

national level must have some meaning. On the other hand, if disaggregated data does not show coherence at the national level, then the concept of national culture may be an artificial one. However, from the methodological point of view, the approach Minkov and Hofstede have taken is not entirely convincing. One issue is with the validity of taking in-country regions as the basic unit of study. Administrative regions have been designated in historical and political processes in ways that are very different from country to country. Administrative regions may or may not conform to cultural or ethnolinguistic areas as they existed in precolonial times. A second issue is related to the fact that the World Values Survey covers only seven out of the 54 African countries. This begs the question – what picture would emerge if more countries were included and if one were to look at the ethnolinguistic level? This is what has been done in this study.

A much larger dataset is available on Africa in the Afrobarometer survey.[84] This is a representative survey that has been carried out at regular intervals since 1999. The research in this study is based on round six of the survey, which was implemented in 2014 and 2015. It included 35 African countries, 30 of which are sub-Saharan.

Using this dataset obviously has the advantage of providing a much larger coverage than the seven African countries included in the World Values Survey. The disadvantage is that the Afrobarometer's primary focus is on attitudes towards democracy and governance, not directly on the values that determine national culture. However, cultural differences 'shine through' in just about any batch of questions asked in different countries. Furthermore, as demonstrated by Inglehart and Welzel (2005), political attitudes are related to culture. Therefore, between and within-country differences in response to Afrobarometer questions also provide insights into cultural differences and similarities.

In their study, Minkov and Hofstede did not use all of the World Values Survey questions. Using a trial-and-error approach, they arrived at a set of 26 value-based questions. They contain a number of questions on what parents think children should be taught, questions derived from the theory of cultural dimensions as developed by Schwartz (2006) and six personal values. These questions are not asked or not asked in the same way in the Afrobarometer survey. However, in spite of the differences in survey questions, some questions do address underlying value orientations in different ways. In order

84 http://www.afrobarometer.org.

to determine which questions would be the most relevant for my research, I made use of the recent cultural dimension scores that were published by Beugelsdijk and Welzel (2018), based on a combination of European and World Values Survey data from different rounds. Beugelsdijk and Welzel have attempted to synthesise the Hofstede/Minkov dimensions and those of Inglehart and Welzel into a three-dimensional model. In their work, they publish scores on thirteen African countries that have also been included in the Afrobarometer survey. In order to arrive at a cluster analysis based on the Afrobarometer survey, the first step was to select a longlist of 43 questions that, at face value, seem they might be related to one of these three dimensions. Comparison of the scores for the 13 countries that are included in the Beugelsdijk/Welzel data led to a shorter list of 32 questions that show at least a weak correlation (Pearson $r > |0.3|$) with one or several of the Beugelsdijk/Welzel dimensions. These, then, are questions that have some relation to cultural differences.

Hofstede and Minkov relied on the dendrograms supplied by the cluster tool to identify subclusters that correspond to nations. I have followed the same strategy. Some African countries are known to be almost or entirely monolingual, in spite of the ethnic differentiations that the Afrobarometer survey uses for these countries. One would expect that groups from these countries cluster together. They do:

- Botswana has nine ethnolinguistic groups; together, they form one cluster, with no other members.
- Lesotho has seven ethnolinguistic groups that together form one subcluster.
- Madagascar has six ethnolinguistic groups that together form one subcluster.
- Mauritius has four ethnolinguistic groups that together form one cluster, with no other members.

There are 26 countries in the Afrobarometer dataset that are in sub-Saharan Africa and for which data from different ethnolinguistic groups are available. There is data on 187 ethnolinguistic groups from these countries. Out of these, 126 or 67.4 per cent cluster together with other ethnolinguistic groups of their country, forming homogeneous national clusters – as compared to a figure of 90.6 per cent found by Minkov and Hofstede (p. 148). Besides those countries that are dominated by one ethnolinguistic group (Botswana, Lesotho, Madagascar) there are seven other countries of which all ethnolinguistic groups fall into the same (sub)cluster. Note that this

might not be the whole story: in all of those countries there could be smaller ethnolinguistic communities that show a different cultural profile but who have not been sufficiently sampled in the Afrobarometer survey.

This means that there are 16 countries from which not all ethnolinguistic groups cluster together at the national level. In five, the majority fall into one (sub)cluster, with only one or two ethnolinguistic groups that seem to be an exception. This leaves 11 countries with considerable in-country cultural diversity.

What this means is that there is not one common pattern that applies across Africa. There are not even regional patterns. For many countries, there is support in this study for the conclusion by Minkov and Hofstede that national culture is a relevant concept and worth studying, even in ethnolinguistically diverse countries such as those found in Africa. However, the present study also shows that there is a significant number of countries in which ethnolinguistic groups do not cluster at the national level. This also means that statements about Africa in general are meaningless here. The subset of countries chosen for the Minkov/Hofstede study is not representative of Africa as a whole, nor can this be assumed for the much larger Afrobarometer subset.

This study has shown that, for some countries in Africa, it is now possible to use data on national culture. In others, it is not. Every country and ethnolinguistic group will have to be examined on its own merits. However, the survey approach that is common in cross-cultural psychology does help to produce meaningful data on ethnolinguistic groups in Africa, just as it does in other parts of the world.

This analysis seems to show that, at least for some countries, the ethnolinguistic group distinctions from the colonial times have lost some of their relevance, because no matter how large their differences may be, they are not visible in a cluster analysis that compares them with ethnolinguistic groups from other countries. The analysis also shows that in some countries, considerable cultural differences remain, whereas in others, something approaching a national culture seems to be emerging. This is in line with Vansina's predictions.

It is important to be aware of the limitations of the approach chosen here. Cluster analysis is a data reduction technique. It is a good tool for preparing broad estimates, but not for detailed analysis. It does not lead to full descriptions of cultures; those have to be obtained through other methods.

But this approach can help to make sense of the cultural landscape of a larger area. In that sense, as pointed out by Minkov (2013: 5), it can be a cognitive tool that helps us to understand the complex world around us. However, looking at individual dimensions of culture might lead to a more precise image. That is the topic of the next section.

4.3.2 Dimension Scores

In the previous section, we were able to demonstrate how, indeed, national cultures seem to be developing in some African countries, but not in others. The traditional ethnic group distinctions seem to have lost their meaning in some countries, but not everywhere.

This section looks at the same problem in a bit more detail, attempting to tease out information on ethnolinguistic group differences on several of the Hofstede/Minkov dimensions,[85] again by a re-analysis of Afrobarometer data. It turned out to be possible to obtain data on four out of the six Hofstede/Minkov dimensions for over 200 ethnolinguistic groups in 35 African countries; for more information, especially on the research methodology, consult Van Pinxteren (2021a). Here, we will only present some key results from a few of the countries, in order to illustrate the overall picture that emerges from the data.

For Southern Africa, one of the questions that could be asked is whether or not, as a result of the long and violent history of the region and the upheavals that rocked it, the data now suggest cultural differences between the SeSotho of Lesotho and those of South Africa. Are the Tswana of Botswana now culturally different from those in South Africa, or is there perhaps a cultural continuity for the Tswana in different countries, dating back to precolonial times? Or is rather a national identity emerging, at least among the black South African population? Table 1 below provides at least the start of an answer.

85 A short description and overview of these dimensions is presented in the Appendix for this chapter.

Table 4.1

Dimension scores of cross-border ethnolinguistic groups, Southern Africa

	Sotho-SA	Lesotho	Tswana-SA	Botswana	SA-Black (combined)
'Fix vs Flex'	77	94	51	49	75
IVR	33	-1	29	28	38
IDV	64	58	55	66	58
PDI	88	69	78	71	86

From the table, the picture emerges that the SeSotho of Lesotho and the Tswana of Botswana are no longer culturally the same; they score differently on 'Fix vs Flex' (LTO) and on Indulgence versus Restraint, and less so on individualism.

The South African groups show similarity on the Indulgence, Individualism, and Power Distance dimensions and on these dimensions, their scores are in line with the overall Black population of South Africa. On the 'Fix vs Flex' dimension, the Tswana seem to be an exception, scoring closer to the Botswana average than to the South African average.

Further analysis shows that the South African Swazi also score in line with the overall Black South African scores. On the whole, I interpret this as tentative support for the idea that a new cultural tradition is emerging in South Africa, as predicted by Vansina. This is a shared new identity, even though black South Africans speak several different languages.

Is something similar happening in Ghana? The data in Table 2 give the first clue.

Table 4.2
Dimension scores, Ghana

	Fix vs Flex (LTO)	IVR	IDV	PDI
Ghana	106	72	87	89
Ghana-Akan	108	84	89	90
Ghana-Dagaba	101	58	86	74
Ghana-Dagomba	98	39	84	86
Ghana-Ewe	114	79	94	70
Ghana-Frafra	91	37	71	77
Ghana-Ga	100	77	90	86
Ghana-Gonja	75	44	82	86
Ghana-Kusaal	77	72	85	65
Largest difference	*33*	*47*	*23*	*25*

It is clear from this data that Ghana is a country with considerable cultural diversity. The differences with Ghana are noticeable with respect to all four dimensions. However, that may not be the complete story, as is clear from Table 3, which shows only the largest ethnolinguistic groups.

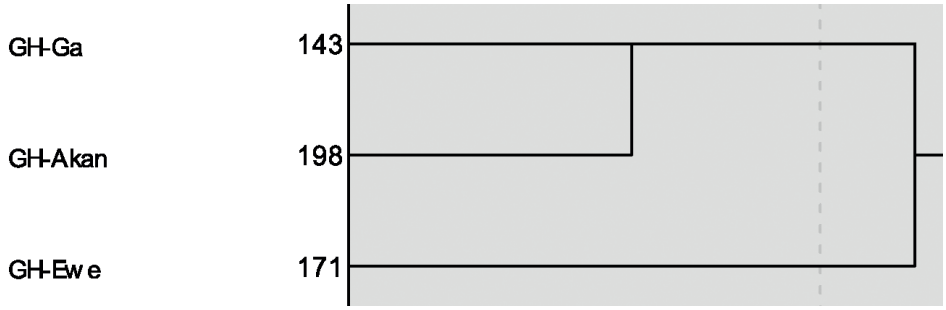
Table 4.3
Dimension scores, largest ethnolinguistic groups, Ghana

	Fix vs Flex (LTO)	IVR	IDV	PDI
Ghana	106	72	87	89
Ghana-Akan	108	84	89	90
Ghana-Dagomba	98	39	84	86
Ghana-Ewe	114	79	94	70
Ghana-Ga	100	77	90	86
Largest difference	*16*	*45*	*10*	*20*

In Ghana, the Akan make up nearly half of the total population. The four largest ethnic groups together make up more than 85 per cent of the

population. Within these groups, the differences are much smaller, with the exception of the Indulgence versus Restraint dimension.

This picture is similar to the result of the hierarchical cluster analysis, as shown below (taken from Van Pinxteren, 2020: 89).



Graph 4.1
Hierarchical clusters, largest ethnolinguistic groups, Ghana

What this suggests is that, even in a diverse country such a Ghana, a value system (in other words: a national culture) may be developing that serves as a common point of reference to all Ghanaians. This value system may be similar to the value system of the Akan, but not quite the same. It could also be that the ways in which people from different ethnolinguistic groups relate to that value system will be different; however, they will share a common understanding and knowledge of the common 'Ghanaian' value system. Put differently: people from minority ethnolinguistic groups in Ghana are likely to have considerable intercultural communication skills, allowing them to navigate and switch between the dominant, 'national' way of doing and judging things and the way of doing and judging things within their own ethnolinguistic group.

In comparison, internal differences are much more pronounced in other countries. Thus, in Kenya, on each of the four dimensions, there are large differences between the ethnolinguistic groups, of a size between 26 and 58 points on a 100-point scale. Without further research, it is difficult to say much more on this topic, but it could be that for some countries, there is no common point of reference – people may have the intercultural skills to know about other cultures, but it could be that there is no acceptance of any framework that serves as a common point of reference for all ethnolinguistic

groups. In those countries, it will not be possible to speak of a 'national culture.'

On the other hand, the Acholi and Lango of Uganda show relative similarity to one another and to the Luo of Kenya; all three groups speak a similar language and they seem to have been able to maintain their cultural integrity, in spite of being divided over two countries.

Table 4.4
Dimension scores, Acholi/Lango/Luo

	Uganda-Acholi	Uganda-Lango	Kenya-Luo	*Largest difference*
'Fix vs Flex' (LTO)	69	73	81	*12*
IVR	30	23	37	*14*
IDV	74	75	67	*8*
PDI	68	71	78	*10*

This seems to show that the process predicted by Vansina may be happening, but it is by no means even across Africa and it also does not mean that, in all cases, it leads to the emergence of coherent national cultures.

This research can be seen as a 'proof of concept': it shows that insights from cross-cultural psychology can be used to make useful statements about African cultures in the same way as it is being done in other parts of the world.

More research into this would be extremely useful, for a number of reasons:

- It would throw more light on where and how in Africa new cultures are developing: is this process even across Africa? Where is it linked to national borders, where is it not? What are the differences and similarities between different countries?
- What may be cultural issues to consider when considering decisions about where to invest and where, for example, to establish regional offices?
- What are the things to look out for when developing business or other partnerships within Africa and between African countries? What are the dos and don'ts? There is currently a large knowledge gap in this area.

Such research could be done in a more direct way: more reliable results could be obtained if the detour via the World Values Survey was not necessary. It would therefore be good to include a (version of) Hofstede's Values Survey Module[86] in a next Afrobarometer round. This would allow a more direct calculation of scores and better comparability with already published scores.

It would also be useful to re-examine the ethnolinguistic and language categories used in the Afrobarometer survey. The current list clearly goes back to the colonial period and compares apples with oranges – for example, for a small country like Lesotho, many groups are distinguished with very small differences in scores. For large groups like the Akan of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire or the Yoruba of Nigeria and Benin, no smaller units are distinguished – but for the Shona of Zimbabwe, there are. It would be good if these inconsistent and colonially based categories were replaced by a smaller set of cultural designations. At the same time, this would make it easier to ensure some form of representativity of sampling also at the ethnolinguistic group level.

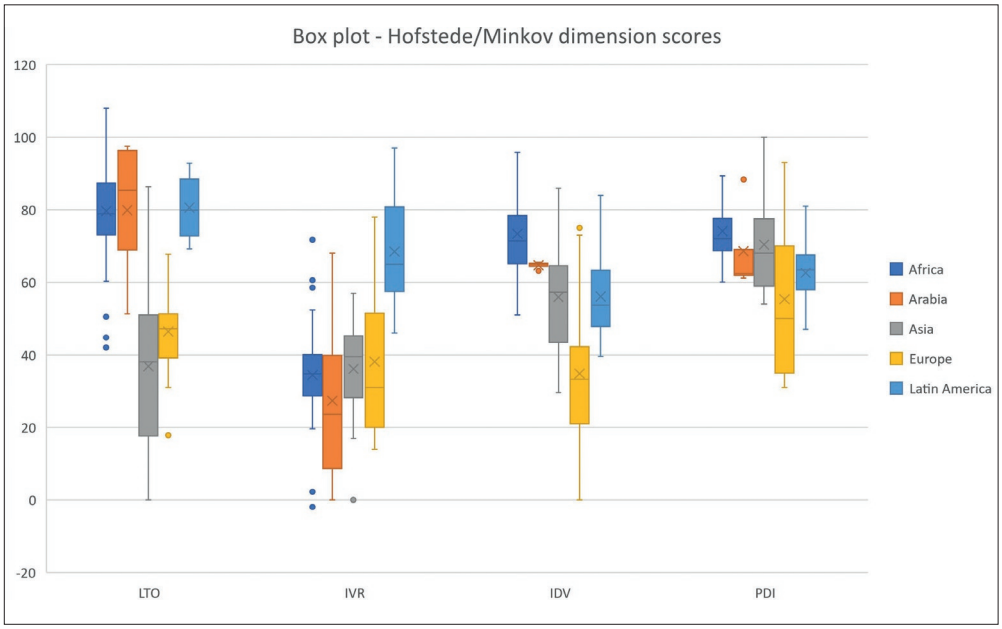
It is probable that there are some commonalities between African cultures and that those commonalities are different from those between, for example, European cultures. At the same time, Africa is not a cultural whole, in the same way that Asia or Europe are not culturally homogeneous. On the other hand, the trope that Africa is an area of almost endless cultural diversity is also not true (Prah 2008: 71). As outlined, more research in this area is useful for a variety of reasons and it is possible, using the Afrobarometer mechanism. A first step in that direction will be taken in the next section.

4.3.3 Africa in the World

The work presented in previous sections has led to new Hofstede/Minkov scores for a large number of African countries. For the first time, then, it becomes possible to use this approach to look more precisely at the question of whether there is such a thing as a common African cultural identity. Is there one for Europe, for Asia, for Latin America? This is certainly a common perception. But how can it be described? Can the cultural dimensions approach be useful here? For the first time, it is now possible to make a comparison between the range of dimension scores per continent. I have explored this

86 https://geerthofstede.com/research-and-vsm/vsm-2013/.

for Africa,[87] the Arab region, Asia, Europe,[88] and Latin America.[89] The data used are the national scores, using the Afrobarometer data where they are available, WVS data where there are no Afrobarometer data, Minkov data where available for IDV and LTO (recalculated to a scale between zero and 100), and Hofstede data in the remaining cases. These data sets are strongly correlated, but not identical. Still, I think they are useful for discerning overall patterns, as the box plot below shows. The boxes show the 2nd and 3rd quartile, the 'whiskers' the 1st and 4th and the dots are outlier values. The inclusive median method has been used.



Graph 4.2
Box plot, Hofstede/Minkov dimension scores

The plot confirms the often-repeated assertion that Africa as a whole is collectivist (high score on IDV) and that, by contrast, Europe is individualist. However, note that some countries in Europe are as collectivist as some of the African countries. The plot also confirms that Asian countries are the

87 Sub-Saharan Africa, including Cabo Verde, Madagascar, and Mauritius.

88 For Russia and Turkey, I have taken into account the capital cities (Moscow and Ankara) when determining in which continent to put them – Europe and Asia, respectively.

89 Including Mexico and Trinidad and Tobago.

most 'flexible' in their norms (a low LTO score), although the range is very wide. On indulgence versus restraint, most continents have a similar score. What is noticeable is the large spread in values that exists on all continents, with the exception of Latin America, which scores as markedly more indulgent. The Arab region seems to be the most restrained, although here, too, there is a large spread. Power distance is related to the individualism/collectivism dimension. Here, Africa scores highest, although scores overlap with those of Asian countries; Europe scores lowest. Note, however, the considerable overlap between all continents with respect to this dimension.

The box plot shows, then, that there are indeed certain commonalities when comparing Africa with other parts of the world and it could be that cosmopolitan people who have lived on several continents perceive a common African identity, in the same way that Europeans perceive this.[90] However, this should not obscure the fact that exceptions to the standard are common and that the diversity within Africa is at least as large as the diversity that exists in most other continents. Another caveat is that the data shows national averages. As Minkov and Hofstede (2012) have shown, this has a meaning for most countries. However, as I have shown in section 4.3.2, this is likely not to be the case in at least a number of African countries. There are some countries in Africa that are home to very different peoples, with very different value systems that serve as common points of reference to those peoples. In that sense, for those countries, knowing the national averages may have limited meaning at best.

It is interesting here to compare these results with the work of Munene, Schwartz, and Smith (2000). Using the Schwartz cultural dimensions framework, they compared the values of teachers and students in a number of Western European countries with teachers and students in a (small) number of African countries. In order to do this, they first construct an image of what are supposedly common African values, paraphrasing the work of Onwuejeogwu. They then interpret them using the Schwartz framework, and find that African culture emphasises embeddedness and a 'status-differentiated organization of social groups,' opposed to egalitarianism (p. 342). They immediately make a link to development: 'when these modes of work relations are maintained in the context of a market economy, they seriously interfere with productivity' (Ibid.). The authors then look for – and find – such com-

90 There are many attempts to describe such perceptions in the literature. See e.g. Etounga-Manguelle (2000) for an attempt using some Hofstede dimensions. These attempts are generally not research-based.

monalities in the African countries they have sampled. They do this not by providing scores on any of the Schwartz dimensions, but by comparing how countries rank within the 54 countries for which they have data. Thus, we do not know whether or not two countries that rank closely together actually also score closely together, or indeed whether the reverse is true.

On a superficial level, Munene, Schwartz, and Smith's findings are not so different from mine: indeed, for most observers coming from Europe, most African countries will seem to score higher on Power Distance and on Collectivism. However, by taking such a Eurocentric view they lose sight both of the diversity that exists within Africa and of the diversity that exists within Europe. Thus, they confirm a stereotypical image of 'Africa as a country' even when their data reveals differences within Africa. In their conclusions, the authors shy away from the idea that Africa's slow pace of development is related to its common cultural problems – even though they cite a number of authors who suggest this. The problem posed by competing worldviews and different value systems within Africa and inhibitions to the development of various culturally autonomous traditions is totally invisible to them.

A decolonial vision, inspired by pan-Africanism should also be Africa-centred in the sense that it takes Africa and its cultural areas as the starting point. The comparative data presented here should be taken to show, in the first place, Africa's internal diversity, a diversity that is as least as high as the diversity that is found in other continents. That being said, the data also provide evidence for a common point of reference that can be taken to be an 'African culture' that many Africans will understand and be able to relate to even though, on the individual as well as on the ethnolinguistic level, they may perceive themselves as being quite different from that common culture.

4.4 Conclusions

The purpose of this part of the study was to answer the third research question: how can we describe current large-scale cultural differences and similarities in Africa? This was done using the methods and terminology of cross-cultural psychology. In order to do that, the study started by discussing several definitions or ideas of culture as found in the literature that I found to be unsatisfactory. I proposed a definition of culture as **a value system that serves as a common point of reference to a people**. I explained its meaning in relation to concepts such as nations, peoples, and ethnic groups. The study then outlined the approach of cultural psychology, clarifying my

position as following the dominant Hofstede/Minkov frame of reference, albeit conscious of the problems associated with it.

The study then presented a number of insights taken from my earlier research, using three related but different lenses. In section 4.3.1, I used an approach developed by Minkov and Hofstede (2012), the technique of hierarchical cluster analysis. That analysis has shown that the conventional way of describing cultural differences, by describing differences between ethnolinguistic groups as designated in colonial times, has lost its meaning, at least in some countries. It may come as no surprise that in countries like Botswana, Lesotho, and Madagascar all ethnolinguistic groups cluster together. However, this is also the case for countries like Burkina Faso, Niger, and Senegal. In total, this holds for ten out of the 26 countries in sub-Saharan Africa for which survey data were available. The hierarchical cluster analysis shows that there is not one common pattern that applies across Africa – there are not even regional patterns. In some countries, a national culture seems to be developing; in others, such as for example Kenya or Tanzania, considerable cultural differences remain. I pointed out that cluster analysis is a data reduction technique that can be useful for mapping the cultural landscape of a larger area, but it also has its limitations, especially when it comes to describing individual groups.

For the second lens, my analysis was more detailed, attempting to derive scores for a number of individual dimensions for ethnolinguistic groups in Africa. The method used was based on the idea of 'anchoring' data sets to one another, as also used by Hofstede. The analysis showed the dynamic and diverse nature of Africa and of African cultures. In Lesotho and South Africa, the cultural unity that was assumed to exist among the Sotho, no matter in which country they live, no longer seems to exist. The South African Sotho are more like other South Africans than they are to the people of Lesotho. The same is true for the Tswana in South Africa and Botswana and also for the Swazi of Eswatini and South Africa. This provided tentative support for the idea that, in those Southern African countries, new identities are emerging. For a country like Ghana, a similar process might be happening. The four largest ethnolinguistic groups in that country, together making up more than 85 per cent of the population, score relatively similar to one another on three out of the four dimensions studied.

In other countries, by contrast, differences are more pronounced. The Acholi and Lango of Uganda show relative similarity to one another and to the Luo

of Kenya. Linguistically, these groups are related. Here, it seems that national borders are culturally less relevant than for example in Southern Africa.

In sum, the study demonstrates that the widespread practice of equating ethnolinguistic units with cultural units is, in general, no longer tenable: for some areas, this might give reasonable approximations; for others, it does not.

The data generated in section 4.3.2 (the lens of dimension scores per ethnolinguistic group) made it possible to provide a comparison with other world regions in section 4.3.3, using much more data from Africa than hitherto available. This comparison shows two main things. On the one hand, it shows that the African continent, like the other major world areas, does have some commonalities. It confirms the idea that Africa, on average, is collectivist and that Europe, by contrast, is individualist. However, it also shows that within Africa, as in other continents, there is considerable internal cultural diversity. Thus, the most individualist country in Africa is more individualist than the most collectivist country in Europe.

In sum, these three lenses show that it is possible to describe large-scale cultural differences and similarities in Africa using the approach of cross-cultural psychology and this chapter has made a start with giving such descriptions. In Chapter Two, the study demonstrated that a gradual transition to using African languages in higher education is likely to become necessary for some countries within the next decade or so. Chapter Three argued that it will not be necessary to use all discerned languages for this purpose. This chapter has shown that this is also not necessary from the cultural identity point of view, because, even if it once existed, nowadays the one-on-one relationship between culture and language can no longer be assumed to exist across Africa.

Now that a theoretical framework has been sketched, we will examine what this means when applied to concrete country situations. This is then the topic of the next chapter.

5 Six Case Studies

The previous three chapters of this study examined three research questions, all three related to the central theme of language, education, and cultural identity in Africa. This has led at least to a 'proof of concept,' showing that rational choices for language in education in Africa are both possible in principle and unavoidable, at least for some countries. Increased use of African languages will also be necessary for a continued process towards new cultural autonomies in Africa, although at present it is difficult to pinpoint how these processes are taking shape. What does seem certain is that the picture will not be even across Africa.

This chapter takes this study one step further by examining six countries in more detail. These are two countries already discussed: South Africa (and some of its neighbours) and Ghana. To these are added four further countries. These are Tanzania, as a rare example of a country that is already using an indigenous language in more domains than most countries in Africa; Morocco, as a country that is gradually transitioning to the use of two indigenous languages in education; Ethiopia, as the country in Africa with the language policy that is perhaps the most supportive of indigenous languages; and the Republic of the Congo (Congo-Brazzaville), as an example from Francophone Africa.

The structure of all brief case studies is roughly the same: a short general introduction, including a mention of the current official language policy; a reference to the cultural and political situation, to the extent made possible by the research presented in Chapter Four; an overview of (the evolution of) enrolment figures in education; an examination of the language situation and the options for rational choices for language in education;[91] and some conclusions and recommendations. Section 5.7 tries to bring together the lessons learnt from all six studies.

91 Information on the language ecology of these countries is contained in country-level spreadsheets of Levenshtein distances between language pairs, as generated through the ASJP database and programme. The full spreadsheets are available from the author on request.

5.1 Tanzania

Tanzania is the only country that has purposefully and successfully introduced an African language for national use. Was this a rational choice, what improvements might still be possible and could this model be replicated in other parts of Africa as well?

Tanzania is a country in East Africa with a population of around 61 million people.[92] The country is linguistically diverse, just like many other African countries. However, it is unique in that it has adopted an African language (Swahili) as its official language, used in parliament, in the lower courts, primary education, and teacher training colleges (Skattum 2018: 68) (see Temu, 1998 for an overview of how this came about).

5.1.1 Cultural and Political Situation

The Ethnologue currently discerns 125 languages spoken in Tanzania.[93] Although Tanzania is a country of considerable cultural diversity, it would be misleading to speak of 125 culturally different entities in the country. In Van Pinxteren (2021a), I analysed information on 18 ethnic groups. On all four cultural dimensions discussed there, the differences within Tanzania are greater than 20 points – such differences in culturally relevant survey question results are likely to correspond to noticeable differences in practice as well. The differences are largest in the Indulgence vs Restraint dimension, with the Luguru and the Hehe scoring on the very restrained side and the Haya and the Iraqw scoring 'relatively' on the indulgent side. Large differences also occur on the 'Fix vs Flex' (LTO) dimension, with the Luguru, the Gogo, and several other groups showing as 'very much' on the 'Fixed' side and the Fipa 'relatively' on the 'flex' side. In Tanzania, there is no direct mapping of cultural differences possible onto language clusters. A one-on-one identification of language with culture does not hold here. This image is supported by the hierarchical cluster analysis reported in Van Pinxteren (2020a), which arranges the 14 groups distinguished for that analysis into six separate clusters (not all of the same size). This is an area worthy of further investigation.

92 https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/tanzania-population/, accessed 26 July 2019.

93 https://www.ethnologue.com/country/TZ, accessed 25 July 2019

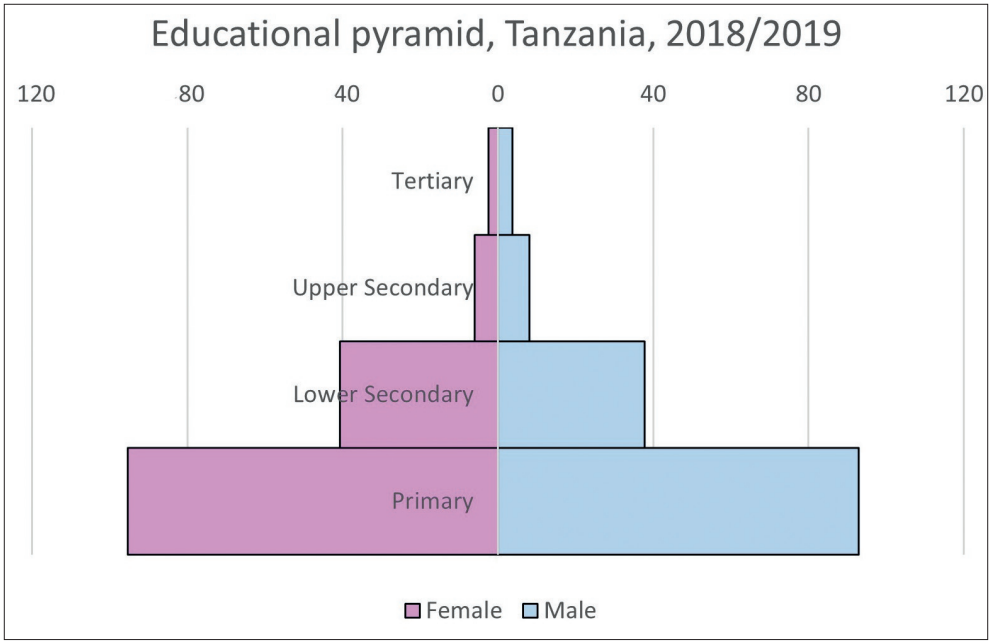
Blommaert (2014) shows how the promotion of Swahili was coupled with the state ideology of 'Ujamaa.' This ideology, he argues, was based on overly simplistic and utopian ideas of pan-African values, based on an idealised communal village life, which supposedly was the cradle for 'African Socialism' (p. 15). He points to the contradiction between these utopian ideas and the actual situation on the ground: the actually existing cultural differences within the country were seen as potentially divisive, were branded as backwards, and were consciously ignored or played down, not studied and not used as the basis for developing the 'Ujamaa' ideology (p. 32). The idea, therefore, was to build a new Tanzanian nation and citizenry, with the Ujamaa ideology and the Swahili language as unifying factors. Blommaert shows that this failed: the idea of a new Tanzanian nation built around Ujamaa greatly underestimated the 'cultural resilience' of the 'common man' (p. 40). However, establishing Swahili as the dominant language in the country did not fail: it was a big success and now seems unchallengeable (p. 148). Why? Why was it possible to establish Swahili in this way, but not to build a culturally homogeneous nation? Blommaert does not provide an answer, his analysis stops at this point. Topan (2008: 264) lists a variety of factors explaining the choice for and success of Swahili: the existing caravan routes; the use by the Germans and the British of Swahili; the use by missionaries; the fact that Swahili was not the language of a dominant ethnic group; and lastly, the role of Julius Nyerere. These are all factors that explain the initial choice for Swahili, but they do not fully explain its continued success. Use of the theoretical framework developed in this study suggests that an obvious explanation is available – this will be explored below.

5.1.2 Educational Situation

Blommaert demonstrates that the educational system that was inherited from colonial times was left intact. Therefore, it continued to serve the purpose of selecting those who were intelligent enough (in language aptitude terms) to be recruited into the national elite. In order to do this (although it was never explicitly stated as a purpose), the medium of instruction in secondary and tertiary education remained English (p. 61).[94]

94 Even though today, for example at the University of Dodoma some of the Swahili-language courses are actually taught in Swahili – see for example https://drive.google.com/file/d/1HLJ3wpeOVq4IPZwdf_jPkgprZiJjtx9_/view p 218, retrieved 13 February 2020.

To this day, the educational system in Tanzania remains highly pyramidical, as shown in Graph 1, below.



Graph 5.1

Educational pyramid, Tanzania, 2018 (Tertiary education: 2019)

The ratio of GER in primary education to tertiary education is 30.5 – as was shown in Chapter Two, this makes the Tanzanian educational sector highly pyramidical, with a large gap between those who receive higher education and those who do not. Note that slightly more girls than boys are in primary education, but in tertiary education boys dominate.

This selective nature is even more clear when one examines secondary education. In Tanzania, secondary education is divided into the Ordinary level (the first four years) and the Advanced level (the last two years). There is a selective exam after the first four years, leading to a sharp fall in attendance rate between the O and the A level. This is aggravated by the fact that O-level education is free and A-level education is not.[95] In 1995, the Gross Enrolment Ratio for the O-level was below seven per cent; by 2010, this had risen to 40 per cent (accompanied by a sharp drop in exam pass rates, as cited in the

95 This was at least the case in 2015. It could be that the introduction of school fees at this level helps to explain the gendered difference in enrolment.

RISE report 2017, p. 3). The same ratio for the A-level was less than three per cent in 1990 and less than nine per cent in 2010. So, in 2010, fewer than 25 per cent of the children who completed lower secondary education got to progress to the advanced level.[96]

Still, with a GER for the initial level of secondary education at around 40 per cent, one can expect that the policy of secondary education in English will come under increasing pressure, as is indeed the case. For many children, the switch to English at the start of secondary education will come too soon: their level of English will not be good enough to understand the teaching in that language, even though they would understand the teaching if it would be in Swahili – as illustrated by Mwinsheike (2003) and more forcefully by Qorro (2013). The net effect of this has to be that those children who are less gifted in language or who come from a background less favourable to learning English or who are hampered by a combination of both factors learn less in school than they could learn if the teaching would be in Swahili. In other words, the Tanzanian model leads to a built-in wastage in the system, which means children do not reach their full potential. In fact, changing to Kiswahili for secondary education has been declared an official policy, but this policy has never been implemented. Tibategeza and Du Plessis (2018) explain why this is not likely to happen yet: they signal that intentions from the past have not been implemented and that there is no political will at present. '[E]ducation stakeholders still think that English is a language of global business, science and technology and would therefore wish their children to be instructed in that language for them to master it. Additionally, parents still hold misconceptions […]' (p. 96).

5.1.3 Language Situation and Language Choice Options

Blommaert (2014) has described the role of language and state ideology in building Tanzania as a culturally coherent country. He sees language as a 'mosaic' of registers (p. 1) and tries to show such a mosaic also in his study of Swahili. Chapter 1.3 argued that this type of approach, which is different from the distinction between discerned and designed languages proposed in this study, tends to downplay or overlook the role of language policy. For Tanzania and Swahili, it is impossible to overlook the role of language policy, because Swahili has been heavily shaped into its designed status, requiring considerable state intervention, joined by an active intellectual elite. This

96 http://data.uis.unesco.org/# , accessed 26 July 2019.

intervention has, as Blommaert shows, been tremendously successful in establishing the hegemony of Swahili in the country. For Blommaert, this is a matter of 'homogenisation from above,' of 'institutionalised ideological constructs' (p. 3) – terms that seem to denote something negative, instead of something legitimate and normal in modern society.

The ASJP database discerns 106 languages spoken in Tanzania, to which I have added English. Some of these may be different word lists for what some might say is the same language, leading to ASJP scores that show very easy to learn language pairs, for example for the different varieties of Swahili discerned by the database.

A first thing to note when examining the Tanzanian matrix in light of the above discussion is that English is a difficult or very difficult language to learn for speakers of any Tanzanian language.[97]

A second key characteristic of Tanzania is that indeed, given the criteria developed in the previous chapters, Swahili is a rational choice as a language for Tanzania: it is 'easy' or 'very easy' to learn for speakers of more than 90 other discerned Tanzanian languages.[98] Note that other choices would have been possible as well – there are a number of other Tanzanian languages to which the same applies and which could also have been chosen. What this means is that for the great majority of Tanzanians, Swahili is far easier to learn than English. In terms of the US schema discussed in section 3.4, it is the difference between 15 weeks of full-time instruction for a linguistically gifted person and 80-plus weeks for such a person.[99] Still, this means that using Swahili as the designed language requires learning for most, if not all speakers of related discerned languages. Yet, the common misconception also quoted by Blommaert (p. 63) is wrong. Blommaert writes that the consequence of the nationwide adoption of Kiswahili was, 'that most children in non-urban inland areas, where Swahili was not the mother tongue of the population, were faced with a 'hidden' language barrier when they entered primary school: that of Swahili. For them, Swahili was as foreign a language as English (a fact already observed by Khamisi 1974: 290) – in spite of the fact that it had become the national language and in spite of the widely heard

97 All ASJP scores are above 95, a good number above 100.

98 'Very easy' being defined as an AJSP score of below 60, 'easy' as below 90.

99 These figures serve to illustrate the order of magnitude we should be thinking about when comparing between easy or difficult to learn language pairs. Precise values for specific language pairs and specific countries and educational systems can only be established through further research.

argument that "everyone spoke and understood Swahili". This point could be read in two ways. One could say that the sentence postulates a dichotomy between mother tongues and all other languages – the 'foreign' languages. In such a reading, English and Swahili are both equal in the sense that they fall in the category of 'foreign' languages. One could also say that there is a distinction of degree: some languages could be more 'foreign' (or more difficult to learn) than others. My benchmarking of ASJP distances suggests that this second reading is more appropriate: some languages are a good deal more 'foreign.' For the great majority of Tanzanians, Swahili is far easier to learn than English. Here, we find the answer to the question posed in the preceding section: this is why, even though the cultural unification project failed, the linguistic project of Swahili could become an enduring success.

The borders of Tanzania are not linguistic borders, though. What is true for the Tanzanian languages also holds for most if not all of the languages of the Narrow Bantu language family, as the table below shows.

It is interesting to note that this similarity is hidden from view by a well-known language classification system such as the Guthrie classification, as updated by Maho (2009). The Guthrie/Maho classification groups Narrow Bantu languages into 16 zones, divided into groups, divided into individual languages. Under this classification, Bantu languages spoken in Tanzania come under the E, F, G, J, P, and M zones, giving the impression of a much greater differentiation than what the ASJP database suggests.[100] (Thus, Swahili is seen as part of the G40 group, Sukuma as part of the F20 group – suggesting they are completely different. The ASJP database also shows them as different, yet this is an easy language pair, ASJP distance 70.)

100 Banda (2016: 273) calls this 'caging languages into zones.'

Table 5.1

ASJP database output for selected Bantu languages[101]

2 Synonyms, at least 28 words Loanwords excluded LDND								
	Gikuyu	Koongo	Lingala	Luba	Sotho-Southern	Swahili	Shona	Zulu
Gikuyu	0							
Koongo	93	0						
Lingala	87	78	0					
Luba	86	84	80	0				
Sotho-Southern	96	89	83	83	0			
Swahili	90	80	80	69	83	0		
Shona	89	78	90	77	83	73	0	
Zulu	96	83	89	82	75	79	82	0
	Gikuyu	Koongo	Lingala	Luba	Sotho-Southern	Swahili	Shona	Zulu

It is important to realise that, in respect of languages, Tanzania and Kenya are two very different countries. Kenya has far more numerous groups of speakers of Nilotic and Cushitic languages than Tanzania does. As the matrix in Table 2 shows, Swahili is a far more difficult language to learn for Nilotic and Cushitic language speakers than for Bantu language speakers. This factor alone may help to explain why pleas, such as those from Kanana (2013), to make Swahili the single official language for Kenya have also fallen on deaf ears.

101 Note that the legend was given in section 3.3 above; higher numbers mean greater distance.

ASJP distance score	**Difficulty**
< 60	Very easy
≥ 60, < 90	Easy
≥ 90, ≤ 95	Medium
> 95, < 100	Difficult
≥ 100	Very difficult

Table 5.2

Selected Bantu and non-Bantu languages, Tanzania

2 Synonyms, at least 28 words Loanwords excluded LDND														
	Hadza	Sukuma	Isanzu	Mbugwe	Mwini	Nilamba	Rimi	Swahili	Valangi	Datooga	Masaai	Alagwe	Iraqw	English
Hadza	0													
Sukuma	97	0												
Isanzu	94	65	0											
Mbugwe	91	77	71	0										
Mwini	95	70	65	79										
Nilamba	96	62	51	65	67	0								
Rimi	92	75	47	74	75	68	0							
Swahili	95	73	71	76	62	60	75	0						
Valangi	92	77	71	57	83	68	76	68	0					
Datooga	98	101	102	99	101	99	105	101	101	0				
Maasai	96	97	96	95	96	97	98	98	98	96	0			
Alagwa	98	102	100	102	101	101	101	96	99	97	100	0		
Iraqw	98	97	96	98	96	97	95	94	98	95	98	53	0	
English	97	96	100	99	97	101	100	97	100	100	98	100	100	0
	Hadza	Suikama	Isanzu	Mbugwe	Mwini	Nilamba	Rimi	Swahili	Vlangi	Datooga	Masaai	Alagwe	Iraqw	English

A third specificity of the Tanzanian situation is the fact that this is a country with two extreme situations; in contrast with a country like Ghana, there are almost no language pairs with 'medium' learning difficulty. So, on the one hand, we see a large group of languages that are close to one another. On the other hand, there is a small group of languages that are neither close to one another, nor to Swahili. These languages deserve to be examined separately.

The largest group is made up of Nilotic languages. These fall into two clusters:

- Maasai. Also spoken in Kenya. It has over 650,000 speakers in Tanzania and in total is spoken by around 1.5 million people. For Maasai speakers, Swahili and English (and indeed all other languages spoken in Tanzania) are roughly of the same level of difficulty.
- Datooga. Number of speakers estimated by the Ethnologue is around 160,000. The ASJP database discerns four varieties, mutually very easy to learn. However, there is no other language spoken in Tanzania that is easy for them; for them, Swahili and English are roughly equally difficult. The Datooga – Maasai language pair is difficult as well.

Then, there are a few Cushitic languages spoken in Tanzania:

- The largest Cushitic language in Tanzania is Iraqw, whose number of speakers is estimated to be above 600,000. The others are Alagwa (around 50,000) and Burunge (around 28,000). Kieβling and Mous (2003), cited in the Ethnologue, report 'relatively high similarity' between Alagwa and Burunge. The ASJP database suggests that these language pairs are indeed 'very easy' or 'easy.' For Iraqw speakers, Swahili is somewhat easier to learn than English (it falls into the 'medium' category). Gorowa is another Cushitic language spoken in Tanzania, but it is not in the ASJP database.

Then, there are two language isolates:

- Sandawe. There are few language isolates in Africa, but this is one of them. As with Datooga, no other language spoken in Tanzania is easy for them, Swahili and English are roughly equally difficult. Number of speakers estimated by the Ethnologue around 60,000.
- Hadza. Again, a language isolate in the same situation as Sandawe, but the number of speakers is estimated at only around 1,000. It is seen as threatened by the Ethnologue.

Lastly, there is one mixed language:

- Mbugu (or Ma'a). Mbugu is unique, in that it is a mixed language that is made up of Bantu and Cushitic elements. The ASJP database gives separate word lists for 'inner' and 'normal' Mbugu. 'Normal' Mbugu has the Bantu vocabulary, and is therefore closer to Swahili than 'innner' Mbugu. Mous (1995: 199) suggests that Mbugu was originally a Bantu language, but that the additional elements were added because the Mbugu needed to set themselves apart from their neighbours. It has around 7,000 speakers.

It is to be expected that educational results of those native speakers of the minority languages listed above who are not bilingual from birth will fall below those of the Bantu speakers. Because Tanzania publishes its exam results at the school and district levels, it might be possible to substantiate this through research. However, this means controlling for such factors as bilingualism, linguistic mix in schools, general socio-economic factors and school-related factors such as the ratio of (qualified) teachers to students and the enrolment ratio in the district. A quick comparison of 2019 primary school results shows an average score for three districts that have at least a large proportion of non-Bantu speakers that is 89 per cent of the score of three districts with mostly Bantu speakers. This seems significant, given the fact that many schoolchildren in Tanzania are exposed to Swahili from a very early age.[102]

In sum: Swahili is difficult or very difficult for less than 2 million or 1.5 per cent of the Tanzanian population. For all others, it is easy or very easy to learn. However, learning an 'easy' designed language still requires formal schooling and a reasonable amount of effort, even for those gifted in languages.

What does this mean for rational choices in education in Tanzania?

5.1.4 Conclusions and Recommendations

A number of conclusions and recommendations seem obvious, keeping in mind the general principles that have been outlined in Chapter 3.2.

102 The comparison is between Bunda, Hanang, and Kondoa districts (non-Bantu) versus Ikungi, Manyoni, and Singida Rural (Bantu) districts. See https://www.necta.go.tz/ for information on the exam results.

1. The choice of Swahili as a designed language of (primary) education in Tanzania is a rational one (although not the only one that would, theoretically, have been possible): this language is easy or very easy to learn for over 98.5 per cent of all Tanzanians. It should be noted that for most speakers, Swahili still requires a fair amount of learning, although far less than learning for example English.
2. It is to be expected that, sooner or later, the pressure to switch from English to Swahili in lower secondary education will increase. Given the current enrolment levels near what I have defined as the 'language barrier', this would be a rational step to take that is bound to increase efficiency in education.[103] However, it is important that this transition should not be undertaken overnight but that it be planned carefully. If and as enrolment figures increase in senior secondary education, a change to Kiswahili at that level will also be necessary, but at the moment it is not.
3. Compared to the current language policy, this means that English will be taught as a subject up to the end of secondary education; Swahili will replace English as medium of instruction at that level. In tertiary education, the current English-only language policy will have to change as well. Swahili will become increasingly important, as a growing proportion of tertiary education will use Swahili as the medium of instruction. If this occurs in parallel with an increase in enrolment levels, then the paradoxical result of this will be, as demonstrated in Chapter 2.2.2, that the proportion of the population that have a command of English at a reasonable level will increase, compared to the current situation.
4. The current monolingual education system is wasteful in terms of talent and resources, especially regarding speakers of non-Bantu languages. Again, this should be changed in a gradual and well-planned way. For the smaller population groups, existing levels of bilingualism might be used as a resource, but the limitations of this case study do not allow definite conclusions on this point.
5. Topan (2008: 266) argues that, by now, the success of Swahili and the extent of intermarriages within the country have reduced the dangers of 'tribalism.' Quoting Batibo, he argues that liberalisation and decentralisation may help in checking the erosion of indigenous languages in the country. Indeed, as recalled above, cultural boundaries do not coincide with linguistic boundaries in Tanzania. Therefore, it should be possible to introduce further efficiency gains without threatening national unity. This can be done by gradually introducing local languages as the medium of instruction at the primary level, especially for those

103 For a convincing description of the benefits of this, see Brock-Utne (2013).

native speakers for whom Swahili presents relatively greater difficulties. The wide consensus among scientists is that early education in a language that is closest to the one spoken at home yields the best results.

6. These recommendations mean that the study and teaching of languages spoken in Tanzania besides Swahili should be taken up in the country, as recommended by Muzale and Rugemalira (2008). Students should be encouraged to study a Tanzanian language besides Swahili and language departments should be set up for other Tanzanian languages, to start with the minority languages. It is telling that the Swedish-funded 'Languages of Tanzania' project that ran until 2008 was located in the Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics of the University of Dar-Es-Salaam – the university had no department for the study of other Tanzanian languages besides Swahili.[104]

In general, this first case study demonstrates that the approach developed in the previous chapters shows promising results, also when compared to existing literature, at least for Tanzania. Swahili is a rational choice for education in Tanzania. Are other African countries in a position to make a similar choice? Is it possible to say something about that using this approach? For that, we will need to look at a few more cases.

5.2 Republic of Congo

In the previous case study of Tanzania, we have shown how, in that country, the choice of Swahili as a designed language to serve a large number of relatively similar discerned languages was indeed logical, given the proximity to one another of the great majority of the languages discerned in Tanzania. Most people in Tanzania speak a discerned language that is part of the family of Narrow Bantu languages. However, these languages are spoken in many more countries in Central, Eastern, and Southern Africa. Would a choice like the one made for Tanzania be possible for other countries as well? In this case study, we will look at a country with a different colonial history but with a similar linguistic make-up: the Republic of Congo (also known as Congo-Brazzaville). All languages discerned for the Republic of Congo belong to the Narrow Bantu family.[105] What can be said about rational choices for language use in higher education in such a country?

104 Currently, though, there is research into 'other Bantu languages' within the Department of Swahili Language and Linguistics: https://www.udsm.ac.tz/web/index.php/institutes/iks/department-of-swahili-language-and-linguistics, accessed 28 August 2020.

105 Although there is a small group of Bayaka in Congo who speak an Ubangian language.

The Republic of Congo is a country in Central Africa with a population approaching 5.5 million people,[106] heavily concentrated in the South and in the region around Brazzaville (the Pool region). Congo has retained French as its official language after gaining independence in the wave of countries that became independent in 1960. Lingala and Kituba are the two officially recognised 'national languages.'

5.2.1 Cultural and Political Situation

The Ethnologue currently discerns 62 languages spoken in Congo,[107] but again, this does not mean that there is a similar number of different cultural entities in the country. Congo was not included in the cultural dimension analysis in Chapter Four of the study, due to a lack of available survey data. For Vansina (1990), the entire area was part of the same cultural tradition, at least until around 1920.

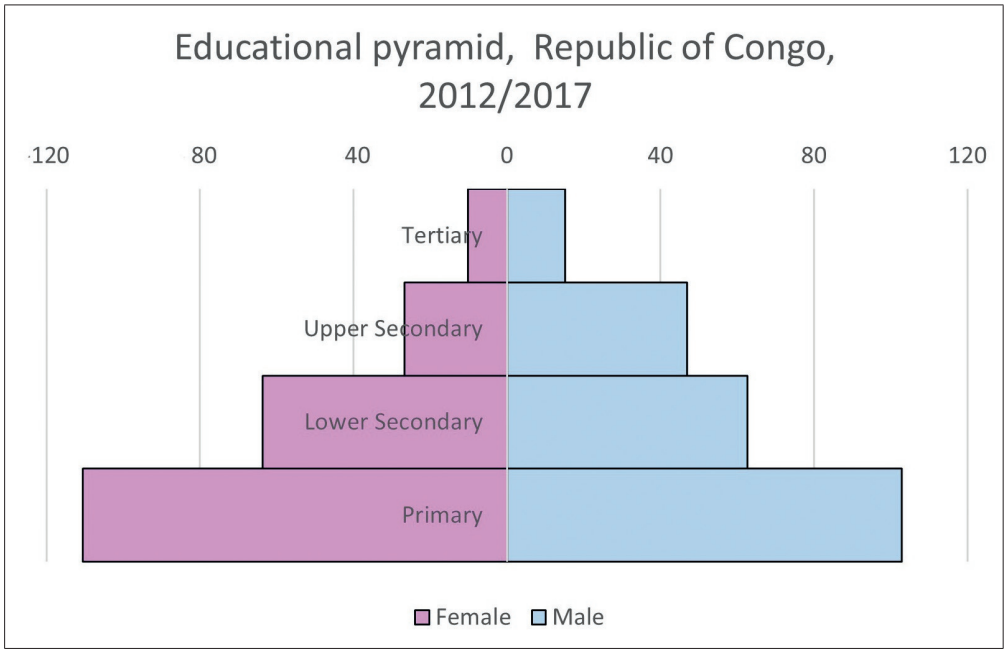
After independence, the country experimented with socialism for a period, until Denis Sassou-Nguesso took over in 1997. Although multi-party democracy was introduced, Sassou-Nguesso has managed to remain as president ever since, winning the civil war of 1997-1999. The discovery of oil has made him and his family very rich.

5.2.2 Educational Situation

In the field of education, the country has made considerable progress. Primary education is universal and secondary education is common. However, there is a gap between lower and upper secondary education: just over half the children who go to lower secondary education continue on to upper secondary education. The Gender Parity Index shows that whereas the ratio of boys to girls in lower secondary education is close to one, many more boys than girls proceed to upper secondary education (the Gender Parity Index drops to 0.57).[108] All education is in French.[109]

106 https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/congo-population/, accessed 8 November 2019.
107 https://www-ethnologue-com/country/CG, accessed 8 November 2019.
108 UNESCO data, 2012.
109 http://www.axl.cefan.ulaval.ca/afrique/congo.htm, accessed 15 November 2019.

The education pyramid for 2012 (primary and secondary education) / 2017 (tertiary education) is shown in the graph below.



Graph 5.2

Educational pyramid, Republic of Congo 2012 (tertary education: 2017)

Note that the GER for tertiary education in Congo increased by 50 per cent between 2012 and 2017, probably partly as a result of the country's Education Strategy 2015-2025. The gender imbalance in favour of boys at secondary level becomes even more prominent at tertiary level.

The ratio of GER in primary education to tertiary education is 8.4 – this makes Congo a country with a fairly pyramidical education structure, though less pyramidical than Tanzania (with a ratio of 30.5).

5.2.3 Language Situation and Language Choice Options

Where the Ethnologue discerns 62 languages currently spoken in Congo, the contributors to the ASJP database discern 126 Congolese languages, to which I have added Swahili and French.

By now, it should not come as a surprise that French is difficult or very difficult to learn for L1 speakers of all Congolese languages.

Where in Tanzania over 98 per cent of the population speaks one of the 'Narrow Bantu' languages, this is the case for the entire population of the Republic of Congo: almost all languages discerned in the country belong to the Narrow Bantu family. As was shown for Tanzania, the discerned languages in this family are all fairly closely related – most of them form easy or very easy language pairs. Does that mean that, like in Tanzania, it would be possible to make a rational choice for one national indigenous language in this country?

Baka (2005: 107) notes that there are four languages of wider circulation in Congo: Kituba; Lingala; Laadi (Lari); and Sango.[110] A comparison of these four languages together with Koongo, as shown in the table below, reveals how close these languages are: Sango is clearly more distant, but the other language pairs are easy or very easy.

Table 5.3
ASJP distances for languages with wider circulation in Congo

2 Synonyms, at least 28 words Loanwords excluded LDND					
	Kituba	Koongo	Laadi	Lingala	Sango
Kituba	0				
Koongo	62	0			
Laadi	68	47	0		
Lingala	83	78	79	0	
Sango	94	97	98	92	0
	Kituba	Koongo	Laadi	Lingala	Sango

110 Sango is the lingua franca of the neighbouring Central African Republic; the Ethnologue does not report any Sango-speakers in Congo.

If we were to apply the same logic as in Tanzania, would it be possible to develop any of these languages into a designed national language for use in higher education in the Republic of Congo? Looking at the full matrix, and purely from a theoretical point of view, the best candidate would seem to be Wumbvu – it presents a problem for only three other languages, all with very few speakers.

Again, the ASJP database itself is not a sufficient tool for making choices of this type: input from linguists with more detailed knowledge of the local languages would be a necessity.

It is interesting to note that, in the Republic of Congo, in spite of any formal policies, a development such as the one suggested above is actually occurring: Bagamboula (2019) describes how Laari (Laadi) has developed into a lingua franca in the populous areas of Brazzaville and the surrounding Pool region, merging elements of Koongo, Suundi, and Lingala. In her view, this has also led to the forming of what she calls a 'mega-ethnicity' of Laadi speakers. She does not specify to what extent Laari is also used as a lingua franca in other parts of Congo, but with the support of a properly designed language policy, it is thinkable that such an expansion would be possible. In that way, Laari could possibly develop into a distinct national language for the Republic of Congo. In a way, this delopment seems similar to what has happened in the Central African Republic, where Sango has obtained the status of national language (Mazrui, 2019).

It is important to note that other choices would also be possible. Thus, one could imagine a choice of keeping several national languages for the Republic of Congo but choosing them in such a way that they overlap with choices made in neighbouring countries and are more in line with cultural and historical identities that may have a stronger position in the region. This would also give a potential for pooling the resources for language development from several countries. For example: the ASJP database discerns 38 Kikongoic languages,[111] spoken in Gabon, RD Congo, Angola (Cabinda), and Congo DR. They form easy or very easy language pairs and one of them could be developed into a designed 'standard Kikongo.'

Kituba and Laadi are both Kikongoic languages, but Lingala is not, although the combination of Lingala with most Kikongoic languages is still easy. This

111 See https://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/kiko1234 for a list of Kikongoic languages as discerned by the Glottolog database.

could mean that such a bilingual solution would be more appropriate for RD Congo.

5.2.4 Conclusions and Recommendations

As was the case for Tanzania, a switch to an indigenous language for tertiary education is not yet necessary in Congo, since enrolment figures are so low that French or any other language can be used. Already at present, the use of French as medium of instruction in primary and secondary education is bound to lead to a waste of talent and resources, because it is likely that not all children have a level of French that is sufficient to follow education in that language, although in principle they may have the intellectual capabilities.

Baka (2005: 102) proposes to use the L1 as much as possible for the first four years of primary education and to switch to an indigenous language of wider communication after that and to use this language until the end of secondary education. In his proposal, this language of wider communication will be taught as a subject in the first years of primary school and another language of wider communication would also be taught as a subject. He proposes using the four languages mentioned above in four different parts of the country up until the end of lower secondary education and to switch to Lingala and Kituba after that, using both also at the tertiary level.

The ASJP database suggests that a simpler solution might be possible, thanks to the predominance of the Narrow Bantu language family in Congo: one or two discerned languages would be relatively and equally easy for almost all Congolese and could therefore be chosen as national language for use in higher education. As Bagamboula (2019) argues, a development towards a common lingua franca is already taking place for Laari. Supporting such a development based on an inclusive language policy would help build a national culture in Congo, would make learning easier and more efficient for children and would therefore provide important benefits for the country as a whole. However, a bilingual solution around one of the Kikongoic languages and Lingala would also be possible and it might be culturally more appropriate.

Compared to the current language policy, this means that French will be taught as a subject up to the end of secondary education; one or two indigenous African languages will replace French as medium of instruction at that level. In tertiary education, these indigenous languages will become increasingly

important, as a growing proportion of tertiary education will use them as medium of instruction. If this occurs in parallel with an increase in enrolment levels, then the paradoxical result of this will be, as demonstrated in Chapter 2.2.2, that the proportion of the population that have a command of French at a reasonable level will increase, compared to the current situation.

Of course, there are countries in Africa where the linguistic situation is much more complicated. What would the ASJP database suggest for such countries? That is the challenge for the next case study, which looks at Ethiopia.

5.3 Ethiopia

In the previous sections, we used the approach developed so far to examine the logic (or otherwise) of the language choices made in Tanzania and in the Republic of Congo. For Tanzania, the choice of Swahili as a designed language for use in (primary) education was a rational one, because it is easy or very easy to learn for more than 98.5 per cent of all Tanzanians. It is to be expected, that sooner or later, this choice will be extended to at least the first level of secondary education as well. However, for the speakers of some minority languages, Swahili is *not* a logical choice and a recommendation was to introduce those minority languages as medium of instruction, in the first instance in primary education, at least for the larger population groups. For the Republic of Congo, a similar choice would be possible, although the historical circumstances are very different and such a choice has not (yet) been made.

In this section, we will look at a country with a completely different linguistic situation, where completely different language choices have been made in education: Ethiopia. Will it be possible to say something rational about Ethiopia, using the approach developed so far?

Ethiopia is a country in the horn of Africa with a population of nearly 113 million people.[112] Just like many other African countries, it is linguistically very diverse. From a political point of view, the country is unique in Africa, in that it was never colonised in the same way that other African countries were. Therefore, an indigenous language (rather than a non-indigenous colonial language), Amharic, was for a long time the language of instruction;

112 https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/ethiopia-population/, accessed 23 October 2019

it is still the national working language.[113] Ethiopia is also unique in that since 1991, the government has been in the hands of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), which gained power after a civil war that had its origins in part in failure to accommodate the internal diversity in the country (Fiseha 2012: 439). In fact, Ethiopia is now unique in Africa in explicitly recognising the rights of its nations, nationalities and peoples in its constitution:

> A 'Nation, Nationality or People' for the purpose of this Constitution, is a group of people who have or share large measure of a common culture or similar customs, mutual intelligibility of language, belief in a common or related identities, a common psychological make-up, and who inhabit an identifiable, predominantly contiguous territory.[114]

Individual regional states are free to choose their own working language and also to decide on the language(s) of instruction in primary education. English became the medium of instruction at the secondary level and is the only medium of instruction at tertiary level (Appleyard and Orwin 2008: 278).

5.3.1 Cultural and Political Situation

In 1994, Ethiopia became a Federal Republic. Administratively, it currently consists of ten regional states and two city districts, states that were formed in a way largely corresponding to the existing distribution of major ethnolinguistic groups over the country.[115] The Ethnologue currently discerns 90 languages spoken in Ethiopia,[116] compared to 125 for Tanzania.

The cultural dimension analysis by Van Pinxteren (2021a) gives data for five ethnolinguistic groups (Amhara, Gurage, Oromo, Sidama, and Tigrinya). For only one of the three cultural dimensions for which we have Ethiopian data is the difference within the country greater than 20 points – such a difference in

113 Recently, however, the government decided to introduce four additional working languages (Afar, Oromo, Somali, and Tigrigna). The practical meaning of this remains unclear. See https://qz.com/africa/1812085/ethiopia-adds-afan-oromo-somali-afar-tigrigna-languages-to-amharic/, accessed 29 July 2020.

114 Article 39.5 of the Ethiopian Constitution, http://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/et/et007en.pdf, accessed 17 July 2017.

115 On 18 June 2020, the Sidama regional state was formed. It split off from the SNNP region after a referendum. See https://borkena.com/2020/06/18/council-ratify-ethiopias-new-ethnic-sidama-statehood/, accessed 29 July 2020.

116 https://www.ethnologue.com/country/ET, accessed 9 September 2019

culturally relevant survey question results is likely to correspond to noticeable differences in practice as well. The differences are largest in the Indulgence vs Restraint dimension. However, even for this dimension the differences are smaller than, for example, in Tanzania. It could be that, seen from a distance, Ethiopians are more alike than they think.

Smith (2013: 121) does not feel Ethiopians are all alike culturally speaking and points to the practical consequences of the cultural diversity she sees, for example where she points out: 'Different ethnolinguistic groups in Ethiopia have strikingly different visions of what citizenship should entail, and at least some of these conflicting visions represent distinct and competing institutional arrangements.' It would be interesting to investigate real versus imagined cultural differences further for Ethiopia.

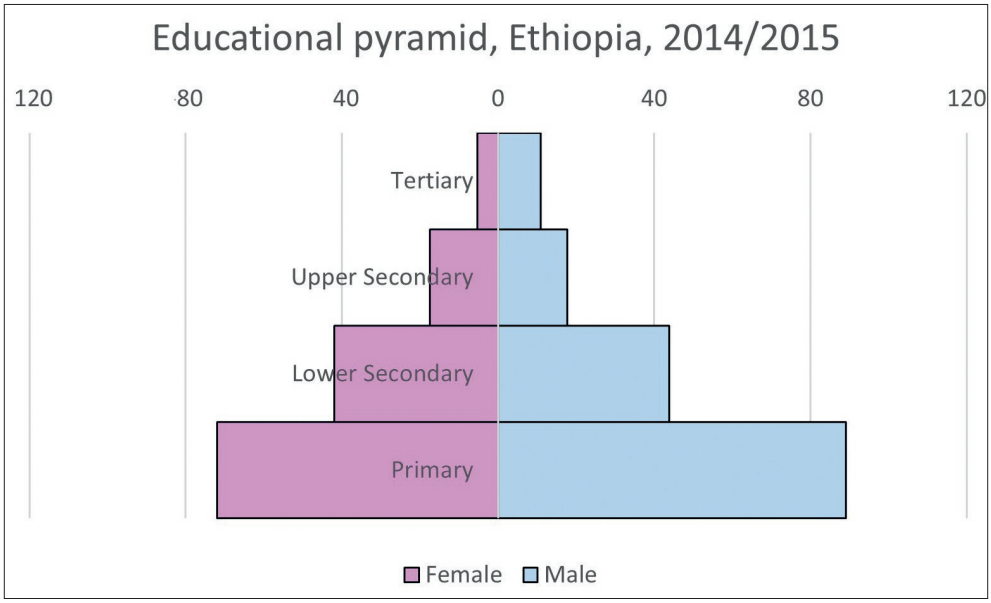
It is interesting to compare the assessment of ethnofederalism of Smith with that of Abbink (2011). Basically, where Abbink stresses that the glass is half empty, Smith calls it half full. Abbink (p. 607) believes that: 'The federal structure […] generates competition between the NNPs (or ethnic groups), specifically their aspiring elites, about 'resources' […], federal funds and about communal or religious identity. In other words, they have a political interest to take position against each other.' Smith, on the other hand, stresses how 'certain kinds of claims, such as ethnic and gendered claims by citizens, can be read as liberatory and democratizing rather than atavistic or primordial, as both the western media and dominant political regimes would have us conclude' (p. 8). A fuller discussion of these assessments is outside the scope of this study, but some examples of what is happening in Ethiopia are included in section 5.3.4, because they may serve as examples for what could also happen in future in other countries in Africa.

5.3.2 Educational Situation

To this day, the educational system in Ethiopia remains fairly pyramidal, as shown in the graph below.

The ratio of GER in primary education to tertiary education is 10.0 – as was shown in Chapter Three, this puts Ethiopia somewhere in-between countries with a very 'steep' pyramid like Tanzania and countries with a more equal pyramid like Botswana. A comparison with the data shown on Ethiopia in Chapter Two also shows the progress made over the past decade: in 2005, all enrolment rates were much lower and the ratio mentioned above stood at

29.2. The enrolment levels of girls have grown much closer to those of boys, although much less so at tertiary level.



Graph 5.3
Educational pyramid, Ethiopia, 2015 (tertiary education: 2014)

These statistics hide the fact that there are still considerable regional disparities within Ethiopia. Thus, Woldehanna and Jones (2006: 26) conclude that, even though there have been considerable improvements compared to the past, 'given a very low baseline of educational enrolment in areas such as Gambella, Benshangul, Somali and Afar, more concerted action is needed to further reduce the inter-regional educational gap.'

Secondary education has a strongly selective nature, which becomes clear when one examines the difference in GER between lower and upper secondary education. The GER in lower secondary was nearly 43 per cent in 2015; in upper secondary, it was under 18 per cent. This is less selective than in Tanzania, where only one in four children proceed from lower to upper secondary education, but still means more than half of all children drop out at this stage.[117]

117 http://data.uis.unesco.org/# , accessed 23 October 2019.

With a GER for the initial level of secondary education higher than 40 per cent, one can expect that the policy of secondary education in English will come under increasing pressure; as argued for Tanzania, it is likely that the switch from a local language to English will lead to wastage for those children whose intellectual abilities would be good enough to understand instruction at secondary level in an easier language, but not in English. Indeed, at least in the Oromio region, some use of Oromo in tertiary education is visible: it 'has become a medium of instruction in teachers' training institutes and has been used as a medium of instruction in colleges in the region.'[118]

5.3.3 Language Situation and Language Choice Options

The ASJP database discerns no fewer than 121 languages to look at for Ethiopia, to which I have added English.

A first thing to note when examining the Ethiopian matrix in light of the above discussion is that, just like it is the case for Tanzania, English is a difficult or very difficult language to learn for speakers of any Ethiopian language.[119]

A key difference with Tanzania is that, in Ethiopia, speakers of the different language families are more evenly divided. Speakers of Cushitic languages make up around half the population, of Semitic languages around 42 per cent, of Nilo-Saharan languages[120] around seven per cent and of Omotic languages not more than one per cent (Hudson 2003: 94).[121]

The situation in terms of ASJP distances within each of these language families is different; therefore, it seems useful to discuss them one by one.

The ASJP database discerns 17 languages in the **Ethiosemitic** subfamily of Semitic languages. The major languages in this group include Amharic, the Gurage languages, Tigre and Tigrinya. Within this subfamily, there are a number of languages that are easy to learn (though not *very* easy) for speakers of all other languages in this subfamily.

---

118 http://www.haramaya.edu.et/academics/college-of-social-sciences-and-humanities/dept/afan-oromo-and-literature/, retrieved 23 October 2019.

119 All ASJP scores are at or above 95, a good number above 100.

120 There is no scientific consensus that grouping languages together into a Nilo-Saharan family is actually justified.

121 Other sources, though, give slightly different percentages, especially for the smaller language families.

The ASJP database discerns 70 Cushitic languages. Cushitic languages are different from one another: a fair number of language pairs are in the difficult or very difficult category. Yet, there are also a number of language pairs in the very easy or easy categories. Cushitic languages are divided into a number of sub-families. One of these is the Agaw or **Central Cushitic** subfamily, of which the ASJP database discerns eight varieties spoken in Ethiopia that form easy or very easy combinations. Another large subfamily are the **East Custhitic** languages; the ASJP database discerns 49 of them; the largest of these languages are Somali and Oromo.[122] Some of these languages are easy for speakers of all other East Custhitic languages.

The ASJP database discerns 20 **Nilo-Saharan l**anguages that are spoken in Ethiopia. The Nilo-Saharan language family is internally diverse: many language pairs are difficult or very difficult, some are of medium difficulty, but a number of them are easy or very easy. The ASJP database suggests that there is not one language that could be developed into a Nilo-Saharan language that would be easy or very easy to learn for all speakers of Nilo-Saharan languages. In fact, it might be necessary to use six or seven languages.[123]

The ASJP database discerns 28 **North Omotic** languages.[124] For these languages, the situation is almost the same as that for the Ethiosemitic languages. There are some languages that are easy (and in some cases very easy) to learn for all other speakers in this group.

In addition, the database discerns four **South Omotic** languages. It would seem rational to use one of the South Omotic languages as designed language for use in education. (The combined number of speakers is around 300,000.)

This means that if we look at 'easy' languages to use in higher education, not more than 12 languages would be enough for Ethiopia (of which half would be Nilo-Saharan languages), instead of the 30 that Skattum (2019) currently reports as being used in primary education. In practice, of course, it might be expedient to select a larger or slightly different group of languages; however, that does not detract from the principle. For primary education, the closer the

122 See Bulcha (1998) for a description that gives insights into the background of the position of the Oromo language in Ethiopia.

123 Some of these languages belong to the Western Nilotic subfamily, which also includes Luo. These languages have a large speaker base in Uganda and Kenya and form easy or very easy language pairs. Other languages in this group can almost be considered language isolates and have only a small speaker base.

124 This includes the three 'Dizoid' languages.

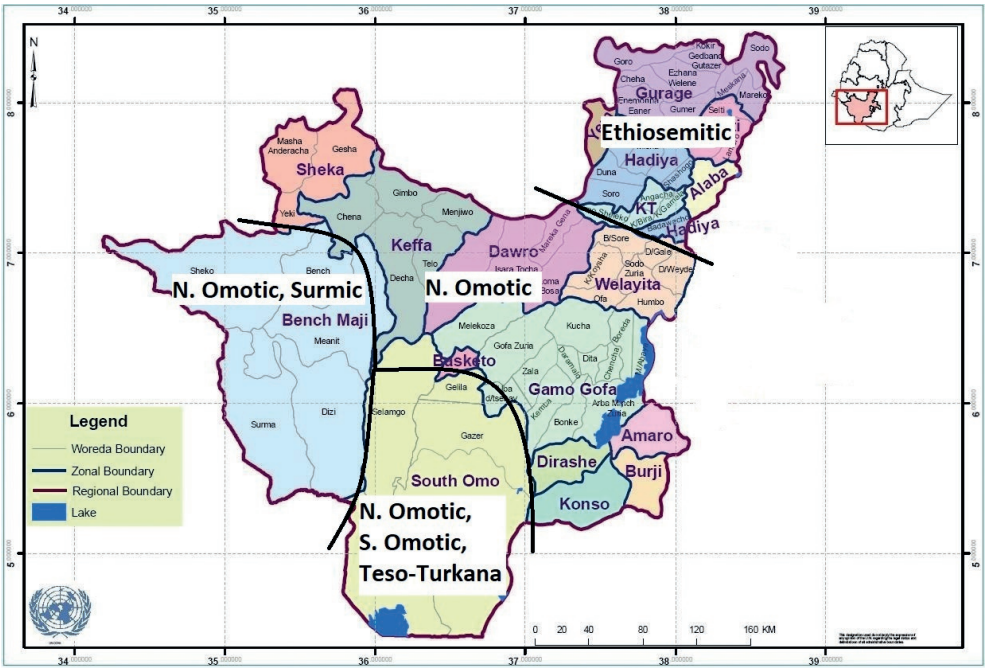
designed medium of instruction is to a discerned L1, the easier and therefore better it is for the majority of children. However, one could imagine that for lower secondary school, a switch to an 'easy' language is a rational thing to do, if that means that for a country like Ethiopia not more than twelve languages are sufficient.

The table below shows a theoretical result using twelve languages chosen for their mutual differences. These 12 languages (plus English) are indeed difficult combinations.

Table 5.4
Difficult language pairs, Ethiopia

2 Synonyms, at least 28 words Loanwords excluded LDND													
	Wetawit	Luo	Teso	Suri Chai	Gumuz	Gwama	Kunama	Xamtanga	W Oromo	Wolaytta	Amharic	Ari	English
Wetawit	0												
Luo	97	0											
Teso	99	95	0										
Suri Chai	97	101	101	0									
Gumuz	101	97	99	99	0								
Gwama	98	98	101	99	96	0							
Kunama	97	94	100	98	95	98	0						
Xamtanga	103	98	101	103	99	101	98	0					
W Oromo	99	100	101	95	103	100	100	100	0				
Wolaytta	100	104	101	100	95	96	96	100	92	0			
Amharic	101	97	104	100	101	95	100	96	102	98	0		
Ari	104	100	100	99	100	97	101	102	100	97	97	0	
English	101	103	99	100	101	102	100	103	102	101	96	97	0
	Wetawit	Luo	Teso	Suri Chai	Gumuz	Gwama	Kunama	Xamtana	W Oromo	Wolyatta	Amharic	Ari	English

Below is an illustrative map of what this would mean for what is probably the most complex of Ethiopia's areas from the ethnolinguistic point of view, the SNNP regional state.



Map 5.1
Potential secondary/higher education language map, SNNP, Ethiopia[125]

5.3.4 The Ethiopian Experiment

Ethiopia is a leader in Africa when it comes to decentralised language policies, because it allows regional states to make their own choices for the medium of instruction in primary schools and for the working language in administration. Thus, it is a country that, in a way, has implemented a number of the suggestions by Laitin (1992: 158):

1. Language 'states' or 'regions' are designated, and procedures are established by which the people of the region can set an official state language for use in a

125 Basic map adapted from UN OCHA, 2005.

range of functions, specified by regional leaders but constrained by the central state.
2. An administrative court at the federal level is constituted to hear demands for boundary rectification and state creation, with the authority to implement its decisions.
3. A national language is designed by the federal government which all citizens are required to know for educational advancement, government promotion, and civil service employment.

As described by Smith (2013), in Ethiopia, states can and do designate official state languages. The House of the Federation can decide on boundary disputes. Indeed, Smith describes in some detail, in Chapter Four, how leaders from the Silt'e or Siltie group were able to petition the House of the Federation in order to create a separate district and how such a district was created after a referendum ordered by the Ethiopian House of Federation. In 2019, another relatively peaceful referendum was held that led to the creation of a new state for the Sidama community, separated from the SNNP state[126] – it may not be the last. Thus, Cochrane and Bekele (2019) point to proposals for the creation of an 'Omotic' state.[127]

The resemblance between this setup and what was recommended by Laitin (1992) is striking and it seems that it has given Ethiopia the possibility of addressing some long-standing issues in a peaceful manner. As an example, the two separate city districts (Addis Abeba and Dire Dawa) have a multi-ethnic population, as is common in many other African cities. In Addis Abeba, Amharic is the language spoken by the majority; the largest minority is Oromo, with nearly 11 per cent of the population. In Dire Dawa, nearly half the population is Oromo, with large minorities of Somali and Amhara speakers. In other African cities, their multi-ethnic character is used to justify a choice for the ex-colonial language as medium of instruction. In Ethiopia, both cities show that a different choice could be possible: they have primary schools with several mediums of instruction (Smith 2013: 153).

The literature gives examples of the types of effects that the Ethiopian language policy has had; thus, Seid (2014) shows how in the Keffa region, there is a language shift from Nayi (ISO 639-3 code: noz) to Kafa (ISO 639-3 code: kbr) (both are North Omotic languages), because Kafa is now being

126 https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/11/ethiopia-sidama-vote-federal-region-electoral-board-191123150618999.html, retrieved 27 November 2019.
127 https://fanabc.com/english/2019/07/scholars-discuss-procedures-to-obtain-statehood-status/, retrieved 23 October 2019.

used in education and in other domains. Before 1991, the shift was rather from Kafa to Amharic.

Processes of language choice are not easy or straightforward, as some further examples from the literature may illustrate.

Savà and Tosco (2008) show why, in the Oromia region, a standardised version of the language could be developed, in a process that took some time historically and that was possible in part because Oromia saw itself as being in competition with the Amharic area. This standard was developed in spite of the fact that the Ethnologue database discerns three Oromo-like languages spoken in Ethiopia. In contrast, Guidi (2012) describes in some detail why attempts in 1999 and 2000 to introduce a designed language made up of a combination of Wolaytta, Gamo, Gofa, and Dawo ('Wogagoda') met with wide popular resistance and ultimately failed, even though these languages are closely related.[128] Cochrane and Bekele (2019: 33) analyse these attempts as top-down. It followed after earlier top-down attempts to combine Gamo, Gofa, and Dawo into one language; those attempts were perceived as threats to linguistic and cultural identities. The addition of Wolaytta made the mix only more explosive, because, on the one hand, the Wolaytta perceived their language as being superior (therefore they tended to resist the move) and the others perceived the attempt as threatening their already threatened identity (and therefore they resisted as well). This resulted in increased ethnic tensions in the region (p. 38) and led to a stalemate that left all groups weaker than they could have been. Obviously, it is likely that such situations will occur in other communities and areas as well and that a top-down approach may be difficult to implement. However, just saying that things must be done bottom-up does not itself solve any problem. Joswig (2020) compares the experience with Wogagoda with some others, including those of speakers of various Ale dialects (an East Cushitic language with around 85,000 speakers). He shows that, through a bottom-up consultation process, Ale speakers were able to see the advantages of a standardised form of their language for written communications and to reach a decision on this. However, other attempts to do the same in Ethiopia remain mired with difficulty. So, this is a difficult, but not an impossible process. It might be possible to overcome some of these difficulties by building carefully designed incentives to collaboration.

128 The benchmarked ASJP database shows these discerned language pairs as mostly 'very easy' and in one instance 'easy.'

In this context, it is interesting to note the study of Küspert-Rakotondrainy (2004), who has used an analytical framework taken from Bourdieu in a study of the Gumuz and Shinasha communities. She found that the recent introduction of local language instruction in primary schools had beneficial effects on school attendance for both communities, especially for girls, and on achievement in schools. However, the identity effects were different, related to the different positions these communities have historically occupied. Thus, for the Gumuz, increased access to education is associated with modernisation and upliftment, whereas, for the Shinasha, it is associated with a re-appreciation of their distinctiveness and with tradition. This is where, then, choices are possible, at least for the Shinasha: using Shinasha as a medium of instruction will stress their Shinasha identity; using an easy to learn other language will stress their integration, for example, with other speakers of North Omotic languages. Neither community, though, is a passive recipient: in both communities, there may be strong (and conflicting) opinions on the best course to take.

What this short discussion shows is that language, education, and identity are indeed closely related, but how exactly this works out in practical situations would require considerably more work. In any case, it would seem important to recognise and try to understand these linkages in order to come to rational policy decisions.

5.3.5 Conclusions and Recommendations

The Ethiopian situation is clearly considerably more complex than the situation in Tanzania and the Republic of Congo and this gives rise to conclusions that in part are different from and add on to those reached for Tanzania.

1) Ethiopia is perhaps unique in Africa in its effort to promote its many languages, at least for use in primary education. A potential drawback of this policy is that it puts a premium on *difference*, rather than on *similarity*: if becoming recognised as a separate 'people, nation, or nationality,' with a separate language leads to additional resources, this provides an incentive for people to profile themselves as such. In Ethiopia, as we have seen, there are a number of small linguistic communities, for which learning other, larger languages is difficult or very difficult. In order to minimise the disadvantages associated with a small linguistic community and to give maximum opportunities for educational advancement for children

in these communities, collaboration will be a necessity (although it is not a solution for every small linguistic community). This therefore illustrates the importance of the fifth principle that was proposed in Chapter Three: the importance of **building incentives for linguistic collaboration**, especially for related linguistic communities.

What could that mean? One incentive for collaboration could be built around the minimum number of speakers needed to justify the use of that language as a medium of instruction at a specified level.

One could hold, as a purely theoretical example, that for a minimum of 1,000 speakers it is justified to develop a language to such an extent that it can be used as designed language for the first four years of primary education. Then, for a minimum of 10,000 speakers, it might be justifiable to do the same for the whole of primary education. For lower secondary education, a minimum of 100,000 speakers might be required, for upper secondary 500,000 and for tertiary education, a minimum of around 1 million speakers.

Theoretically, one could add to this an approach that takes prevalence of bilingualism into account; thus, for linguistic communities where bilingualism is not prevalent lower thresholds might be acceptable than for communities where it is, in order to still create a situation that offers equal opportunity to all children.

2) It is to be expected that, sooner or later, in Ethiopia as well as in Tanzania, the pressure to switch from English to local languages as the medium of instruction in lower secondary education will increase. Given the current enrolment rate just above what I have defined as the 'language barrier,' this would be a rational step to take that is bound to increase efficiency in education. However, it is important that this transition should not be undertaken overnight but that it be planned carefully. Secondary education in local languages should be perceived from the start as quality education, not as second-hand education. If and as enrolment figures increase in senior secondary education, a change to local languages at that level will also be necessary, but at the moment it is not.
3) Cochrane and Bekele (2019) and others also point to the issue of the *quality of education*: just expanding education without investing in the quality of teachers, schools, and materials may not be productive; at the moment, many children learn their own language and are officially taught Amharic and/or English as a subject, but the level of teaching is such that achievements remain far below those of the Estonian educational system (although, on the other hand, not so long ago those children might not have received any education at all).

4) For tertiary education, a switch to indigenous languages as suggested above is not yet necessary; enrolment figures are still so low that English or any other language can be used. However, if enrolment rates increase to levels approaching those of the global North, a gradual switch to indigenous languages will become advisable. If the numbers suggested in conclusion 1) above were applied to Ethiopia, this would mean an evolution towards tertiary education possibilities in one or more Ethiosemitic languages, one or more East Cushitic languages (for example Oromo), perhaps a Central Cushitic language and a North Omotic language.[129]
   For all those who will find these languages easy to learn (the vast majority of all Ethiopians), this would mean a tremendous improvement compared to the current situation, which requires a high level of English. For the remaining smaller groups[130] there would be no similar improvement (but also no worsening compared to the current situation). For most of them, the possibility to learn in their own discerned language or a language that is easy for them up to a higher level than is presently possible would still be an improvement.
5) Ethiopia may have to consider a model where several languages are used at the federal level, similar to countries like Belgium, Canada, or Switzerland. The solution suggested above with five languages (one Ethiosemitic, three Cushitic, and one North Omotic), if implemented, would make access to national debate and policy making possible in an easy to learn language for over 90 per cent of all Ethiopians. Reaching 100 per cent would require adding several more languages. A monolingual alternative could either use an indigenous language (such as Amharic or Oromo), but this would put those Ethiopians who find that language difficult or very difficult to learn at a disadvantage. Another possibility would be to use an international language such as English, but even if the Ethiopian educational system would be just as good at teaching English as the Estonian system (which is currently not the case), that would still disenfranchise around 60 per cent of Ethiopians at the national level.
6) Smith (2013) holds that Ethiopia harbours a number of very different cultural communities; my study suggests a less diverse picture, but it is not finely grained enough to be able to make confident statements at this

129 Speakers of Nilo-Saharan languages in Ethiopia would be at a relative disadvantage, because of the small speaker communities and large differences between the languages. For some, a possibility might be provided in neighbouring Eritrea, Kenya, and Uganda, which have larger speaker communities in these languages.

130 According to the Ethnologue, the situation in Ethiopia is different from that in some other countries, in that speakers of these languages generally do not have a majority of people who are bilingual from birth; many are indeed monolingual.

level about Ethiopia. However, Smith also feels that the fact that linguistic rights (coupled to citizenship rights) are recognised in Ethiopia may be a factor that works in favour of, rather than against national unity. Still, how to balance a federal, decentralised system with many different languages with the need to keep a nation together is clearly a challenge that Ethiopia is still struggling to find an answer to. A key element in this might be to move to a limited number of national languages, as suggested above, and to adopt policies that encourage learning several Ethiopian languages.

In general, this third case study again demonstrates the power of this approach, but it also shows its limitations. These limitations lie in the difference between what seems rational and equitable and what are sure to be intervening political realities on the ground.

In sum, using the benchmarked ASJP database can hopefully serve as an input for a national debate in Ethiopia along more rational lines.

What could we learn from examining a country at the other side of the continent, for example Ghana?

5.4 Ghana

In the previous three case studies, we have looked at a country that has chosen one designed indigenous language to serve a large number of relatively similar discerned languages (Tanzania), a country that would be in a position to make such a choice (Republic of Congo), and a country with a different colonial history from the rest of Africa and a traditionally dominant indigenous language (Ethiopia). In this case study, we will examine a linguistically diverse country that has a long colonial history with the UK but at the same time with a relatively long period of independence: Ghana. What can be said about rational choices for language use in higher education in such a country? We will also venture a brief excursion into Nigeria and look at the question of what the potential is (or otherwise) of using either Ghanaian or Nigerian Pidgin English as a designed national language in education.

Ghana is a country in West Africa with a population approaching 31 million people.[131] Ghana has retained English as its official language. The country is peculiar in that one language, Akan (Twi),[132] is spoken by around half the population as L1 and many more as L2.

5.4.1 Cultural and Political Situation

The Ethnologue currently discerns 73 indigenous languages spoken in Ghana,[133] but again, this does not mean that there is a similar number of different cultural entities in the country. Van Pinxteren (2021a) was able to analyse data on eight ethnolinguistic groups. For all four cultural dimensions discussed there, the differences within Ghana are greater than 20 points – such differences in culturally relevant survey question results are likely to correspond to noticeable differences in practice as well. The differences are the largest in the Indulgence vs Restraint dimension. A fairly large difference also occurs in the 'Fix vs Flex' (LTO) dimension, with Ewe being very much on the 'Fixed' side and the Gonja relatively on the 'flex' side. Because of the dominance of the Akan, their scores are close to the national average. Moreover, the scores of the largest ethnolinguistic groups (the Akan, Dagomba, Ewe and Ga) are fairly similar, with only some of the smaller ethnolinguistic groups having a different score. The cluster analysis by Van Pinxteren (2020b) shows that out of the five groups that could be distinguished for that analysis, four are in the same cluster. An interesting fact is that the Akan of Ghana and those of Côte d'Ivoire do not cluster together (using anthropological methods, MacLean 2010 reaches the same conclusion). Together, this suggests that Ghana enjoys a certain measure of a common and national cultural frame of reference, even though not all ethnolinguistic groups may subscribe to it fully (see also the analysis of the role of indigenous languages and English in national identity formation in Ghana as given by Anyidoho and Kropp-Dakubu, 2008).

Ghana was the second country in sub-Saharan Africa to gain independence, in 1957, under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah. Since then, the country has witnessed a tumultuous history involving coups, military rule and periods of profound economic crisis. However, the country returned to a multi-party democracy after elections in 1992 and has remained a democracy since;

131 https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/ghana-population/, accessed 31 October 2019.
132 The Ethnologue, however, discerns four Akan languages.
133 https://www-ethnologue-com/country/GH, accessed 31 October 2019.

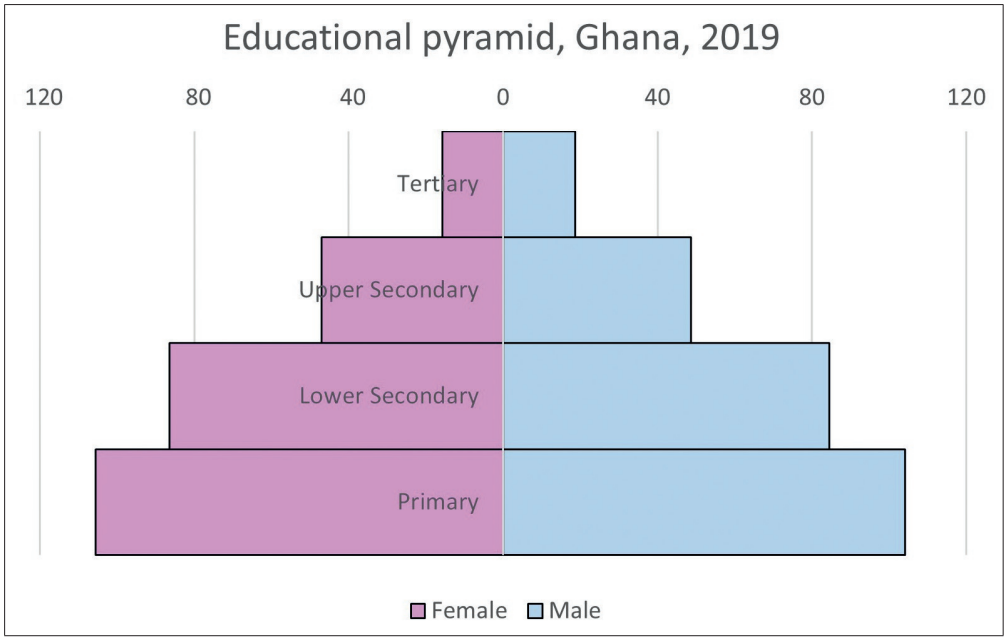
ruling presidents have been defeated at elections several times and there have been peaceful handovers.

5.4.2 Educational Situation

In the field of education, the country has made considerable progress. Primary education is universal and secondary education is common, the government having expanded tuition-free education to the senior secondary level in 2017. Ghana has experimented with several medium of instruction models – for an overview, see Klu and Ansre (2018). Currently, the official policy is to use English as the sole medium of instruction after the first three years of primary education. [134] During the first three years, indigenous languages are used. However, Ghana officially supports only 11 indigenous languages.[135] The actual implementation of this policy is patchy, to say the least, as described e.g. by Trudell (2016) and Anyidoho (2018). As Yevudey and Agbozo (2019) argue, this may be related to the fact that most teachers themselves have a multilingual background and resort to frequent code-switching and translanguaging in an effort to maximise their teaching efficiency. These efforts might lead some teachers to deviate from the official language policy, whereas others do not. When there is a national service that posts teachers to schools regardless of their language repertoires, some teachers may end up teaching pupils with an L1 that the teacher also speaks – those teachers could use that language, even if the policy is different. Other teachers may not be able to speak the languages of their students – they can therefore not employ such a strategy.

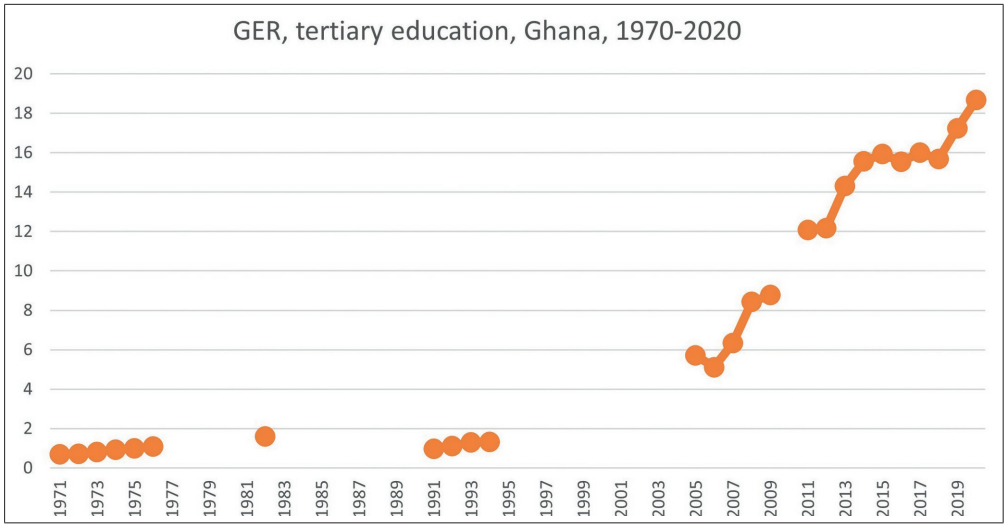
The education pyramid for 2019 is shown in the graph below.

134 See e.g. p. 28 of the Strategic Plan 2018-2030 of the Ghanaian Ministry of Education, available at
https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/planipolis/files/ressources/ghana-education-strategic-plan-2018-2030.pdf, accessed 7 November 2019.
135 http://www.bgl.gov.gh/, accessed 7 November 2019.



Graph 5.4

Educational pyramid, Ghana, 2019



Graph 5.5

Evolution of GER in tertiary education, Ghana

The progress made in Ghana in the past 45 years can be illustrated by the graph above, showing the evolution of the GER in tertiary education over the years.

Another tell-tale statistic (also derived from UNESCO data) is the Gender Parity Index for senior secondary education, showing the ratio of girls to boys. In 2000, this ratio was still 0.66 – for every three boys attending senior secondary school, there were two girls. By 2018, the ratio had improved to 0.95 – an impressive achievement.[136]

The ratio of GER in primary education to tertiary education is 6.1 – as was shown in Chapter 3.2, this puts Ghana close to the top in sub-Saharan Africa – the top country is Botswana, with a ratio of 3.4 (which is still below the ratios in the Global North).

What percentage of Ghanaian children have mastered English at the B2 level by the end of their secondary school career? An approximate calculation was already given in Chapter 2.2.3. Using WASSCE examination results, I gave an estimate of 54 per cent of those who sit for the WASSCE examination and just under 15 per cent of all 18-year-olds in Ghana (in 2018).

A less optimistic assessment is given by Stoffelsma and De Jong (2015). They found that in Ghana, only 48 per cent of first-year students for a Bachelor of Education had a B2 level in English reading proficiency, even though a WASSCE 'credit pass' is a requirement for admittance. Therefore, one might expect that all students have the B2 level – yet Stoffelsma and De Jong found this not to be the case. It would be interesting to do further research into this apparent discrepancy.

As discussed in Chapter 2.2.3, it could be that this national picture hides considerable regional differences from sight, especially differences between rural and urban areas. It might be that in urban areas, the proficiency in English of Ghanaian youngsters is closer to the situation in Malta, where around 48 per cent of the 18-year-olds have mastered English at the B2 level. At present, I have no data to support such an assertion but, if it would be the case, it would represent a devastating indictment of the current Ghanaian language policy, which would then seem to play a role in increasing the inequality in the country and could therefore be a factor in dividing, rather than uniting the country.

136 This may not be the end of the story because, as shown in chapter three, in most countries of the Global North girls now outperform boys.

The data as presented here suggest a few things:

- It is likely that the efforts of a significant number of students who are currently following secondary education go to waste, not because of a lack of intellectual ability in general, but because a lack of mastery of English. A vivid illustration of this idea is given by Arkorful (2014). He describes the 'Schools for Life' programme in Northern Ghana. This is a nine-month part-time programme, taught not by professional teachers but by community members who speak and teach in the same language as the children. The curriculum is restricted to literacy in the local language, numeracy, and life skills. He finds that this nine-month programme is just as effective as three years of formal primary school (p. 78). This is a built-in inefficiency in the Ghanaian educational system that is bound to become increasingly onerous as enrolment levels rise.
- If enrolment figures increase even further, the current language model in Ghana will reach its limits and pressure to change is bound to grow. This could go quickly: in 2017, Ghana abolished the school fees for senior secondary education. This has led to a considerable increase in the gross enrolment rate in secondary education: from 56 per cent in 2012 to 63 per cent in 2019.[137] A similar increase in the enrolment rates in tertiary education seems likely, based on this.
- The current educational model provides a strong incentive to parents to do whatever they can to give their children a head start in life by providing them with the best English education they can find or afford (e.g. via the elite Achimota school[138]). This also explains, at least in part, the resistance that parents feel towards teaching in local languages, even though they have a generally positive attitude towards the local language (Beyogle, 2014). This provides a strong incentive to duplicate existing socio-economic inequalities through education, as already described by Bourdieu. In Ghana, these are in part also regional inequalities, the North being consistently behind the Southern part of the country in many areas, including education, as pointed out, for example, by Higgins (2009) and further analysed by Abdulai and Hickey (2016).

Would it be possible to devise a language policy that uses certain designed Ghanaian languages as medium of instruction and if so, what would be considerations that are relevant for making a rational choice?

137 http://data.uis.unesco.org/#, retrieved 18 March 2021.

138 Founded in 1924 as the Prince of Wales College, this elite school was the first of its kind in Ghana and remains highly respected to this day.

5.4.3 Language Situation and Language Choice Options

Where the Ethnologue discerns 73 indigenous languages currently spoken in Ghana, the ASJP database discerns 65 Ghanaian languages, to which I have added English.

The first thing to note about the Ghanaian matrix is that both English and Ghanaian Pidgin English are either difficult or very difficult to learn for the majority of mother-tongue speakers of other Ghanaian languages. English and Ghanaian Pidgin English together form a 'very easy' combination, so early exposure to Pidgin English may help children to later learn standard English.

A second feature is that, unlike in Tanzania, the indigenous languages spoken in Ghana are not conveniently close to one another. Thus, choosing for example Akan (Twi) as the national language is not a rational choice the same way it is for Tanzania: for many Ghanaians who do not speak Twi as their L1 the language is a bit easier than English, but for millions of Ghanaians, it is not; switching to Twi would not constitute an 'inclusive' solution as proposed in the third principle outlined in section 3.2; it would lead to considerable resistance.

The major language families in Ghana are the Kwa and the Gur languages (both part of the Volta-Congo family), but these families are internally diverse: for example the Chala/Konkomba language pair (both are Gur languages) is difficult, as is e.g. the Adangbe/Ikpana language pair (both Kwa languages).

Still, rational choices for language use in higher education may be possible by looking at subfamilies. The largest of these is the Potou-Tano subfamily of Kwa languages; these languages are spoken in Ghana, but also in parts of Ivory Coast. As is clear from Table 5, several of these languages are easy to learn for any of the other languages in this subfamily. This is true for example for Efutu, but also for the Fante variety of Akan. The Bureau of Ghana Languages (BGL)[139] supports Akan/Twi, Gonja, and Nzema from this language subfamily. It would be conceivable to use several of these languages in primary education but make a switch to just one of these languages as medium of instruction for secondary and higher education – this language would then have to be taught as a subject in primary education.

139 http://www.bgl.gov.gh/language-overview.php, retrieved 28 February 2020.

Another subfamily of the Kwa languages is Ga-Dangme, which has two discerned languages. It is a very easy language pair; either one of these languages could be developed for use in higher education. Note that Ga/Twi is not an easy language pair. However, Ga is easy to learn for speakers of a number of the Ghana-Togo mountain languages discerned in Ghana. Ga and Dangme (or Dangbe) are both supported by the BGL. Again, it would be conceivable to use both languages in primary education but to make a switch to just one of these languages as medium of instruction for secondary and higher education – this language would then have to be taught as a subject in primary education.

A last subfamily of the Kwa languages is formed by the Gbe languages, of which Ewe is the most important one spoken in Ghana. As shown in Chapter Two, most of the Gbe language pairs are very easy. Ewe is supported by the BGL.

The Gur languages form a different family, with many discerned languages spoken mainly in the North of Ghana (and neighbouring countries). This family is internally diverse; there is not one language that is easy to learn for all Gur-speakers. However, with three languages it would be possible to have a solution for all or nearly all Gur languages spoken in Ghana. The Gur languages supported by the BGL are Dagaare, Dagbani, and Kasem. Dagaare and Dagbani are easy or very easy to learn for almost the same group of other Gur languages; from the point of view of inclusiveness, a more rational choice might be possible.

If the same rule of thumb would be applied to Ghana that has been suggested for Ethiopia (discerned languages with a minimum speaker base of one million as medium of instruction in tertiary education), then tertiary education would have to be provided in Ghana in five or six languages, possibly in addition to English: one Potou-Tana language, one of the Ga-Dangme languages, a Gbe language, and two or three Gur languages. Again, this would be an inclusive solution that would be a tremendous benefit for Ghanaians and for Ghana as a whole. As Ansah (2014: 14) has pointed out, to implement such solutions would need to take the actual sociolinguistic situation on the ground into account. It would require a good collaboration between the Ministry of Education, the Ghana Education Service, the Ghana Statistical Service, and the Linguistics Association of Ghana. That way, it will be possible to offer mother tongue education to every child in a decentralised way.

Table 5.5

Potou-Tano languages

2 Synonyms, at least 28 words

Loanwords excluded

LDND

	Ahante	Anufo	Anyi	Baule	Dompo	Dwang	Efutu	Gechode	Genyanga	Gonja	Hill Guang	Krachi	Larteh	Nawuri	Nchumuru	Nkami	Nzema	Twi Asante	Twi Fante
Ahante	0																		
Anufo	87	0																	
Anyi	76	68	0																
Baule	78	67	56	0															
Dompo	87	87	84	79	0														
Dwang	93	91	87	85	77	0													
Efutu	87	87	87	87	82	80	0												
Gechode	87	93	85	83	76	77	75	0											
Genyanga	86	92	87	84	75	75	73	29	0										
Gonja	92	93	87	86	69	77	85	72	73	0									
Hill Guang	85	88	87	87	77	76	77	81	78	82	0								
Krachti	85	89	82	83	81	79	86	71	71	72	80	0							
Larteh	93	92	86	87	75	78	83	81	82	84	89	82	0						
Nawurri	92	95	80	87	74	79	84	56	62	61	83	65	86	0					
Nchumuru	88	89	87	87	78	75	80	69	69	70	84	57	86	69	0				
Nkamie	87	87	85	83	74	68	77	84	77	77	68	72	81	76	78	0			
Nzema	79	74	72	77	85	88	87	92	93	91	88	89	87	95	90	88	0		
Twi Asante	87	77	71	75	85	77	81	88	85	85	88	82	84	92	87	82	79	0	
Twi Fante	90	84	71	76	84	80	77	81	77	84	88	77	85	88	80	81	81	46	0
	Ahante	Anufo	Anyi	Baul	Dompo	Dwang	Efutu	Gechode	Genyanga	Gonja	Hill Guang	Krachi	Larteh	Nawuri	Nchumuru	Nkam	Nzema	Twi Asante	Twi Fante

5.4.4 English, Creole, Pidgin?

In some countries, including in Ghana and Nigeria, new languages have developed that have acquired status of lingua franca. This includes languages such as Sango in the Central African Republic, Krio in Sierra Leone, and Ghanaian and Nigerian Pidgin English. Both in Ghana and Nigeria, English-based Pidgins have developed that are widely used. One might therefore ask the question whether these could be developed into designed languages as the single language to use in higher education on a national level, thus avoiding the need to use multiple languages.

For Ghana, this does not seem to be a likely development, because the language is not spoken in the whole country, but mostly confined to the greater Accra region, where it competes with Akan as a lingua franca. Also, according to the Ethnologue, its use is gendered, being used mostly by men.[140]

For Nigeria, the situation could be different. Nigerian Pidgin English (also known as Naijá) is widespread in the country and is, in fact, developing into a Creole, because more and more children learn it as a first language (Simpson and Oyètádé, 2008). It therefore seems to be a legitimate question to ask: could Nigerian Pidgin become a national language in Nigeria and could it potentially solve the problem of which language to use in higher education?

What answer would the ASJP database suggest?

The first thing to note about Nigeria is that it is linguistically very diverse. The Ethnologue discerns 507 living indigenous languages.[141] The ASJP database discerns 380 (including English). These languages are from very different language families: there are substantive numbers of speakers from Afro-Asiatic languages (Hausa being the largest), Nilo-Saharan languages (Kanuri being the largest), and Niger-Congo languages from several families, including Southern Bantoid (Ibibio, Tiv), West-Benue-Congo (Yoruba, Edo, Igbo, Nupe, Idoma), Kalabari, and various Platoid languages (Jukun and others).

140 https://www-ethnologue-com/language/gpe, retrieved 8 January 2020.
141 https://www-ethnologue-com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2443/country/NG, retrieved 8 January 2020.

Table 5.6

Selected language pairs, Nigeria

2 Synonyms, at least 28 words Loanwords excluded LDND													
	Tiv	Ibibio	Yoruba	Edo	Idoma	Igbo Onitsha	Nupe	Jukun Takum	Kalabari	Kanuri	Hausa	English	Nigerian Pidgin
Tiv	0												
Ibibio	99	0											
Yoruba	96	94	0										
Edo	99	94	87	0									
Idoma	97	87	98	94	0								
Igbo Onitsha	96	93	95	98	98	0							
Nupe	98	93	94	91	95	95	0						
Jukun Takum	94	96	101	88	95	96	91	0					
Kalabari	98	101	94	101	98	91	99	99	0				
Kanuri	101	103	98	103	99	98	101	97	94	0			
Hausa	104	103	97	96	99	100	96	101	96	99	0		
English	104	103	99	100	98	100	100	100	101	102	98	0	
Nigerian Pidgin	103	103	98	98	97	100	100	102	97	101	99	41	0
	Tiv	Ibibio	Yoruba	Edo	Idoma	Igbo Onitsha	Nupe	Jukun Takum	Kalabari	Kanuri	Hausa	English	Nigerian Pidgin

As is clear from Table 6, showing these main languages, English and Nigerian Pidgin form an easy combination. Both languages are difficult or very difficult for all of the other Nigerian languages in this selection.

What is also clear is that there are only a few other easy language combinations, such as between Edo and Yoruba and between Edo and Jukun. Of the three major languages of Nigeria, the Igbo-Yoruba combination is of medium difficulty, the combination of either of these with Hausa is about as difficult as the combination with English.

The Ethnologue reports that there are several dialects of Nigerian Pidgin: 'Lagos Pidgin, Delta Pidgin, Cross River Pidgin, Benin Pidgin. No unified standard. Dialects may be very different from each other.'[142] This is a logical development – pidgins are formed on the basis of a mixed lexicon using words from different languages, but, in this case, with English as the dominant source. However, it is logical that in different linguistic areas, words from different other languages will be added in. In addition, pronunciation will be different, depending on the sounds that are common in the different linguistic areas; the same may hold for the grammar. The consequence of this is that, sooner or later, the Ethnologue will come to decide that it is necessary to discern different Nigerian Pidgin languages.

Note also that the Ethnologue does not mention 'Kano Pidgin' or 'Maiduguri Pidgin.' This is because Nigerian Pidgin does not currently enjoy nationwide coverage in Nigeria: in its different varieties, it is mainly spoken in the South of the country. Northerners do learn the language, mainly to deal with Southerners, and those that do can be recognised by their Northern accent.[143]

Of course, policy could influence this. One could imagine developing Nigerian Pidgin into a designed language with a formal grammar, pronunciation rules, and a vocabulary that could include words from a variety of Nigerian languages. However, it would only make sense to do this if the source languages that would be at the basis of such a development are not too different – but, in this case, they are. The ASJP database looks at lexical differences, but a quick look at Wikipedia reveals that, for example, Hausa and Yoruba are also very different in their phonology and grammar. This means that it will be difficult, if not impossible, to develop the language in such a way that it is ***equally easy to learn*** for all Nigerians: there will always be inequities, no

142 https://www-ethnologue-com/language/pcm, retrieved 7 January 2020.
143 Akinyinka Akinyoade, personal communication.

matter what solution may be conceived. What is possible, in theory, would be to develop the language in such a way that it is ***equally difficult*** to learn for all other Nigerians – but because English already serves that purpose, what would be the point?

There is another theoretical possibility: all Nigerian parents could decide to abandon their own languages and to change over to speaking Nigerian Pidgin with their children from birth, or at least to make sure that these children grow up in a largely Nigerian Pidgin-speaking environment – for a number of children, especially in the South of the country, that is, of course, already happening. For these children, it will be easier than for others to learn standard English, at least if the designed Pidgin is close to the current Nigerian Pidgin. If this process takes place in certain parts of Nigeria but not in others, it will only lead to a sharpening of the internal divisions in the country. This is likely to happen if Nigerian Pidgin itself borrows more heavily from some Nigerian languages than from others. One could argue that Pidgin is (or Pidgins are) culturally more appropriate and therefore 'feel' better, especially because of such borrowings and other changes. However, this could probably also be accomplished through Nigerian English and, unless people massively switch to Nigerian Pidgin as their L1, the indigenous languages will always feel even better. If the Pidgin is similar to some, but not to all languages, then this would lead to resistance. But if the choice is between changing to a more equitable form of Nigerian Pidgin than the current one and changing to (Nigerian) English – why not choose English instead?

In conclusion, developing Nigerian Pidgin into a designed language would be possible, but it cannot be done in such a way that it would become an easy alternative language for ***all*** Nigerians – the underlying language ecology prevents it. This same reasoning also applies to Ghana: the Gur languages are very different from the Kwa languages, but within the Kwa languages there is great diversity as well. In Ghana, just as in Nigeria, the underlying language ecology would prevent developing the Pidgin as a national language that would be an equitable and easier alternative than English. In other words: pidgin will not solve anything.

What this also means, following the logic explained in the earlier chapters, is that Nigeria will have to change over to using multiple languages in higher education at some point in the future; one of these could still be English. It would be possible, using the method developed in these case studies, to carry out such an analysis for Nigeria as well. I have chosen not to do this because the method developed here itself does not provide final answers, Nigeria has

a rich base of linguists better able to do the analysis and the approach itself is sufficiently developed through the other case studies.

5.4.5 Conclusions and Recommendations

As was the case for the previous countries, a switch to indigenous languages for tertiary education is not yet necessary in Ghana, since enrolment figures are so low that English or any other language can be used. However, enrolment rates have doubled in the 2005-2015 period and could double again in the next decade. If that happens, the strain on the system will increase and the pressure for a change to indigenous languages at least for a part of tertiary education will increase.

Already at present, the use of English as sole medium of instruction in secondary education is bound to lead to wastage and loss, because it is likely that not all children have a level of English that is sufficient to follow education in that language, although in principle they may have the intellectual capabilities.

For Ghana, it would be possible to choose five or six languages as designed languages for higher education (possibly in addition to English) that would cover almost the entire population and guarantee equitable access to education at levels that cannot be achieved using English as the sole medium of instruction. This is a lower number than the number of languages currently supported for primary education; however, it might be necessary to make a slightly different choice of the languages chosen as medium of instruction, in order to do justice to the principles of ease of learning and of inclusivity as outlined in Chapter 3.2. Given the common cultural basis that seems to bring together most major ethnolinguistic groups in Ghana and given the level of cross-cultural understanding that seems to exist there, this should not pose a threat to national unity, but rather serve to bring the peoples of Ghana even closer together, especially if policies are put in place that encourage Ghanaians to learn each other's languages.

We have briefly examined whether or not Pidgin could provide a solution to the language problem, either in Ghana or in Nigeria. The conclusion was clear – in those countries, they are no solution. In the previous case studies, the conclusion was that in future, non-indigenous languages will no longer be used as medium of instruction in secondary education and will have, at best, a minor role as medium of instruction in tertiary education. For Ghana,

the situation might be different from that in other countries, in that it is thinkable that English will continue to be used as medium of instruction in parts of secondary and tertiary education, alongside indigenous languages.

Now, let us look at a country from a very different region, a country with one clearly dominant language which also has comparatively high enrolment rates in education: Morocco.

5.5 Morocco

In the previous case studies, we have looked at various countries in sub-Saharan Africa, all characterised by the use of former colonial languages in higher education. However, the situation is slightly different in North Africa, where Arabic plays an important role. In the Maghreb countries, French is slowly being edged out by Arabic as the medium of instruction in higher education. Therefore, it is interesting to also examine the situation in one of these countries. The country chosen for this case study is Morocco, because, on paper, it has a progressive language policy. How does this work out in practice, and does the Moroccan experience provide possible insights relevant for the rest of the continent?

Morocco is a country in North Africa with a population of over 37 million people.[144] The country is linguistically diverse, just like many other African countries. It has two official languages: Arabic and standard Tamazight (Berber).[145] However, French, the former colonial language, is still widely used in government, the private sector, and in education.[146]

5.5.1 Cultural and Political Situation

Morocco is a constitutional monarchy; the current king is Mohammed VI. He is the latest ruler in the Alaouite dynasty, which has ruled Morocco since 1631, though under French overlordship from 1912 until independence in 1956. The powers of the king are considerable, but have been limited after

144 https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/morocco-population/, accessed 11 August 2021

145 The term 'Berber' is used for both the people and their languages. The people are also referred to as Amazigh, plural Imazighen; their discerned languages go by different names.

146 Thus, the site of the Prime Minister of Morocco is available in Arabic, French, and Tamazight: https://www.cg.gov.ma/fr, accessed 11 August 2021

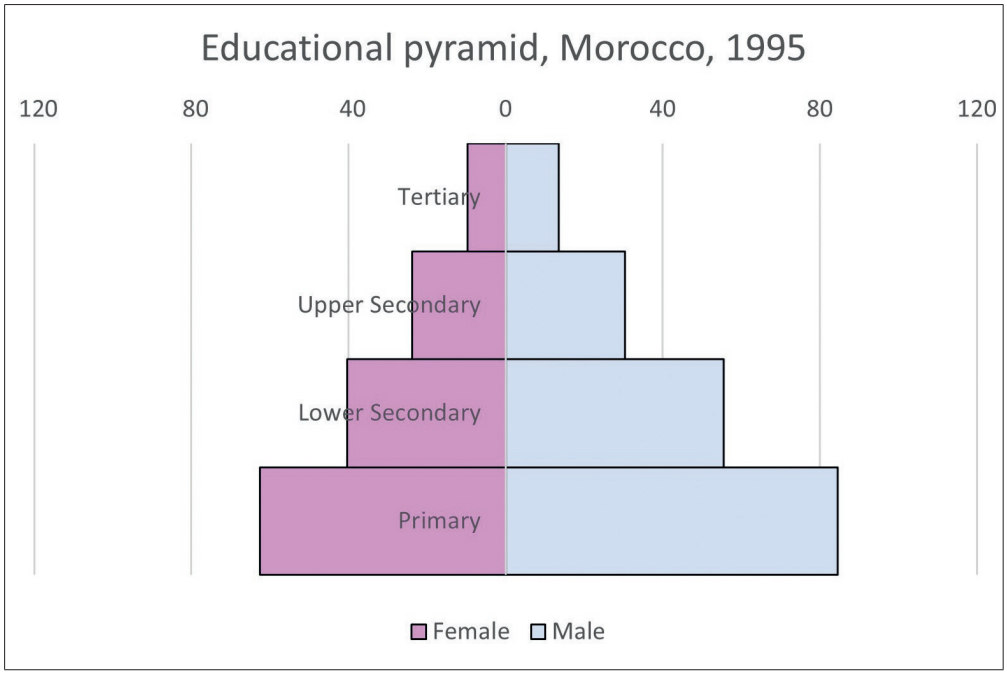
the constitutional reform of 2011. Morocco is a multi-party democracy, with the last elections held in 2021. Within Morocco, there is a great deal of inequality, with large differences between the urban and rural areas. In part, this inequality is regionally and linguistically mediated, forming one explanation for the unrest that has shaken the North of the country.

Although Morocco is linguistically diverse, the language ecology is much less complicated than that of most African countries. The Ethnologue currently discerns ten languages spoken in Morocco.[147] However, this does not mean there are as many different cultural groups. Van Pinxteren (2021a) was able to analyse information on the Berber and Arab-speaking communities. For two of the cultural dimensions discussed there, the differences were greater than 20 points – such differences in culturally relevant survey question results are likely to correspond to noticeable differences in practice as well. These differences concern the Indulgence vs Restraint dimension, although both groups score on the restrained side of the spectrum, and on the 'Fix vs Flex' (LTO) dimension, although both groups score towards the 'Fixed' side of the spectrum, the Berber more so than the others. On the other hand, the hierarchical cluster analysis by Van Pinxteren (2020b) places both groups in the same cultural cluster with the Algerians and Egyptians (with Tunisians being in a separate cluster).

5.5.2 Educational Situation

The situation in Morocco is different from that in sub-Saharan Africa, in that the participation rate in higher education is much higher, although not as high as the rate in the Global North. In addition, the situation is dynamic, as the two pyramids below show, comparing the situation in 1995 with that of 2019.

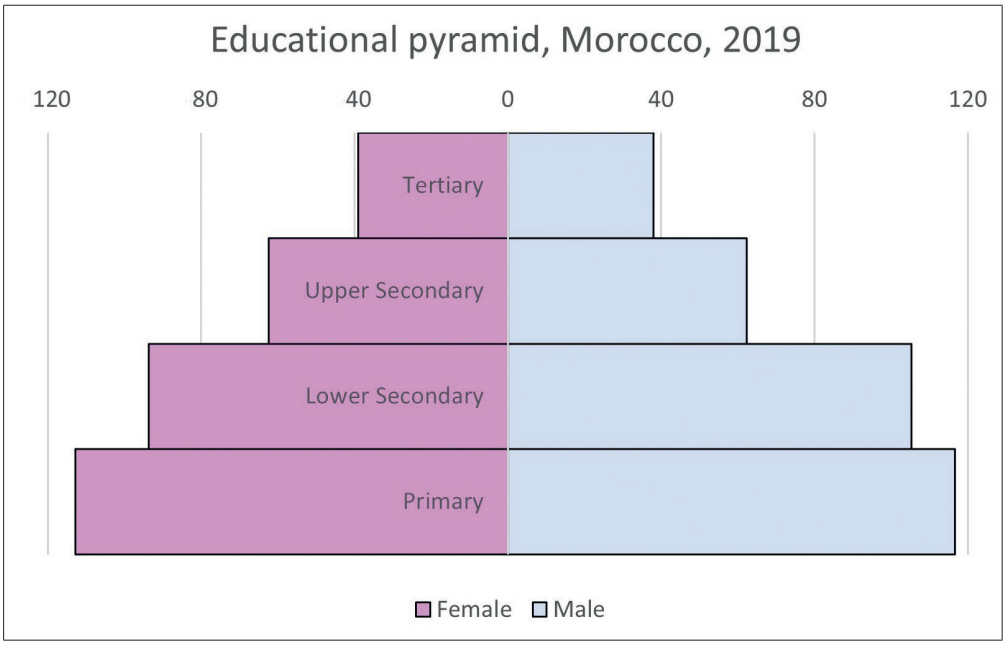
147 https://www-ethnologue-com/country/MA/languages, accessed 11 August 2021



Graph 5.6

Educational pyramid, Morocco, 1995 (Secondary education: 1996)

In 1995, the participation of girls was markedly below that of boys. A minority of girls especially could not go to primary school. Participation at tertiary level was below the current participation in Botswana (see the next case study), but above that of Tanzania. By 2019, the situation had changed dramatically.



Graph 5.7
Educational pyramid, Morocco, 2019

In Morocco, nowadays, the participation rate of girls is almost equal to that of boys, a dramatic shift compared to 1995. Participation at all levels has increased; for tertiary education, it now approaches the 40 per cent level, the threshold identified as the 'language barrier' in Chapter Two. Thus, it should come as no surprise that Jaafari (2019: 134) points out that in spite of intensive language teaching since early primary school, many students 'finish their high school with a very low level in French which does not even enable them to communicate let alone to pursue their higher studies.' Contrary to what Jaafari thinks, this in itself is not an indication that the Moroccan education system is failing: my hypothesis is that no education system that needs to educate a large percentage of the population manages to give more than around 40 per cent of the children a high enough level in a foreign language. The educational system in Morocco has become much less pyramidical: the ratio of GER in primary education to tertiary education has improved from 6.4 in 1995 to 3.0 in 2019.

The medium of instruction in education has been hotly debated over the years, and has been the subject of various reforms, with various degrees of effectiveness (Jaafari, 2019). However, by 1980, both primary and secondary education had changed from using French to using Arabic as the medium

of instruction. One important exception remains: Morocco has a small but prestigious private educational sector that continues to provide education in French. In tertiary education, French remains the most important medium of instruction, although in many universities a number of courses are being taught in Arabic.[148]

5.5.3 Language Situation and Language Choice Options

Whereas in other African countries the number of designed languages is low or virtually non-existent, at least for use in higher education, this is quite different in Morocco. Morocco makes use of various forms of Arabic that are not actually spoken by anybody, but still used in certain formal domains, including in education. These include Quranic Arabic (used for religious purposes), Classical Arabic, and Modern Standard Arabic. It is this last language that is taught as designed language in education and used as the medium of instruction. As pointed out earlier, it is a language that has to be learned in school. In contrast to other African countries, the Arab language has not suffered as much as African languages have during the colonial period: the French have tried with similar intensity as in their other colonies to impose the French language (Jaafari 2019: 126), but in North Africa their success was limited by the stronger position of Arabic as a language of prestige especially in the domain of religion.

Berber languages have suffered much more than Arab from linguistic domination, because these languages have a much lower status than Arabic, similar to that of African indigenous languages in the rest of the continent. Yet, for the Berber languages, a gradual and not uncontested process of emancipation has taken place that has given them a higher status than that of most African languages in other countries. In 2000, the Charter of Educational Reform for the first time recognised the importance of the Berber languages. Then, in 2001, a national Institute, IRCAM, was created, devoted to Amazigh culture.[149] In 2003, Amazigh started to be used in education (Idhssaine and El Kirat, 2021). The creation of IRCAM also led to designing a Moroccan standard Tamazight that is different from any of the spoken varieties of Berber discerned in Morocco. It is most closely related

148 See e.g. this overview of courses in a mixture of French and Arabic from the University at Oujda: http://www.ump.ma/fr/fsjes-17/alastshar-alkanony-that-alsbgh-almaly-lledarat-oalmkaolat, accessed 12 August 2021, and this one from the University Mohammed V in Rabat: http://www.um5.ac.ma/um5/formations-par-diplome?id=2, accessed 18 August 2021

149 http://www.ircam.ma, accessed 18 August 2021

to Tashelhit (Shilha). IRCAM also created a new version of the traditional Tifinagh script, which has subsequently been used for writing the language (complicating its adoption, but perhaps also rendering the language more visible). In the 2011 constitution, standard Tamazight was recognised as one of the official languages of the country, which is supposed to be taught to all children (but not used as a medium of instruction). However, measures to follow up on this have been slow in coming. Yet, in principle, both the Arab and Berber languages now have institutions that are tasked with protecting and developing the language. The ASJP database discerns 16 languages used in Morocco, to which I have added French; standard Tamazight is not currently in the ASJP database. The ASJP distances are given in Table 7, below.

The matrix immediately shows that, for all Moroccans, French is a difficult (though not a *very* difficult) language to learn. By contrast, for speakers of Moroccan Arabic (the most commonly spoken language in the country, also known as Darija) Modern Standard Arabic is a very easy language to learn, less difficult also than Quranic Arabic, which can still be classified as easy. The other variety of Arabic that the ASJP database discerns, Judeo-Moroccan Arabic, is in the same position. A similar situation prevails for speakers of the various Berber languages discerned by the ASJP database: they mostly form very easy language combinations.

Arabic and Berber languages do have some similarities: as the matrix shows, the combination of Tashelhit with Modern Standard Arabic is on the border between easy and medium-difficult; most other combinations are of medium difficulty.

The relationship between the two groups of languages (Arabic and Berber) has not always been an easy one, due in part to ethnic and regional tensions within the country. Darija and related languages are spoken by approximately 90 per cent of the population (Jaafari 2019: 127), whereas an estimated ten per cent of the population prefer one of the Berber languages. There is a considerable degree of bilingualism, although many more people with Berber as their L1 also speak Arabic than the other way around. Many children are brought up both with Arabic and Berber as their mother tongues, although this, again, is common where parents are of mixed or of Amazigh origin, not when both parents are of Arab-speaking origin.

Table 5.7

ASJP database output for Moroccan languages

2 Synonyms, at least 28 words

Loanwords excluded

LDND

	Ayt_s	Beni	Figuig	Senha	Senha	Tamaz	Tamaz	Tarif	Tarif	Tashe	Tazna	Arabic	Class	Judeo	Moroc	Stand	French
Ayt_Seghrouchen(AA.Berber)	0																
Beni_Snous_Western_Algeria	52	0															
Figuig(AA.Berber)	57	35	0														
Senhaja_de_Srair (AA.Berber)	60	46	57	0													
Senhay(AA.Berber)	47	50	65	20	0												
Tamazight_Central_Atlas_AY	53	52	46	48	53	0											
Tamazight_Central_Atlas_NT	50	47	47	44	40	27	0										
Tarifit_Beni_Iznassen (A.A.Berber)	51	21	33	39	45	51	51	0									
Tarifit_Guelaia (AA.Berber)	53	34	47	43	44	54	55	27	0								
Taselhit_Ida_Usemlal (A.A.Berber)	60	54	51	47	47	42	20	56	61	0							
Taznatit (A.A.Berber)	69	66	54	75	77	66	65	64	71	66	0						
Arabic_Quranic (A.A. Semtic)	91	97	95	98	93	95	91	95	93	90	97	0					
Classical_Arabic (A.A. Semtic)	92	99	93	97	92	95	91	94	94	91	95	32	0				
Judeo_Moroccan Arabic (A.A. Semtic)	90	98	96	94	85	91	91	94	94	90	94	54	59	0			
Morocan_Arabic (A.A. Semtic)	93	96	92	96	89	93	94	93	95	93	93	63	68	48	0		
Standard_Arabic (A.A. Semtic)	91	98	94	96	90	93	91	94	95	90	54	52	47	62	66	0	
French	98	99	98	96	95	95	97	95	97	99	99	97	95	98	98	97	0
	Ayt_s	Beni	Figuig	Senha	Senha	Tamaz	Tamaz	Tarif	Tarif	Tashe	Tazna	Arabic	Class	Judeo	Moroc	Stand	French

What this means, then, is that the choice that was made in Morocco to have Modern Standard Arabic and a designed Tamazight as the two national languages appears to be a rational one, even though many have argued against it. A remaining issue for debate is whether or not the spoken varieties (either of Arabic or of Berber languages) should be allowed in schools and used as resource or should instead be banned (see Jaafari 2019: 132-133).

The choice in Morocco in favour of two easy to learn designed languages can serve as an example for other African countries. However, that does not mean that all is rosy. Thus, in their recent study, Idhssaine and El Kirat show that Berber language use is often limited to family circles (with parents and grandparents) and that there is a shift towards Arabic. This means that intergenerational language transmission is still in jeopardy. In order to counteract this, they recommend (p. 477) 'a democratic implementation of the provisions of article five of the amended constitution to enhance the patterns of presence of Amazigh in public life' and 'the immediate vertical and horizontal generalisation of the Amazigh teaching experience.' In addition, they call for the introduction of Amazigh as a medium of instruction, in addition to its use as a means of communication.

5.5.4 Conclusions and Recommendations

The example of Morocco clearly shows the usefulness and practical applicability of the theoretical framework as developed in the earlier chapters. Thus, the distinction between designed and discerned languages helps to understand the language ecology of the country and makes it easy to understand why the choice of Modern Standard Arabic and Standard Tamazight as the official languages of the country is both rational and understandable. It also shows that the use of designed languages is not only a common practice in Asia and Europe, but is also part of the African continent. The theoretical existence of a 'language barrier' that was introduced in Chapter Two shows its usefulness in the Moroccan example, because the transition from French to Arabic in higher education is taking shape, in a country where the participation in higher education now stands at around 40 per cent. In a way, the choice of working with two national languages in Morocco may be easier than in some other countries, because the language pairs are only of medium difficulty; one can expect that with a relatively limited effort, large sections of the population could learn to use both languages at least to reach basic proficiency.

Yet, it is also clear from the Moroccan case study that a gradual transition from a colonial language to one or more local languages can be fraught with difficulties. For Tamazight, the situation is more difficult than for Arab, because the language does not have the same prestige and it is spoken by a minority that is probably still getting smaller. Yet, the Moroccan example also underlines the importance of institutional support and of using language in education for achieving a potential reverse of the slow language decline and erosion that has been and is still taking place.

Jaafari (2019: 138) has recommended that, '[f]or policy makers, crafting a coherent policy should be free from any politicization or ideologization of the issue.' This important point deserves to be underscored, because it reinforces the importance of establishing a set of sound principles (as proposed in Chapter Three), which enable a scientifically informed discussion on rational language choices open to countries, one that is relatively unencumbered by political strife.

Now, after examining the very North of the continent, let us end our series of case studies by examining its southernmost country, a country that has adopted no fewer than eleven official languages: let us look at South Africa.

5.6 South Africa and Some of Its neighbours

The previous case studies have demonstrated the variety of language ecologies and language policies prevailing on the African continent and have illustrated both the strength and the limitations of the theoretical approach as developed in the earlier chapters. For this last case study, it is interesting to look at the country with the most diversified and technologically most advanced economy of the continent, the country on the continent that has suffered longest under minority domination and that has made a conscious choice in favour of using eleven national languages: South Africa. Because South Africa has heavily influenced most of its neighbours and because they exhibit some interesting characteristics, this case study will also devote brief paragraphs to Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, and Namibia, and to the particular challenges posed by and for the speakers of Khoisan languages.[150]

150 South Africa, of course, also influences developments in Mozambique and Zimbabwe and, indeed, further afield in the region as well, but still in a less direct manner and with different historical backgrounds; including those countries in the case study as well would make it unwieldly.

South Africa has a population of more than 60 million people. As such, it dwarfs the populations of Botswana (less than 2.5 million), Eswatini (under 2 million), Lesotho (just over 2 million), and Namibia (just over 2.5 million).[151]

South Africa, Botswana, and Namibia are linguistically diverse; Eswatini and Lesotho are much more homogeneous linguistically. All these countries, except for South Africa, have English as their only official language; Botswana is peculiar in that one language, Tswana, is spoken by over 80 per cent of the population either as L1 or as L2. For an overview, see e.g. Chebanne (2016b).

5.6.1 Cultural and Political Situation

Even though South Africa has adopted eleven official languages and the other countries can also boast a large number of languages, this does not mean that there is a similar number of different cultural entities in the country. In the hierarchical cluster analysis, Van Pinxteren (2020b) demonstrated that the old 'tribal' distinctions that are still used in Botswana and Lesotho seem to have lost their meaning. Furthermore, the cultural dimensions analysis by Van Pinxteren (2021a) gave rise to the idea that the Sotho, Swazi, and Tswana of South Africa are now, culturally speaking, more akin to one another than to their siblings in the neighbouring countries.

Whereas in the rest of Africa European settlers have remained small minorities in numerical terms, albeit at times economically influential, this is different in South Africa. It is the only country that has a sizeable proportion of inhabitants of European descent, estimated at around nine per cent of the population, divided into an English-speaking and an Afrikaans-speaking community. In spite of apartheid regulations, there have been frequent and intense contacts between the various population groups, leading to a mixed-race population of around equal proportions (most of whom are Afrikaans speaking).

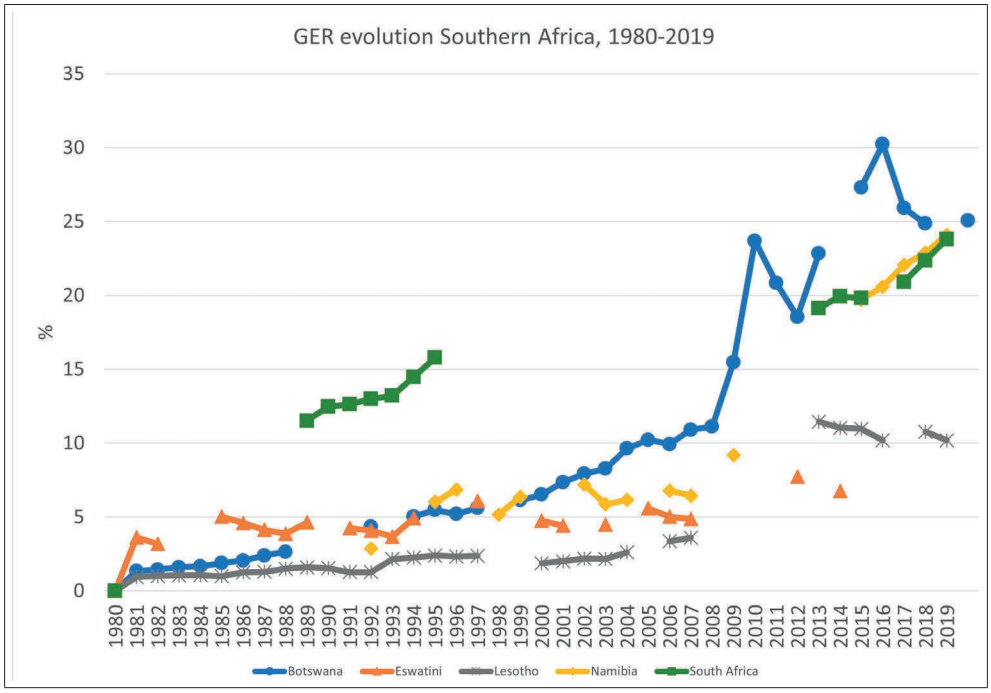
South Africa became a multiparty democracy after the ending of the unique apartheid system of institutionalised racial segregation in 1990; in the same year, Namibia also gained its independence. The ANC, the leading movement in the liberation struggle headed by the iconic figure of Nelson Mandela, gained the majority of seats in the first free elections and has retained it ever

151 https://www.worldometers.info/population/africa/southern-africa/, accessed 18 August 2021.

since, in spite of suffering from several internal crises. However, much of the power in the country is devolved to its nine provinces. In some, the ANC does not have a majority. One legacy of the apartheid system is that the inequality in the country is to a significant extent still manifested along racial lines.

5.6.2 Educational Situation

One of the most important grievances under the apartheid system was the institutionalised inequality in access to and quality of education. Therefore, it is to be expected that Namibia and South Africa would have invested heavily in improvements in this area since independence and that this should be visible in the Gross Enrolment Ratios. As Graph 8 below shows, this has indeed been the case. However, a comparison between the four countries shows a few elements worth noting.

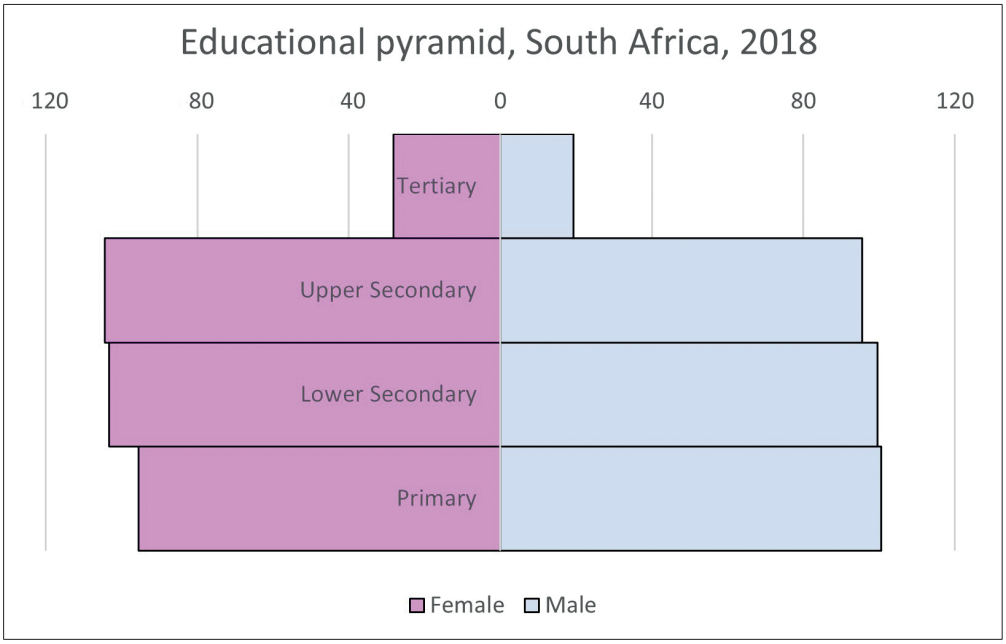


Graph 5.8
Evolution of GER in Southern Africa, Tertiary education, 1980 – 2019

First, it is noticeable that GER increased for Eswatini and Lesotho, from levels of around two per cent in 1980 to a level of around ten per cent in

1999. Second, it is noticeable that South Africa started at a much higher level than the other countries, of around 12% in 1990, compared to less than five per cent for the other countries at the time. However, Botswana and Namibia percentually increased much faster than South Africa; in 1999, all three countries stood at just under 25 per cent, with Botswana outperforming all other countries.

Looking at the entire educational pyramid in South Africa gives the picture as in Graph 9, below.



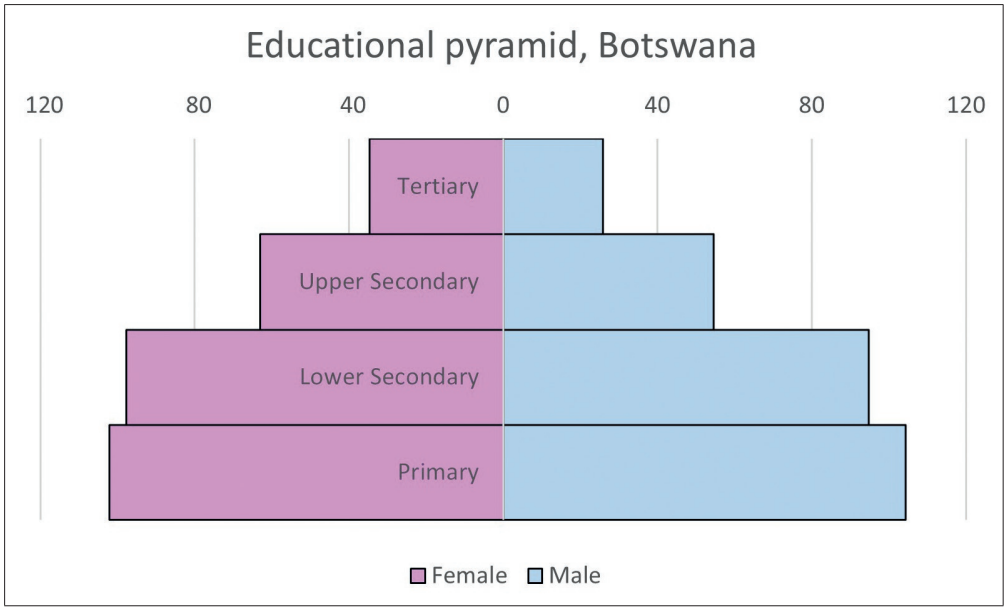
Graph 5.9
Educational pyramid, South Africa, 2018

A big difference between the situation of South Africa and that of the other case study countries is that, in South Africa, there is no selection between lower and upper secondary education: education up to the end of secondary level is now universal in the country. Especially for girls, the GER of over 100 per cent in secondary education can probably be attributed to catching up: many girls who did not get a chance to complete their secondary education before are now able to do so. However, participation in tertiary education

is lower than for example in Morocco and lower for boys than for girls. The ratio of GER in primary education to tertiary education in 2018 was 4.1.

In South Africa, all eleven official languages are used as medium of instruction for the first few years of primary education. After that, the medium of instruction becomes either Afrikaans or English. There is a recognition that before other languages can be introduced at tertiary level, they may first need additional development, or intellectualisation (discussed in section 5.6.5).

It is interesting to compare this with Botswana. In terms of participation in tertiary education, Botswana is the best-performing country in sub-Saharan Africa. As is clear from Graph 10, below, selection in in Botswana occurs earlier than in South Africa (more in line with the other countries in this case study). There is a cut-off point between lower and upper secondary education: only two out of three children who start secondary education continue to the upper level; but more children than in South Africa proceed to tertiary education. The ratio of GER in primary education to tertiary education in 2015 was 3.4, which puts Botswana at the top of sub-Saharan Africa (although this ratio is still below those of the Global North).



Graph 5.10
Educational pyramid, Botswana, 2008/2015

In Botswana, Tswana is used as the medium of instruction in the first two years of primary education. English is used afterwards. No other languages are used in education.[152] Chebanne (2020, personal communication) feels that it would be too much to say that Botswana has a language policy as such; rather, there are a number of commonly-accepted practices in education and in administration.

This is different from the situation in Namibia, where mother-tongue education is provided in several languages in the first four years, after which a switch is made to English (Garrouste 2011: 225).

Molosiwa and Bokhutso (2016) have argued that the current language in education policy of Botswana puts speakers of other languages than Tswana at a disadvantage. Is this picture confirmed if one looks at the ASJP database? Would it be possible to devise a more equitable language policy? This question is probably easier to answer by looking at the Bantu and Khoisan languages separately.

5.6.3 Language Situation: Bantu languages

The ASJP database discerns 18 Bantu languages spoken in Namibia, 12 in South Africa, and six in Botswana. Eswatini and Lesotho are monolingual; both languages are also spoken in South Africa.

These languages all make for easy or very easy language combinations. Nevertheless, one should realise that speakers of for example Kalanga (in Botswana) face difficulties in learning Tswana that are greater than those faced by native Tswana speakers (they are equivalent e.g. to English speakers trying to learn Dutch). The current educational system of Botswana does not take these difficulties into account, although individual teachers might, in contrast to the situation in South Africa and Namibia.

In line with the fifth principle (encourage collaboration), it might be cost-efficient to develop Tswana in Botswana in harmony with the development of Tswana in South Africa and also in harmony with closely related discerned languages like Sotho, spoken in South Africa and Lesotho. This would be rational, but it is not a straightforward matter. Thus, Machobane and

152 See Annah Molosiwa at http://theconversation.com/training-can-help-botswanas-teachers-manage-multiculturalism-69058, retrieved 18 November 2019.

Mokitini (1998) provide an insightful analysis of the problems in creating a harmonised writing system (orthography) for Sotho.

Banda (2016) also discusses the issue of the many writing systems (orthographies) that exist in Africa. He points out how they are needlessly complicated and different from each other and from the conventions of English spelling (which, unfortunately, are among the least logical found anywhere). He documents that, in practice, official orthographies are often not followed and that a practice is emerging that does justice to the multilingual repertoires many people have. His plea is for allowing this to happen. However, it does not follow from the fact that colonially developed orthographies needlessly divide Africans that leaving things to chance will lead to better outcomes: that reasoning disregards the advantages of standardised writing systems. Instead, African-designed policies are needed that offer maximum simplicity and that capitalise on possibilities for mutual intelligibility between related languages – the policies that Prah has been working on.

In this context, it may be illustrative to look at Tswana and other languages in South Africa before turning to further conclusions and recommendations.

Below is the matrix of ASJP distances between the 11 official languages of South Africa.

Table 5.8

ASJP output, official languages of South Africa

2 Synonyms, at least 28 words Loanwords excluded LDND											
	Ndebele	Northern Sotho	Sotho Southern	Swazi	Tsonga	Tswana	Venda	Xhosa	Zulu	Afrikaans	English
Ndebele	0										
Northern Sotho	85	0									
Sotho Southern	73	59	0								
Swazi	60	74	75	0							
Tsonga	66	70	75	67	0						
Tswana	85	70	66	88	77	0					
Venda	72	76	71	68	75	81	0				
Xhosa	55	84	70	59	73	86	71	0			
Zulu	61	77	75	43	70	86	71	52	0		
Afrikaans	101	101	100	104	101	98	103	101	102	0	
English	95	101	99	99	91	99	98	100	99	59	0
	Ndebele	Northern Sotho	Sotho Southern	Swazi	Tsonga	Tswana	Venda	Xhosa	Zulu	Afrikaans	English

Again, it is good to point out that both Afrikaans and English are difficult or very difficult languages for any L1 speaker of one of the other languages spoken in the region. It is also good to note that the Afrikaans-English language pair is very easy – using the same criteria proposed in the other case studies, using only one of them as language in higher education should be possible. Afrikaans-speakers are often praised for their excellent command of English, but taking into account the proximity of both languages there seems to be no cause for special admiration here.

Alexander (1998) has argued that in South Africa, only two Bantu languages (Nguni, encompassing Ndebele, Xhosa, Swazi, Tsonga, and Zulu) and Sotho (encompassing the others) could be developed for formal use in education and other domains.[153] This thesis is only partially supported by the ASJP database. The Nguni languages do form very easy language pairs, with the exception of Tsonga. On the other hand, the internal variety within the Sotho-Tswana languages seems to be larger than within the Nguni languages; the Sotho-Tswana language pair is easy, but not *very* easy. Using the same criteria as employed for the other case studies would lead one to conclude that only one (and in fact, any one) of the Bantu languages discerned in South Africa would need to be developed as the designed language (it could in theory be used then for Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, and Namibia as well). In the completely hypothetical case that for example Afrikaans and Zulu would become the two official languages of South Africa, this would lead to a tremendous strengthening of the position of Zulu. However, developing Sotho and Nguni, as suggested by Alexander, would also have this effect. What seems certain is that South Africa's current language policy with eleven official languages will inexorably lead to a strengthening of the position of English. Alexander (2001) has pointed this out as well, and has argued for the creation of a new, common South African identity. The research of Chapter 4.2 illustrates that such an identity might be forming.

In Namibia, Kwanyama (Ovambo) is by far the largest Bantu language. It, or any other Bantu language spoken in the country, could be developed as the single designed language for use in higher education in the country, as could be done for Tswana in Botswana.

153 See Msimang (1998) for an analysis of how these ideas were sabotaged in the apartheid era.

5.6.4 Language Situation: Khoisan languages

The Khoisan languages are among the most endangered in Africa, totalling together fewer than around 300,000 speakers, mostly from marginalised communities.

The ASJP database discerns 29 Khoisan languages (including some that are extinct), spoken in Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa. They fall into three families: Tuu; Khoe-Kwadi; and Kx'a (see Table 9).

A first feature that they have in common is that English and Bantu languages are all either difficult or very difficult languages for all speakers of Khoisan languages.

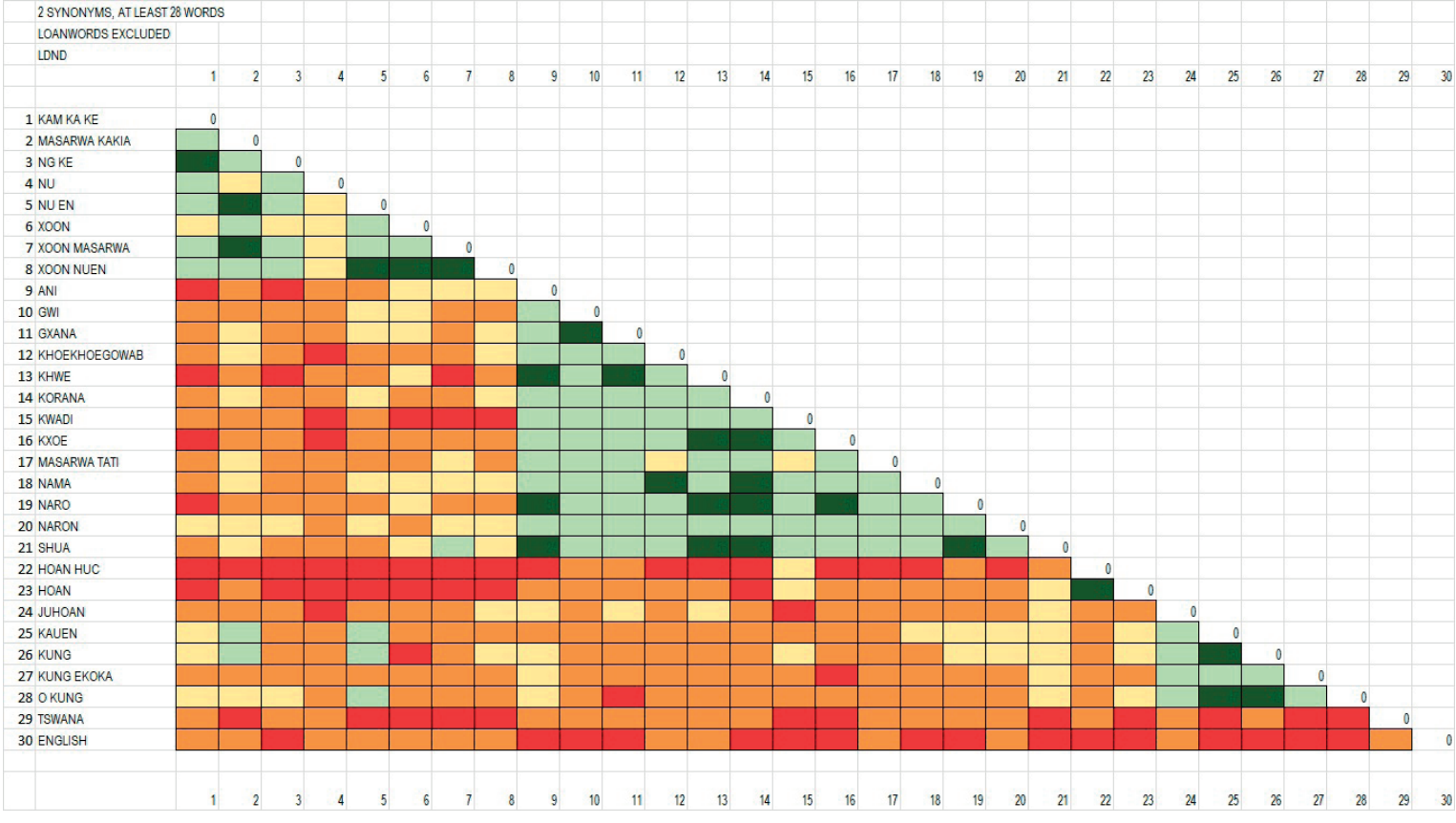
A second thing to note is the internal diversity of the Khoisan languages: there is not one language that would be easy to learn for all of them. This internal diversity is often overlooked in discussions of Khoisan speakers, who tend to be lumped together. But in spite of the overlooked internal diversity, there are some easy or very easy combinations within individual Khoisan language families. Thus, for the Tuu family, Xoon is easy or very easy. There are only around 2,500 speakers of Tuu languages. For the Kx'a family, only the various varieties of Kung remain; they form an easy combination with together around 15,000 speakers.

The largest Khoisan language family is Khoe-Kwadi. The largest of the discerned languages in this group is Khoekhoegowab, also known as Nama. It has around 200,000 speakers. It is easy for speakers of all other Khoe-Kwadi languages and is used as medium of instruction in primary schools in Namibia and taught as a subject in later years.[154]

154 http://www.nied.edu.na/assets/documents/05Policies/NationalCurriculumGuide National_Curriculum_Basic_Education_2016.pdf, accessed 19 November 2019.

Table 5.9

ASJP output, Khoisan languages



Botswana does not follow the example of Namibia: none of the Khoisan languages are used in education, all children are confronted with English and Tswana from day one. Mokibelo (2010) shows the difficulties related to this, leading especially to systematic underperformance in English. She points to a specific issue, also discussed by Chaudenson in relation to French teaching, namely, that speakers of Khoisan languages typically have difficulties in learning English that are different from those experienced by speakers of Bantu languages. English is roughly equally difficult for speakers of either Tswana or of a Khoisan language. However, because the L1 is different, the type of problem experienced by learners is different. If the curriculum is taught using textbooks geared towards Tswana speakers, and perhaps by teachers who are themselves Tswana speakers as well, this will put Khoisan speakers at a disadvantage they will find difficult to overcome. This disadvantage is in addition to the disadvantage caused by cultural differences and socio-economic inequality discussed by Molosiwa and Bokhutso (2016). Mokibelo (2016) compares the situation of San and Zezuru (Shona) speakers with mainstream Tswana children in Botswana. She finds that both groups are disadvantaged, but tends to group them together, even though the Shona-Tswana language pair is much easier than any of the Khoisan-Tswana language pairs.

A related issue has to do with the appropriateness of the school system itself. Many of the Khoisan speakers still employ a nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle that is adapted to the arid conditions of the Kalahari Desert.[155] Children are therefore often sent to hostels in towns or cities and separated from their families in order to attend class. This system has the double effect of causing trauma in children and of alienating them from their roots. This means those children who are both intelligent and strong of character – therefore, those children who potentially could be most valuable to their communities – are taken out, thereby intellectually impoverishing their communities at a time when, due to climate change, increasing demands are made on their resilience and adaptability. This type of problem has been pointed out in connection to pastoralists in other areas and has led for example to the experiment with Pastoralist Field Schools in East Africa.[156]

Taking the rule of thumb proposed for Ethiopia as a guideline, one could imagine using three designed Khoisan languages for use in in the first years

155 See Van Pinxteren et al. (2020b) for a more extensive discussion on educational issues in dryland areas in several parts of the world.

156 http://www.fao.org/capacity-development/news-list/detail/en/c/883112/, accessed 19 November 2019.

of primary education: Xoon; Kung; and either Haikom or Khoekhoegowab. This would be far better than the current situation in Botswana and South Africa, which forces children to learn a (very) difficult language and then through this language to learn another (very) difficult language. (The current situation is akin to forcing English-speaking children to learn in Chinese for the first few years of education and to use their knowledge of Chinese then to switch to education in Hindi – a recipe for failure.) It would be even better to develop the education system to such an extent that all children who speak a Khoe-Kwadi language could get a fuller education in a designed Khoe-Kwadi language (even though that would probably not offer any solace to speakers of Tuu or Kx'a languages).

Chebanne (2016a) has pointed out that a harmonised language development policy with a harmonised writing system are both essential for any of this to have any chance of success.

What we see, then, is that a number of the Bantu languages are slowly obtaining higher status in the region and are being used at least in the first few years in education. For the Khoisan languages, this is much less the case, with the exception of Namibia.

In South Africa, nine Bantu languages have official status and this is not meaningless. It has led, for example, to the establishment of an official Research Chair on the intellectualisation of African languages. This deservers a short discussion.

5.6.5 Intellectualising African Languages

The fact that nine languages have gained official status in South Africa, in addition to Afrikaans and English, has not remained entirely without consequences. Thus, the Pan-South African Language Board (PanSALB) was established in 1995. Its mission is to 'create conditions for the development and use of all South African official languages, including the Khoi, Nama and San languages, and South African Sign Language.'[157] Under its aegis, there are notional national language bodies for each of these languages. However, strong institutions per language that enjoy a measure of semi-autonomy analogous to the IRCAM in Morocco do not exist in the country.

157 https://www.pansalb.org/about-us/, accessed 27 August 2021.

Academically, work has been done, for example, under the Research Chair on the intellectualisation of African languages, held by Russell Kaschula.[158] There are other scientists in South Africa doing work in this area as well. It is impossible to treat all this work here; an impressive overview is found in Kaschula, Maseko, and Wolff (2017). The 'Prologue' chapter by Wolff (pp. 4-15) concisely summarises the case for African language use in higher education and exposes a number of common misunderstandings on the topic. The efforts at intellectualising languages in South Africa face several problems. One of them is a lack of consistent policies and adequate resources. Another is that it is concentrated at the university level, which, in essence, is too late: if students have somehow learned to use English in a formalised, scholarly way in secondary school but have not learned to use African languages in the same way, they will have difficulties using those languages in such a way in tertiary education. In the terminology of Cummins: to effectively make use of Cognitive/Academic Language Proficiency in African languages at tertiary level, that proficiency first has to be acquired at the secondary level. On the other hand, there are successes as well. Makalela (2015) reports how using multiple languages at the same time ('translanguaging') in teacher training is more effective than using one language only.

In sum, though, in the assessment of Kamwangamalu (2019: 48): 'if South Africa's language in-education practices are any indication, the country's multilingual language policy has failed.' The bottom line is: in spite of the considerable efforts and good work done, the dominance of English has increased after the end of the apartheid era; it has not decreased. In that sense, the experience in South Africa is an illustration of the wisdom of the proposals by Alexander and of the theoretical insights of De Swaan.

5.6.6 Conclusions and Recommendations

Batibo (2004: 60) has argued that the future of Setswana depends on the commitment of the country's decision-makers. However, as I have shown, the commitment of decision-makers can and will be influenced by broader societal processes that are at play, such as the steady increase in enrolment. As was the case for the previous countries except Morocco, a switch to indigenous languages for tertiary education is not yet necessary for any of the countries in Southern Africa, since enrolment figures are so low that English or any other language can be used. However, in Botswana and

158 https://www.ru.ac.za/africanlanguages/research/, accessed 27 August 2021.

Namibia, enrolment rates have almost tripled in the years since 2007. If this type of growth continues in the coming decade, the strain on the system will increase and the pressure for a change to indigenous languages at least for part of tertiary education will increase.

Already at present, the use of English as medium of instruction in secondary education is bound to lead to wastage and loss, because it is likely that not all children have a level of English that is sufficient to follow education in that language, although in principle they may have the intellectual capabilities. Matiki (2010) has shown that the dominance of English in the legal system disempowers the majority of Botswanans who do not have a sufficient command of the language.

Botswana is unique in that it has speakers of all three Khoisan language families within its borders, although the largest speaker base is in Namibia. The ASJP database has been used to estimate the evolution over time of human languages.[159] According to Holman et al. (2011: 25), the Khoisan languages may have the oldest roots in the world, thereby representing a unique human heritage. Preserving and promoting this heritage in some way could rightfully be portrayed as a matter of national pride for the countries in the region. Using some or all of these languages in education would be a way of doing so that would also provide a service to the speakers of these languages, especially if it is done in a way that supports sustainable livelihoods. The ASJP database suggests that these cannot be lumped together – developing one Khoisan language as the designed language would not offer an equitable solution for the speakers of languages in the other language families. Using at least three Khoisan languages for the first years of primary education would probably help to increase the achievement of Khoisan speakers. In addition, special measures should be considered aimed at ensuring that education is relevant to the pastoral lifestyle of many Khoisan-language speakers.

The Botswana experience reinforces the importance of using foreign-language teaching methods that take the specific difficulties of speakers of different languages into account: a method that works well for Bantu speakers may be less appropriate for Khoisan speakers and vice versa.

For South Africa, the short analysis shows that the policy of using eleven official languages may turn out to be counter-productive from the point of

159 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Automated_Similarity_Judgment_Program, accessed 25 November 2019.

view of promoting indigenous languages. Current efforts at intellectualising African languages, although commendable, are under-resourced and too thinly spread. Furthermore, the 'divide and rule' tactic leads to a strengthening of the position of the English language. Rational choices may not be the same as choices that seem realistic given the current socio-political situation of the country; however, the analysis does show alternative choices that may be feasible in the current context that lead to better outcomes than the current situation.

5.7 Some Challenges and Conclusions

5.7.1 Six Case Studies: Applying the theory

This study examines Vansina's prediction that neo-African traditions will appear, based in part in African languages. Chapters Two and Three presented a new reasoning on why African languages are currently not being used more in higher education; they investigated the scope for rational choices in language use for (higher) education. This was done at a fairly abstract and theoretical level, although much more concrete than what is found in most other pleas of this type. This chapter has explored what the theoretical insights gained could contribute when applied in six different country situations. Chapter Four demonstrated that, in some countries, neo-African traditions seem to be developing along national lines; in other countries, such a development does not seem to be taking place. In any case, the traditional ethnolinguistic distinctions seem to be losing their significance, at least in a number of cases. However, the situation is different from area to area and no clear patterns can be distinguished.

In these six case studies, I tried to look at the overlap (or lack of it) between the cultural and the linguistic situation in each country and examined the feasibility or otherwise of rational choices for language in higher education in as many countries (Tanzania, Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Morocco, and South Africa and its neighbours). I also looked at languages from some of the language families more in general.

Only in Botswana was it possible, to some extent, to map cultural differences onto language differences: the Bantu speakers in that country seem to be culturally different from the small groups of speakers of Khoisan languages. Even there, the mapping is not one on one: the Khoisan languages belong to

three different language families; the data do not show whether or not this also corresponds to three different cultural areas within the Khoisan-speaking communities. In Ethiopia, I only have data for five of the larger ethnolinguistic groups. That data suggests that, seen from a distance, Ethiopians may be more alike culturally than they think themselves. In South Africa, there seem to be positive indications that the link between language and culture that may have existed in the past is now no longer there: the Tswana, Sotho, and Swazi in South Africa are more similar to one another than to their siblings in Botswana, Lesotho, and Eswatini. In the other countries, there is no clear mapping of cultural differences onto linguistic differences. As authors like Topan (2008) or Smith (2013) have argued, this also means that a switch to using African languages in and by itself does not need to pose a threat to national unity, contrary to what is popularly believed.

In all countries in sub-Saharan Africa, enrolment in tertiary education is still (far) below the level common in the Global North. Therefore, a change to using African languages in higher education is not yet necessary for any of these countries; there are enough young Africans that have sufficient language abilities and general intelligence to fill up the relatively few places available to them. However, this is likely to change if enrolment figures double again, as they have done in the past and as has also happened for example in Europe. Such a development is already taking place in Morocco and could take place in other countries in the next decade or so; it is perhaps most likely to occur first in Botswana, the country with the best performance in this regard in the region. However, a shift to a different or additional medium of instruction, at least for part of tertiary education, requires careful preparation and planning – if such a change is foreseen, then it is best to start preparations as early as possible.

The case studies also show problems at the level of secondary education, where in a number of countries, enrolment rates, especially at the level of lower secondary education, already exceed 40 per cent. I do not have precise information on what level of language knowledge is necessary to profit from education at this level: the only indication available is for tertiary education. There is abundant literature complaining about high dropout rates in secondary education in Africa.[160] Some of that must be related to adverse socio-economic conditions, to the quality and/or the affordability

160 One statistic is, for example, the 'cumulative drop-out rate to the last grade of lower secondary general education' as published at http://data.uis.unesco.org/#. For Ghana, this rate was more than 21 per cent in 2016; for Estonia, it was under 0.5 per cent (data retrieved 22 November 2019).

of education and to discouraging or even threatening conditions in schools, especially for girls. However, some of it is likely to be due to language as well: secondary education in what is essentially a foreign designed language puts certain demands on the language learning abilities of children and those abilities are not distributed equally over the population. In addition, the required level of Cognitive/Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) only develops in the late teens. Increasing numbers of children are likely to drop out because of insufficient skills in the language area, even though their intellectual capabilities in other areas might be sufficient to profit from the education if it would be provided in a more easily accessible designed language. This factor is bound to become more important with increasing enrolment rates in secondary education: more children in secondary education will mean that the average language abilities of children enrolled in secondary education will decrease and therefore that the average amount of effort required to teach them a foreign designed language to the required level will increase. Secondary education in many countries would clearly become more efficient (in terms of rates of successful completion at a given rate of investment) if it were to be provided in designed languages that are easier to learn for children.

The six case studies show that it is possible to arrive at rational choices for a limited number of designed languages in the countries studied. For Tanzania, the case study has shown that Swahili is easy to learn for over 98.5 per cent of all Tanzanians (in sharp contrast to English, which is difficult or very difficult for all Tanzanians); this suggested a new and powerful explanation for the enduring success of Swahili in the country, an explanation that is better than the partial explanations found in the literature. It is important to stress that teaching a large proportion of the population an 'easy' designed language still requires an efficient and well-resourced educational system, although the requirements are far lower than what a 'difficult' language would require. Therefore, using some of the Tanzanian discerned languages that are more distant from Swahili as designed languages at least in the initial years of primary education might improve the efficiency of education for L1 speakers of those languages.

The study has pointed out how for the speakers of minority Nilotic and Cushitic language as well as for the speakers of Hadza and Sandawe (considered to be language isolates), Swahili is not an easy language. In order to educate these groups in the most efficient manner, it would be important to introduce education (at least at primary level) in a designed language that is more accessible to them. What the Tanzanian example also shows is that

the differences within the Narrow Bantu family of languages (to which most discerned Tanzanian languages belong) are smaller than those within the Nilotic language family – choosing one easy designed language is possible for the Narrow Bantu family, but not for the Nilotic family.

Both the literature discussed on Tanzania and the analysis from Chapter Four point to the fact that even though Narrow Bantu languages spoken in the country form relatively easy language pairs, this does not mean that Tanzania has a culturally homogeneous Bantu-speaking majority: large cultural differences within the country remain, that cannot easily be mapped onto language families.

The Republic of Congo is in a certain way in a similar situation as Tanzania, in that all the discerned languages spoken in the country belong to the Narrow Bantu family. The recommendation by Baka was cited, who suggests using the L1 as much as possible for the first four years of primary education, then to switch to one of the country's four languages of wider communication and to narrow this down to Lingala and Kituba for upper secondary and tertiary education. The ASJP database suggests that a more efficient choice might be possible, because several discerned languages are easy to learn for all Congolese. This is in line with developments already taking place more or less spontaneously in the country – a rational language policy would make it possible to support and accelerate this process towards an indigenous national language, at least for higher education. Following the suggestion by Baka, it would be possible indeed to use the L1 for the first years of primary education and then to immediately switch to one or two discerned languages.

The choice that would suggest itself for the Republic of Congo is certainly not possible for all African countries. In Ethiopia, the linguistic situation is considerably more complex. Ethiopia's current ethnofederalist policies put a premium on difference, rather than on similarity. Therefore, for Ethiopia the fifth of the proposed principles would be important: building incentives for **linguistic collaboration**, especially for related linguistic communities.

This could be done, for example, by stipulating that developing a designed language for use at a specific level of education would only be done if the speaker base of discerned languages that are related to such a designed language is large enough. In Ethiopia, as in other countries, switching to local languages at the level of lower secondary education would probably already increase efficiency at that level. For higher education, the ASJP database suggests this could be developed in four or five languages.

The Ethiopian case study also brought home some of the limitations of the approach of using the ASJP database. These are related to the fact that what may seem rational and equitable at a theoretical level might not be a realistic outcome to aim for, given the current socio-political situation in the country. However, this study at least offers a starting point for a rational debate and a way of starting to think about incentives for convergence in designed language use in a domain such as (higher) education.

The Ghanaian case study in a way gave similar results to those of Ethiopia. In Ghana, the indigenous languages are not conveniently close to one another. For the Kwa family of languages, three languages would be necessary for an equitable solution (for example Akan, Ga, and Ewe). For the Gur family of languages, a further three languages would seem to be necessary. It might be possible that English is used as a medium of instruction alongside Ghanaian languages for longer than might be the case for some other countries. The study pointed out that pidgin will not be a solution. Ghana is one country where the data presented in chapter four suggests that a national culture may be forming, even though in-country differences between ethnolinguistic groups remain.

The case study on Morocco brought in a new perspective; whereas in the other countries, enrolment in tertiary education is still below the 'language barrier' threshold, this level appears to have been breached in Morocco. The gradual transition that is happening in Morocco from using French to Modern Standard Arabic as the designed language in higher education makes sense from that point of view. The ASJP database suggests that the choice of Modern Standard Arabic makes sense in that country, because the language is easy to use for speakers of the Moroccan Arabic (Darija) and the other Arab-like languages spoken in the country. Likewise, the choice for a standardised Berber language (Tamazight) as a second official language also makes sense. The creation of a special institution dedicated to the protection and promotion of the Amazigh culture and language has helped the emancipation of the Berber language and people, although there is still a long way to go on this front.

Lastly, the case study of South Africa and some of its neighbours reinforced some of the conclusions and recommendations from the previous case studies. Most people in these countries speak a Bantu language. Therefore, efficiency gains can be achieved for the educational systems in these countries by making use of a limited number of designed Bantu languages. Doing this would also greatly help to strengthen the position of these languages, who

now face continuing erosion due to the increasing dominance of English. However, it would require a greater amount of cross-national collaboration, for example on Sotho-Tswana, than is currently the case. Botswana has the highest enrolment rate in tertiary education in Sub-Saharan Africa, but it is still below the 40 per cent level. However, it is entirely possible that the country will reach that threshold in the next decade or so. If so, an orderly and planned transition involving a gradually expanding role of Tswana in tertiary education would seem to be possible and desirable.

Special attention is justified for speakers of Khoisan languages. The ASJP database suggests that the Khoisan languages are internally very diverse and indeed, they are considered to be made up of three language families. Preserving and promoting this heritage in some way could rightfully be portrayed as a matter of national pride for the countries in the region. Using some or all of these languages in education (as is already happening for the first few years of primary education in Namibia) would be a way of doing so that would also provide a service to the speakers of these languages, especially if it is done in a way that is culturally appropriate and supports sustainable livelihoods. The study pointed out that methods of teaching English should be adapted to the specific linguistic background of the learners: methods that may be suitable for Bantu-language speakers may not be ideal for speakers of Khoisan, or indeed of Chadic or Nilotic languages.

This study thus supports the conclusions by Kaschula and Nkomo (2019: 621), who argue:

> What is required is a mutually inclusive linguistic environment that celebrates not only linguistic equity between African languages and exoglossic languages, but also African identity, culture, and indigenous knowledge in the context of what such an approach can bring to African development. What goes to the core of such a developmental approach would be to use African languages for the purposes of education.

The analytical framework and the case studies together demonstrate that indeed, there are good possibilities for rational language-in-education policies in Africa. They also lead to a few additional insights that I would like to present here.

5.7.2 Decolonising Education: A different perspective

The analysis in these case studies leads to a perspective that should be added to existing perspectives on decolonising education. These existing perspectives tend to be focused on the content of education, rather than on the sociological function of education. Thus, Ndofirepi and Gwaravanda (2019: 589) say: 'Placing the African knowledge system at the centre of analysis involves the use of the African knowledge paradigm, worldview and categories of thought as the basic framework of analysis.' Curiously, they manage to discuss decolonisation of Universities without even once referring to the issue of language, thus in a way illustrating the assessment of Kaschula and Nkomo (2019: 619), who say that '[t]he language question is then the 'elephant in the room' when it comes to development in Africa, indeed to transformation of the continent at all levels, from societal, educational to economic transformation.' Prah (2016) before them has already pointed to the link between the two: building on indigenous knowledge systems requires also building on knowledge as transmitted through indigenous languages. Mbembe (2015) asserted: 'The African University of tomorrow will be multilingual.'

As was shown in Chapter 1.4, Bourdieu has demonstrated that there is a relationship between enrolment ratios in education and the social function of education and its role in elite reproduction. The analysis of the evolution of enrolment rates as well as the 'steepness' of the educational pyramid (indicated by the enrolment ratio in tertiary education divided by the enrolment ratio in primary education) are meaningful for understanding the function of education in a particular society.

Looking at enrolment ratios and the steepness of the pyramid in colonial times, it is clear that the function of education was limited to recruiting a small number of local cadres for work within the colonial system – what Campbell (2017) calls 'education for submission.' An efficient way of recruitment was to provide substandard education in a foreign language to a small group of 'privileged' children. Some were so intelligent (and so malleable) that it showed even under such adverse conditions – they were then recruited and given a continuing education of a higher standard. This system clearly was conceived in a top-down manner.[161]

161 It is important to bear in mind that this top-down system was not invented specifically with the intention of keeping the colonised in their place, although it had that function. Educational systems in Europe at the end of the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century were also conceived top-down and had a specific function in elite reproduction that is different from the current situation.

The problem is that the system was essentially kept, but with ever larger numbers of children and students in the system – but the system will not scale. This is bound to be a problem already in a number of countries with high enrolment rates in (lower) secondary education because it is not likely that educational systems in those countries will be able to give all children the foreign-language skills that they need in order to profit from that education. However, because the educational pyramid is conceived top-down, this problem is not seen. As long as there are enough young people with the required language skills to fill up the few places available to them in tertiary education, the essentially colonial model of education can continue. However, there is a limit to this. In the Global North, so many young people attend tertiary education that giving them all the required foreign-language skills becomes a practical impossibility. That is why even in countries with a relatively low number of speakers of local languages, such as Estonia, tertiary education is predominantly in an indigenous designed language. Trends in enrolment over the years in Africa show that this 'language barrier' is likely to make itself felt in a number of African countries within the space of the next decade or so, as is already happening in Morocco.

Bourdieu helps us understand that shifts in the function of education are never uncontested. Therefore, continued expansion in tertiary education is likely to lead to different types of social strife and unrest; planning for what lies ahead may help to make these struggles more peaceful and more productive than they will otherwise be.

Preparing for a system where many more students than is currently the case take up tertiary education requires a shift in thinking about the educational pyramid: instead of conceiving it top-down, as in the colonial period, it will be necessary to conceive it bottom-up. As outlined above, in colonial times the demands on the quality of primary and secondary education for all but the elite could be limited. Children needed to be given a chance to show their language abilities and once the selection was made, would be taught all else they needed to know at higher levels of education. The fact that those without the required abilities did not get the maximum benefit from their schooling did not matter so much. Again, as long as the system is aimed at educating only a relatively small proportion of the population, this works fine.

However, in a highly developed society, maximum levels of education are a must in order to ensure maximum productivity. This means that under-achievement is no longer an acceptable outcome. If primary and secondary education are of substandard quality, the stress on tertiary education to make

good on the missed opportunities of earlier phases will become unbearable. Furthermore, those that do not proceed to tertiary education will be left empty-handed. In other words, in future, all brains will be needed and they need to be developed at all levels of education. This means that the educational pyramid needs to be conceived bottom-up. As argued in Chapter Two, the net result of teaching more children, but teaching them foreign language as a subject, instead of using it as medium of instruction will be an increase rather than a decrease in the number of people who speak such a foreign language. It will also mean that results in other areas (such a science-related subjects) will go up.

Decolonising education should go beyond decolonising the university curriculum. It is necessary to also question the top-down model of education that was inherited from colonial times.

5.7.3 Cultural Identity and Language: Are they related and if so, how?

Ask any lay person what he or she considers to be characteristic of his or her ethnic culture and 'language' will invariably be one of the first things mentioned. In Chapter 1.1, I quoted Adichie, who said that '[l]anguage is the constructs of culture.' This statement echoes Prah (2010b: 83): 'Language is thus a historical and cultural register of the speakers of the language. It is impossible to conceive of culture without language or language without culture.' This captures the popular imagination, which holds that, somehow, there is a relationship between the two. However, the case studies demonstrate the difficulty of pinpointing this. Yet, the question remains: can we somehow get more precise?

In the literature, perhaps the most famous idea on the connection between the two is in the so-called Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, as first suggested by the US linguist and ethnologist Edward Sapir in 1949 and later refined by another US linguist, Benjamin Whorf (1956). In its current most-used form, the hypothesis holds that language and culture are interdependent and that the language people speak influences some of their decisions and behaviour. Yuka and Okolochi (2011) use it as their main argument in support of greater use of African languages. Kaschula and Mostert (2017: 293) use it to posit that in South Africa 'there are potentially 11 worldviews.' In Chapter Four, I have argued that this is probably not correct but that it would be relevant to carry out more research into what differences do exist. In sum, I am with Fabb (2016: 56), who discusses the hypothesis and the ways it has been used

and argues 'that it is premature to come to these conclusions. Languages vary in much more complex and detailed ways than is accommodated by the binary divisions favoured in the Whorfian articles.' This conclusion is also supported by the material presented in the case studies.

But if that is so, what then can we say about these matters? A more sophisticated approach can be found in Wierzbicka. Wierzbicka (1997) holds that it is possible to describe cultures through a study of key words and their meanings in different languages. She gives the example of the word 'friend' in different languages, such as American English, British English, Polish, and Russian. What she shows is that the equivalent of this word (and related terms) in each language refers to a different category of people – from rather wide in American English to very restricted in Russian. She holds that by using more terms like this and by studying more languages, it is possible to describe both linguistic and cultural differences. She has developed 'Natural Semantic Metalanguage' for making such descriptions. However, doing this requires a high level of specialist multilingual expertise and a great amount of work. Davis and Abdurazokzoda (2016) show that there are relationships between how languages are structured and cultural characteristics, comparing data from the World Atlas of Linguistic Structures (WALS), for example on ways of showing politeness, with cultural traits, using data from the World Values Survey.

A preliminary conclusion, also supported by the case studies, can be that there ***is*** a relationship, but it is not always one-on-one: it can also be one-to-many, and this is in either direction (one cultural area with several languages or one language serving different cultural traditions). The discussion is not helped by the controversies, pointed out in section 1.3, about what to call a language. The common trope is that there are over 2,000 languages in Africa – but are there over 2,000 cultures? In section 1.7, I called this a pre-scientific myth. Yet, in line with the thinking of Vansina (1990), larger-scale cultural traditions used to exist in Africa. Vansina has shown this for the region of Equatorial Africa. This is a region where many different languages can be discerned, although, as shown in the case study on the Republic of Congo (section 5.2), many of them are closely related. If, like Prah (2012), one were to hold that the actual number of languages is much smaller, then a better agreement between linguistic and cultural differences and similarities in Africa might be found – but as the example of culturally diverse Tanzania, with its large speaker base of closely related Bantu languages seems to suggest, such an agreement is not likely to be absolute.

There is a large body of literature that links ethnic and linguistic fragmentation within a country to lack of mutual trust, to bad governance and all that it entails and to failing economic performance. The classic study in this regard is by Easterly and Levine (1997); this study has led to a host of similar studies, all more or less confirming their findings – see e.g. Michalopoulos and Papaiouannou (2016). However, as pointed out in section 1.3, these studies depend on source data on ethnolinguistic groups that are based on the colonial period and need to be treated with some caution and suspicion.

In this light, it is interesting to look at the more sophisticated approach that was used by Desmet et al. (2016: 442). What they find is that even small linguistic divisions between groups can lead to market inefficiencies: trade becomes more difficult in these circumstances. However, it is only the larger differences, between languages that separated thousands of years ago, that lead to much larger negative effects, leading to a skewed distribution of resources and the likelihood of civil conflict. Likewise, Beugelsdijk and Klasing (2016) show that greater differences in values within regions also leads to lower trust levels in those regions – and to lower levels of economic growth.

The link between culture and language is to a certain extent malleable. Hofstede (2001: 63), almost at the beginning of his classic book, devotes a few paragraphs to two exceptional situations he encountered in Europe. His research findings revealed to him that in Belgium, there is one national culture, even though there are two quite different languages spoken in the country: Dutch and French (a 'medium to difficult' combination, depending on the discerned Dutch-like language that is chosen). For Switzerland, he found a different picture: the French speakers were culturally more aligned with France, the speakers of their two German-like languages more with Germany. Hofstede explains this from the specific history of the countries. For Europe, these two situations are not so common. Africa, however, has a radically different history and the research of Chapter Four suggests that both the Belgian and the Swiss situations may be much more common in Africa than they are in Europe. In Ghana, for example, a situation akin to that of Belgium might exist; Ghana is a territory where there is a long history of interaction between the groups living in different parts of the country. However, there is no empirical evidence that suggests that the hypothesis on the feasibility of nation building put forward by Grotenhuis (2016), as discussed in Chapter 1.5, is correct. Cultural and linguistic alignments or rifts are the results of long-term historical processes that can be influenced by social engineering to only a very limited extent, much more limited

than Grotenhuis seems to believe. With Blommaert (2014: 40): the 'cultural resilience' of the 'common man' should not be underestimated. It is not possible to ignore historical realities when trying to mix peoples of different linguistic and cultural origins together in whichever way the social engineers please and hope for a stable outcome.

Building on the work of Desmet et al. (2016), Gerschman and Rivera (2018: 231) arrive at a more nuanced analysis. By looking at linguistic distance, they find that 'only deep-rooted diversity, based on cleavages formed in the distant past, is strongly inversely associated with a range of regional development indicators.' In other words, small differences are not so important – but countries with considerable cultural differences are faced with developmental challenges. This does not mean that ethnically homogeneous countries are conflict and violence-free; these studies all show statistical correlations that hold when comparing many countries, but that do not say much about individual countries.

There is a related point that needs to be made here and this is about the relationship between language and (social and technological) innovation. As argued in sections 3.1 and 3.2, using a designed language that is easy to learn for as many people as possible is essential for giving access to the functions associated with citizenship in a country. Enabling citizens to function as such through indigenous designed languages will enhance public debate and will thereby stimulate the development towards cultural autonomy. This will also make it easier to create a fertile breeding ground for social and technological innovation. On the other hand, restricting access to the national debate to those who know the colonial language well enough will tend to muffle or stunt such debate and innovation and cause it to go underground.

Let us again revisit the conclusions from the previous chapters and try to discover what links can be found between them.

6 Language, Education, and Cultural Identity Revisited

The start of this study used the example of Adichie's novel *Americanah* to point to a number of wider issues I wanted to speak to, regarding the status of African cultural identities today, the relationship with language and more in particular, the relationship between language, education and cultural identity. This concluding chapter revisits those issues, making use of the insights gained earlier. What did we learn? What remains unexplored? What is the way forward?

In order to do that, the first section summarises the main conclusions from the earlier chapters and discusses the limitations of the research. This will lead to a discussion of the research agenda that this work suggests. In the next section, I will situate the approach of this study within a broader context of empowering and disempowering views on Africa, including a critique of the toxic cocktail of ideas that currently puts a brake on the scope for African agency. The study ends with a concluding look at the issue of cultural autonomy.

6.1 Main Conclusions: Findings and limitations

In Chapter One, I explained my interest in a view of African identities as actually experienced and built by Africans – not as constructs that have been engineered by the various state-building and nation-building initiatives. This means that I am interested in looking at culture. I aligned myself with the vision of Prah, who sees language as a central element of culture. This led to the three main research questions of this study:

- Why are African languages not being used more in higher education?
- What possibilities are there for rational language in education policies?
- How can we describe large-scale cultural differences and similarities in Africa?

I criticised the over-confidence in social engineering and its possibilities of 'nation-building' in Africa (or elsewhere). I took issue with the tendency by Marxists to downplay the importance of culture. I mentioned the tendency

of scientists to fall into the trap of taking one of two pre-scientific myths as their starting point: the 'Africa as a country' and the 'Tower of Babel' myths, either describing Africa as a cultural whole or, on the other hand, as infinitely fragmented. I criticised both myths for being disempowering, obscuring an appreciation and understanding of the different African cultural identities that form part of the full spectrum of human cultural identities.

I then turned to Vansina, who predicted the emergence of neo-African traditions, carried by African languages. I again pointed to Prah, who has drawn attention to the central role of education in African languages for African development. The use of African languages in higher education remains very limited and it seems reasonable to suspect that this in itself hinders the development of the neo-African traditions predicted by Vansina. The first research question was to explore the reasons for this and to explore possible future developments.

Using a theoretical framework developed by Bourdieu, the study argues that there is one explanation for the limited use of African languages in higher education that has hitherto been overlooked in the literature: the issue of the relatively low enrolment figures in Africa, as compared to the Global North. The basic argument is that as enrolment figures increase, the pressure on using African languages as medium of instruction will also increase, simply because language learning abilities are not distributed equally across the population. As long as education limited itself to an intellectual elite, it was possible to select only those most gifted in language. Using the educational system of Estonia as a benchmark, the study shows that in future, this will no longer be a cost-effective option. In order to develop the argument, I proposed a new distinction between discerned and designed languages, inspired by terminology originally proposed by Kloss. In formal settings, but also in education, the designed languages that are used will always be different from the repertoires spoken at home; therefore, they need to be learned and thus also taught. The study has shown that it is possible and in fact common that one designed language serves several different discerned languages.

Answering the second research question, on the possibilities for rational choices for language use in higher education necessitated a number of innovative ideas. I argue that higher education requires use of a designed language, therefore always requiring a certain amount formal learning from the user. However, in order for an educational system to educate as many people as possible in as efficient a way as possible, it is important to minimise the required language learning by staying as close as possible to the language

repertoire learners already have. In order to develop a way of thinking about this, the study uses Levenshtein distances as calculated with the help of the ASJP database. These were benchmarked to a schema for ease of language learning. This yielded a new way of approximating which languages are 'easy' or 'difficult' and for whom. I concluded that rational choices would be possible, and proposed to base such choices on five principles:

1. Develop a limited number of designed languages for education.
2. Designed languages should be chosen in such a way that they are easy to learn for as many speakers of discerned languages as possible.
3. Strive for inclusivity: choose designed languages in such a way that all have to exert a relatively low but relatively equal effort to learn them.
4. Make use of existing bilingualism as a resource.
5. Build incentives for linguistic collaboration, especially for related linguistic communities.

The starting point of the chapter on culture was the definition of **a value system that serves as common point of reference to a people**. This definition is at the group level – not at the individual level. It accepts that within any cultural whole, there is a large amount of diversity. The key element is that individuals who know or consider themselves to be part of a specific culture know its values, even though they may not themselves subscribe to them on a personal level. The study showed how in order to compare cultures and describe large-scale cultural differences and similarities, the approach of cross-cultural psychology offers a viable vocabulary, in alignment with the approach as initially developed by Hofstede and Minkov. This approach depends on the use of value surveys of comparable groups across a range of countries. Chapter Four made use of my earlier research, making use of the Afrobarometer survey to describe large-scale cultural differences and similarities using three lenses: *hierarchical cluster analysis; cultural dimension scores;* and a *comparison of scores from Africa with scores from other continents*.

The hierarchical cluster analysis shows that, indeed, in many countries ethnolinguistic groups cluster together at the national level. This is especially so for countries where this would be expected, such as Botswana, Lesotho and Madagascar. For a country like Lesotho, the Afrobarometer survey has sufficient data from seven ethnolinguistic groups, who all cluster together. One can wonder what the meaning still is of these distinctions for a country like Lesotho. Ethnolinguistic groups also cluster together in a number of other countries, such as Niger. In other countries such as Ghana, most

ethnolinguistic groups cluster together. However, there are other countries, such as Guinea, Kenya, Uganda, Zambia, and Tanzania in which the groups do not cluster together neatly. The conclusion was that there is not one common pattern that applies across Africa. In general, approaches that map cultural differences onto linguistic differences, using linguistic differences as a proxy for cultural differences, are not reliable, at least not for the whole of Africa.

The second lens gave individual dimension scores for ethnolinguistic groups for four out of the six Minkov/Hofstede dimensions: 'Fix vs Flex' (LTO); Indulgence versus Restraint (IVR); Individualism versus Collectivism (IDV); and Power Distance (PDI). Especially the Individualism versus Collectivism distinction is well-accepted in the literature and used in a variety of settings.

The findings broadly confirm the picture obtained through the hierarchical cluster analysis. In some countries such as Ghana, the largest ethnolinguistic groups show similarities, even though some of the smaller groups show different patterns. In Southern Africa, the picture emerges that, for example, the Sotho of Lesotho and the Tswana of Botswana are no longer culturally the same as their counterparts in South Africa. In South Africa, a new cultural tradition seems to be emerging, as predicted by Vansina. This is a shared new identity, even though 'black' South Africans speak several different discerned languages. On the other hand, in a country like Kenya, large differences remain between ethnolinguistic groups. Thus, the Luo of Kenya are closer to the Acholi and the Lango of Uganda (with which they share linguistic similarities) than to other ethnolinguistic groups in Kenya.

The third lens compares sub-Saharan Africa with other continents. It shows that Africa's internal diversity is at least as high as the diversity that is found in other continents. On the other hand, it also confirms the common perception that on average, Africa is more collectivist and Europe more individualist.

Together, these three lenses provide 'proof of concept': using cross-cultural psychology, it is possible in principle to describe large-scale cultural differences and similarities in Africa and it leads to new insights into African identities today, that are different from what was handed down as insights from colonial times. This method can be used for charting the emergence of 'neo-African' traditions, as predicted by Vansina. The first signs of such a development are visible in the data. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that there are limitations to this research, due to imperfections in the underlying data.

I tried to show how the theoretical insights thus gained could be applied, presenting six brief country case studies, of Congo Republic, Ethiopia, Ghana, Morocco, South Africa, and Tanzania. They reinforced the point that cultural and linguistic differences cannot be mapped onto one another. However, they also made clear that indeed, in all cases it is possible to propose rational language policies, using a limited number of designed African languages. Such rational policies would represent a tremendous improvement compared to the current situation, as shown by the example from Morocco. For Southern Africa, I argued in favour of special arrangements for speakers of the Khoisan languages in the region, in addition to the use of Bantu languages. For Congo and Tanzania, most people would be well-served by one of the Bantu languages spoken in those countries. For Ghana, the situation is more complicated and as many as six languages might be needed (still below the number of nine languages currently supported by the Government, but only up to primary school level). For Ethiopia, by far the most complicated country language-wise in my list of cases studies, in theory only five languages would be sufficient, although in practice this seems unrealistic.

The study provides an additional way of looking at decolonisation of African education: changing the university curriculum will not be enough. In addition, it will be necessary to re-think the 'educational pyramid' from the bottom up and to think about rational choices for increased use of African languages. A developed society requires a productive population and a productive population means an educated population. In many African countries, primary education is now almost universal. However, there is a scope and need for considerable expansion of (appropriate) education at secondary and tertiary levels: Africa will need to educate all its brains. In order to do that efficiently, it will be essential to use African languages. Clearly, doing that might also help in the development of new cultural traditions in Africa, although the relationship might not always be one-on-one.

There are limitations to this approach: a purely desk-type theoretical exercise of this type can never be enough. This research provides an approach that can serve as an input to a national and continental dialogue on language in education policies. Of course, input from local scientists and leaders is going to be more important, input that needs to take perceived historical and cultural differences and similarities into account.

Again, in Africa, there are those countries (such as probably Ghana), where there is a level of national unity across linguistic divides and there are others (such as probably Tanzania), where linguistic divisions for the majority of the

population are more limited, but where nevertheless the cultural differences are considerable. It is good to point out that, in spite of the attention given to fierce ethnic conflicts on the continent, most Africans do manage to live in peace with their neighbours, even if they speak a different language or come from a different cultural background. In contrast to many in the Global North, Africans are, by and large, not only multilingual, but also multicultural. That means that they are able to navigate different linguistic and cultural contexts much more easily and more ably than most Europeans or Americans could. This is an asset, but this adaptability also helps to keep the underlying linguistic and cultural realities on the continent out of sight. Yet, these realities exist and deserve to be understood in their dynamism. The process of building neo-African traditions is not yet over – there is a dynamic here that is still developing. In order for that process to continue, use of African languages in higher education will be important. Fortunately, the process of expansion in enrolment will itself set in motion a sociological process leading to increased use of African languages in higher education. This will be helped by careful planning and rational choices – but, as I have shown, such rational choices are possible.

6.2 The Way Forward: A research agenda

This study is built around a few basic premises. One of them is that Africa's development issues are caused not by plotting of ruthless neo-colonial exploiters, not by prevailing climatic conditions, not by skin pigmentation or other genetic differences, not by something inherently 'wrong' in Africans or in African culture, and not by general backwardness. Instead, I have pointed to Vansina's explanation, cited in Chapter One: the basic problem lies in the way in which the old cultural traditions in Africa have been destroyed in the colonial period and have not yet been replaced by a new set of commonly-understood cultural traditions. If this is the basic problem, then a research agenda should crucially be centred around understanding these developments and at identifying strategic opportunities for agency.

Prah (2014) has called for decentralisation in Africa, democratisation, transcending current national boundaries, development of languages and basing oneself on 'deeper historical identities.' In this study, I have limited myself to language in education and to cultural identities – already a vast field of exploration. Research into the other areas (best ways of achieving democratisation and decentralisation, how artificial boundaries can be overcome) is also going to be necessary, but such research has to base itself

on an appreciation of, as Prah says, 'what people have and have had for ages';; or, to use the words of Wa Thiong'o (2005: 164): 'only through the use of African languages shall we be able to break with European memory.'

Throughout, this study pointed to the need for more research. It has argued that the convenient shortcuts in thinking about language can no longer be used unquestioningly. Thus, the distinction between 'speakers' and 'non-speakers' of a language is too easy. Likewise, the assumption that there is a set cost of learning a different language that is equal for all learners is wrong, as is the assumption that anybody can learn any other language to whatever level of fluency. Comparable research into the actual levels of fluency in foreign language use reached in Africa is lacking.

Dimmendaal (2004: 85) has called for capacity building of African linguists – certainly a call I would support. However, he limits himself to 'the area of descriptive and applied linguistics' – by which he essentially means 'training of some younger colleagues in the documentation of poorly studied or undescribed languages.' Likewise, Lüpke (2019: 489) believes that linguistic research should be expanded to record and analyse an ever-greater number of social interactions between speakers. This conventional research agenda seems too limited (although it would require considerable funding) and not well focused. It seems clear that no research agenda can afford to ignore language policy, language planning, engineering and language learning. Leaving these matters outside of research is disempowering, as it relegates speakers of African languages to a reserve-like status, outside the mainstream of a democratic debate.

The study has demonstrated that rational choices in developing designed (African) languages for higher education are possible and unavoidable. But I do not have an answer as to which languages this would be and how it should be done in concrete cases – I cannot go beyond developing the reasoning and developing the context. Moving from there to implementation will require considerable research and the energies of educators, linguists, and policymakers alike. Research into which languages would be seen as acceptable or which could serve most speakers of discerned languages as designed language is needed, research into language policy and effective policy implementation is likewise needed.

Current educational systems in many African countries are wasteful and need to be re-thought bottom-up, rather than top-down. How would it be possible to use existing resources in a more efficient way, leading both to curricula that

are more appropriate for local situations and to higher academic achievement overall? The study has given 'proof of concept' that African languages will be essential for that – but that in itself is not sufficient. How to go about this in concrete situations? What can educational systems deliver in Africa, under different language regimes? Where does the 'language barrier' lie in concrete cases? The schema used in this study for ease of language learning is based on US experiences. In comparison with those US experiences, how easy is it for which African learners to acquire sufficient foreign language knowledge (or to be taught such knowledge through education)? Those are questions that could occupy the energies of linguists and social scientists for years to come and attempting to answer them might be more productive than investing more and more resources in merely recording social interactions between speakers.

In general, the institutional position of languages in a position to be developed as designed languages needs to be improved and strengthened. Thus, in Europe, there exists an organisation such as EFNIL,[162] which brings together all national language academies. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the only similar national institution seems to be BAKITA[163] in Tanzania. At the African level, there is ACALAN,[164] but it is grossly under-resourced and not very effective.

In the area of cultural identity, this study has suggested a better way of looking at 'culture', different from the way of looking at culture as a thing from the past, and given a 'proof of concept,' showing the potential of cross-cultural psychology. However, better questions and a better way of covering ethnolinguistic groups would be needed in order to get more reliable results.

It is clear that the frequent assumption taken in development research that linguistic diversity can be taken as a proxy for cultural diversity deserves to be questioned – it can no longer be taken at face value, because situations as described for Belgium by Hofstede may be much more common in Africa than in Europe and, furthermore, their occurrence does not seem to follow a readily predictable pattern.

---

162 European Federation of National Institutions for Language (EFNIL), http://www.efnil.org/, accessed 4 March 2020.

163 The National Kiswahili Council (BAKITA), https://bakita.go.tz/eng/welcome, accessed 4 March 2020.

164 African Academy of Languages (ACALAN), https://acalan-au.org/index.php, accessed 4 March 2020.

Much more research and dialogue is needed at the national level, also to map both the linguistic and cultural similarities and differences and to use them as the basis for making the difficult choices in language development as well as in decentralisation and democratisation that will be needed in order to achieve an accelerated development path that is based on the values of Africa's peoples.

6.3 The Search for Empowerment

In Chapter 1.2, I pointed out that I am inspired by a decolonial vision that seeks to build Africa on the basis of African cultures and languages and is carried by civil society. It is a vision that wants to base itself on ideas of African empowerment. But which ideas are empowering – and which ones are not? In order to add a bit of detail to the general vision, let us first look for a moment at what, then, does *not* fit in that vision. Typically, what does *not* fit are all ideas that somehow depict Africa as essentially static and unchanging and that either treat it as a coherent whole (the pre-scientific myth or trope of 'Africa as a Country') or as infinitely fragmented (the 'Tower of Babel' myth, both discussed in Chapter 1.7). All of them tend to deny the possibilities of African agency and the potential for conscious policy choices to have a positive effect. A few examples:

- There is the idea that Africa's woes are caused by prevailing climatic conditions. If that is so, then obviously Africans are doomed – they are the victims of their geographic location and have no or only limited agency themselves. An example of this is the Cool-Water idea, used by Welzel (2013). He advances the idea that the moderate climes of Europe caused Europe's advance, but that sooner or later, by some sort of natural process, Europe's blessings will spread to the rest of the world. Adopting this idea leads to severely restricted scope for African agency.
- There is the idea that there is something inherently 'wrong' in Africans or in African culture, leaving likewise little scope for African agency. An example of this is the idea by Van der Veen (2014) that Africa's problems are caused by 'important African characteristics of its political, economic and social culture.'[165] These characteristics are peculiar to Africa, and can be seen as well in Latin America, but '(o)nly in the Latin American countries where the indigenous population formed a large proportion of the total.' Like Welzel, Van der Veen sees few options for Africans, except

165 Page 425 of the Dutch original, my translation.

to work diligently at becoming 'modernised.' Another example is the idea that for any number of reasons, Africa is afflicted by an endemic disease called patrimonialism or neopatrimonialism, explaining the endemic corruption on the continent – a disease for which there is no apparent cure.[166]

- There is the idea that Africa's woes are caused by plotting of ruthless neo-colonial exploiters. In a vulgar Marxist view, this leads to the conclusion that the African masses have little choice but to welcome capitalism as a necessary step in history's unavoidable march to socialism. Again, this restricts African agency.
- There is the view that Africa will be fine once it has modernised. This leaves little scope for African paths to development. Yet, such paths may be relevant, and not only for Africa. When Greta Thunberg was asked at the 2020 Davos summit what she would like to change, her simple answer was: 'everything.' And indeed, in paragraph 28 of the UN Agenda 2030 (UN 2015: 12) world leaders say: 'We commit to making fundamental changes in the way that our societies produce and consume goods and services.' Such fundamental changes are also necessary in order to avoid or mitigate climate change. The modernity theory basically holds that Africa needs to 'catch up' with the rest of the world (especially the Global North) and to 'modernise,' in the sense of becoming more like the North. Clearly, if the modern world needs 'fundamental changes' in order to become sustainable, then this same modern world can no longer be held up as the ideal that African countries should strive for. However, the opposite is also not right: it is also not right to claim that something cannot work in Africa because it has proven to be unsustainable in the developed world.

In line with a pan-Africanist vision, then, Africans will have to make their own choices and, in doing so, they will, of course, take elements from elsewhere, but to that they will add elements of their own. They should neither be advised to take up the Northern development model lock, stock, and barrel, nor to reject it outright.

In this study, I looked more closely at a number of other disempowering ideas, especially related to language and culture.

- The assertion that Africa has more than 2,000 living languages is often repeated uncritically and leads to an unwillingness to engage with language issues. This is not made any easier by the fashionable ideas

166 See Mkandawire (2015) for a discussion and critique of such theories.

discussed in section 2.1.1 about 'languoids.' These ideas lead to a neglect of language planning and language policy, and to a focus on discerned languages or language as spoken by people, away from a discussion of how designed languages and policies favouring indigenous designed languages can play a role as inclusive enablers rather than as exclusive gatekeepers. Furthermore, Africans have been raised with the idea – proven to be false both by research and through practice – that the best way to teach a child a foreign language is by using it as medium of instruction from an early age.

- Chapter 1.5 called attention to a related very common set of ideas on Africa, the idea that social engineering has complete freedom to build 'nations' in Africa, no matter what the underlying cultural basis is. If culture is unimportant (either because Africa forms a cultural whole or because Africa is infinitely fragmented or because socialism is anyway going to make all men brothers), then it is logical that the sacrosanctity of current nation states is the starting point of any further thinking.
- Chapter 4.1 discussed how various ideas about culture work to obstruct a view of both the constants and the dynamics of African cultures and cultural identities. These are concepts of culture as related to artefacts or products, or view culture as the way our ancestors lived, or only associate negative things with culture, such as its use as a marker to artificially mobilise primordialist sentiments. Authors tend to assume that culture needs homogeneity and they then say that because in practice they do not see such homogeneity (with individuals having 'multiple' and 'shifting' identities), culture as a concept is outdated. In general, there is often a confusion between what describes the level of individuals and what describes the level of larger groups. All these obstructions work together to create the situation already described by Claude Ake in 1993: referring to the concept of ethnicity as 'phenomenally problematic' in Africa, where there is a 'tendency to problematize the people and their culture, an error that continues to push Africa deeper into confusion.'

Together, this forms an entangled web of sometimes contradictory ideas that are called up time and again and work together to deny African agency. Together, these ideas on development, on culture, on identity, on nation building, and on language truly form what I would call a ***toxic cocktail of ideas*** that a decolonial vision is up against. This cocktail is part of what has been called the 'cognitive empire (the one that operates through invasion [of] the mental universe of its victims)' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Msilo, 2021: 23). Together, they 'explain' Africa's misery and turn Africa into a passive recipient, in need of foreign intervention – essentially still following the

colonial model. Let us recap: Africa's underdevelopment is explained either by its geographical location, or by faults in its culture. Those that dare to think about culture usually give it a negative connotation in connection with Africa. The only way out is through a modernisation (or through socialism) that is seen as coming from outside of the continent. The continent is anyway seen as a tabula rasa, a blank sheet, ready to receive foreign-based social engineering recipes.

Chapters 1.2 and 1.5 pointed to criticisms of the artificial nation states that were formed in Africa and to the related problem of endemic corruption, mismanagement and, in short, 'failed states.' The 'toxic cocktail' of ideas makes it impossible to contemplate a reconfiguration of some of Africa's more desperate nation states – as suggested by African thinkers such as Adebajo (2010) or, at the sub-national level in Nigeria, by Adejumobi (2004). For a critique of this complex of ideas, see also Prah (2004).

In the areas of language and education, the toxic cocktail also works in a way that is entirely disempowering. Linguistic categories that make the continent look infinitely fragmented are imposed on it. The distinction between discerned and designed languages is not made and, as a consequence, the importance of language policy is denied or simply ignored altogether. This means that a debate on using African languages in higher education is relegated to the fringes and does not take centre stage. The colonial system that equates foreign-language knowledge with social and economic progress is reproduced, leading to a reproduction of the rift between the elites and the masses of the population and hindering the development of cultural autonomy, a development anyway not well understood because of ideas of culture that see culture as something old-fashioned at best, negative at worst.

To give an example of ideas that I think *are* empowering, let me point to the results of the 'Tracking Development' project (Vlasblom, 2013). This study compared four Asian and four African countries and tried to explain the difference in development between the two sets of countries. The main finding was that in Africa, in contrast to Asia, investment in small-scale agriculture has been neglected. This finding *is* empowering, because it points the way to promising policy options that African countries can pursue. There is a link with language and education as well: if there is a dichotomy between the elite and the masses and if education is moulded on the colonial approach, then there is likely to be less attention to investment in agriculture, compared to when the elite also speak the language of the masses and when education is conceived in a bottom-up manner. Increasing productivity in

agriculture requires educated farmers who have a good understanding both of agricultural science and who have the required business and marketing skills. The traditional idea that those who were without education could make a living by subsistence farming is flawed, because it stands in the way of agricultural, and thus of general development in Africa.

Developing a decolonial and empowering perspective, then, involves much more than pious statements and it cannot afford to ignore the language issue. Throughout this study, I have shied away from using hard to understand concepts such as 'epistemic oppression,'[167] but I do think there is a case to be made for it. Attacking epistemic oppression, though, can only be done by looking at what it is composed of: a whole amalgam of partly scientific and partly pre-scientific theories, ideas, notions and myths that work together to form this toxic blend of ideas that needs to be unpacked and re-examined. In this work, I hope to have provided at least some ammunition for that.

Fortunately, as shown, trends in enrolment are likely to push education systems to the limits of what they can achieve in terms of foreign-language teaching and will lead to increased pressure to switch to African languages, at least in parts of the higher education systems. Such a switch is entirely doable, as demonstrated in the case studies of chapter five. It will contribute tremendously to the formation of new cultural autonomies.

6.4 Concluding Remarks: Towards regaining cultural autonomy

Vansina (1990: 259) sees autonomy, taken as self-determination, as key to the possibility of a cultural tradition to succeed. Wursten (2019: 31) makes a further point: democracy can only work if citizens perceive a measure of control and autonomy – the way they do this, is culturally determined. Chapter Four presented evidence of the fact that Africa has a rich, but not an endless cultural diversity. Chapter Three established that in the key area of higher education, it is possible to come to inclusive and rational choices for designed languages. Chapter 5.6.3 argues that even though the link between culture and language is not strictly one on one and that it is to a certain extent malleable, there is not a complete freedom there. There are some linkages between culture and language that have a strong historical basis; building

167 Epistemology is the philosophical field that deals with the theory of knowledge and how it is produced. Epistemic oppression as a term was highlighted by Dotson (2014) and refers to persistent exclusion, hindering contributions to knowledge production.

on these linkages can and does form elements for the emergence of new African cultural traditions, as predicted by Vansina. If we accept that cultural autonomy is a precondition to development, then we should at least devote some thoughts to what such a cultural autonomy would entail.

There is a rich literature on cultural autonomy, looking, for example, at the nation states in Eastern Europe or at the rights of minority cultures in North America.[168] It is impossible to treat this here, but it is possible to make a few general observations.

Firstly, it is good to point out that in the literature, a distinction is frequently made between regional autonomy – that is territorially based – and cultural autonomy, that is not (necessarily) territorial. Nimni (2007) has provided an example of how a model that allows for cultural, rather than regional autonomy could be implemented. This is relevant to bear in mind, because in Africa, territorial decentralisation is often seen as one way of combating bad governance issues on the continent. The idea is that by bringing the government closer to 'the people', it will also become more accountable. If territorial decentralisation roughly parallels ethnic or cultural lines (as is the case for example in Ethiopia and in Kenya), then indeed forms of territorial autonomy could also lead to forms of cultural autonomy. Of course, if (as in Kenya) the official language remains a colonial language, the dichotomy between the elite and the masses may remain.

To get an idea of what cultural autonomy would entail, it is good to look at the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, a non-binding resolution adopted with an overwhelming majority by the UN General Assembly in 2007. The term indigenous peoples is not unambiguous, but Wikipedia cites a preliminary UN Working Group definition of 1982 that holds that:

> Indigenous communities, peoples, and nations are those that, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society […].'[169]

168 For a useful historical overview see for example Roach (2004).

169 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indigenous_peoples, accessed 6 March 2020.

This definition is generally held not to apply to Africa, with the exception of small and distinct minorities such as the Khoisan peoples of Southern Africa or the Pygmies of Congo. However, it would be strange if such minorities would be given rights that are denied larger groups or majorities – the assumption is that majorities already enjoy such rights and have denied them others – a situation that may not be applicable in many African countries.

Indigenous peoples, according to the declaration, have 'the right to self-determination.' 'By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development' (Article 3). According to Article 4, they 'have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs, as well as ways and means for financing their autonomous functions.' Under Article 13, they have the right to use and develop their own languages. Article 14 gives them 'the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.' 2019 was the UN-sponsored International Year of Indigenous Languages. One of the conclusions from that year was: 'The protection, support and promotion of linguistic diversity and multilingualism is crucial for peace, development, good governance and reconciliation in our societies, as well as for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.'[170]

Do African ethnolinguistic groups currently have the rights indigenous groups should have? Except perhaps for largely homogeneous countries such as Botswana or Madagascar and except perhaps for Ethiopia, they clearly do not. Moreover, it is not even so obvious what larger cultural units exist, even though denying their existence is clearly impossible. Can they get such rights in future? Yes they can – but for that, conscious choices and conscious policies will be needed, based on knowledge that has a decolonial starting point.

170 https://en.iyil2019.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/strategic-outcome-document_iyil2019_eng.pdf, annex page 7. Note that UNESCO is also planning a 'decade on indigenous languages', 2022-2032.

References

Abbink, Jon (2011). Ethnic-based federalism and ethnicity in Ethiopia: Reassessing the experiment after 20 years. *Journal of Eastern African Studies (5)*4, 596-618.

Abdulai, Abdul-Garafu; Hickey, Sam (2016). The Politics of Development under Competitive Clientelism: Insights from Ghana's Education Sector. *African Affairs (115)*458, 44-72.

Adebajo, Adekeye (2010). *The Curse of Berlin: Africa After the Cold War.* London (UK): Hurst & Company.

Adejumobi, Said (2004). Civil society and federalism in Nigeria. *Regional & Federal Studies (14)*2, 211-231.

Adibe, Jideofor (2017). Who is an African? Reflections on Ali Mazrui's notion of the African. In: Njogu, Kimani; Adem, Seifudein (Eds). *Perspectives on Culture and Globalization: Intellectual Legacy of Ali A. Mazrui,* 178-191. Nairobi (Kenya): Twaweza Communications.

Agugua, Augustine (2018). Theories of Social Change and Development in Africa. In: S.O. Oloruntoba and F. Toyin (eds): *The Palgrave Handbook of African Politics, Governance and Development,* 103-121. New York (US): Palgrave Macmillan.

Ake, Claude (1993). What is the Problem of Ethnicity in Africa? *Transformation (22),* 1-14.

Akkari, A. (2008): Education in the Maghreb: From the Construction to the Consolidation of Educational Systems. *Analytical Reports in International Education*, 2(1), 89-106.

Albaugh, Ericka (2014). *State-Building and Multilingual Education in Africa.* New York (USA): Cambridge University Press.

Alesina, Alberto; Devleeschauwer, Arnaud; Easterly, William; Kurlat, Segio; Wacziarg, Romain (2002). Fractionalization. *Journal of Economic Growth (8)*2, 155-194.

Alexander, Neville (1998). The Political Economy of the Harmonisation of the Nguni and the Sotho Languages. *Lexicos (8: 1998),* 269-275.

Alexander, Neville (2001). Language Politics in South Africa. In: Bekker, Dodds, Khosa (eds.): *Shifting African Identities,* 141-152. Pretoria (South Africa): Human Sciences Resource Council.

Altbach, Philip (2012). *International Higher Education - an Encyclopaedia: Volume 1.* Abingdon (UK): Routledge.

Altinyelken, Hülya Kosar; Moorcroft, Sarah; Van der Draai, Hilde (2014). The dilemmas and complexities of implementing language-in-education policies: Perspectives from urban and rural contexts in Uganda. *International Journal of Educational Development (36),* 90-99.

Ameka, Felix (2017). The Uselessness of the Useful: Language Standardisation and Variation in Multilingual Contexts. In: Tieken-Boon van Ostade, Ingrid; Percy, Carol (eds): *Prescription and Tradition in Language: Establishing Standards across Time and Space,* 71-87. Bristol/Buffalo: Multilingual Matters.

Anderson, Benedict (1983). *Imagined Communities.* New York (US): Verso Books.

Ansah, Gladys (2014). Re-examining the fluctuations in language in-education policies in post-independence Ghana. *Multilingual Education 2014 4:12.*

Anyidoho, Akosua (2018). Shifting Sands: Language Policies in Education in Ghana and Implementation Challenges. *Ghana Journal of Linguistics (7)*2, 225-243.

Anyidoho, Akosua; Kropp Dakubu, M.E. (2008). Ghana: Indigenous Languages, English, and an Emerging National Identity. In: Andrew Simpson (ed.): *Language and National Identity in Africa*, 141-157. Oxford (UK): Oxford University Press.

Appadurai, Arjun (1996). *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization.* Minneapolis (US): University of Minnesota Press.

Appiah, Kwame (2012). Misunderstanding cultures: Islam and the West. *Philosophy and Social Criticism (38)*4-5, 425-433.

Appleyard, David; Orwin, Martin (2008). The Horn of Africa: Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, and Somalia. In: Andrew Simpson (ed.): *Language and National Identity in Africa*, 267-290. Oxford (UK): Oxford University Press.

Arkorful, Kingsley (2014). Ghana's Complementary Education Program. In: Zsiga, Elisabeth; Boyer, One Tlale; Kramer, Ruth (eds.): *Languages in Africa - Multilingualism, Language Policy and Education*, 71-80. Georgetown (US): Georgetown University Press.

Asiwaju, A.I. (1985). *Partitioned Africans: Ethnic relations across Africa's international boundaries, 1884-1984.* London (UK): C. Hurst & Co.

Athanasiou, Efthymios; Moreno-Ternero, Juan; Weber, Shlomo (2016). Language Learning and Communicative Benefits. In K. Kosonen and C. Benson (eds.), *Language Issues in Comparative Education Inclusive Teaching and Learning in Non-Dominant Languages and Cultures*, 212-230. Rotterdam (NL): Sense Publishers.

Attah, Mark (1987). The National Language Problem in Nigeria. *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne Des Études Africaines, (21)*3, 393-401.

Ayittey, George (2010). The United States of Africa: a revisit. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences (632)*1, 86-102.

Ayittey, George (2015). Post-MDGs and Africa's Development Conundrum. *Journal of International Development (27)*3, 345-361.

Bagamboula, Elise (2019). Laari, kikoongo, kisuundi, kigaangala ou création d'une mega-identité laari dans la région du Pool. In: Laurentian University, *Langues en contexte/ Languages in Context*, Série monographie en sciences humaines (22), Sudbury (Canada): Laurentian University, 175-192.

Baka, Jean (2005). Problématique pour une meilleure gestion du multilinguisme social de type Afro-Européen en Afrique au Sud du Sahara. *Afrika Focus (18)*2, 95-118.

Bamgbose, Ayo (2000). Language planning in West Africa. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language (141)*, 101-117.

Bamgbose, Ayo (2011). African Languages Today: The Challenge of and Prospects for Empowerment under Globalization. In Bokamba, Eyamba (ed), *Selected Proceedings of the 40th Annual Conference on African Linguistics*, 1-14. Somerville (US): Cascadilla Proceedings Project.

Banda, Felix (2009). Critical perspectives on language planning and policy in Africa: Accounting for the notion of multilingualism. *Stellenbosch Papers in Linguistics PLUS (38),* 1-11.

Banda, Felix (2016). Language policy and orthographic harmonization across linguistic, ethnic and national boundaries in Southern Africa. *Language Policy (15),* 257-275.

Barac, Raluca; Bialystok, Ellen (2012). Bilingual Effects on Cognitive and Linguistic Development: Role of Language, Cultural Background, and Education. *Child Development (83)*2, 413-422.

Barro, Robert; Jong-Wha, Lee (2015). *Education Matters: Global Schooling Gains from the 19th to the 21st Century.* New York (US): Oxford University Press.

Batibo, Herman (2004). Setswana: An under-exploited national resource? In: Katrin Bromber, Birgit Smieja (eds): *Globalisation and African Languages - Risks and Benefits,* 53-63. Berlin (Germany): Mouton de Gruyter.

Bekker, Simon (2001). Identity and Ethnicity. In: Bekker, Dodds, Khosa (eds.), *Shifting African Identities,* 1-6. Pretoria (South Africa): Human Sciences Resource Council.

Benson, Carol (2015). The Language Barrier. *Fixing the Broken Promises of Education for All,* Montreal (Canada): Unesco Institute of Statistics, 70-76.

Beugelsdijk, Sjoerd; Welzel, Christian (2018). Dimensions and Dynamics of National Culture: Synthesizing Hofstede With Inglehart. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology (49)*10, 1469-1505.

Beugelsdijk, Sjoerd (2019). Nederlandse waarden en normen internationaal vergeleken – Analyse. In: Beugelsdijk, de Hart, van Houwelingen, Versantvoort (eds), *Sociaal en Cultureel Rapport 2019 – Denkend aan Nederland.* The Hague (Netherlands): SCP, chapter 9.

Beugelsdijk, Sjoerd; de Hart, Joep; van Houwelingen, Pepijn; Versantvoort, Maroesja (2019). *Thinking of the Netherlands - Social and Cultural Report – Public Magazine.* The Hague (Netherlands): SCP.

Beyogle, Richard (2014). Language Contact and Language Attitudes in Two Dagara-Speaking Border Communities in Burkina Faso and Ghana. In: Zsiga, Elisabeth; Boyer, One Tlale; Kramer, Ruth (eds.): *Languages in Africa - Multilingualism, Language Policy and Education*, 81-91. Georgetown (US): Georgetown University Press.

Blommaert, Jan (2013). Citizenship, Language and Superdiversity: Towards Complexity. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education (12)*3, 193-196.

Blommaert, Jan (2014). *State Ideology and Language in Tanzania* (2nd ed.) Edinburgh (UK): Edinburgh University Press.

Bobina, Mariya, Grachev, Mikhail (2016). Cross-Cultural Studies as a Resource for Management Development in Africa. In: Kazeroony, Hamid; Du Plessis, Yvonne; Puplampu, Bill (eds): *Sustainable Management Development in Africa: Building Capacities to Serve African Organisations,* 99-122. New York (US): Routledge.

Bourdieu, Pierre; Passeron, Jean-Claude (1979). *The Inheritors: French Students and Their Relation to Culture.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Brock-Utne, Birgit (2013). Language and liberation. Language of instruction for mathematics and science: A comparison and contrast of practices focusing on Tanzania. In K. Kosonen and C. Benson (eds), *Language Issues in Comparative Education - Inclusive Teaching and Learning in Non-Dominant Languages and Cultures,* 77-93. Rotterdam (NL): Sense Publishers.

Brock-Utne, Birgit (2017). Multilingualism in Africa: Marginalisation and empowerment. In: H. Coleman (ed.): *Multilingualisms and Development,* 61-77. London (UK): British Council.

Bulcha, Mekuria (1998). The Politics of Linguistics Homogenisation in Ethiopia; trends in the Development of the Oromo Language. In: Kwesi Prah (ed.): *Between Distinction and Extinction: the Harmonization and Standardization of African Languages*, 91-124. Cape Town (South Africa): CASAS Book Series no. 1 (repr. 2000/2005).

Buzási, Katalin (2016). Linguistic Situation in Twenty sub-Saharan African Countries: A Survey-based Approach. *African Studies (75)*3, 358-380.

Calvès, Anne-Emmanuèle (2009). Empowerment: The History of a Key Concept in Contemporary Development Discourse. *Revue Tiers Monde (200)*4, 735-749.

Camic, Charles (1991) (ed.) *Talcott Parsons – the Early Essays.* New York (US): McGraw-Hill.

Campbell, Horace (2017). Ali Mazrui: Transformative Education and Reparative Justice. In: Njogu, Kimani; Adem, Seifudein (eds.). *Perspectives on Culture and Globalization: Intellectual Legacy of Ali A. Mazrui,* 64-100. Nairobi (Kenya): Twaweza Communications.

Chaudenson, Robert (2006). *Éducation et langues - Français, créoles, langues africaines.* Paris (France): l'Harmattan.

Chebanne, Andy (2016a). Writing Khoisan: Harmonized orthographies for development of under-researched and marginalized languages: The case of Cua, Kua, and Tsua dialect continuum of Botswana. *Language Policy (15),* 277-297.

Chebanne, Andy (2016b). Found and Lost Languages: A Survey of the Past and Current Situation of Botswana Ethnic and Linguistic Communities. *Botswana Notes and Records (48*), 160-175.

Chumbow, Beban (2005). The language question and national development in Africa. In: Mkandawire, Thandika (ed.). *African intellectuals - Rethinking politics, language, gender and development*, 165-192. Dakar (Senegal): CODESRIA.

Chumbow, Beban; Atindogbe, Gratien; Domche, Engelbert; Bot, Dieudonné (2007). Classification of the Languages of Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea on the Basis of Lexicostatistics and Mutual Intelligibility. *African Study Monographs (28)*4, 181-204.

Christopher, Nkechi (2008). Social and Educational Impact of Language Assessment in Nigeria. *Nordic Journal of African Studies (17)*3, 198-210.

Clifford, James (1983). On Ethnographic Authority. *Representations No. 2*, 118-146.

Cloete, Nico; Maassen, Peter (2015). Roles of Universities and the African Context. In: Cloete, Nico; Maassen, Peter; Bailey, Tracy (eds): *Knowledge Production and Contradictory Functions in African Higher Education,* 1-17. Cape Town (South Africa): African Minds.

Cochrane, Logan; Bekele, Yeshtila. Politics and Power in Southern Ethiopia: Imposing, Opposing and Calling for Linguistic Unity. *Language Matters (50)*3, 26-45.

Council of Europe Language Portal, http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/cadre1_en.asp, accessed 12 May 2017.

Cummins, Jim (1979). Cognitive/Academic Language Proficiency, Linguistic Interdependence, the Optimum Age Question and Some Other Matters. *Working Papers on Bilingualism,* 19.

Cysouw, Michael (2013). Predicting language-learning difficulty. In: Borin, Lars; Saxena, Anju (eds.): *Approaches to Measuring Linguistic Differences,* 57-81. Berlin (Germany): Mouton de Gruyter.

Davis, Lewis; Abdurazokzoda, Farangis (2016). Language, culture and institutions: Evidence from a new linguistic dataset. *Journal of Comparative Economics (44)*3, 541-561.

Davidson, Basil (1992). *The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State.* New York (US): Three Rivers Press.

Desmet, Klaus; Ortuño-Ortín, Ignacio; Wacziarg, Romain (2016). Linguistic Cleavages and Economic Development. In: V. Ginsburgh and S. Weber (eds.): *The Palgrave Handbook of Economics and Language,* 425-446. Houndsmills (UK): Palgrave Macmillan.

Devisse, Jean; Vansina, Jan (1988). Africa from the seventh to the eleventh century: five formative centuries. In: M. El Fasi (ed): *General History of Africa, III*, 750-793. Paris (France): UNESCO.

Dimmendaal, Gerrit (2004). Capacity building in an African context. In Peter K. Austin (ed.) *Language Documentation and Description, vol 2*, 71-89. London: SOAS

Djité, Paulin (2008). *The Sociolinguistics of Development in Africa.* Clevedon (UK): Multilingual Matters.

Doornbos, Martin; Van Binsbergen, Wim (2017). *Researching Power & Identity in African State Formation - Comparative Perspectives*. Pretoria (SA): UNISA Press.

Dorvlo, Kofi (2008). *A Grammar of Logba (Ikpana).* Utrecht (Netherlands): LOT.

Dotson, Kristie (2014). Conceptualizing Epistemic Oppression. *Social Epistemology (28)*2, 115-138.

Easterly, William; Levine, Ross (1997). Africa's Growth Tragedy: Policies and Ethnic Divisions. *Quarterly Journal of Economics (111)*4, 1203-1250.

Education Indicators - Technical guidelines. UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Montreal, 2009. (Online version accessed 22 February 2017 at http://www.uis.unesco.org/Library/Documents/eiguide09-en.pdf)

Englebert, Pierre (2005). Back to the Future? Resurgent Indigenous Structures and the Reconfiguration of Power in Africa. In: O. Vaughan (ed.): *Tradition and Politics – Indigenous Political Structures in Africa,* 33-60. Trenton (US)/Asmara (Eritrea): Africa World Press.

Erk, Jan (2015). Iron Houses in the Tropical Heat: Decentralization Reforms in Africa & their Consequences. *Regional & Federal Studies (25)*5, 409-420.

Etounga-Manguelle, Daniel (2000). Does Africa Need a Cultural Adjustment Program? In: L. Harrison and S. Huntington (eds.): *Culture Matters,* 65-77. New York (US): Basic Books.

Fabb, Nigel (2016). Linguistic Theory, Linguistic Diversity and Whorfian Economics. In: V. Ginsburgh and S. Weber (eds.): *The Palgrave Handbook of Economics and Language*, 17-59. Houndsmills (UK): Palgrave Macmillan.

First European Survey on Language Competences - Executive Summary (2012). European Commission, Brussels (Belgium).

Fiseha, Assefa (2012). Ethiopia's Experiment in Accommodating Diversity: 20 Years' Balance Sheet. *Regional and Federal Studies (22)*4, 435-473.

Fougère, Martin; Moulettes, Agneta (2007). The Construction of the Modern West and the Backward Rest: Studying the Discourse of Hofstede's Culture's Consequences. *Journal of Multicultural Discourse (2)*1, 1-19.

Garrouste, Christelle (2011). Explaining learning gaps in Namibia: The role of language proficiency. *International Journal of Educational Development (31)*, 223-233.

Geertz, Clifford (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures.* New York (US): Basic Books.

Gellner, Ernest (1983). *Nations and Nationalism.* Ithaca (US): Cornell University Press.

Gerschman, Boris; Rivera, Diego (2018). Subnational diversity in Sub-Saharan Africa: Insights from a new dataset. *Journal of Development Economics (133)*, 231-263.

Gervedink Nijhuis, Chantal; Voogt, Joke; Pieters, Jules (2012). The cultural complexity of internationalcollaboration: Conditions for sustainable curriculum development in Ghana. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations (36)*5, 647-658.

Gilbert, Jeremie (2013). Constitutionalism, ethnicity and minority rights in Africa: a legal appraisal from the Great Lakes region. *International Journal of Constitutional Law (11)*2, 414-437.

Ginsburgh, Victor; Weber, Shlomo (2016). Linguistic Distances and Ethnolinguistic Fractionalization and Disenfranchisement Indices. In: V. Ginsburgh and S. Weber (eds): *The Palgrave Handbook of Economics and Language*, 137-173. Houndsmills (UK): Palgrave Macmillan.

Gooskens, Charlotte (2013). Experimental Methods for Measuring Intelligibility of Closely Related Language Varieties. In: R. Bayley, R. Cameron, C. Lucas (eds): *The Oxford Handbook of Sociolinguistics,* 195-213. New York (US): Oxford University Press.

Gooskens, Charlotte; Heeringa, Wilbert; Beijering, Karin (2008). Phonetic and Lexical Predictors of Intelligibility. *International Journal of Humanities and Arts Computing (2)*1–2, 63-81.

Greenfield, Patricia (2000). What Psychology Can Do for Anthropology, or Why Anthropology Took Postmodernism on the Chin. *American Anthropologist (102)*3, 564-576.

Grin, François (2003). Language Planning and Economics. *Current Issues in Language Planning (4)*1, 1-66.

Grotenhuis, René (2016). *Nation-Building as Necessary Effort in Fragile States.* Amsterdam (NL): Amsterdam University Press.

Guidi, Pierre (2012). Les enfants du Wolaitta n'apprendront pas en wogagoda : les enjeux linguistiques et politiques d'un conflit scolaire en Éthiopie (1999-2000). *Cahiers de la recherche sur l'éducation et les savoirs (11)*, 129-148.

Hammarström, Harald (2016). Linguistic diversity and language evolution. *Journal of Language Evolution (2016)*, 19–29.

Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin; Bank, Sebastian (2020). *Glottolog4.2.1.* Jena (Germany): Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History. (Available online at http://glottolog.org, accessed on 22 June 2020.)

Heeringa, Wilbert (2004). *Measuring Dialect Pronunciation Differences using Levenshtein Distance.* Groningen (Netherlands): Groningen dissertations in linguistics, vol. 46.

Heugh, Kathleen (2011). Theory and Practice – Language Education Models in Africa: Research, Design, Decision-making, and Outcomes. In: Ouane, Adama; Glanz, Christine (eds.). *Optimizing Learning and Education in Africa – the Language Factor. A Stock-taking Research on Mother-tongue and Bilingual Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 105-158. Hamburg (Germany)/Tunis (Tunisia): UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning / Association for the Development of Education in Africa.

Heugh, Kathleen (2014). Shades, Voice and Mobility: Afar pastoralist and Rift Valley communities (re)interpreting literacy and linguistic practices. *Multilingual Margins (1)*1, 21-52.

Heugh, Kathleen (2016). Harmonisation and South African languages: Twentieth century debates of homogeneity and heterogeneity. *Language Policy (15),* 235-255.

Heugh, Kathleen (2019). Multilingualism and Education in Africa. In: Ekkehard Wolff (ed.): *The Cambridge Handbook of African Linguistics,* 577-600. Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press.

Higgins, Kate (2009). *Regional Inequality and Secondary Education in Ghana – Policy Brief No 1. Prepared for the World Development Report 2009*. ODI (UK).

Hirji, Karim (2017). *The Enduring Relevance of Walter Rodney's How Europe Underdeveloped Africa.* Montreal (Canada): Daraja Press.

Hobsbawm, E., Ranger, T. (1984). *The invention of tradition.* Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press.

Hofstede, Geert (1980). *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work Related Values.* London (UK) and Beverley Hills (USA): Sage.

Hofstede, Geert (1986). Cultural Differences in Teaching and Learning. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations (10)*, 301-330.

Hofstede, Geert (1995). Multilevel Research of Human Systems: Flowers, Bouquets and Gardens. *Human Systems Management (14),* 207-217.

Hofstede, Geert (2001). *Culture's Consequences – 2nd edition*. Thousand Oaks (USA): SAGE.

Hofstede, Geert; Hofstede, Gert-Jan; Minkov, Michael (2010). *Cultures and Organizations - Software of the Mind - 3rd edition.* New York (US): McGraw-Hill.

Hofstede, Geert; Garibaldi de Hilal, Adriana; Malvezzi, Sigmar; Tanure, Betania; Vinken, Henk (2010). Comparing Regional Cultures Within a Country: Lessons from Brazil. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology (41)*3, 336-352.

Holman, Eric; Brown, Cecil; Wichmann, Søren; Müller, André; Velupillai, Viveka; Hammarström, Harald; Sauppe, Sebastian; Jung, Hagen; Bakker, Dik; Brown, Pamela; Belyaev, Oleg; Urban, Matthias; Mailhammer, Robert; List, Johann-Mattis; Egorov, Dmitry (2011). Automated Dating of the World's Language Families based on Lexical Similarity. *Current Anthropology (52)*6, 841-875.

Idhssaine, Abdellah; El Kirat, Yamina (2021): Amazigh language use, perceptions and revitalisation in Morocco: the case of Rabat-Sale region, *The Journal of North African Studies (26)*:3, 465-479.

Inglehart, Ronald; Welzel, Christian (2005). *Modernization, Cultural Change and Democracy.* Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press.

International Standard Classification of Education - ISCED 2011. UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Montreal, 2012. (Online version accessed 22 February 2017 at http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/isced-2011-en.pdf)

Ives, Peter (2008). A Marxist Philosophy of Language. *Capital & Class (94),* 162-166.

Jaafari, Taoufik (2019): Language Debates and the Changing Context of Educational Policy in Morocco, *Journal of Global Initiatives: Policy, Pedagogy, Perspective (14)*2 , 125-142.

Joswig, Andreas (2020). Language Standardization Dilemmas in the Ethiopian Context. In: Wal, Jenneke van der; Smits, Heleen; Petrollino, Sara.; Nyst, Victoria; Kossmann, Maarten (eds): *Essays on African languages and linguistics: in honour of Maarten Mous* 81-100. Leiden (Netherlands): African Studies Centre.

Kamwangamalu, Nkonko (2016). *Language Policy and Economics - the Language Question in Africa*. London (UK): Palgrave MacMillan.

Kamwangamalu, Nkonko (2019). Language Policy in Post- Apartheid South Africa – An Evaluation. In: McCarty, Teresa; Nicholas, Sheilah; Wigglesworth, Gillian (eds.): *A World of Indigenous Languages*, 48-67. Bristol (UK): Multilingual Matters.

Kanana, Fridah Erastus (2013). Examining African Languages as Tools for National Development: The Case of Kiswahili. *The Journal of Pan African Studies (6)*6, 41-68.

Kaschula, Russell; Maseko, Pamela; Wolff, Ekkehard (2017) (eds). *Multilingualism and Intercultural Communication – a South African Perspective*, 283-300. Johannesburg (South Africa): Wits University Press.

Kaschula, Russell; Mostert, Andre (2017). Language policy in South Africa through the Sapir-Whorf 'looking glasses'. In: Kaschula, Maseko and Wolff (eds): *Multilingualism and Intercultural Communication – a South African Perspective.* Johannesburg (South Africa): Wits University Press.

Kaschula, Russell; Nkomo, Dion (2019). Intellectualization of African Languages: Past, Present and Future. In: Ekkehard Wolff (ed): *The Cambridge Handbook of African Linguistics,* 602-622*.* Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press.

Kloss, Heinz (1967). 'Abstand Languages' and 'Ausbau Languages'. *Anthropological Linguistics (9)*7, 29-41.

Kortmann, Bernd; Lunkenheimer, Kerstin; Ehret, Katharina (eds.) 2020. *The Electronic World Atlas of Varieties of English*. Zenodo. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.3712132

Kru, K. Ernest; Ansah, Margaret (2018). An Overview of the Language-in-Education Policy in Ghana: Emerging Issues. *The Social Sciences (13)*3, 596-601.

Küspert-Rakotondrainy, Sophie (2014). Language Policy and Social Identity in the Light of Socio-Political Changes in Ethiopia. A Comparative Case Study among the Gumuz and Shinasha. *Ethiopian Renaissance Journal of Social Sciences and the Humanities (1)*1, 41-72.

Kymlicka, Will (2013). Multicultural states and intercultural citizens. *Theory and Research in Education (1)*2, 147-169.

Laitin, David (1992). *Language repertoires and state construction in Africa.* New York (USA): Cambridge University Press.

Lamola, M. John (2019). Breaking the Gridlock of the African Postcolonial Self-Imagination*. Angelaki, Journal of the Theoretical Humanities (24)*2, 48-60.

Lebeau, Yann, Ogunsanya, Mobolaji (eds) (2000). *The Dilemma of Post-Colonial Universities*, Ibadan (Nigeria): IFRA.

Li, Shaofeng (2016). The Construct Validity of Language Aptitude - A Meta-Analysis. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition (38),* 801-842.

Lo Bianco, Joseph (2008). Educational Linguistics and Education Systems. In: B. Spolski, F. Hult (eds), *The Handbook of Educational Linguistics,* 113-123. Malden (USA): Blackwell Publishers.

Lüpke, Friederike; Storch, Anne (2013). *Repertoires and Choices in African Languages.* Berlin (Germany): De Gruyter Mouton.

Lüpke, Friederike (2019). Language Endangerment and Language Documentation in Africa. In: Wolff, Ekkehard (ed): *The Cambridge Handbook of African Linguistics*, 468-490. Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press.

Machobane, M.; Mokitini, M. (1998). Problems in the Development of Sesotho Orthography. In: Kwesi Prah (ed.): *Between Distinction and Extinction: the Harmonization and Standardization of African Languages,* 203-212. Cape Town (South Africa): CASAS Book Series no. 1 (repr. 2000/2005).

MacLean, Lauren (2010). *Informal Institutions and Citizenship in Rural Africa: Risk and Reciprocity in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire.* Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press.

Maho, Jouni (2004). How many languages are there in Africa, really? In: Katrin Bromber, Birgit Smieja (eds.): *Globalisation and African Languages - Risks and Benefits,* 279-296. Berlin (Germany): Mouton de Gruyter.

Maho, Jouni (2009). NUGL Online - The online version of the New Updated Guthrie List, a referential classification of the Bantu languages. Available online at https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/887a/3570883e1810b2c81be86d139617dfd89b0c.pdf?_ga=2.177329893.1731164584.1573721144-454447670.1573721144 retrieved 14 November 2019.

Makalela, Leketi (2015). Moving out of linguistic boxes: the effects of translanguaging strategies for multilingual classrooms. *Language and Education (29)*3, 200-217.

Makoni, Sinfree (1998). In the Beginning was the Missionary's Word: the European Invention of an African language: the Case of Shona in Zimbabwe. In: Kwesi Prah (ed.): *Between Distinction and Extinction: the Harmonization and Standardization of African Languages*, 157-164. Cape Town (South Africa): CASAS Book Series no. 1 (repr. 2000/2005).

Makoni, Sinfree; Meinhof, Ulrike (2006). An Argument for Ethno-Language Studies in Africa. In: Paul Zeleza (ed): *The Study of Africa, vol. 1*, 117-134. Dakar (Senegal): CODESRIA.

Makoni, Sinfree (2016). Romanticizing differences and managing diversities: a perspective on harmonization, language policy, and planning. *Language Policy (15),* 223-234.

Mamdani, Mahmood (1996). *Citizen and Subject – Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism.* Princeton (USA): Princeton University Press.

Maris, Berthold van (2010). Tellen tot de dag des oordeels - Hoeveel talen zijn er nu écht in de wereld? *Onze Taal*, (*2010)* 9, 248-249.

Matiki, Alfred (2010). The Case for the use of Indigenous Languages in the Legal System in Botswana. In: *Mapping Africa in the English Speaking World: Issues in Language and Literature*, 182-190. Monaka, Kemmonye; Seda, Owen; Ellece, Sibonile; McAllister, John (Eds). Newcastle upon Tyne (UK): Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Maurer, Bruno (Ed.) (2015). *Mesurer la francophonie et identifier les francophones - Inventaire critique des sources et des méthodes.* Paris (France): Éditions des archives contemporaines.

Mazrui, Alamin (2019). Sociocultural and Political Settings of Language in Africa. In: Wolff, Ekkehard (ed): *The Cambridge Handbook of African Linguistics*, 419-441. Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press.

Mazrui, Ali (1993). *General History of Africa, VIII, Africa since 1935.* Paris (France): UNESCO.

Mbembe, Achille (2001). *On the Postcolony.* Berkeley/Los Angeles (US): California University Press.

Mbembe, Achille (2002). On the Power of the False. *Public Culture (14)*3, 629-641.

Mbembe, Achille (2015). *Decolonizing Knowledge and the Question of the Archive.* Johannesburg (South Africa): WISER lecture transcript.

McArthur, Tom (2003). World English, Euro-English, Nordic English? *English Today (19)*1, 54-58.

McGroarty, Mary (2008). The Political Matrix of Linguistic Ideologies. In: B. Spolski, F. Hult (eds), *The Handbook of Educational Linguistics,* 98-112. Malden (USA): Blackwell Publishers.

McKenzie, Katherine; Milton, Meagan; Smith, Glenys; Ouellette-Kuntz, Hélène (2016). Systematic Review of the Prevalence and Incidence of Intellectual Disabilities: Current Trends and Issues. *Current Developmental Disorders Reports (2016)*3: 104-115.

McLeod, John (2010). *Beginning Postcolonialism (2nd ed.).* Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press.

Michalopoulos, Stelios; Papaiouannou, Elias (2016). The Long-Run Effects of the Scramble for Africa. *African Economic Review (106)*7, 1802-1848.

Minkov, Michael (2013). *Cross-Cultural Analysis.* Thousand Oaks (USA): SAGE.

Minkov, Michael; Dutt, Pinaki; Schachner, Michael; Morales, Oswaldo; Sanchez, Carlos; Jandosova, Janar; Khassenbekov, Yerlan; Mudd, Ben (2017). A Revision of Hofstede's Individualism-Collectivism Dimension: A New National Index from a 56-Country Study. *Cross-Cultural & Strategic Management (24)*3, 386-404.

Minkov, Michael; Dutt, Pinaki; Schachner, Michael; Morales, Oswaldo; Sanchez, Carlos; Jandosova, Janar; Khassenbekov, Yerlan; Mudd, Ben (2018a). A Reconsideration of Hofstede's Fifth Dimension: New Flexibility versus Monumentalism Data from 54 Countries. *Cross-Cultural Research (52)*3, 309-333.

Minkov, Michael (2018b). A revision of Hofstede's model of national culture: old evidence and new data from 56 countries. *Cross-Cultural & Strategic Management (25)*2, 231-256.

Minkov, Michael; Hofstede, Geert (2012). Is National Culture a Meaningful Concept? Cultural Values Delineate Homogeneous National Clusters of In-Country Regions. *Cross-Cultural Research (46)*2, 123-159.

Miti, Lazarus (2015). Cultural and Linguistic Aspects of Development in Africa: the

missing ingredients. *Nawa Journal of Language and Communication (9)*1, 2-24.

Mkandawire, Thandika (2015). Neopatrimonialism and the Political Economy of Economic Performance in Africa – Critical Reflections. *World Politics (67)*3, 563-612.

Mokibelo, Eureka (2010). English: A Disempowering Language for Khoe Learners in Botswana. In: *Mapping Africa in the English Speaking World: Issues in Language and Literature*, 191-203. Monaka, Kemmonye; Seda, Owen; Ellece, Sibonile; McAllister, John (Eds). Newcastle upon Tyne (UK): Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Mokibelo, Eureka (2016). Implementation of the Language-in-education Policy and Achieving Education for All Goals in Botswana Primary Schools. *Universal Journal of Educational Research (4)*1, 157-164.

Molosiwa, Annah; Bokhutso, Keene (2016). Low educational participation of marginalised children in Botswana's rural and remote schools: Interface between cultural, structural and institutional factors. *Africa Education Review (13)*2, 48-63.

Moran, Steven; Prokić, Jelena (2013). Investigating the Relatedness of the Endangered Dogon Languages. *Literary and Linguistic Computing (28)*4, 676-691.

Mous, Maarten (1995). *The Making of a Mixed Language: the Case of Ma'a/Mbugu.* Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Msimang, T. (1998). The Nature and History of Harmonisation of South African Languages. In: Kwesi Prah (ed.): *Between Distinction and Extinction: the Harmonization and Standardization of African Languages*, 165-172. Cape Town (South Africa): CASAS Book Series no. 1 (repr. 2000/2005).

Munene, John; Schartz, Shalom; Smit, Peter (2000). Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: Cultural Influences and Managers' Decision Behavior. *Public Administration and Development (20)*4, 339-351.

Muzale, Henry; Rugemalira, Josephat (2008). Researching and Documenting the Languages of Tanzania. *Language Documentation & Conservation (2)*1, 68-108.

Mwinsheikhe, Halima Mohammed (2003). Science and the Language Barrier: Using Kiswahili as a Medium of Instruction in Tanzania Secondary Schools as a Strategy of Improving Student Participation and Performance in Science. In: Birgit Brock-Utne, Zubeida Desai and Martha Qorro (eds). *Language of Instruction in Tanzania and South Africa (LOITASA)*, 129-149. Dar es Salaam (Tanzania): E & D Publishers.

Naidoo, Rajani (2004). Fields and institutional strategy: Bourdieu on the relationship between higher education, inequality and society. *British Journal of Sociology of Education (25)*4, 457-471.

Ndhlovu, Finex (2015). *Hegemony and Language Policies in Southern Africa: Identity, Integration, Development.* Newcastle upon Tyne (UK): Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Sabelo (2020). The cognitive empire, politics of knowledge and African intellectual productions: reflections on struggles for epistemic freedom and resurgence of decolonisation in the twenty-first century. *Third World Quarterly*, published online 8 July 2020.

Ndlovo-Gatsheni, Sabelo; Msila, Vuyisile (2021). On Decolonizing Knowledge, Pedagogy and Methodology in Africa. *Méthod(e)s : African Review of Social Sciences Methodology/Revue africaine de méthodologie des sciences sociales, issue 1,*2021, 23-46.

Ndofirepi, Amasa; Gwaravanda, Taurai (2019). Epistemic (in)justice in African universities: a perspective of the politics of knowledge. *Educational Review (71)*5, 581-594.

Neocosmos, Michael (1995). *Towards a History of Nationalities in Southern Africa.* Copenhagen (Denmark): CDR Working Papers no 95.6.

Ngeutsa, Robert; Wassouo, Emmanuel; Kouabenan, Dongo Rémy (2021). Construction and validation of a scale measuring cultural beliefs and values in Cameroon. *Current Psychology*, published online 12 August 2021.

Nimni, Ephraim (2007). National–Cultural Autonomy as an Alternative to Minority Territorial Nationalism. *Ethnopolitics (6)*3, 345-364.

No author (1953). *African Languages and English in Education.* Paris (France): UNESCO Education Clearing House.

No author (2017). *RISE Tanzania Research Programme Overview January 2017*. Washington DC (USA): Georgetown University Initiative on Innovation, Development and Evaluation (guide).

Nugent, Paul (2019). *Boundaries, Communities and State-Making in West Africa - The Centrality of the Margins.* Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press.

Oloruntoba, Samuel; Falola, Toyin (2018). Introduction: Contextualizing the Debates on Politics, Governance and Development. In: S.O. Oloruntoba and F. Toyin (eds): *The Palgrave Handbook of African Politics, Governance and Development* 1-32. New York (USA): Palgrave Macmillan.

Olowu, Dele; Chanie, Paulus (2016). *State Fragility and State building in Africa - Cases from Eastern and Southern Africa.* Dordrecht (NL): Springer International Publishing. UNU Series on Regionalism # 10.

Ouane, Adama; Glanz, Christine (2010). *Why and how Africa should invest in African languages and multilingual education - An evidence- and practice-based policy advocacy brief.* Hamburg (Germany): UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning.

Pennycook, Alastair (2010). *Language as a Local Practice*. Milton Park (UK): Routledge.

Peterson, Mark; Barreto, Tais Siquiera (2014). The *like it or not* proposition: Implications of societal characteristics for the cultural expertise and personal values of organization members. *Journal of Organizational Behavior (35)*, 1134-1152.

Peterson, Mark; Pike, Kenneth (2002). Emics and Etics for Organizational Studies - A Lesson in Contrast from Linguistics. *International Journal of Cross-Cultural Management (2)*1, 5-19.

Piller, Ingrid (2016). *Linguistic diversity and social justice: an introduction to applied sociolinguistics.* New York (USA): Oxford University Press.

Pinxteren, Bert van (2018a). What Do Enrolment Data Say About Education? In: A. Breedveld and J. Jansen (eds): *Education for Life in Africa,* 35-50. Leiden (Netherlands): African Studies Centre.

Pinxteren, Bert van (2018b). African Identities – a New Perspective. Unpublished Master Thesis, Leiden University: http://hdl.handle.net/1887/64766.

Pinxteren, Bert van (2020a). National Culture and Africa Revisited: Ethnolinguistic Group Data From 35 African Countries. *Cross-Cultural Research*, *54*(1), 73-91.

Pinxteren, Bert van; Emirhafizović, Mirza; Dailidienė, Inga; Figurek, Aleksandra; Hălbac-Cotoară-Zamfir, Rareș; Mętrak, Monika (2020b). Education for Resilience: How a Combination of Systemic and Bottom-Up Changes in Educational Services Can Empower Dryland Communities in Africa and Central Asia. *Journal of Asian and African Studies.* (56)6, 1271-1285.

Pinxteren, Bert van (2021a). Cultural Autonomy and Cultural Dimensions in Africa—as Evidenced from the Afrobarometer Survey. *Méthod(e)s : African Review of Social Sciences Methodology/Revue africaine de méthodologie des sciences sociales, issue 1,* 2021, 89-110.

Pinxteren, Bert van (2021b). *Language, Education and Identity in Africa.* Amsterdam (Netherlands): LOT.

Posner, Daniel (2004). Measuring Ethnic Fractionalization in Africa. *American Journal of Political Science (48),* 849-863.

Prah, Kwesi (1991). *Culture, Gender, Science and Technology in Africa.* Namibia: Harp.

Prah, Kwesi (1998). *Between Distinction and Extinction: the Harmonization and Standardization of African Languages.* Cape Town (South Africa): CASAS Book Series no. 1 (repr. 2000/2005).

Prah, Kwesi (2004). African Wars and Ethnic Conflicts – Rebuilding Failed States. *HDR Occasional Paper no. 10.* UNDP.

Prah, Kwesi (2008). *Anthropological Prisms - Studies on African Realities.* Cape Town (South Africa): CASAS.

Prah, Kwesi (2010a). The burden of English in Africa: from Colonialism to Neo-Colonialism. In: *Mapping Africa in the English Speaking World: Issues in Language and Literature*, 128-148. Monaka, Kemmonye; Seda, Owen; Ellece, Sibonile; McAllister, John (Eds). Newcastle upon Tyne (UK): Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Prah, Kwesi (2010b). African languages and their usages in multicultural landscapes. *Journal of Multicultural Discourses (5)*2, 83-86.

Prah, Kwesi (2012). The language of development and the development of language in contemporary Africa. *Applied Linguistics Review (3)*2, 295-313.

Prah, Kwesi (2014). *Tracings. Pan-Africanism and the Challenges of Global African Unity.* Cape Town (South Africa): CASAS.

Prah, Kwesi (2016). Has Rhodes Fallen? Decolonizing the Humanities in Africa and Constructing Intellectual Sovereignty. *Inaugural Humanities Lecture, HSRC, 2016.* Pretoria (South Africa): Academy of Sciences of South Africa.

Prah, Kwesi (2017). The Intellectualisation of African Languages for Higher Education. *Alternation(24)*2, 215-225.

Pratt, Mary-Louise (1992). *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. London (UK): Routledge.

Qorro, Martha (2013). Language of instruction in Tanzania: Why are research findings not heeded? *International Review of Education (59):* 29-45.

Rajagopalan, Kanavillil (2010). The Soft Ideological Underbelly of the Notion of Intelligibility in Discussions about 'World Englishes'. *Applied Linguistics (31)*3, 465-470.

République du Congo. *Stratégie Sectorielle de l'Éducation, 2015-2025.* Brazzaville (Congo), Government of the Republic of Congo. Available online at https://www.globalpartnership.org/fr/content/plan-sectoriel-de-leducation-2015-2025-republique-du-congo

Raynaut, Claude (2001). Societies and nature in the Sahel: ecological diversity and social dynamics. *Global Environmental Change 11*, 9-18.

Roach, Steven (2004). Minority Rights and an Emergent International Right to Autonomy: A Historical and Normative Assessment. *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights (11),* 411-432.

Rodney, Walter (1972). *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. London (UK): Bogle l'Ouverture Publishing and Dar-es-Salaam (Tanzania): Tanzania Publishing House.

Roy-Campbell, Zaline (2019). Revitalizing African Languages for Transformation. *Contemporary Journal of African Studies (6)*1, 27-45.

Sagna, Serge; Hantgan, Abbie (2021). African multilingualism viewed from another angle: Challenging the Casamance exception. *International Journal of Bilingualism, (25)*4, 939-958.

Saint-Jacques, Bernard (2012). Intercultural Communication in a Globalized World. In: L. Samovar, R. Porter, E. McDaniel (Eds), *Intercultural Communication, A Reader*, 13th Ed., 45-56. Boston(US): Wadsworth.

Santiago, Paulo, et al. (2016). School education in Estonia. *OECD Reviews of School Resources: Estonia 2016*, Paris (France): OECD Publishing.

Savà, Graziano; Tosco, Mauro (2008). "Ex Uno Plura": the uneasy road of Ethiopian languages toward standardization. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language (191)*, 111-139.

Schapera, Isaac; Comaroff, John (1991). *The Tswana – Revised Edition.* London (UK): Kegan Paul International.

Schlechty, Philip (2001). *Shaking Up the Schoolhouse: How to Support and Sustain Educational Innovation.* Hoboken (USA): Wiley.

Schwartz, Shalom (2006). A Theory of Cultural Value Orientations: Explication and Applications. *Comparative Sociology (5)2*, 137-182.

Seid, Samson (2014). Ethnic Language Shift among the Nao People of Ethiopia. In: Zsiga, Elisabeth; Boyer, One Tlale; Kramer, Ruth (Eds): *Languages in Africa - Multilingualism, Language Policy and Education*, 102-109. Georgetown (USA): Georgetown University Press.

Sefue, Ombeni (2004). What went wrong in Africa – It is partly the Manner of its Birth and Upbringing. *Development ISSues (6)*1, 23.

Shankman, Paul (1984). The Thick and the Thin: On the Interpretive Theoretical Program of Clifford Geertz [and Comments and Reply]. *Current Anthropology (25)*3, 261-280.

Shils, Edward. (1957). Primordial, personal, sacred, and civil ties. *British Journal of Sociology (8),* 130-145.

Skattum, Ingse (2018). Language of Instruction in Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone Africa: An Overview. In: A. Breedveld and J. Jansen (eds.), *Education for Life in Africa,* 67-81. Leiden (Netherlands): African Studies Centre. http://hdl.handle.net/1887/67229

Skuttnab-Kangas, Tove (2012). Mother tongue medium education. In *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*, General Editor Carol A. Chapelle; part Bilingual Education, Area Editors Jasone Cenoz and Durk Gorter. Malden, MA (USA): Blackwell. DOI: 10.1002/9781405198431.wbeal0776.

Skuttnab-Kangas, Tove (2013). Today's Indigenous education is a crime against humanity: Mothertongue-based multilingual education as an alternative? *TESOL in Context (23)*1&2, 82-125.

Smelser, Neil (1992). Culture: coherent or incoherent. In: R. Munch & N.J. Smelser (Eds), *Theory of culture*, 3-28. Berkeley (US): University of California Press.

Smith, Lahra (2013). *Making Citizens in Africa - Ethnicity, Gender, and National Identity in Ethiopia*. New York (USA): Cambridge University Press.

Sow, Ali; Abdulaziz, Mohamed (1993). Language and Social Change. In: Mazrui, Ali (Ed). *General History of Africa, VIII, Africa since 1935,* 522-552. Paris (France): UNESCO.

Stoffelsma, Lieke; De Jong, John (2015). The English Reading Proficiency of Future Teachers in Ghana. *Nordic Journal of African Studies 24*(2), 94-117.

Storey, John (2001). *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: an Introduction. 5th Ed.* London (UK): Pearson/Longman.

Stroud, Christopher (2004). Revisiting reversing language shift: African languages in high modernity. In: Katrin Bromber, Birgit Smieja (eds.): *Globalisation and African Languages - Risks and Benefits,* 85-102. Berlin (Germany): Mouton de Gruyter.

Swaan, Abram de (2001). *Words of the World: the Global Language System.* Cambridge (UK): Blackwell Publishers.

De Swaan, Abram de (2004). Endangered languages, sociolinguistics, and linguistic sentimentalism. *European Review (12)*4, 567-580.

Taylor-Leech, Kerry; Liddicoat, Anthony (2014). Macro-language planning for multilingual education: focus on programmes and provision. *Current Issues in Language Planning (15)*4, 353-360.

Tausch, Arno (2015). *Hofstede, Inglehart and Beyond. New Directions in Empirical Global Value Research*. Munich (Germany): Munich University MPRA paper no. 64282.

Temu, Arnold (1998). The Development of National Language – a survey of Kiswahili in Tanzania. In: Kwesi Prah (ed.): *Between Distinction and Extinction: the Harmonization and Standardization of African Languages*, 143-155. Cape Town (South Africa): CASAS Book Series no. 1 (repr. 2000/2005).

Tibategeza, Eustard; Du Plessis, Lodewyk (2018). The Prospects of Kiswahili as a Medium of Instruction in the Tanzanian Education and Training Policy. *Journal of Language and Education (4)*3, 88-98.

Topan, Farouk (2008). Tanzania: The Development of Swahili as a National and Official Language. In: Andrew Simpson (ed.), *Language and National Identity in Africa*, 252-266. Oxford (UK): Oxford University Press.

Trudell, Barbara (2016). Language choice and education quality in Eastern and Southern Africa: a review. *Comparative Education (52)*3, 281-293.

Trudgill, Peter (2002). *Sociolinguistic Variation and Change.* Georgetown (USA): Georgetown University Press.

Ugwuanyi, Lawrence (2018). Theoretical Foundations of Nation-Building. In: S.O. Oloruntoba and F. Toyin (eds): *The Palgrave Handbook of African Politics, Governance and Development,* 123-133. New York (USA): Palgrave Macmillan.

United Nations (2015). *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. A/RES/70/1.* New York (USA): United Nations.

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf accessed 6 March 2020.

Vansina, Jan (1990). *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa.* Madison (US): University of Wisconsin Press.

Vansina, Jan (1992). A past for the future? *Dalhousie Review (68)*1-2, 8-23.

Veen, Roel van der (2004). *What Went Wrong with Africa: A Contemporary History*. Amsterdam (Netherlands): KIT.

Venkatasawmy, Rama (2015). Ethnic Conflict in Africa: a Short Critical Discussion. *Transcience (6)*2, 26-37.

Venkateswaran, Ramya; Ohja, Abhoj (2019). Abandon Hofstede-based Research? Not yet! A perspective from the philosophy of the social sciences. *Asia Pacific Business Review (25)*,3, 413-434.

Vlasblom, Dirk (2013). *The Richer Harvest – Economic development in Africa and Southeast Asia Compared.* Leiden (Netherlands): African Studies Centre.

Wa Thiong'o, Ngũgĩ (2004). African Identities: Pan-Africanism in the Era of Globalization and Capitalist Fundamentalism. *Macalester International (14)* Article 9.

Wa Thiong'o, Ngũgĩ (2005). Europhone or African memory: the challenge of the pan-Africanist intellectual in the era of globalization. In: Mkandawire, Thandika (ed.): *African intellectuals - Rethinking politics, language, gender and development*, 155-164. Dakar (Senegal): Codesria

Walter, Stephen (2008). The Language of Instruction Issue: Framing an Empirical Perspective. In: B. Spolski, F. Hult (eds.): *The Handbook of Educational Linguistics,* 129-146. Malden (US): Blackwell Publishers.

Walter, Stephen (2014). Investigating Teacher Effects in Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education Programs. In: Zsiga, Elisabeth; Boyer, One Tlale; Kramer, Ruth (eds.) *Languages in Africa - Multilingualism, Language Policy and Education*, 59-70. Georgetown (US): Georgetown University Press.

Warmelo, N.J. van (1937/1974). The Classification of Cultural Groups. In: W.D. Hammond-Tooke (ed), *The Bantu- Speaking peoples of Southern Africa*, 56-84. London (UK): Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Wen, Zhisheng; Biedroń, Adriana; Skehan, Peter (2017). Foreign language aptitude theory: Yesterday, today and tomorrow. *Language Teaching (50)*1, 1-31.

Wichmann, Søren; Holman, Eric; Brown, Cecil (eds.) 2018. *The ASJP Database (version 18).*

Wierzbicka, Anna (1997). *Understanding Cultures Through Their Key Words – English, Russian, Polish, German and Japanese.* New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wiley, Terence (2002). Heinz Kloss revisited: National Socialist ideologue or champion of language-minority rights? *International Journal of the Sociology of Language (154),* 83-97.

Woldehanna, Tassew; Jones, Nicola (2006). *How Pro-Poor is Ethiopia's Education Expansion? A benefit incident analysis of education since 1995/6.* London (UK): Save the Children UK Working Paper # 23.

Wolff, Ekkehard (2016). *Language and Development in Africa - Perceptions, Ideologies and Challenges.* New York (USA): Cambridge University Press.

Wolff, Ekkehard (2018a). Postcolonial education and language in Africa. *Research Africa Reviews (2),* 6-10.

Wolff, Ekkehard (2018b). Multilingualism, translanguaging and linguistic superdiversity: an Africanist's perspective on 'language'. *Nordic Journal of African Studies (27)*2, 1-21.

World Bank (2019). *Ending Learning Poverty: What Will It Take?* Washington DC (USA): World Bank.

Wursten, Huib (2019). Democracy and the Need for Autonomy. *Journal of Intercultural Management and Ethics (3)*, 25-32.

Yevudey, Elvis; Agbozo, Edzordzi (2019). Teacher trainee sociolinguistic backgrounds and attitudes to language-in-education policy in Ghana: a preliminary survey. *Current Issues in Language Planning 20*(4), 338-364.

Yuka, Lendzemo; Okolocha, H. Oby (2011). Rethinking our Strategies towards the Development of Indigenous African Languages. *postamble (7)*1, 1-14.

Zeleza, Paul Tiyambe (2006). The Inventions of African Identities and Languages: The Discursive and Developmental Implications. In: *Selected Proceedings of the 36th Annual Conference on African Linguistics*, ed. Olaoba F. Arasanyin and Michael A. Pemberton, 14-26. Somerville (USA): Cascadilla Proceedings Project.

Zsiga, Elisabeth; Boyer, One Tlale; Kramer, Ruth (2014). *Languages in Africa - Multilingualism, Language Policy and Education*. Georgetown (US): Georgetown University Press.

Appendix– Chapter 4:
Hofsted-Minkov dimensions

The original Hofstede dimensions are based on surveys collected by Hofstede in the 1970s. He originally suggested four dimensions that could describe differences and similarities between cultures. They are:[171]

Individualism (IDV) is the extent to which people feel independent, as opposed to being interdependent as members of larger wholes.

Individualism does not mean egoism. It means that individual choices and decisions are expected. Collectivism does not mean closeness. It means that one 'knows one's place' in life, which is determined socially. With a metaphor from physics, people in an individualistic society are more like atoms flying around in a gas while those in collectivist societies are more like atoms fixed in a crystal.

Power Distance (PDI) is the extent to which the less powerful members of organisations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally.

This dimension is thought to date from the advent of agriculture, and with it, of large-scale societies. Until that time, a person would know their group members and leaders personally. This is not possible where tens of thousands and more have to coordinate their lives. Without acceptance of leadership by powerful entities, none of today's societies could run.

Masculinity (MAS) is the extent to which the use of force is endorsed socially. In a masculine society, men are supposed to be tough. Men are supposed to be from Mars, women from Venus. Winning is important for both genders. Quantity is important and big is beautiful. In a feminine society, the genders are emotionally closer. Competing is not so openly endorsed, and there is sympathy for the underdog.

171 Descriptions taken from http://www.geerthofstede.com, accessed 9 May 2017.

This is NOT about individuals, but about expected emotional gender roles. Masculine societies are much more openly gendered than feminine societies.

Uncertainty avoidance (UAI) deals with a society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity.

Uncertainty avoidance has nothing to do with risk avoidance, nor with following rules. It has to do with anxiety and distrust in the face of the unknown, and conversely, with a wish to have fixed habits and rituals, and to know the truth.

Hofstede realised that his findings might be constrained by the questions asked in his surveys. In his later work, he pointed to the Chinese Values Survey, which asked different questions. They led to a fifth dimension, the dimension of **Long- versus Short-Term Orientation** (LTO) (Hofstede 2001: 351). Later, Michael Minkov, using data from the World Values Survey (WVS), found a dimension that he called *'monumentalism versus flexhumility'* and that was related to LTO. Hofstede and Minkov decided to join forces and came to new LTO scores, using WVS data (Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov 2010: 253).

Minkov et al. (2018a), using data from a new study undertaken with commercial funding, proposed a new conceptualisation that reflects national differences in high versus low self-regard and self-confidence, being always the same person versus being flexible and adaptable, and liking to help people versus being reluctant to do that. The Short-Term or 'Monumentalist' pole here stands for high self-confidence, being always the same person and being helpful. I have taken this conceptualisation as being the most recent. The name is, in my view, far from clear. Mediacom, the company funding the study, called it 'Fix or Flex.' For the purpose of this study, I will use 'Fix vs Flex' (LTO).

In his analysis of WVS data, Minkov also found indications of a sixth dimension, **Indulgence versus Restraint** (IVR). 'Indulgence is about the good things in life. In an indulgent culture it is good to be free. Doing what your impulses want you to do, is good. Friends are important and life makes sense. In a restrained culture, the feeling is that life is hard, and duty, not freedom, is the normal state of being.'

How We Published This Book Sustainably

The African Studies Centre Leiden strives to produce and disseminate a wide range of Africa related knowledge that will inform, inspire, and motivate readers of all generations. The production of knowledge, however, can have unintentional damaging and irreversible side effects on the environment. Unnecessary use of harmful materials, polluting transportation methods and the use of toxic substances in printing techniques are just a few examples of how hard copy books can have a negative impact on the environment.

We want future generations to enjoy our publications just as much as the current generation. That is why the African Studies Centre Leiden wants to publish its work in the most sustainable way, with an eye for the natural environment and all living organisms that it is home to.

This book was printed on Rebello (cover) and Everprint (interior) paper, made from 100% recycled paper. We used glue that is less burdensome to the environment than conventional book glue. Finally, our book cover is made from recycled plastic.

Do you want to contribute to sustainability yourself? Please pass this book on to others after you have finished with it.

If you have any further suggestions on how to make this book more sustainable, please let us know!

African Studies Centre Leiden

Decolonial visions like those of Vansina and Prah hold that old cultural traditions in Africa have been destroyed, but that new African ways of interpreting the world are emerging. Education has a key role to play in this regard. As Prah, Wolff, and others have argued, such education must be based on African languages and values.

Using a quantitative comparative analysis, this study shows that maintaining former colonial languages as a medium of instruction will become impossible to sustain. Over the next decade, African countries will have to transition to using African languages.

The choice of which languages to use has vexed researchers and policymakers. The study points to a new route out of this conundrum. It shows how, all over the world, designed languages serve speakers of several discerned languages. Six case studies examine practical policy options in Africa.

African languages in education will bolster the new, decolonised cultural traditions already taking shape on the continent.

African Studies Collection 80

Dr Bert van Pinxteren started his career in the anti-apartheid movement, at the Holland Committee on Southern Africa, where he was responsible for recruiting Dutch teachers for newly-independent Zimbabwe. Since then, he has worked for various NGOs, including Friends of the Earth International and ActionAid Netherlands. He has lived and worked in Kenya and worked with many African grassroots groups.

Bert has an MA in Adult Education and Community Organisation from the University of Amsterdam. He also has a Master in African Studies and obtained his PhD from Leiden University in 2021.

africanstudies centre leiden

www.ascleiden.nl