

## **A Discursive Analysis of the Treatment of English and Indigenous Languages in Post-colonial Language Policies in Kenya**

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### **Abstract**

This article investigates the treatment of English and Indigenous languages in the context of post-colonial language policies in Kenya, utilizing Critical Discourse Analysis as its primary methodological approach. Focusing on the integration of English and Indigenous languages in critical domains such as education, research, and administration, this study unveils a nuanced portrayal of the government's language policy. Four language policy documents were purposively selected. These are the Presidential Working Party on Education and Manpower (Kamunge 1988), the Kenyan Constitution of 2010, The National Curriculum Policy (2018), and The Basic Education Curriculum Framework (2017). Using checklists, key policy recommendations were extracted and analyzed using Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model. The study revealed that the underlying hierarchies between English and Indigenous languages embedded in official policy documents. This suggests a paradoxical dynamic which despite the overarching goal of promoting linguistic diversity, biases persist in favor of English. This study recommends a proactive governmental strategy to enhance practical value and benefits awareness of Indigenous languages, advocating their greater exposure and representation in official language policy documents. This approach corresponds with wider initiatives to address historical disparities in post-colonial settings, acknowledging Indigenous languages as essential not only for communication but also as crucial carriers of cultural legacy and identity. It highlights the real benefits of integrating Indigenous languages across various sectors, proposing a definitive approach to a more equitable language policy that genuinely represents Kenya's unique linguistic landscape. This study provides essential insights for politicians and educators to promote inclusive language policies in analogous post-colonial contexts.

**Keywords:** Curriculum framework; critical discourse analysis; indigenous languages; language policies; post-colonial contexts

### **INTRODUCTION**

Language policy has become an increasingly important issue in society. This concept is directly linked to language practice, ideology, and management. According to (Johnson & Johnson, 2013), language policy refers to the

rules and laws that determine the usage, status, and rights of language(s) in a country. Spolsky (2004) suggests a tripartite division of language policy into language practices, language beliefs, and language ideology. He also observes that language policy functions in

complex relationships. The language policy in Kenya, even in the post-colonial era, is not clear (Nabea, 2009). This is because of the unfolding of political and ideological processes on a global scale. The emergence of discourses about globalisation, resources, and capital in terms of learning, teaching, and research, alongside the reintroduction of Indigenous languages in education systems, seems to have impacted the creation of a language in education policy. Fitzsimmons-Doolan (2019) argues that democratic ideals are essential in language policy processes, and a wide range of voices and discourses must be engaged in the process. Therefore, this study illustrates how genre chains of culture, globalisation, diversity, educational quality knowledge, resources, and capital in terms of learning, teaching, and research are interlinked with the policy process.

Therefore, this paper adopts a tripartite conceptualizing of language policy as 'text' and 'discourse' (Bonacina-Pugh, 2012; Fairclough, 1992). Bonacina-Pugh (2012) portends that language policy as text is a written artefact that regulates language (use); texts are products of discourse, which is a form of social action, while language policy as discourse produces knowledge and meaning in context and stands in a dialectical relationship to the social. Language policy as practice (or 'practiced' language policy) refers to a set of implicit interactional norms that influence the production and interpretation of language choice acts. The study thus conceptualizes 'language policy' as a multilayered social and discursive process that involves interconnected texts, discourses, and practices.

Hult and Johnson (2015) argues that most studies on language policy and planning (LPP) have looked at policy texts or the implementation of policy, while "relatively few LPP investigations have examined policymaking in real-time. Most studies in

Kenya have adopted a historical approach (Gathigia & Njoroge, 2017; Nabea, 2009) and implementation (Mose, 2017). Rather than focusing on the historical study of language policies since independence, the current study is a synchronic analysis of the treatment of Indigenous language and English in current language policy documents. Therefore, this study addresses one main research question: How is the relationship between English and Indigenous languages discursively expressed in Kenya's post-colonial policy documents?

The focus of the study was on the Report of the Presidential Working Party on Education and Manpower Training for next decade and beyond (Kamunge, 1988) Kenya's new constitution (Kenya, 2013), Task Force on the Re-alignment of the Education sector to the Constitution of Kenya 2010 (Odhiambo, 2012), The Republic of Kenya's National Curriculum Policy (Kaviti, 2018), and Kenya's 2017 Basic Education Curriculum Framework (Wanjohi, 2017). The post-independent policy documents in question were written in the context of colonial history in Kenya that had established English "as the most revered, powerful, and 'prestigious' language," while the mother tongues were to be used "for mundane communicative needs" in the private sphere (Sure & Ogechi, 2008). It is hoped that this study will inject new insights into the relevance of the critical understanding of policy documents, to the field of Language Policy, and on the promotion of language diversity.

Gee (2014) observes that due to globalization, technological advances, and continual migration patterns, educators and policymakers have to deal with increasingly complex and diverse teaching and learning contexts. Further, the values, beliefs, and convictions educators and policymakers hold about how best to respond to linguistic and cultural diversity in school will shape schools'

responses to this diversity. Gee argues that these beliefs or ideologies are broader societal conversations or discourse. What earns legitimacy (what is valued) is reflected in discursive practices (how we talk about things) as well as concrete actions, such as formal policies and resource allocation.

Corson (1998) observes that multiple language choices in schools, or language-in-education policies, define the role of different language(s) and language varieties in schools, including which language(s) can or must be used for instructional purposes. Though language-in-education discourses are varied and multiple, two broadly defined perspectives are analytically useful: pluralist and assimilationist discourses.

Spolsky (2004) states that language policy includes language practices, language beliefs, and management decisions of a community or polity. Spolsky further defines language practice in a speech community as the habitual pattern of selection among the varieties that make up its linguistic repertoire. Language beliefs or ideology, on the other hand, refer to beliefs about language and language use and any specific efforts to modify or influence that practice through any kind of language intervention, planning, and management.

Shohamy (2006) considers discourses surrounding linguistic diversity in schools to be enacted through implicit and explicit language choices or decision making. She argues that language policies are manifestations of singular intentions, yet analyses of intentionality in discourse are notoriously problematic, especially considering that language policies are the product of multiple, potentially conflicting, intentions which may or may not be retrievable. For instance, language tests are the de facto language-policy mechanisms used by those in power to transform hegemonic ideology into practice. De Jong (2013)

observed that language policies in education are based on linguistic and cultural diversity in schools. This includes a wide range of language choices beyond the medium of instruction such as literacy activities, curriculum content, and assessment practices.

Zhang et al. (2022) observes that the three components of language policy; language practices, beliefs and management are interrelated within a domain. Zhang's et al., (2022) study shows how most countries have prescribed language requirements through the constitution including the official language or status of other languages which reflects the general language policy of nation guaranteed by law.

This study adopted Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional discourse framework for the critical explanation and interpretation of language-policy documents. The Fairclough 3D analytic model can be categorised into three levels of analysis: text, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice (Fairclough, 2001). Fairclough (1992) highlights that the analysis of text cannot be isolated from the discursive practice and social context in which it is produced. Discourse is first seen as a text of written and spoken language which contains formal properties, such as grammar and vocabulary. Therefore, text is a product of discursive practice or interaction processes, and this practice includes the production, distribution, and consumption of text, all of which are decided by the condition of social practice. On the other hand, Fairclough (1992) maintains that discursive practice is constitutive in both conventional and creative ways: it contributes to reproducing social society (social identity, social relationships, systems of knowledge, and belief) as it is yet to contribute to transforming society. Discourse

as a social practice emphasises that the analysis of language use in text and the processes of production and interpretation should be put into the corresponding social context. The current study examines the interplay between language policy as ‘text’, discourse’ and ‘practice by conducting a Critical Discourse Analysis of post-colonial language policy documents.

### **1. Methods**

This study employed a qualitative research design. The research design used both historical and documentary data to construct detailed and comprehensive accounts of various social phenomena. A historical approach involves consulting archives and historical sources to appraise the historical basis of language policies in Kenya and their ideological foundations. Document analysis was applied to attain a deeper understanding of policies and find answers to research issues regarding language policies.

Accordingly, a purposive sampling technique was used to select post-independent policy documents that show a shift to global outreach and culture. Out of nine (9) policy documents on language policy in Kenya since independence, the study purposively selected four (4) for analysis in this study since they are currently used in guiding the implementation of Indigenous language and English in Kenya. These are: The Presidential Working Party on Education and Manpower (Kamunge 1988), the Kenyan Constitution of 2010, The National Curriculum Policy (2018), and The Basic Education Curriculum Framework (2017). Checklists were used to extract key policy recommendations from the selected texts for analysis. Data analysis applied Fairclough’s

Three-Dimensional Model, which emphasises the analysis of text discourse and its cultural, social, and historical contexts from a critical perspective. A thematic analysis method was used to identify the key themes in the language policy documents.

### **2. Results and Discussion**

A CDA analysis of post-colonial language policy reveals that the first theme in the policy documents is the initiative behind the policy; that is, why should Kenya implement the language policy as recommended by language policy agents? The analysis of colonial language policy follows Fairclough’s three-dimensional analysis, namely text, discourse practice, and sociocultural analysis. The analysis takes a discursive approach to language policy, which starts from the premise that language policy is constituted, enacted, interpreted, and (re)contextualised in and through language. This approach extends the CDA approach, shows hidden agendas in each policy, and integrates perspectives from the context-sensitive discourse-historical approach in CD. It incorporates discourse as an essential lens through which policy mechanisms, ideologies, and practices are constituted and *de facto* language policy materializes. Therefore, this section argues that conceptualizing and analyzing language policy as a discursive phenomenon enables a better understanding of the multilayered nature of language policy that shapes the management and experience of corporate multilingualism in Kenya.

#### ***2.1 Post-colonial language policies as text***

Language policy as text is a written artefact that regulates language (use); texts are products of discourse, which is a form of social action. Text analysis involves the internal

analysis of a language policy text, including a focus on lexicosyntactic units such as vocabulary words, phrases, or grammatical structures, and discourse elements such as topoi and genre. The data analyzed reveal linguistic features of language policy, such as lexicalization, modal words, topoi (common-sense ideas as grounds for arguments), and argumentation.

The text aspect was evaluated in terms of lexicalization. Lexicalization, otherwise termed “wording” has to do with the use of lexical items from different register fields (Fairclough, 1992). In the examined data, lexicalization was achieved through lexical items that advanced language policy-related issues. Such lexical items overtly or covertly provide clues to the intended message of the text producer. The lexical features in the current study entail how the choice of words, phrases, or expressions (diction) in the language policy are selected for the representation of Indigenous languages. The lexical features examined included nouns, verbs, and voices. In terms of lexicalization, the Kamunge report (1988) uses modal words, such as *should* and argumentation, as follows:

### Extract 1

*English should be used as the medium of instruction. The commission noted that, to improve learners’ proficiency in English and develop good reading habits, primary school libraries should be established in all schools and properly stocked for this purpose. (Kamunge RPT, 1988).*

Extract 1 uses the modal auxiliary verb *should*. Modal auxiliary verbs are the most straightforward and widely used by many people to express modality or uncertainty

towards something, whether in written or spoken form. The use of the modal verb “should” show that it is important for English to be used as a medium of instruction. This is further illustrated by the argument structure strategy that follows line 1. The analyzed data revealed the features of the argument structure in language text policies. The argument structure in language text policies is signalled by lexical features such as verbs, adverbs, and modals, as shown in Extract 2:

### Extract 2:

*The Commission noted that, to improve learners’ proficiency in English and develop good reading habits, primary school libraries should be established in all schools and properly stocked for this purpose (Kamunge RPT, 1988).*

Extract 2 from The Kamunge Report (1988) reveals the use of discourse markers that indicate certain argument components, but which are not included in the actual annotation of argument components. Moreover, the data show the use of private verbs (about us) such as *improve*, *develop*, and *establish*, which are followed by noun phrases. The communicative function of the above structure is to show a call for action on the implementation of the suggested policy.

This aspect of lexicalization is also reflected in the Kenya Constitution of 2010, where the lexeme official language and national language are emphasized as follows:

### Extract 3

*Chapter 2, Section 7(1) of the Kenyan Constitution (The Republic of Kenya, 2010) stipulates that the national language of the*

*Republic is Kiswahili. 7 (2) stipulates that the official languages of the Republic are Kiswahili and English. Chapter Eight of the Constitution also has further provisions on language concerning language use in parliament, which states under sub-section (1) that the official languages of Parliament shall be Kiswahili, English, and Kenyan Sign Language Constitution of Kenyan (2010)*

In Extract 3, the use of the terms *official language* and *national language* reflects professional language use within a language policy document. Further, the verb *stipulates* is used together with the *that-clause* to achieve the communicative function of informing the republic of the different roles of languages: English and Kiswahili. Moreover, the use of *stipulates* is also an affirmation of a professional term used in legal documents.

It can be added that passive constructs together with private verbs were also used to show the role of the state in the implementation of language policy as shown in Extract 4:

#### **Extract 4:**

*Chapters 2 and 7 (3) also note the following obligations of the state: to promote and protect the diversity of languages of the people of Kenya and to promote the development and use of Indigenous languages, Kenyan sign language, Braille, and other communication formats and technologies accessible to persons with disabilities Constitution of Kenyan (2010)*

In Extract 4, the verbs *to promote* and *protect* are followed by the noun phrase *the diversity of languages of the people of Kenya* to achieve a communicative function that the policy suggested is for the good of the people of Kenya. Thus, the verbs *promote* and *protect* are transitive verbs and perform the

communicative function of both activity and facility verbs.

### **3.2 Post-colonial language documents as “discourse” and “practice”**

A close analysis of the data of the current study reveals that language policy consists of transforming the curriculum and, more broadly, the teaching and learning environments of all learners to make education more responsive to the new demands of a globalized world. This study reveals that global outreach and culture are central discursive features of positioning language policy documents in Kenya. This was achieved through the reinforcement of the assumption in genre chains. The genre chain in CDA literature is the change or transformation of the genre. According to Fairclough (2003), genre chains contribute to the possibility of actions that transcend differences in space and time, linking social events to different social practices, countries, and times. The data revealed that key recurring discourse topics of the language policy statements analyzed encompass culture, globalization, diversity, educational quality knowledge, resources, and capital in terms of learning, teaching, and research.

The analysis of Kamunge Report (1988) reveals aspects of discourse practices in which language policy stresses the need for education to solve challenges in society or community, the improvement of access, equity, and equality, and the approach of the cost-benefit analysis, as shown in Extract 5:

#### **Extract 5**

*English should be used as the medium of instruction. The commission noted that, to improve learners’ proficiency in English and develop good reading habits, primary school libraries should be established in all*

*schools and properly stocked for this purpose (Kamunge RPT, 1988).*

As Extract 5 indicates, the Kamunge Report from which it was drawn pointed out English as the language of instruction and provided guidelines on how to improve learning outcomes. The Kamunge Report further stresses the need for education to solve challenges in society and communities; the improvement of access, equity, and equality; and the approach of cost-benefit analysis. Regarding language policies, education is based on the need for a new generation of human resources. The language policy document in the Kamunge Report is written in this context. A study of the recommendations above reveals that, regarding language policies, the Kamunge Report initiated English as the medium of instruction nationwide, and English as a valuable tool to meet the needs of social development in Kenya. This is further demonstrated by the implementation strategy, where the commission emphasised learners' proficiency in English.

Arising from the recommendations in the education reform reports, one notices the use of intertextuality in which the policy is reinforced by genre chains and abstraction. In effect, the English hegemony is emphasized at the expense of Indigenous languages. Furthermore, the report did not consider the role of Indigenous languages in the promotion of education. Therefore, this study observes that the Kamunge report violates the rights of Indigenous peoples and fails to protect Indigenous languages. Learning English is represented alongside social and economic development, whereas Indigenous languages are ignored. However, national development, which entails the development of individuals educationally, socially, politically, economically, and culturally, is achievable through interactions with government agencies that disseminate policies in various Indigenous

languages. Therefore, in the Kamunge Report, English was emphasized at the expense of the Indigenous languages.

A documentary analysis of Kenya's constitution (2010) reveals the intertextual and interdiscursive connections between the strategies and social variables that shape the creation and appropriation of the texts and their underlying ideological values. The policy covers numerous provisions on language and culture and can be said to be the country's current language policy. The Constitution has a more elaborate and clearer language policy (RoK, 2012). Kenya's previous constitution was silent on mother tongue in education and other cultural activities. It has made no attempt at preservation, advancement, or development especially in primary schools. The Kenyan Constitution (2010) has new guidelines regarding language and cultural heritage. In Chapter Two of the Constitution, which emphasizes the sovereignty of the constitution and the Republic of Kenya, Article Seven provides the following:

#### **Extract 6**

*Chapter 2, Section 7(1) of the Kenyan Constitution (The Republic of Kenya, 2010) stipulates that the national language of the Republic is Kiswahili. 7 (2) stipulates that the official languages of the Republic are Kiswahili and English. Chapter Eight of the Constitution also has further provisions on language concerning language use in parliament, which states under sub-section (1) that the official languages of Parliament shall be Kiswahili, English, and Kenyan Sign Language Constitution of Kenyan (2010)*

In Extract 6, the legitimization of Kiswahili as a national language is based on the assumption and abstraction of coping with national development needs; namely, Kiswahili as an appropriate language for the

Pan-African dream and regional unity. Thus, the Constitution defines Kiswahili as the language of cross-ethnic communication in Kenya. UNESCO considers Kiswahili both an international language and a local lingua franca. Johnson (2011) observes that the deletion, addition, and other alteration from one policy text to another are essential aspects of the language policy genre.

Further, Extract 6 shows that both English and Kiswahili are largely constructed for Kenya's economic and political utility. The data reveal that the English and Kiswahili languages in Kenya play an instrumental role in nation construction and economic development. This implies that the learning of English and Kiswahili in Education is legitimized as a matter of using English and Kiswahili as tools to cope with socioeconomic and political issues. The previous commissions emphasized quality education which then indicated that the learning of English and Kiswahili is based on a utilitarian perspective, that is, as a tool for social development and personal gain. The status of the two languages is ascribed in Chapter Seven as the official language and in Chapter Eight of the Constitution as the official language of Kenyan Parliament. This suggests that in education, the two languages are promoted for their instrumental value in nation-building, self-development, and economic gain. The acknowledgement of Kiswahili as both a national and official language gives the country a suitable medium of communication in the promotion of unity as opposed to English which, as previously stated in the previous constitution, essentially marginalizes the majority of the Kenyan population, although it is still important as a language for international dialogue. The analysis shows that language policy discourses are multilayered and always recontextualized; they might have some paradoxes, inconsistencies, and contradictions. Wodak (2010) clarified that the historicity of

discourses and discursive events provides an opportunity to determine the historical dimensions and manipulative character of discursive practices.

Data from Kenya's constitution (2010) language policy show that Indigenous languages are discursively negotiated through claims over the promotion and preservation of local heritage, culture, and pride, as shown in Extract 7:

#### **Extract 7**

*Chapters 2 and 7 (3) also note the following obligations of the state: to promote and protect the diversity of languages of the people of Kenya and to promote the development and use of Indigenous languages, Kenyan sign language, Braille, and other communication formats and technologies accessible to persons with disabilities Constitution of Kenya (2010)*

The language policy discourse fragment in Extract 7 is characterized by a density of positively connoted nouns and predication strategies that position the social actor, here the state as an ambitious, aspirational and active agent ("to promote and protect the diversity of languages and to promote the development and use of Indigenous languages"). The data reveal that although Indigenous languages are not recognized as official languages in Kenya, it is encouraging that, for the first time, these languages are entrenched in the Constitution. An analysis of the intertextual and interdiscursive links is essential for understanding this ideological change. This ideological and discursive change reveals that Indigenous languages are not just for verbal communication, as stipulated by the Ominde Commission, but also for the use of Indigenous languages in development. This was unlike Kenya's previous constitution, which was silent on the mother tongue in education or in other cultural activities. This study observes



that the Kenyan Constitution of 2010 captures and promotes the ideology of multilingualism and multiculturalism, as shown in Chapter 2, Section 7 (3).

Kenya has over 60 Indigenous languages spoken in various parts of the country, and the Kenyan Constitution (2010) is likely to promote the native language (Bunyi, 2005). It is worth noting that the place of Indigenous languages in the Kenyan Constitution of 2010 is described by the intense use of nominalization/, which has the effect of making a text more lexically dense, a feature commonly noted with written political texts, such as the diversity of languages of the people of Kenya and the use of Indigenous languages (Van Leeuwen, 2008; Wodak & Fairclough, 2010). By representing Indigenous languages in this manner, the policy appears to be more packed and information intensive. Consequently, policies on Indigenous languages appear to be more prestigious and serious. Thus, the construction of Indigenous languages in the Kenyan Constitution of 2010 appears to have been more significant and well-thought of.

In fact, Okoth-Okombo (2011) observes that the provisions on language in the new constitution are in line with the three-language strategy that the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) recommends in an effort to address concerns regarding "culture liberty in today's diverse world. Accordingly, the Kenyan Constitution of 2010 reflects a three-language formula (as UNESCO recommends) that provides public recognition of the use of these three languages. This study shows that Indigenous languages undergo a change from using vernaculars purely for pragmatic purposes to vernaculars as communicative tools, and then to vernaculars as a way to spread culture abroad. Indigenous languages are therefore linked to the active spread and maintenance of people's culture.

The analysis of Odhiambo's 2012 Task Force reflects a language policy that discursively reflects concepts of globalization through education and at the same time maintains a local perspective, as shown in Extract 8:

#### **Extract 8**

*The use of the language of the school's catchment area in lower primary schools should be maintained (Odhiambo RPT, 2012).*

Odhiambo's 2012 Task Force was mandated to realign the education sector under the Constitution of 2010 and Vision 2030. A close analysis of the above language policies reveals thematic relations with other policies, such as the Mackay Commission of 1981 and the Koech Commission, as shown by the unreferenced paraphrases of policies in Extract 4. The analysis shows that policy documents are intertextual. The taskforce places the role of Indigenous languages in education as shown above. The analysis above reveals that post-colonial commissions, such as Gachathi (1976), the Mackay report of 1981, and Koech (1999) and Odhiambo (2012), all construct a place in which Indigenous languages occupy a child's education. The three commissions recommend that the child be taught using the predominant language in the school catchment area and that Kiswahili should be used only in schools with heterogeneous student populations. The recommendations suggested in the commissions presented in this study are in line with various scholarly works on the benefits of using mother languages in education (Cummins, 2000; Moseley, 2012). The UNESCO report of 1953 clearly highlights the importance of using the mother tongue as the language of instruction in early education.

UNESCO (1953:11) observes that the best medium for teaching a child is his or her native language. Psychologically, it is a system of meaningful signs that, in one's mind, work

automatically for expression and understanding. Sociologically, it is a means of identification among members of the community that they learn more quickly than through an unfamiliar linguistic medium. Moreover, several international and regional institutions have commended mother-tongue education. For instance, the OAU (now the African Union) recognizes the use of African languages as a medium of instruction at the primary school level. Among the aims and objectives of the OAU Language Plan of Action for Africa of 1986 is "to encourage the increased use of African languages as vehicles of instruction at all educational levels". (Kioko et al., 2014) argue that the mother tongue is the language through which the child is inducted into the world; hence, it is through it that the child gains an understanding of his or her environment. It is noteworthy that Odhiambo's Task Force of 2012 was formulated and infused with the ideas of globalism, technology development, and information, as shown by the status of the English language in Extract 9:

### Extract 9

*The teaching of English and Kiswahili as subjects in the lower primary to facilitate the switch to English in primary class 4. The medium of instruction will be English from standard onwards. The introduction of international languages, especially Chinese, into the curriculum (Odhiambo RPT, 2012).*

The discourse in Extract 9 suggests that English should be taught nationwide. The policy on international languages is based on the ideology of globalization and advocates the introduction of Chinese into the curriculum. Odhiambo's 2012 language policy is thus based on the global and local values of languages and is further blended with repetitive rhetoric on diversity and culture. Therefore, the analysis shows how language policy is discursively constituted and coupled

with diversity discourses, such as globalization, diversity, investment, educational quality, culture, knowledge, resources, and capital, in terms of learning, teaching, and research. The discourse on linguistic diversity and culture is to be understood from an argumentative perspective, where the types of culture are seen as common-sense ways of reasoning invoked throughout the language policy extracts.

The Odhiambo Task Force (2012) uses grammatical choices to justify the dominance of English over Indigenous languages in the Kenyan education system. The reports use various grammatical choices to justify English's dominance over Kenya's Indigenous languages in the country's educational system. One of the primary ways to do this is to use English as a comparison standard and portray native languages as inferior. In the Ominde Report, for instance, Indigenous languages are referred to as "vernaculars" and portrayed as impediments to national unity and development. The report suggests that teaching English as a medium of instruction will result in "the acquisition of modern skills and the cultivation of the necessary attitudes and values for progress." The Odhiambo Task Force contends that the use of English as a medium of instruction is essential for students to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in the global market. According to the report, teaching Indigenous languages as subjects rather than as instructional media is sufficient to preserve and promote their use.

The National Curriculum Policy (2018) signifies a resolute effort to implement a competency-based curriculum (CBC). The policy guides the implementation of CBC and how all learners should acquire competencies and qualifications to promote national values, inspire individual innovation, nurture life-long learning, and provide opportunities for learners to realise their full potential. This document reveals that the current policy regarding

language of instruction (LOI) in Kenya is as Extract 10 illustrates:

### **Extract 10**

*For 3 years of pre-primary education, the LOI is the language of the catchment area (i.e. Indigenous language) (Odhiambo RPT, 2012).*

As Extract 10 indicates, the CBC curriculum has introduced Indigenous languages as a learning area in a bid to actualize the National Language Policy in education. In grades 1-3, Indigenous languages are covered as part of the literacy activities. Thus, the National Curriculum Policy deems it clear that to improve the quality of education, it has to make local languages a part of primary education. The above data reveal that the adoption of Kiswahili as an official language and the commitment to preserve and develop Indigenous languages placed in Kenya's constitution have not prevented the overuse of English in education and the suppression of minority languages, as shown in Extract 11.

### **Extract 11**

*From Grade 4 onwards, English became the LOI. Students first encountered English in a foreign language setting before becoming the main language in which they interacted and were assessed (Odhiambo RPT, 2012).*

According to Extract 11, the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), as introduced by the Government of Kenya, aims at responding to global trends that dictate that education must respond to the emerging social, technological, and economic demands of the workplace. As a result of these demands, the government has prioritized curriculum reform to empower and skilled young Kenyans to thrive in a competitive, industrializing, and closely networked globalized world. Therefore, this

study observes that this policy is predicated on neoliberal ideals equating English language proficiency with greater opportunity and access to global sources of power, knowledge, and wealth. The study shows that from Grade 4 onwards, English became the LOI. The National Curriculum Policy thus positions English as a 'neutral' language in that it is not the native language of any community in Kenya. Consequently, it does not take advantage of one group over another, as it may use an Indigenous language. This view amounts to equitable erasure. Moreover, by compelling every Kenyan to not only learn English but also allot most of their educational attention to English in the form of content and language courses, learners are shown, at the very least, that their Indigenous language, culture, and identity are not important, and at worst, erase them.

Extract 11 also shows that from Grade 4 onwards, English became the LOI. This implies that Indigenous languages are relegated to educational policies and national curricula, which advances a series of problems related to inclusivity in education. Furthermore, this LOI reveals a number of worrying issues that may fortify inequalities and ambiguities rather than vanquishing them. For example, there may be a depth of ambiguity that can be presented in practice, where the content is delivered in English, but learners are free to mix their languages during class. Similarly, there could be cases in which English is the only language allowed to be spoken in the classroom. The study observed that the lack of appropriate enactment of the LOI policy in the lower primary and the increased exposure to the English language, especially from upper primary to post-secondary education, can lead to English taking the dominant role in education and erasing the unique linguistic and cultural

identity of Indigenous languages, as well as the replacement of Indigenous ways of thinking and knowing by Western epistemology. The Republic of Kenya's National Curriculum Policy (2018) reflects a dominant promotional rhetoric about diversity and culture in the form of globalization discourse. The findings of the study are in line with Bettney (2022), who reveal that the hegemonic position of English is supported by the concept of language hierarchy that classifies languages according to a series of given values and functions. Within this hierarchy, English holds the position of a 'hypercentral' language, thus becoming a global lingua franca.

The Basic Education Curriculum Framework (Development, 2017) was prepared to provide a comprehensive conceptualization of reforms in basic education: pre-primary education, primary education, and secondary education. The Basic Education Curriculum Framework (BECF) is the outcome of extensive stakeholder engagement, a national needs assessment study, deliberations from a national curriculum reform conference, and several benchmarking studies. The framework is aligned with the Constitution of Kenya 2010, Vision 2030, the East African Community Curriculum Harmonization Structures and Framework, and other policy documents that express the aspirations of the country. The BECF articulates the national goals of education, values, guiding principles, and theoretical approaches that underpin the conceptualization of basic education. Regarding language use, the BECF recommends the following.

#### **Extract 12**

*The students were expected to begin at the pre-primary level and were instructed in "the language of the catchment area" (BECF, 2017).*

Extract 12 shows that the BECF prescribes the mother tongue as the medium of instruction in rural areas for the first three years of learning. After two years of pre-primary education, students are encouraged to be "taught the foundational skills of reading and writing the English language at the earliest opportunity time, as shown in Extract 13:

#### **Extract 13**

*From Grade 4 onwards, English replaces the language of the catchment area and becomes the medium of instruction BECF (2017).*

Extract 13 suggests that the BECF provides English privileges. The BECF represents English as a natural, uncontested, neutral, and indispensable tool linked to economic development and personal benefits, as shown in v. English is represented along with the ideology of globalization. The rationale for English as an LOI in the BECF stems from its position as "the language of education, information, trade, diplomacy, and social networking". Thus, English is needed to cope with information and globalization. This study observes that the interlocking connections between English and globalization make the terrain of English naturalized at the expense of Indigenous languages competitive. Thus, English is seen as a global language that must be learned for one to be educated, able to participate in the world economy, and a global citizen. These findings are in line with Skutnabb-Kangas (2001), who argues that:

*If globalization is the integration and organization of economic activities that transcend national boundaries connecting business communities across the world in real time, a powerful global language for communication is also required. English appears to have acquired the status of the most dominant global language (Skutnabb-Kangas 2001:372),*

The above argument shows the importance of English, and competition in the terrain of English legitimizes and reinforces the MoE's absolute power in controlling local policy agents. The data show that the association of English with social status, economic power, and societal modernization provides a powerful rationale for its inclusion in language policies. These findings are in line with Phillipson (2000) suggestion that ex-colonial languages continue to operate as languages of vertical control and that they serve as powerful exclusionary mechanisms by which those who cannot operate effectively in these languages are prevented from accessing the high-skilled sections of the labor market as well as high political offices, nationally and internationally.

The findings reflect the idea of policies as projective, as articulated by Gee (1994), who conceptualizes (macro-level) policy texts as both enacting processes to respond to problems and constructing representations of desired future worlds. Thus, the policy on the English language in Extract 13 is due to the relationship between English and development. However, this is at the cost of local languages.

### 3. Conclusion

This paper has examined the interplay between text, discourse, and practice within post-colonial documents, highlighting the manner in which language beliefs and language practices are regulated through the use of Language Policy (LP) documents. The findings of this study have revealed a "common sense" that has been widely acknowledged globally pertaining to the value of the English language in the education system and its impact on socioeconomic development. This discourse of quality education and the justification for the

use of English as a medium of instruction is repeatedly reinforced in policies through its application in various contexts, ultimately resulting in the establishment of this "common sense" as a widely accepted assumption. Consequently, post-independence language policies continue to perpetuate the dominance of English because of their association with the discourse on globalization, linguistic diversity, and internationalism. The study concludes that the supremacy of English is perpetuated by the education system. A fundamental limitation with this is that Indigenous language will continue to be relegated to the periphery despite its official recognition language policy documents which are currently in use. It is recommended that the government should increase the visibility of Indigenous languages in government Language Policy documents by raising awareness of the practical value and benefits of these languages. To establish how teacher training institutions are preparing teachers for the implementation of Indigenous language policy proposals, further research work should focus on curriculum and materials analysis in those training institutions.

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