Degree Project
Master’s Degree

Boundaries to the effective implementation of mother tongue education in a post-colonial context

A case study of The Gambia

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**Abstract:**

The thesis focuses on mother tongue education in The Gambia, attempting to analyse factors affecting its implementation in public lower basic schools across the country. The work is based on a field study investigating the strategies and the controversies behind multilingual education, with reference to a project launched in 2015 and aimed at the introduction of the seven Gambian national languages beside English.

**Keywords:**

Education, Multilingualism, Mother Tongue, Linguistic Domination, Perception, Attitude, Legacy.
List of Abbreviations:

ACAL – Annual Conference of African Linguistics
ECD – Early Childhood Development
EGRA – Early Grade Reading Ability
ELINL – Early Literacy in National Languages
FIOH – Future in Our Hands
GPE – Global Partnership for Education
LBS – Lower Basic School
MoBSE - Minister of Basic and Secondary Education
PTA – Parent Teachers’ Associations
SMC – School Management Committee
UN – United Nations
UNESCO – United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF – United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund
WB – World Bank
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1. Introduction

The choice of a field study in The Gambia

During my experience as social worker with a group of asylum seekers who had come to Italy from The Gambia, I had the opportunity to be introduced to their lifestyle and traditions, and decided to discover more about this country. Later on, during my Master Course in African Studies, I had the possibility to further my academic knowledge on the country, especially with regard to the socio-educational sphere. I decided to write my thesis based on a field research in The Gambia and I found an interesting project regarding mother tongue education in lower basic schools, having thus the opportunity to investigate more about this topic, as well as the social and individual contexts around it. When I reached the capital city of Banjul, I had little knowledge on the educational program and this was an advantage, because the realization of interviews and observations did not result biased by prejudices, but only by possible subjective perceptions developed in itinere.

A thesis on multilingual education

The Gambia is the smallest country in continental Africa, enclaved in Senegal and facing the Atlantic Ocean. Despite its reduced dimension, it has multiethnic and multilingual varieties, composing a diverse population. In this context, the issue of socio-linguistic inclusion is recently gaining importance. In 2015, a project called EGRA (Early Grade Reading Ability) was launched by the national government and other international partners, with the aim to gradually include the 7 national languages spoken in the country in public lower basic education. These idioms spoken nationally represent ethnic pluralities of Gambian students, and have been employed in the last five years to mediate the English knowledge. Previously, a monolingual model imposed the L2 as the sole medium of instruction. The introduction of multilingualism in school was aimed at gradually approach the official language, through mother tongue alphabetization. This program was primarily aimed at increasing the literacy rate of the young population, but also at enhancing indigenous identities and recover the previous monolingual predominance. Nevertheless, the effective implementation of mother tongue education still is hindered by various factors, namely economic and managerial flaws, but also
socio-cultural beliefs, influencing attitudes and prejudices on this strategy and affecting the expected outcomes.

The first section of the thesis will introduce the historical context of the continent, in consideration of linguistic influences inherited by the colonial era. Subsequently, the case study will be presented and the development of national education policies in recent years, until the introduction of the multilingual model in 2015, will be analyzed. This section will also provide an overview of structural and socio-cultural impediments to schooling across regions.

Based on the previous contextualization, the second part of the thesis will be dedicated to the investigation of mother tongue education in public schools and to the analysis of factors influencing its effective implementation, possibly influenced by historical legacies.

1.1 Aim and Research Questions

The study delineated the context of realization of mother tongue education in The Gambia. Furthermore, it investigated the existence of factors impeding the effective implementation of multilingual education in lower basic schools across regions. Since its introduction in 2015, the EGRA project has encountered confidence, but also dissent. The cohabitation of indigenous languages beside English is considered as a resource, but also as a threat to the previous school establishment. The aim of this thesis is to observe structural flaws in schooling and ideological prejudices among educational actors affecting mother tongue education, despite the wide recognition of its positive impact on educational outcomes. In this regard, one of the factors considered in the case study is the difference in the school provision and management between urban centres and rural peripheries of The Gambia. Beside geographic variations, the investigation focused on individual and group attitudes shaping multilingualism in school. In consideration of these aspects, the research questions that have guided the work are the following:

− What are the structural and socio-cultural variables affecting education in urban centres and rural peripheries?
− In which manner are ideological boundaries affecting mother tongue education influenced by historical legacies?
The results to these questions are important to define the present tendencies on the educational approach of EGRA in The Gambia. The investigation of the educational platform is also precious to reveal ongoing legacies that impede the development of a multilingual consciousness.

1.2 Methodology

1.2.1 Data collection and observations

The methodology used for the thesis consists of a qualitative research in Gambian lower basic schools. A content analysis of primary and secondary sources was employed, to provide the contextual framework of the research. The historical past of the continent was investigated from a linguistic perspective, and related to the later transformations on language policies in The Gambia. The study focused on recent developments concerning linguistic strategies of education, until the introduction of the EGRA project, inclusive of national language diversities.

In the case study, the qualitative research included observations in class and interviews to school staff and families. Individual opinions and experiences on the program represented a precious source to investigate the actual application of multilingualism and its contradictions.

The Gambia is divided into six Regions. Banjul Region, commonly referred to by respondents as Region 1; West Coast, referred to as Region 2; North Bank, or Region 3; Lower River, or Region 4; Central River, or Region 5 and Upper River, or Region 6 (See Fig. 1, Pag. 4). 18 public schools have been visited, respectively two in Region 1, eight in Region 2, two in Region 3 and six in Region 4. During the three months of research, schools in Region 2 were visited more frequently for reasons of proximity. In this manner, empirical observations developed in weekly permanence, rather than daily visits like it happened in the case of Regions 1, 3 and 4. The investigation involved the observation of national language lessons, but the class attendance was also extended to other teachings when possible, with the aim to observe school operations and language switches. In order to better delineate the national education framework, the study also involved two private

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LBSs (Lower Basic Schools), one madrasa\textsuperscript{2} and one centre for people with different abilities. The study was not aimed at making comparisons between the different structure and management of these institutions, but rather at gaining knowledge about the general education framework of The Gambia, with central focus on public institutions. As it will become evident from the findings of interviews and observations undertaken in public and private centres, public schools sometimes adopt the same linguistic choice of other institutions taken into account. In this perspective, the general overview on education is necessary to make considerations.

As already mentioned, interviews were carried out besides empirical observation, in order to include different perspectives on schooling and mother tongue education. Interviews involved 22 headmasters, one for each school visited. 20 teachers were also included in the study: 4 during a two-day workshop on vocational training organized by FIOH (Future in Our Hands) in two different schools of Region 3, and other 16 teachers, one each public school visited. Besides, meetings with the Permanent Secretary of Education in Banjul and also with the Principal Education Officer of the Inset Unit in Kanifing, responsible for teachers’ training and EGRA supervision, were arranged with the support of FIOH. Furthermore, 15 parents were interviewed during the three months of study, two from Soma, in Region 4 and 13 from Bakoteh, Bundung, Tallinding and Serrekunda, in Region 2 (See Table n. 1, Pag. 5). Generally, teachers were interviewed before the beginning of the morning lessons, and it usually lasted about 20 minutes. On the other hand, headmasters could dedicate more time to questions and interviews could last approximately one hour. Parents were heard in the morning, when they accompanied children to school, and their available time was rather restricted, according to their job. Interviews focused on perceptions on schooling and on technical issues related to the learning environment and the school management. After having traced the structural framework, queries were dedicated to the investigation of perceptions on the use of multilingualism in school and opinions of its possible effects on literacy. All the interviews were taken individually, in school. Unfortunately, some of the parents who were consulted, could not speak English and teachers mediated the conversation. For this

\textsuperscript{2} Madrasas are Islamic institutions where Quranic precepts are taught through the Arabic language. If Literacy and Numeracy in English language are included in curricula, they are considered “conventional schools”.
reason, their opinions could have been biased because they were expressed in front of an educational authority. All interviews were recorded and then transcribed, for an analysis of common and different views on schooling and mother tongue education. At pages 53-54, an Annex illustrates the Interview Guide, containing the main questions posed to the interviewees during the field study.

In the thesis, I decided to overlook the perspective of students, namely for two reasons. The first one is that, as an individual researcher, including minors in the study would have signified that results could have been considered unreliable because easily manipulated by my perspective. The second reason is that the EGRA program only involves children until their ten years old, and this implies a lack of comprehensive recognition of advantages and disadvantages of mother tongue education, possibly reducing the validity of interviews. For these reasons, interviews only involved adult respondents from different regions, according to the sample schools taken into consideration.

During the months of data collection, the main difficulty was creating contacts with school headmasters, because not everyone was disposed to be under visitor’s lenses and to transform their school into a bridge for international knowledge. Despite initial efforts, once the visit was arranged, it was always possible to openly interact with principals and schools’ staff, attending classes and asking questions on personal opinions, for critical judgements on the educational matter.

An impediment to the realization of more interviews was the impossibility to involve students’ families in the investigation. Only 15 parents were interviewed, because many of them, even after having received an official invitation from headmasters of the various schools visited, claimed to be busy in their working activities and declined. Frequently, even once the meeting had already been arranged, they did not show up. Probably, this lack of response from the familial counterpart is due to reasons of work commitments, but also to a general disinterest towards the school matter3.

In the weeks of field investigation, I had the opportunity to gain knowledge on broader contexts, surrounding the school environment. I interacted with the societal spheres and approached different cultures, traditions and religious beliefs, thus gaining more knowledge on the subtle layers composing a multifaceted population. This social

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3 See Pag. 26
overview contributed to a broader understanding of structural and ideological issues on education.

As findings will later illustrate, profound discrepancies are encountered between rural and urban schooling. The empirical observation provided details on macro-differences, concerning geographies of regions and infrastructures, while interviews illustrated micro-differences concerning technical difficulties and social attitudes and perceptions on schooling. Socio-cultural habits are influenced and in turn influence school attendance and learning results.

With reference to multilingualism in education, the observations focused on modes of application and learning contexts. Interviews revealed contrasting perceptions and attitudes on its role in formal settings. Based on observations and interviews, the EGRA method appears generally recognized as a useful strategy. Nevertheless, school structural flaws could affect the opportunity of linguistic coexistence. The arbitrary multilingual refusal, due to a mistrust on its institutional role and possibly exacerbated by historical legacies, still constitutes an impediment to the effective implementation of mother tongue education.

![Fig. 1 Administrative Division of the Gambia. Source: Visit the Gambia](image)

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Table 1 Visited Schools and Interviewees[^5]

[^5]: The Table includes interviews with Headmasters, Teachers and Parents. Two interviews, namely that with the Principal Education Officer (Interview 58, 20.12.19, Inset Unit Kanifing) and with the Permanent Secretary of Education (Interview 59, 23.12.19, Banjul), are not included in the chart.
1.2.2 Research Ethics

It is necessary to state that the case study was conformed to the Research Ethics and the questionnaires solely included adult respondents, interviewed on their socio-linguistic impressions and behaviors. Inquiries did not include religious, ethnic or sexual matters, nor these were used to discriminate. Interviews respected the three criteria of the Good Research Practice from the 2018’s publication of the “Expert Group on Ethics”, Sweden⁶. According to the principle of Professional Secrecy, interviews were never divulged to uninvolved parties, and were only shared between the interviewer and the respondent. According to the ideal of Anonymizing subjects of the research, contextualization, or revelation of details useful to identify respondents were avoided. Following the criterium of Confidentiality, information given in confidence was never revealed to others⁷. Respondents were informed of the purpose of the study before every interview and the NGO “Future in Our Hands” was my guarantor. Visits in schools were always preceded by formal permission in advance, with the intervention of Future in Our Hands who mediated my meetings with the school staff.

1.2.3 Structure of the thesis

The thesis is articulated in two main chapters, following the present introduction. The first one has the objective to present a historical framework of the continent, exploring past linguistic re-shaping and persistent legacies on identitary perceptions. The chapter later introduces the case study on The Gambia, providing an overview of linguistic policies, until recent reforms on education and the introduction of oral languages in lower basic schools. This part serves to gain in-depth knowledge on space and time of formal linguistic coexistence. In this section, the case study will be dedicated to the investigation of schooling across The Gambia, with reference to regional discrepancies and managerial flaws, but also to socio-cultural attitudes involving school environments and surroundings. The second chapter focuses on the impediments to an effective implementation of mother tongue education, between deficiencies in the language policy and socio-cultural prejudices on its role. Possible relations to the colonial heritage will be explored.

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⁶ Expert Group on Ethics, Good Research Practice, Stockholm, 28.05.2018.
⁷ Ibid, Pag. 40.
Each chapter will be followed by concluding remarks on the findings. At the end of the thesis, the results of the investigation will be followed by suggestions for possible implementations to the present linguistic strategy.

1.3 State of Research

Literature on the analysis of multilingual education and its introduction in post-colonial realities is vast and diverse. Scholars and linguists investigated through volumes and articles the modes of implementation of mother tongue education and its effects on literacy across the continent.

The most relevant literature in relation to the present thesis consists in productions investigating linguistic hierarchies developing from the colonial experience, and their possible effects on perceptions and attitudes on the language matter.

An important document is the article of the linguist Bamgbose, *African Languages Today: The Challenge of and Prospects for Empowerment under Globalization*, edited in 2011. In his work, he considers variables of influence on linguistic choices and linguistic policies, delineating historical and economic prerequisites as determinant for enduring difficulties in the implementation of multilingual models. The colonial legacy is considered as the major cause of linguistic delegitimization, still relegating indigenous languages to a domestic domain and supporting the dominance of “standardized” Western idioms on the continent. The enduring economic dependency of ex-colonies from foreign agents hinders the affirmation of the national value and contributes to the impediment of multilingual permeation in formal domains. Official idioms tend to be maintained as the sole medium of communication with the international dimension, representing the symbol of the Western hegemony.

Another research was elaborated by Fishmann, in his article *Sub-Saharan Africa*, published in 1999. According to his view, despite the attempts to re-introduce linguistic pluralities in the educational platform of ex-colonial states, the foreign domination has affected self-perceptions and judgements on language dignity. Local idioms are thus

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hardly included in educational programs, despite the difficulty of students to access literacy through the mere use of the official language.

The debate on multilingual introduction in education was furthered by the studies of Wolff, in his recent work entitled: *Language ideologies and the politics of language in post-colonial Africa*. In this article, he makes use of the similitude with “Scylla and Caribdi”, in order to explain the erroneous dichotomy deriving from monolingual choices. The tendency to solely adopt foreign idioms in formal contexts (Scylla) would lead nations to the loss of linguistic diversity, while reducing education to the mere mediation of local languages (Caribdi) would culminate in socio-economic exclusion, in the framework of an increasingly globalized world. The author suggests the effective implementation of multilingual models, as a solution capable to mediate education and ethno-linguistic inclusion. Many other authors focused their studies on the possible colonial legacy on economic and social manifestations.

It would be important to include in the present state of research the fundamental contribution of the scholar Skutnabb-Kangas. In her volume *Linguistic Genocide in Education – or Worldwide Diversity and Human Rights?*, she defines the myth of English and analyzes the contexts in which it is the sole language in charge of education. The employment of monolingualism in institutional environments leads multilingual nations to a formal death of languages, since these are solely used in domestic spaces. When this phenomenon is oriented by targeted policies, it can be called as linguistic murder. Idioms still survive, but they are delegitimated, considered unworthy of inclusion. The author also investigates the positive effects of multilingualism in school and collects examples of mother tongue education programs across the African continent, comparing linguistic inclusion to monolingual strategies.

The state of research provides information useful to contextualize the introduction of multilingualism in present Africa and possible reasons of its ineffectiveness. It represents the framework of this field study, where the case of The Gambia is under scrutiny, in order to gain deeper understanding of dynamics behind linguistic choices and language refusal.

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As already mentioned, the thesis is articulated in two main parts, based on different kind of sources.

The first section, Chapter 2, is aimed at providing a historical overview of the continent, focusing on linguistic reshaping from above and persistent influences on present Africa. This part also introduces the field study in The Gambia. Literature on past and present contexts constitute the framework to nowadays schooling across regions. The study is also based on observations and interviews, aimed at investigating structural flaws and socio-cultural habits possibly affecting education.

An important resource for the first part of the thesis is the volume of Skutnabb-Kangas, *Linguistic Genocide in Education – or Worldwide Diversity and Human Rights?*, useful to define perceptions on the role of multilingualism in present Africa and to explain possible legacies impeding its effective implementation. This volume represents a crucial contribution for the present research, because the author unveils contradictions and counter-productive behaviors hindering the benefits of mother tongue education. *Languages of Instruction for African Emancipation*, edited by Brock-Utne and Hopson in 2005, provides another important example of contextualization of linguistic policies and motives of influence behind language choices12. The authors of the book gave an important contribution, reinterpreting the colonial experience as a persistent condition of African countries, still modelling perceptions and attitudes on the role and use of languages in education.

Another support to the present study was *State and Society in The Gambia Since Independence: 1965-2012*, edited in 2013 by Saine, Ceesay and Sall13. This book explains the shaping of the political establishment and the society layers in The Gambia. The wide timeline of this research is fundamental to understand linkages between socio-politic motives and societal responses across regions. This scheme is applicable to later issues, related to the introduction of mother tongue education.

The second part of the thesis is introduced by Chapter 3. This section approaches the core topic of the field study, developing around empirical observation and interviews about mother tongue education, in sample schools across regions in The Gambia.

Other materials employed for the first and the second part and of the case study are a variety of articles and documents from international organizations, dedicated to the analysis of bilingualism and multilingualism in school, in countries where the official language is a foreign idiom.

Previous studies regarding possible reasons behind linguistic choices in multilingual countries are useful to gain in-depth understanding on persistent impediments to the multilingual strategy, possibly influenced by the historical legacy of the African continent. Authors listed in the above section provide the contextual analysis of the topic later developed in this thesis.

It was difficult to find any research aimed to investigate linguistic strategies in education, with particular focus on The Gambia. The multilingual project launched in 2015 was the result of a collaboration between national government and international agents, persuaded by the positive impact on literacy registered in other countries. Studies held before and after that year on the education matter, solely are promoted by the initiative of aid organizations and national institutions, and mainly are circumscribed to recent years.

In 2013, the GPE (Global Partnership for Education) published an article revealing the positive effects of a pilot project involving 5 national language on reading abilities in The Gambian LBSs\textsuperscript{14}. This initiative undertaken in 2011, culminated in the EGRA strategy, started in 2015 from the joined efforts of the World Bank, the GPE, the UNESCO and the Gambian government. Following a survey in 2016, UNESCO convened on improvements in the overall literacy level of schools across The Gambia, stating that benefits of the newly introduced mother tongue program could be extended beyond cognitive skills to enhanced self-esteem\textsuperscript{15}, potentially transforming mother tongue education into an opportunity to enhance an identity awareness capable to reshape perceptions on the national value.

The interest of foreign agencies did not only relate to education from the linguistic point of view. In a later report, GPE remarked that rural peripheries represented a fragile context to education, and dropouts were affecting the achievement of basic literacy. Consequently, the initiative to provide children with donkey carts to reach schools from


\textsuperscript{15} UNESCO, “If you don’t understand, how can you learn?”, in GEM Report Policy paper 24, 2016, Pag. 7.
isolated areas was ideated to encourage school attendance\textsuperscript{16}. The recent involvement of international forces in Gambian instruction not only was aimed to observe educational praxis, but also to intervene for possible improvements. The analysis of structural flaws culminated in the ideation of projects aimed at intervening on school attendance and completion, and in the search of strategies aimed to achieve basic literacy through the introduction of curricula modeled on language inclusion. With the exception of these international agents, scholars did not apparently investigate further on educational strategies in this country.

This thesis represents a contribution to the past research, because it narrows the focus to a qualitative study, rather than a statistical sample. It is more restricted in time and space, but it is aimed at examining mother tongue education in Gambian lower basic schools, taking into consideration possible linkages of linguistic (mis)perceptions to the colonial heritage.

1.4 Theoretical framework

The introduction of mother tongue education in schools where the official language is a foreign idiom has started in recent years. It is the result of a long process of linguistic re-evaluation, consequent to the development and of theories over time. In this regard, the linguist Jim Cummins gave a fundamental contribution with his “Linguistic Interdependence Theory”, developed in the 1970s. According to his previous studies in Canadian schools, bilingualism had a remarkable impact on literacy and education outcomes. The coexistence of French with English in school determined an increasement in the literacy rate and in cognitive skills since lower grades. Similar results were observed in American schools, where Hispanic children exposed to their mother tongue beside English were improving learning faster. Mediating languages were proving their key role in the achievement of positive learning outcomes. In his later statement, Cummins claims: “To the extent that instruction in Lx is effective in promoting proficiency in Lx, transfer of this proficiency to Ly will occur provided there is adequate

exposure to Ly (either in school or environment) and adequate motivation to learn Ly”\textsuperscript{17}. According to this theory, languages in multilingual territories should thus be considered as an opportunity to enhance reading abilities, but also cognitive skills, through a mutual linguistic support. The visual representation of this principle is a double iceberg, where the tips over the water, representing an L1 and an L2, result as two distinct entities. Under the visible surface, the ice merges and differences coincide, coexisting in the same place. For this reason, the monolingual choice is reductive, especially if the idiom involved is unfamiliar to the learner. The potential of individuals is to develop abilities in an L2 through a familiar language or a mother tongue, and this is possible because, “under the surface”, languages mutually support the development of cognitive skills\textsuperscript{18}. Other scholars investigated the gradual employment of native languages in formal contexts and where effectively implemented, multilingualism has demonstrated its benefits on educational outcomes\textsuperscript{19}. This theory is now supported by other linguists, who demonstrated their statements with empirical results. When the Gambian government decided to adopt a multilingual policy aimed at including linguistic and ethnic pluralities across regions, the outstanding results of this strategy were already renown, and soon they also became evident nationally. The thesis is not conceived with the intention to verify the effectiveness of mother tongue education on literacy, because this method is already supported by objective results, if properly applied\textsuperscript{20}. The field study is oriented to provide evidence of controversies concerning multilingual instruction since its application in 2015. The focus of the investigation is on possible structural flaws and (mis)perceptions hindering the implementation of the linguistic strategy in school. Besides, the thesis is aimed at investigating the influence of colonial legacies on ideological boundaries to multilingualism. In this perspective, it is important to include the theory presented by Phillipson, in order to trace possible legacies affecting the employment and the understanding of the

multilingual strategy. The British scholar defines the concept of “Linguistic Imperialism”, with the aim to relate the colonial experience of the African continent to forms of persistent language dominance. In the colonial era, the delegitimization of indigenous idioms labelled as *dialects* was accompanied by a linguistic hegemony, perpetrated through the introduction of official idioms prevailing on pluralities in form (language as medium of communication) and content (language as vehicle of Western ideologies). This theory defines the myth of English as part of a monolithic entity, invading formal spaces until post-colonial times. The permeation into the educational platform as the sole vehicle to knowledge (form) is corroborated by the persistent sense of inferiority of populations (content). Therefore, the recent introduction of indigenous languages beside the official idiom is frequently welcomed with dissent and mistrust by actors involved in the education delivery.

In this regard, the investigation firstly focuses on schooling across regions, to provide the contextual environment of realization of a multilingual model, in its discrepancies. Secondly, the study involves ideological boundaries, possibly exacerbated by structural flaws, but also influenced by legacies deriving from the past and hindering linguistic coexistence.

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22 Ibid, Pag. 38.
23 Ibid, Pag. 53.
2. From the colonial era in Africa to a post-colonial context in The Gambia

2.1 The role of colonialism in the linguistic identity re-shaping

2.1.1 The colonial impact on African languages

The geographical discoveries commissioned by European leaders in the XV Century represented the beginning of a new era, further leading to the Imperialism of the XIX Century and to a new partition of the continent among foreign powers. The transformation of borders divided ethnic groups and idioms, creating the phenomenon of cross-border languages, a by-product of the colonial partition, that still characterizes the African continent.24

Beside the new geographical arrangement, alien political and institutional systems were introduced on the continent and imposed on the population, as an evidence of the Western hegemony. The introduction of exogenous official languages and the import of a new educational system, aimed to form a new society to be linked with the colonizers, deeply influenced the identity of the populations. Schools introduced by missionaries were meant to civilize the “savage” others and the imposition of European languages as official languages was intended to create order among diverse subjects. In contexts of forced cohabitation of societies and populations with different ethno-linguistic backgrounds, the duality between speakers and non-speakers of the newly introduced idioms posed a further obstacle to the development of national cohesion.

The colonial presence influenced the development of language policies in Africa. According to Bamgbose, formal education has resulted in the marginalization of the African languages and it determined for Africa to have almost fifty years of post-colonialism, until nowadays, with ex-colonial powers still being determinant in its domestic affairs.25

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2.1.2 The post-colonial legacy in linguistic perceptions

In the 1950s, African countries gradually obtained independence from the European hegemonies and the newly educated élite started to actively administrate their national territories. The duality between educated and illiterate people introduced in colonial times, heavily influenced the decisions of national leaders. The existent division between the western-educated natives and the non-westernized mass was an advantage, for excolonial powers, to continue perpetrating political dominion\textsuperscript{26}. The European languages introduced during colonialism were thus adopted as official idioms and the educational structure was left unaltered. Language policies in post-colonial Africa were indirectly influenced by ex-colonial powers, who had contributed to the formation of local Westernized élites, aiming to adhere to the previous establishment. The effects of the so-called \textit{colonization of the mind} represented a persisting legacy for indigenous societies even after the colonial era, shaping post-colonial societies on the footprint of past interventions for national re-shaping\textsuperscript{27}. Bokamba defines this legacy as \textit{Ukolonia}, a mental brainwashing that altered the capacity of self-evaluation, influencing the capacity to emerge from previous impositions and to affirm societal and linguistic values\textsuperscript{28}.

Bamgbose identifies ideological motives for neglecting the identity of indigenous languages, including the negative economic effect attributed to the use of indigenous languages in formal contexts. It is believed by politicians and national élites that introducing the locally spoken languages at institutional levels and in educational curricula would be too expensive and dispersive, in consideration of the necessary financial efforts to guarantee the equal inclusion of the diverse oral idioms nationally. Another factor is a widespread encouragement of the myth that official monolingualism in international languages avoids ethnic rivalries. The misperception of multilingualism and the subsequent delegitimization of its adoption as an official language regime permeates the consciousness of populations, deforming their perceptions towards mother tongue. Another important element that influences African language policies is the perception that career development opportunities in the context of globalization are

favored by international languages, which further pushes aside the already marginal sense of identity of small communities. It is mistakenly believed that certain languages have the right to be mainstream and other ones are not suitable for communication in formal contexts. Another powerful discourse that is recently gaining further relevance is the fear of tribalism, identified with the coexistence of different languages in formal settings and the related risk to exacerbate interethnic rivalries, when creating space of linguistic sharing. Nowadays, this concept is related to the spread of terrorism and it can negatively influence language development because it links diversity with phenomena of possible ethnic predominance and consequently, with potential dangers for the collectivity. As mentioned before, external and internal factors have been crucial for the present pattern of language policies and language use in Africa. Using mother tongue in education and in formal contexts has traditionally been considered as an economic waste and a dangerous dividing force. Furthermore, the colonial legacy has negatively affected the self-perception of African identities, thus increasing the level of relegation and denial of communities, operated through the elitist strategic discourses. Still nowadays, the lack of policies capable to protect minority languages and give them institutional relevance impedes effective implementations. With a few exceptions, national languages are still widely ignored in national agendas and at the educational level, they often represent a mere phase of transition to international languages. Beside the identitary delegitimization deriving from linguistic exclusion in formal contexts, the most evident consequence of foreign language education in schools is a poor level of literacy, reduced only in countries where the foreign language is employed together with the students’ mother tongue.

2.2 A case study of language and education: The Gambia

This chapter introduces a field study in lower basic schools across regions, aimed at focusing on multilingual education. The investigation is based on empirical observation in class and interviews with teachers, headmasters and parents, aimed at investigating structural and socio-cultural differences influencing education.

In this section, the study will focus on schooling across regions. The following chapter will analyze mother tongue education, between confidence and dissent.

2.3 The Gambia: a brief description

The Gambia is the smallest country in continental Africa. Entirely enclaved in Senegal, it overlooks the Atlantic Ocean. The capital and few other urban centres are surrounded by the sea, while the rest of the country develops along the inland, on the banks of River Gambia (See Fig. 1, Pag. 4). The official idiom is English, in coexistence with seven indigenous languages.

It became independent in 1965 and after a coup d’état in 1994, it was turned into a military state under the dictatorship of Yaya Jammeh, until his deposition in 2016. The Gambia is now a democratic country, developing after years of political self-isolation and regional economic disparities, between coastal centres and rural provinces (See Fig. 1, Pag. 4).

2.4 The introduction of national languages in educational curricula

Despite previous initiatives had already promoted the introduction of linguistic diversities in school curricula at an international and national level, it is not until the Education Policy 2004-2015 that the implementation of national languages in schools was introduced: “During the first three years of basic education (grades 1-3), the medium of instruction will be in the predominant Gambian language of the area in which the child lives. English will be taught as a subject from grade one and will be used as a medium of instruction from grade 4. Gambian Languages will be taught as subjects from grade 4”.

This policy represents a watershed in the socio-linguistic history of the country and

determines the development of further pilot projects involving the use of national languages in school curricula. 

Aimed at improving the national standards in education and at reducing the gap with other countries on the continent, different projects were launched in order to mark the difference between schools where local languages were used as a vehicle for instruction and those where English was the only language of schooling.

The most incisive measure towards education is the National Language program, launched by the Early Literacy in National Languages Project (ELINL) in 2011. It was applied to 108 schools and 125 grade 1 classes. According to this method, the local language spoken by the community of the area was taught once a day for one hour in a class of 25 children, during the whole academic year. During the lesson, children learned letters one by one along with systematic combinations to blend into words. Since the average number of pupils per class in The Gambia is more than the double of those in national language classes, by 2012, the number of students involved in the pilot project was incremented and the number of classrooms doubled. In this manner, the improvement rate was reliable and the learning outcomes were still good (Interview 58, Principal Education Officer, 20.12.19, Inset Unit Kanifing).

Surveys in the following years revealed the effectiveness of the use of national languages in education and registered an increment in the level of children’s literacy. Scholars tested the capability of children to recognize a certain number of letters in one minute and dramatic improvements were registered, in comparison to the survey held in 2009, where half of the students in the classes taken into account couldn’t read a single word. Nevertheless, a profound discrepancy in the literacy level was registered between coastal and inland regions, especially between Region 1 and Region 6, the two opposite areas of The Gambia.

From 2015, the government decided to adopt a new method in all the public LBSs across the country. “[…] The national language pilot program will be expanded to form the basis of a smooth transition from the home to the school to enhance performance and the appreciation of indigenous languages and knowledge”.

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37 Ibid.
The Early Grade Reading Ability method (EGRA) was developed, thanks to the collaboration between the Minister of Education and other international agents. The WB donated 12 million dollars and the GPE gave other 7 million dollars for the implementation of this project nationwide\(^{39}\). National languages were now taught every day for one hour, to gradually introduce pupils to the other subjects (Literacy, Numeracy and Social & Environmental Studies). Children from grade 1 to grade 3 in LBSs were involved in the process, spread across the nation in public schools. Teachers’ trainings and workshops on strategies were included in the national agenda. The seven national languages mostly spoken across the country, namely Wolof, Fula, Mandinka, Jola, Serahule, Manjaco and Serer were gradually included in the school curricula, with the aim to facilitate children through the use of a familiar idiom. English had been determinant for massive failures, but now children were supported by the dynamic tool of their own language.

Private institutions continued to vehicle knowledge through the sole English, while religious centres employed Arabic for Quranic lessons and, sometimes, English for literacy and numeracy. With the introduction of local languages in the public school’s program beside English, the multilingual reality of The Gambia was also gradually becoming worthy of recognition.

Nevertheless, despite the ambitious intentions of the government and the efforts of the new Minister of Education Claudiana Cole, the introduction of national languages in higher levels of education is still a utopia. Like later surveys remarked, local languages are still the mere tool of transition to English, employed in education up to grade 3, and then abandoned in favor of the L2. Recent improvements concern the effort in including more than one language in school, so that children of different ethnic groups could express themselves in a familiar language and feel more comfortable with their peers. Better results have been achieved in coastal areas, where the higher rate of enrolments encouraged the presence of teachers trained in different languages, responding to the need of the diverse ethnicities involved. In recent years, quality education has also been promoted thanks to a more comprehensive school system. The number of schoolhouses

has dramatically increased, reaching 577 public and 576 private Lower Basic Centres across the nation.  

As far as the higher levels of education are concerned, provision is not guaranteed everywhere, but schools are mainly concentrated in Region 1 and 2. The institutions are mostly private and represent an excessive cost for many families. International organizations like UNICEF, GPE and the World Bank gave significant contribution to the African partner40, but economic support should not be considered as the only prerequisite of changes.

2.5 Schooling in The Gambia: geographic and social differences

The following section is aimed at illustrating structural flaws in schooling and possible socio-cultural habits affecting education. The table below (See Table n. 2) contains a list of visited schools, divided according to type of institution and location. Data also regard the number of teachers employed and the number of students enrolled in each school. The table illustrates the different national languages involved in lower basic education.

As demonstrated from the chart, schools in Region 1 and 4 generally present a lower number of enrolled children and employed teachers. This depends on the demographic disparity across regions, but also, with reference to inland areas, to the absence of infrastructures and to the lack of school staff.

The following section will illustrate in which manner these and other factors influence school attendance and learning outcomes.

The chart also evidences a discrepancy in the number of national languages involved in education, but this aspect will be discussed in Chapter 3 (See Pag. 29).

2.5.1 Structural issues of rural Gambia

As previously mentioned, the territory in The Gambia mainly extends towards the inland, isolated from the urban centres close to the capital city. There is a profound difference between regions and the majority of the population lives excluded from services and infrastructures developing on the coast.

As it was observed during the study, accessibility is the main problem in rural areas. Infrastructures, roads and public transports are almost inexistent. Electricity is guaranteed in the main rural towns, but the rest is deprived of public provision. For this reason, capillary educational services are also hindered in rural villages, determining a partial social isolation. Schools are not many, and they are not easy to reach. Villages are far from each other and schools are not in all of them. Some children would need to walk long distances to reach their school\textsuperscript{41}. Parents cannot often accompany them, because they are busy with the agricultural activities and moreover, they do not own a private transport. Beside lower basic schools, there is scarcity of educational centres from Region 3 to 6. As it emerged from an interview with the Principal Education Officer, “Children who ended grade 9 rarely further their education, because prosecuting would mean to abandon

the village and move to the urban towns. In case they do not obtain a scholarship, it results impossible to have the economic opportunity to leave their family” (Interview 58, Principal Education Officer, 20.12.19, Inset Unit Kanifing).

Based on the interviews, lack of transports also seem to delay the provision of school materials. “Chalks, pencils, schoolbags and textbooks are normally guaranteed by the government, but when distribution starts, it is easier to cover Region 1 and 2 from the capital Banjul, for reasons of proximity” (Interview 13, Headmaster, 29.10.19, Japineh). As the two teachers interviewed during the workshop in Ndungu Kebe commented, even if textbooks are distributed to teachers, the number is not sufficient to cover every child in class, thus forcing the staff to prepare extra materials or to use the board as the only vehicle of learning (Interview 2 and 3, Teachers, 26.10.19, Ndungu Kebe).

Lack of electricity also affects the learning outcomes: “If printer machines are not available, unless teachers intervene and prepare handmade exercises or pictures, children are not provided with the necessary support” (Interview 2, Teacher, 26.10.19, Ndungu Kebe). Furthermore, during the rainy season, from May to September, the heat is almost unbearable and the impossibility to have electric fans reduces the school attendance and the efficiency of students and staff. The low quality of materials used for the school buildings increases the discomfort and the temperature rises because of scorching tin roofs.

Another structural fault affecting education is the current method of posting teachers. As it resulted during the interview with the Principal Education Officer, “There is no effective control on the distribution of the staff across the country because economic finances are limited. For this reason, when a qualified teacher is selected to work in rural areas for the ongoing academic year, there are no effective monitoring to verify whether the place has been effectively covered according to ministerial decisions. Economic constraint prevents control on the staff, but nepotism and corruption can also affect the process. In fact, it commonly happens that teachers refuse to leave urban centres in favor of rural areas” (Interview 58, Principal Education Officer, 20.12.19, Inset Unit Kanifing).

As mentioned before, the lack of higher institutions in the inland is an obstacle to the professional formation of villagers. “In this manner, most of the qualified staff corresponds to the coastal population, able to further their studies. Consequently, they are
not disposed to renounce to privileges and commodities and move to a small, isolated village” (Interview 59, Permanent Secretary of Education, 23.12.19, Banjul).
Lack of teachers in the villages dramatically affects the learning outcomes and it also discourages attendance. As a teacher at Soma LBS claims, the high number of children per class determines inequality in education, since individual capacities are diverse and not everyone will be adequately included in the learning process (Interview 8, Teacher, 28.10.19, Soma).
As the headmaster of Dongoroba LBS claimed, for the 236 children in his schools, only three teachers are available, including himself (Interview 15, Headmaster, 29.10.19, Dongoroba).
Malfunctioning schools in rural areas are the result of a structural problem, intertwined with the perceptions and misperceptions of rural life.

2.5.2 Socio-cultural issues in rural Gambia
Beside economic and structural issues causing disadvantages to rural regions, there are also individual practices and communal approaches having harmful impacts on educational opportunities and educational participation.
In rural Gambia, interviews revealed that everybody contributes to the domestic activities of the family. Children collaborate in the housework and in farming activities, and their studies are relegated to a secondary place\(^\text{42}\). Before and after school, they help their parents, often forgetting to do their homework or not having time to finish them. “In the morning, since they are retained in the domestic duties, they reach school late and look unclean and tired, with no energies left to learn. The importance of learning is generally ignored by families or recognized as less necessary than the domestic collaboration. Childhood is neglected for these ‘small adults’, since they rarely have time to study and play.” (Interview 58, Principal Education Officer, 20.12.19, Inset Unit Kanifing).
Not only helping in the housework affects children’s learning, but also it influences their attendance and completion rate. If they are involved in other activities, their studies are not constant and the result is not satisfying\(^\text{43}\). As it resulted from an interview, social

perceptions in this regard can be determinant in children’s life: “Families will be convinced of the inadequacy of their children or, more generally, they will attribute the failure to school. Consequently, many of them decide to suddenly interrupt the education of their kids.” (Interview 17, Headmaster, 30.10.19, Jasong).

Besides the scarcity of time to dedicate to studies, another major cause of educational failure is the disinterest of parents in the activity of their children. Too often students lack of support from their families, not only in regard of economic efforts, sometimes beyond their possibilities, but also with respect to understanding and practical help. Parents in rural areas do not show too much concern towards their children. They do not check if they finished their assignments, nor if they understood the lesson of the day. According to teachers in Jasong LBS and Bureng LBS, almost 90% of students do not do their assignments and for this reason they decided to give homework only to students from Grade 3, to encourage their further learning (Interview 18 and 20, Teachers, 30.10.19, Jasong and Bureng).

Parents often forget to attend end of term meetings with teachers, aimed to monitor their children’s progress. According to the interviewed headmasters of rural schools, most of them only participate to debates to complain about the high number of assignments, impeding their children to help their family in other activities.

Beside their disinterest, an urging problem is also determined by teachers’ absenteeism, additionally affecting children’s results and not well monitored by the government\textsuperscript{44}. Their lack of commitment is sometimes caused by the unsatisfaction with their posting in a rural area for that academic year, especially if they come from the coast. In other cases, it is ascribable to lack of adequate preparation or disinterest on their job (Interview 7, 15 and 19, Headmasters, 28.10.19, Soma; 29.10.19, Dongoroba; 30.10.19, Bureng).

Social habits are not the only cause of school dropout. Cultural attitudes can possibly harm children’s educational opportunities. Child marriage is still an urging issue in the country, despite this practice was banned by the law since the 1990s. In rural traditional families, puberty represents a net passage to adulthood and to adult responsibilities\textsuperscript{45}.

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Marriage at a tender age means that education cannot be furthered anymore. The same condition is for teenage wives in rural Gambia.

Menstruation not only is related to adulthood, but it also represents a taboo in many families. Sometimes, female and male physical changes are not even mentioned from parents and relatives, leaving children unaware of the consequences of puberty and sexuality. Not all girls are aware of the imminent changes of their body. Influenced by the cultural taboo on female puberty and menstruation, girls often prefer to hide themselves from the other members of the family and moreover to strangers. Besides, menstruated girls do not always have the economic possibility to buy pads in order to continue with their normal activities. Furthermore, school’s toilets are not equipped and increase the physical and mental discomfort. For these reasons, many of them decide to avoid awkward situations and to miss school in those days. Physical shame is thus another important reason of inconstancy and eventual dropouts. Collateral effects of this cultural taboo determining disinformation are also unwanted pregnancies that, in turn, increment the phenomenon of child marriage.

2.5.3 Structural and socio-cultural issues in urban Gambia

As it was observed during the field study, the geographical proximity to administrative quarters positively impacted on education, allowing children to study in more adequate buildings, provided with electricity and closer to their homes. Beside lower basic centres, higher institutions of education proliferate in towns and favour the development of a skilled youth.

In comparison with rural areas, where the scarcity of teachers affects education, the obstacle to learning in urban centres is rather the high density of population, determining the formation of overcrowded classes. Even if more teachers are available, learning

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outcomes are still affected. Structural flaws are also reflected in attitudes and perceptions, despite these tend to manifest less intensively than in the peripheral inland.

As the spokesman of Bakoteh LBS’s PTA (Parent Teachers’ Associations) claims: “The excessive number of students for each class demotivates children, but also affects the teachers’ commitment. Professors are often late in the morning or lazy in class, leaving students to play rather than explaining” (Interview 31, Teacher, 12.11.19, Bakoteh). The headmaster adds: “Teachers’ absenteeism is a major concern and the sole method to contain it is organizing meetings to discuss and sensitize on the importance of constancy among the school staff” (Interview 30, Headmaster, 12.11.19, Bakoteh).

According to the Headmaster of Bakau LBS: “Public schools guarantee free education for all, but the quality of learning is affected by the mass participation of students, not adequately handled. A widespread belief among teachers is that of the superiority of private schools, limiting the students’ number to favour the educational process, but also offering better salaries to motivate their staff. The result is a major lack of commitment for civil servants, because teachers do not often rely on their responsibilities, but rather on their economic gain” (Interview 37, Headmaster, 21.11.19, Bakau). Despite the decision of the government to introduce PTAs and SMCs (School Management Committee) in school, with the aim to socially include and motivate the communal collaboration of parents with the teachers’ staff, the importance of education and communication for better outcomes is not always comprehended. Some families still show disinterest towards their children’s academic progress and ignore educational priorities. Parents tend to give importance to domestic collaboration, undermining the impact of this abuse on the space given to human formation. “[…] It frequently happens that families only attend school meetings when they want to complain about the amount of homework, to be reduced in favour of housework and farming” (Interview 41, Headmaster, 04.12.19, Abuko).

The phenomenon of parental disregard is worsened in case of social malaise, where disadvantaged children are often stigmatized and relegated to the domestic environment, rather than included in adequate settings, with the opportunity to share their experience with their peers and to overcome their previous condition of shame and exclusion. The institution of “St. John’s for the Deaf” was established with the aim to give an opportunity to disadvantaged children, destined to discrimination.
Despite the commitment of the staff working with these youths, families are often an obstacle to their education. As the headmaster asserts: “The attitude of families is harmful to most of my students. Parents who lack of understanding, are not supportive and force them to abandon their studies” (Interview 57, Headmaster, 25.11.19, Serrekunda).

Beside structural deficiencies, exacerbated by socio-cultural traditions and individual behaviours, approaches from “above” can also possibly affect the educational outcome or at least its perception. Foreign intervention could sometimes reflect lack of adequate strategies of implementation and could thus increment pre-existent difficulties. In the school of Abuko LBS, for example, donors provided tablets in spite of no appropriate evaluation of the local needs. “The lack of adequate financial support from the government had determined deficiencies in the school security system. In absence of a night watchman, all tablets were stolen by thieves” (Interview 41, Headmaster, 04.12.19, Abuko). Donors had provided devices without dialoguing with the local authority first, and an incomplete evaluation of possible obstacles to the project was the cause of its failure. The “patronal” attitude of the organization had thus a disastrous impact on the venture50.

Beside the introduction of technological devices, international donors also intervene in the provision of extra materials aimed at supporting the learning activities, often in areas where technology is not applicable. Libraries’ corpus is often expanded, implementing or creating an integrative educational offer in rural and urban areas of the country. Once again, the positive impact of donations can sometimes be hindered by the lack of empathy, if the donor adopts the attitude of “filling an empty recipient” with no self-identification with different contexts. The headmaster of Jasong LBS pointed out that: “The school library is currently furnished with books donated from a British NGO, including volumes not suited for children’s education. Novels and Romance books should have been discarded from the selection before tomes were donated” (Interview 17, Headmaster, 30.10.19, Jasong).

These examples offer evidence of the possible effects of international intervention in local administration. The adoption of external measures can successfully integrate to the

school, or it represents the symptom of a short-sightedness of the donor, in the incapacity of harmoniously integrate with the local context. The scarce empathy showed by the international agents in the cases mentioned above has a neutral or even negative impact on schools which belong to a vulnerable context, in the ideological predominance of filling an empty bottle from above⁵¹.

2.6 Concluding Remarks
The first section of the chapter was intended to give an overview of the colonial event, in relation to its linguistic repercussions on the African continent. The socio-economic domination was accompanied by the Western imposition of a foreign idiom, responsible for education and knowledge. The indigenous language’s delegitimization permeated national societies and still nowadays, it contributes to impede linguistic re-appropriation in formal contexts. Monolingual education in countries where the official language is a foreign idiom, not only implicitly emarginates indigenous diversities, but also determines evident failures in the literacy process.

The second part of the chapter was designed to introduce the field study and present the multilingual project of EGRA, launched in Gambian lower basic schools in 2015. The overview of innovative educational methods served as a contextualization of the chapter’s fulcrum, namely the investigation of schooling across regions in The Gambia.

Findings evidenced profound differences between rural and urban areas, concerning educational possibilities and teaching management. Disadvantageous contexts apparently influence the commitment of teachers and the interest of families towards education. Socio-cultural habits in turn seem to significantly interfere with school attendance and learning outcomes, in a sort of endless vicious circle. In some cases, the foreign intervention reflects a paternal attitude and furtherly impedes a responsible school development.

This section served as a framework to the core topic of the thesis, addressed in the following chapter, which focuses on the investigation of structural and ideological boundaries to mother tongue education.

3. Mother tongue education

3.1 Structural boundaries to the multilingual implementation

Since 2015, when the EGRA method was introduced in schools nationally and the multilingual system permeated lower basic curricula, difficulties already investing education furtherly emerged. Regional discrepancies became more evident with the introduction of linguistic diversities in the academic environment, where the lack of learning materials, the staff shortage and the infrastructural flaws had already contributed to a fragile schooling context. Furthermore, the linguistic inclusion still results partial. Despite seven national languages should have supposedly been included in the project, the preparation of teachers still mainly regards the five most commonly spoken idioms, and the other languages are practically excluded from learning programs. This section is aimed at providing details on possible reasons behind the partial linguistic inapplicability.

As it emerged during the interview with the Permanent Secretary of Education: “The preparation of teachers during their academic courses mainly concerns theoretical studies on the didactic activity and its methods, while the grammatical knowledge of the various languages involved is overlooked, resulting in an incomplete training. The refusal from the college administration to adopt a national languages’ coherent training program is the primary cause of failure in the multilingual model. This choice depends on the difficulty to include all the languages of EGRA curricula and comprehensively prepare future teachers, but also on the currently inefficient posting method of the qualified staff. The already unequal distribution of teachers on the territory, deriving from phenomena of nepotism and corruption, is worsened by a posting method that does not take into account their ethnic belonging. In this manner, teachers are sent in communities where possibly another language from theirs is spoken, and this determines technical difficulties of teaching, since they need to cope with an alien language, or different regional varieties of the same language. Colleges and universities presently seem unable to recover individual’s linguistic gaps in all the languages involved in the EGRA method, and for this reason training curricula exclude all of them” (Interview 59, Permanent Secretary of Education, 23.12.19, Banjul).
When asked on possible solutions to this issue, he replied: “A range of limited languages could be possibly taught to teachers in their three years of academic preparation, and then considered as a variable in the posting process, in order to implement the present fallacious model.”

Linguistic competence is not the only problem concerning the EGRA method. As it emerged during the observations, not everywhere there is a coherent number of teachers able to cover lessons for children speaking different languages. For this reason, pupils can find themselves in classes where the national language involved is that mostly spoken by the community. Consequently, they do not have the opportunity to develop knowledge using their mother tongue, and find themselves included in an unfamiliar system or, even if they have familiarity with the community language adopted in class, they find themselves in an academic context where their own native language is not considered.

As it was observed during the research, the higher presence of teachers in urban areas generally guarantees the formation of classes where the national languages spoken by children belonging to different linguistic groups are all part of the curriculum. On the contrary, in rural communities there is generally one classroom, where only the community language is the vehicle to the English introduction (See Table n. 2, Pag. 20). Besides, teachers’ shortage determines the formation of overcrowded classes, where the teaching can be hindered in all subjects, including national languages.

If not equally employed across the country, multilingualism could be considered as an obstacle to homogeneous inclusion, and not recognized as a resource for development, culminating in a mere form of bilingualism that excludes the multifaceted aspects of the society.

Furthermore, the annual redistribution of teachers renders their efforts to learn new languages vane, because they can always be posted in different communities.

Previous economic shortages were determinant for school flaws, depending on centres and peripheries of the country. Besides, since 2015, the inadequate language training in college, in addition to the inefficient posting method, have caused difficulties for teachers in employing the EGRA method effectively.

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As teachers in Pakallinding and Bureng LBS reveal, also monitoring programs dedicated to qualified teachers are not adequate and do not cover regions capillarily. Furthermore, since teachers are reposted annually, some areas will unlikely to be covered, because this rotational system discourages investments in the peripheries of the country, according to the belief that teachers will gradually be included in the urban monitoring programs, and governmental efforts can be restricted to coastal areas. “The effect of this state absence is an arbitrary implementation of the multilingual method” (Interview 12 and 20, Teachers, 28.10.19, Pakallinding; 30.10.19, Bureng). Since these two schools are located in a peripheral region, the governmental indirect “laissez-faire” is perceived more intensively than what occurs for urban areas.

According to the findings, regional differences undoubtedly represent the primary variable influencing the implementation of schooling and multilingualism in school. The structural framework where education develops is determinant for the formation of opinions and perspectives. Nevertheless, individual backgrounds and social motives are in turn influential on the possible construction of bias about structures and super-structures of multilingualism.

3.2 Ideological boundaries to the multilingual implementation

As it resulted from the study, despite some teachers recognize improvements related to the recent implementation of this method, others report difficulties caused by the structural and managemental inefficiency. Nevertheless, other issues should be examined with reference to multilingualism in education, namely those attitudes and misperceptions possibly stemming from persisting legacies, representing a virtual impediment to the EGRA implementation.

Among the 18 public schools observed, only those in Region 1 and 2 adopt more than one national language, but never effectively recur to mother tongue education, for reasons of classrooms’ availability or teachers’ shortage. Nevertheless, it was observed that in some cases, teachers would informally refuse national languages’ teaching and replace the lesson from 8.30 to 9.30 with reviews of previous lectures or topics scheduled in other subjects. This praxis was mainly observed in urban schools, in spite of a more permeant governmental presence. In fact, despite a major disadvantaged context, rural centres paradoxically seemed to take full advantage of the only national idiom employable,
namely the community language, and to adhere to the timetable rather than relying on the sole English.

Another remarkable finding is the relation evidenced between age and perception. The interview included 20 teachers, whose majority was <35 years old (15 of them). Among the interviewees, young teachers who started their career after 2015 unfrequently assert that national languages constitute an element of confusion in the learning process. On the contrary, their older colleagues often disagree with linguistic inclusion. Differently, headmasters of the 18 public schools taken into consideration, recognized the benefits of the EGRA method, despite possible practical difficulties. This result makes evident how in some cases age matters in time of judgement on multilingualism, as in the example of young and old teachers. Nevertheless, age does not matter if we consider old teachers and headmasters. In this case, in a context where age and experience could be similar, other variables emerge, and the recognition of multilingualism results influenced by individual perceptions and socio-cultural heritages.

The following section aims to investigate possible ideological impediments to multilingualism, based on interviews.

Teachers in Soma, Latri Kunda and Bakau LBS lament the inutility of mother tongue education, as an element of confusion for students. According to them, the pronunciation of sounds between an L1 and English can actually diverge and potentially hinder the learning process (Interview 8, 27 and 38, Teachers, 28.10.19, Soma; 07.11.19, Latri Kunda; 21.11.19, Bakau).

As teachers in the interview at Ndungu Kebe and Wellingaraba pointed out, letter A corresponds to the sound [a] in national languages, but in English it is pronounced [ei]. Similarly, letter C is pronounced [k] and [si]. Letter E corresponds to [e] and [i]. Letter I is pronounced [i] and [ai]. Letter U is both [u] and [iu]. Early in the morning, children are taught to spell letters according to local sounding, whilst later, they are encouraged to attribute a different sound to the same letter (Interview 2, 3, 5 and 6, Teachers, 26.10.19, Ndungu Kebe; 27.10.19, Wellingaraba).

According to professors supportive of the EGRA method: “[…] the phenomenon of sound-switching is common to pupils all over the world approaching an L2 from their own mother tongue. Furthermore, also English native speakers would incur difficulties when learning the different manners in which letters are pronounced, depending on the
words where they are combined. Similarly, the temporary confusion of Gambian children
is soon replaced with a raised awareness of differences and similarities among L1 and L2,
enhancing their cognitive abilities.” (Interview 20 and 53, Teachers, 07.01.20, Campama;
30.10.19, Bureng).

Difficulties of sound pronunciation are not peculiar to African students approaching the
L2, because English native speakers encounter the same problem as well. For this reason,
the opinion of teachers who discourage multilingual approaches for reasons of sound
ambiguity can be ascribed to a merely subjective perception, probably influenced by a
mistrust towards the multilingual method, erroneously identified as a factor of confusion.
Beside teachers’ concerns on sound switches, it would be necessary to analyse
the strategy behind the linguistic switch itself. After 9.30 in the morning, there is a net
passage from national languages to the “academic idiom”, worthy to be employable in
the other subjects.

This method basically embodies those monolingual programs including foreign
languages’ teaching, but in the reverse. In fact, in this case it is the L1 to be taught as a
foreign language, only a few hours per week, while the primary source of education is the
official L2. The school method currently employed in The Gambia, constraining
indigenous languages to the marginal role of an L2, represents a non-form of
multilingualism, namely a monolingualism de facto, developed within the layers of the
educational platform.

With reference to the limited time devoted to mother tongue education, two are the
arbitrary strategies chosen by teachers. As mentioned before, some professors decide to
employ multilingualism in the restricted time available because they believe in the EGRA
method, while others informally replace this strategy with the sole use of the L2 in school,
because they are convinced that the use of national languages will affect the learning
outcomes. As it was revealed by the headmaster of Latri Kunda LBS: “Staff members
who decide to unofficially refuse the method, relegate the use of local languages to a mere
functional, temporary period of transition to English. Difficulties encountered in mother

53 T. Skutnabb-Kangas, Linguistic Genocide in Education – or Worldwide Diversity and Human
54 A. Ouane, C. Glanz, Optimising Learning, Education and Publishing in Africa: The Language
tongue education reflect objective limits of the strategy, but also teaching approaches aimed at minimalizing the efforts, in lack of adequate opportunities or more simply, in lack of self-commitment” (Interview 26, Headmaster, 07.11.19, Latri Kunda).

As the headmaster of Serrekunda Proper LBS admits: “Children are firmly discouraged to use their own language after 9.30 in the morning, despite they often lack of competence to express themselves and communicate in the official idiom.” (Interview 39, Headmaster, 25.11.19, Serrekunda).

For this reason, a teacher claims: “After the daily national language lesson, if children speak their mother tongue, they are warned or reported from the class prefect, who will write their name down on the register.” (Interview 6, Teacher, 27.10.19, Wellingaraba).

Admonishing students for the supposedly wrong use of their own mother tongue is not the only method employed. Some teachers use more coercive measures, considered as more effective and supportive for the use of English in school. To avoid linguistic interference during lessons, some professors use to ask the payment of 1 Dalasi from children for every time they hear words in local languages. The amount of money corresponds to about 0,02 €, but for Gambian children means the impossibility to afford a meal during the break and represent an unforgettable humiliation (Interview 20, Teacher, 30.10.19, Bureng).

A teacher of Japineh LBS claims: “I used to beat my pupils with a stick, if they spoke Mandinka after the national language’s lesson, but later I had to stop, because the headmaster of this school told me it is considered as an abuse.” The teacher also admits that a colleague of the same school was used to put “symbols” on pupils, to effectively remind the correct behaviour and avoid further linguistic mistakes: cow heads and donkey bones were assembled in necklaces to be worn by the student in front of the class for the rest of the day (Interview 14, Teacher, 29.10.19, Japineh).

Some teachers openly claim to disagree with multilingualism, because: “English is the sole vehicle to internationality and better job opportunities for the youth.” National languages are not recognized as a vehicle to literacy, but they are considered as a waste of time (Interview 16 and 38, Teachers, 29.10.19, Dongoroba; 21.11.19, Bakau).

Findings suggest that attitudes of the teaching staff in public schools sometimes result similar to those of private centres’ employees, deploying a sole language in the educational platform. While private teachers choose monolinguism because they
respond to the interest of European organizations, public teachers are not influenced by monolingual policies, but can be guided by subjective motives culminating in language exclusion. The headmaster of Swallow LBS stated: “National languages are not useful to learning, because they are already employed in domestic environments and do not need to be furthered by students.” (Interview 55, Headmaster, 18.11.2019, Manjai Kunda).

Monolinguism and reductive linguistic coexistence are tolerated and sometimes also financed by the government, as it happened for “Ibrahim Bilingual Madrasa”, where English is employed beside Arabic, thus embracing a conventional curriculum, supported by state funds. This exclusive bilingualism ignores the indigenous diversities of the country, merely relying on foreign idioms across the educational process.

Some respondents added that the official language is more suitable for academical contexts and that national languages are not capable to express concepts adequately, since they do not present the adequate vocabulary for this purpose. They suggested that: “The use of national languages should be interrupted at the end of Grade 1, because these only serve as a vehicle to access rudiments in English.” (Interview 22 and 51, Teachers, 07.11.19, Bundung; 07.01.20, Banjul).

From these statements, there emerges the concept that the sole English is sufficient to determine positive learning outcomes. Languages of mediation and their benefits are not always taken into account in a country with a foreign official idiom, considered by some respondents as incapable to vehicle formal knowledge, and thus relegated in a linguistic jail.

It is necessary to contextualize the hostile prejudices and attitudes encountered in the interviews and remark ideologies deriving from a common historical past, affecting the implementation of the EGRA method, but also influencing strategies behind mother tongue education itself.

The daily linguistic re-orientation, designed in the project from 9.30, is visible in the change of the linguistic code used by children. This strategy, designing English as the sole vehicle to all the subjects from 9.30, is accompanied by implicit collateral effects, even more confusing than “sudden” linguistic exclusion itself. In fact, the traumatic code-

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55 See footnote 2, Pag. 3.
switching reproduces a distorted perception of the language value among young kids, in
the arbitrary devaluation of its semantic and symbolic significance, according to the
timetable. National languages have a space in the learning process for only one hour a
day and then, they are “inexplicably” relegated in favour of the external source, in a
continuous perpetration of linguistic hierarchization.
This rule of Gambian multilingualism in school constitutes itself the manifestation of a
colonial heritage, where linguistic inclusion is designed to be considered as part of
educational curricula only one hour a day, while the other subjects are conveyed by an
alien idiom. This boundary is then reflected in possible individual and group
misperceptions of language.
As it emerged from the interviews, attempts to regulate language production in class
possibly culminate in episodes of stigmatization of students, for reasons of linguistic
preference. Strategies and instruments aimed at linguistic discipline through stigma and
punishment, finally culminate into language delegitimization.
Ideological motives leading to language exclusion are primarily affected by discrepancies
in linguistic policies and mismanagement of strategic planning, as evidenced in Paragraph
3.1. Nevertheless, linguistic misperceptions also result influenced by a historical heritage.
The persistent colonial legacy still dominates the minds, regulating the formality about
language switches and the arbitrary inapplication of multilingual methods. In this manner,
past socio-linguistic influences still hinder the ideation of efficient strategies and also
their effective realization.
The tradition to stigmatize the use of native idioms actually dates back to the colonial
time, when Christian missionaries adopted coercive methods to promote the spread of the
European languages57.
When employed in nowadays education, this method represents the persisting footprint
of the foreign influence on socio-linguistic identities. The resulting linguistic
delegitimization reflects an imbalance of languages’ status, between English and its
“alien” languages 58. As mentioned before, the neat choice on the use or refuse of national

57 H. Giles, P. Johnson, “Ethnolinguistic theory: a social psychological approach to language
58 T. Omoniyi, Bilingualism, Biliteracy, Classrooms and Identity Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa.
languages, depending on different time and context, culminates in a devaluation of languages’ communicative power, increasing the gap between official and para-official linguistic status.

Teachers who punish the use of indigenous languages or claim to feel more comfortable in employing only English in school, not only result conditioned by a lack of adequate preparation or commitment towards the local languages’ use. An ideological force resides behind their refusal, stronger than practical issues. The result of the desire for domestic relegation of local languages, is a delegitimization of the linguistic and ethnic identity of the young population, in a continue denial starting within the educational platform. As the Education Officer claimed: “Teachers’ capacity is not at the base of educational constrains. Training is not the main difficulty, despite the economic and technical aspects need to be addressed as obstacles for successful policies in this country. Barriers for an effective development of a multilingual model and for its implementation, rarely depend on the abilities of teachers, or on the practical obstacles to the task. Attitude is the real issue and prejudices and misperceptions are its direct causes.” (Interview 58, Principal Education Officer, 20.12.19, Inset Unit Kanifing).

A common historical past is reflected in the attitude of some adults within educational contexts, affecting themselves and children in the linguistic perception. The identity building process of languages thus results distorted by the subaltern position youths are taught to adopt in respect to the official language, worthy to be predominant in formal settings.

3.3 The perspective of parents

Despite contradicting strategies are increasing the diversity of the educational setting after the implementation of the multilingual method, the prevalent attitude is that of a prudent inclusive policy. Aimed at overcoming linguistic division among children and at creating an effective model implementing L1 to overcome the gaps of the L2, interactions between languages for a positive mutual support are shared as the common strategy of the many59, without measures of stigmatization aimed at reducing interferences within the process of language switch. Prudent policies can also include the choice to employ a restricted number of local languages beside English, rather than a comprehensive model of

59 See also Cummins, Linguistic Interdependence Theory, Pag. 11.
multilingualism. In rural areas, this is a matter of necessity, in schools with lack of teachers and inadequate buildings to contain the number of students. The community language is the only one taken into consideration. In urban areas, there is generally a better school provision and the multilingual inclusion is favoured. Nevertheless, socio-cultural perceptions can influence school policies and the deriving pattern. Socio-cultural bias on linguistic use does not only begin with teachers’ attitudes, but also with the necessities of parents who misinterpret and distort motives behind the choice of multilingualism. The headmaster of Abuko LBS claims: “I had to respond to parents’ complaints and the national languages’ teaching was interrupted for one year, after they had lamented that this method was incrementing ethnic rivalries and divisionism among students” (Interview 41, Headmaster, 04.12.19, Abuko).

Multilingual approaches are not only perceived as unifying forces, but also as the possible cause of tribalism. After one year, children were not assigned to different classrooms, according to their mother tongue, but the headmaster was obliged to adopt the community language as the only local idiom studied in school. The other languages were only employed for Grade 1s, where children inevitably needed a familiar tongue in order to approach English (Interview 41, Headmaster, 04.12.19, Abuko). The attribution of the multilingual tendency to the phenomenon of tribalism represents a persisting legacy, deriving from the colonial ideal of monolingual superiority on the chaos of multitudes. Ouane defined monolingualism as “[…] a construction imposed for political and educational reasons as the linguistic ideal”.

As the Principal Education Officer states, if schools decide to merely adopt the language widely spread in that community, rather than all the different mother tongues spoken by children in that school, learning improvements will be hindered. The community language results as alien as English to many pupils, and thus, it will not serve as an effective support (Interview 58, Principal Education Officer, 20.12.19, Inset Unit Kanifing).

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60 See also Obeng and Adegbija, Pag. 39.
Nevertheless, the relatively introduction of national languages in public lower basic education is gradually breaking the chains of the colonial legacy, and gaining acceptance among headmasters, teachers and also families.

In this regard, it is necessary to refer to parents interviewed in urban and rural schools. It is important to remark that it resulted very difficult to engage them in this initiative, despite the official invitation they had received from the headmaster. Many of them claimed to be unavailable because of housework or other activities. Among the participants, a minority was not able to speak English and teachers translated questions and collected answers. For this reason, results might be influenced, because they are destined and mediated by an educational authority. Nevertheless, among 15 parents interviewed in four different schools, nine knew about the EGRA project and were supportive of this initiative. When the others were illustrated on the educational strategy, they also seemed to appreciate the positive results they registered on children in their studies.

Parent 1 referred: “I give a great importance to national language teaching, hoping it will be able to enhance the English knowledge and help my child in future job opportunities” (Interview 23, Parent, 07.11.19, Bundung).

Parent 2 stated: “My nine-year-old daughter is part of the EGRA program and now she is capable to teach me English, because she was faster than her older siblings in learning how to read and write.” In this way, she is helping the illiterate parents to improve (Interview 35, Parent, 12.11.19, Bakoteh).

Respondent 3 reported in Wolof to the mediator that she is not a mother, but she takes care of her nephew of seven years old. Since he attended ECD (Early Childhood Development) before primary 1, he is already able to read, because he was familiar with the EGRA sounding (Interview 10, Parent, 28.10.19, Soma).

Parent 4 claimed in Jola to the mediator that: “My two children of Primary 2 and 3 do not like Maths, but are enthusiast do homework in literacy, because they learnt how to read thanks to this method and for them, English now is easy.” (Interview 48, Parent, 09.12.19, Tallinding).

Common findings were encountered from the interviews. All respondents admitted that their financial condition would impede their children to further higher education levels, unless they would be able to win a scholarship. In addition, all children are involved by
their families in housework or farming activities. In consideration of these aspects, possible improvements concerning education result hindered by the unavailability of sufficient time to dedicate to studies and the impossibility to study after lower basic school.

Nevertheless, the objective to obtain the achievement of basic literacy seems facilitated by the introduction of indigenous languages\textsuperscript{63}. Parents registered the positive difference in comparison to older siblings of these children who went to school before 2015 and encountered more difficulty in learning how to read and write. Moreover, the parental role results overturned, when children who learnt how to read and write represent a resource to the language skills’ improvement of that illiterate family.

\section*{3.4 Possible future developments}

According to the findings of the thesis, the government should feel the responsibility to invest more equally in education across regions, in order to recover structural flaws. If mother tongue was implemented through policies and interventions aimed at promoting a more equal school development, this progress would be reflected in attitudes and perspectives, gradually welcoming the indigenous pluralities. This managemental rearrangement would indeed be followed by a gradual renegotiation of the multilingual role in enhancing literacy and ethno-linguistic identities.

Despite past legacies still appear to hinder the liberation of minds and the enhancement of national self-esteem, the positive impact of multilingualism on educational outcomes is gradually persuading on the necessity for inclusion of diversities, in order to recover a secular delegitimization and enhance the linguistic heritage of the nation. An unexpected event might accelerate this process, namely the return to a democratic system after a twenty-year dictatorship, in 2016. In fact, this process was followed by the proliferation of programs broadcasted by Tv and Radio, where politics could finally become the core of independent debates. The effort to embrace literate and illiterate people culminated in the ideation of programs in English, but also in the widely spoken national languages. Therefore, the permeation of orality into formal settings is lately becoming more decisive, reflecting local ethno-linguistic varieties.

\textsuperscript{63} See also UNESCO, \textit{GEM Report Policy Paper} 24, Pag. 10.
Despite the persistence of socio-cultural aftermaths and individual countertendencies, the renewed engagement from the government and the rising awareness of the grassroots could finally pave the way for indigenous pluralities, and transform them into the essence of this country.

3.5 Concluding Remarks

This chapter was aimed at analyzing structural flaws and ideological controversies concerning mother tongue education. The first part was dedicated to the consideration of inequalities of multilingual instruction across regions, alimenting possible misperceptions on linguistic coexistence. Preexisting schooling discrepancies resulted determining in the inhomogeneous applicability of the EGRA project.

The second part was aimed at contextualizing prejudices and attitudes within the educational framework, in view of possible linkages with the colonial legacy, influencing linguistic perceptions. The historical aftermath still results an impediment for the affirmation of multilingualism in formal contexts.

Nevertheless, the case study registered a partial recognition of the benefits on literacy, conveyed by mother tongue education. Headmasters and teachers generally support the method, despite objective difficulties encountered. The contribute of parents was also useful to delineate a change of perspective, motivated by the observation of learning improvements in comparison to previous years.

In 2016, following a sudden political change towards democracy, the involvement in politics was encouraged by the proliferation of free media of information, broadcasting in English, but also in national languages. This renewed engagement from the grassroots needs to be encouraged by state initiatives towards linguistic rights. These are the prerequisites to further improvements concerning linguistic inclusion in formal settings.
4. Conclusion

This thesis was aimed at tracing structural flaws and socio-cultural boundaries impeding the implementation of mother tongue education. The first chapter introduced the objective and the following research questions:

- What are the structural and socio-cultural variables affecting education in urban centres and rural peripheries?
- In which manner are ideological boundaries affecting mother tongue education influenced by historical legacies?

Before introducing the case study, fundamental for the thesis, an overview of historical events leading to linguistic re-establishments was provided in the second chapter. The first section was dedicated to the analysis of linguistic transformations of Africa during the colonial time and of the further influence this era had on linguistic perceptions and attitudes. The second part of the chapter was aimed at introducing the case study and intended to provide answers to the first research question. The description of education delivery in The Gambia was actually focused on differences between rural and urban centres.

Findings remarked the isolation of inland areas from the coastal urbanity, due to the lack of infrastructures and services. The difficult provision of learning materials from the capital and the staff shortage deriving from shortsighted posting policies determine a major obstacle for basic education. These structural flaws in schooling were also analyzed to better understand socio-cultural spaces surrounding the educational environment across regions.

In rural areas, rooted traditions constitute an impediment to schooling. Beside the general disinterest of parents and the involvement of children in domestic chores, collateral issues contribute to school dropouts. Early marriage still nowadays in some areas of The Gambia represents a communal feature and a cultural essence preventing education. Besides, gender taboos like that of menstruation force young women to social and educational relegation.

Urban areas seem to be little influenced by the survival of these ancient values and social difficulties result less predominant for educational outcomes. The second chapter was
thus intended to analyze schooling in consideration of the existing influence of structural deficiencies on social habits, and vice versa.

The third chapter was intended to answer the second research question. For this purpose, the investigation focused in the EGRA method in Gambian public lower basic schools. Firstly, practical impediments to its implementation were taken into account and subsequently, the study concentrated in the tendencies and countertendencies possibly affecting the multilingual strategy. The results of the field study remarked how preexistent flaws were exacerbated after the introduction of the mother tongue education strategy. The shortage of qualified staff and adequate learning materials in school, in addition to the already inefficient posting method, where linguistic abilities are not taken into account, determines a language reduction, or exclusion, in the formal setting. Findings also remarked the existence of prejudices and attitudes affecting linguistic coexistence within the educational sector, but also inner contradictions to the reductive multilingual model.

Apparently, certain behaviors stem from a historical legacy, leading to the delegitimization of indigenous languages, labeled to be unadapt or unnecessary to the English learning.

The concepts of stigmatization, language delegitimization and linguistic inadequacy reflect the artificial motives behind the perpetration of a foreign dominion in the colonial era. The conviction that national languages’ use within the educational space should be limited, or better reduced to the domestic environment still reflects concerns about the effective role of multilingualism in a plural society.

Similarly, the myth of tribalism reflects an “excessive” effort of inclusion of too many parts, dangerous for unity. It was inherited from the colonial strategy to impose a monolingual order on “chaotic” pluralities and still is reflected in educational contexts.

Contradictions and misperceptions encountered are also alimented by persisting socio-cultural dependences from external factors, influencing the disaffection towards multilingual policies, as for example it still happens with Western NGOs working in the educational sector on the territory and adopting a monolingual model in private schools, or with conventional madrasas, adopting systems of foreign multilingualism.

The two research questions are intertwined. The thesis evidences how the findings related to the two questions influence each other. Structural and managerial flaws in
schooling influence beliefs and misbeliefs towards education. As a consequence of educational disparities across regions, mother tongue education is also employed differently. This variable affects perceptions and attitudes, already linked to the colonial linguistic delegitimization, and it possibly impedes an effective implementation of mother tongue education, reducing it to a stigmatization.

Fortunately, countertendencies are lately determining a re-negotiation of the multilingual value. Recently, with the gradual permeation of the EGRA method in schools, suspicious attitudes towards multilingualism have largely been wiped away and replaced by a major confidence on its role, partly based on the positive results impacting the previous approaches. Teachers generally adopt the method and, despite many of them feel more comfortable in the use of English, because it is the unifying language over the plurality, they understand the positive impact on learning outcomes and on ethnic and social inclusion. Parents who engage themselves in their children’s education, commonly show their appreciation in the positive learning improvements.

The double function of national languages, introduced to academically, but also to ethnically include, is making its way among the previous prejudices on the divisive linguistic power. That colonial legacy that for long has been subjugating minds and self-perceptions, operating on language relegation, is hopefully losing its charm. Linguistic misuse and language refuse are becoming outdated in the recently developed educational framework, inclusive of pluralities. The linguistic re-discovery as a tool of learning and cooperation, aimed at recovering social misperceptions, is the prerequisite for further developments in the academic field and in the process of identity-building.
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Annex

Interview Guide\(^{64}\):

**Teachers**
- When did you start teaching?
- For how many years have you been teaching in this school?
- What are the main difficulties you encountered while teaching (concerning the environment, the classes, the staff, the parental presence/absence in education, the school sector itself)?
- Do you use the EGRA method in school?
- Do you think this strategy is useful to learning? Why?
- What are your suggestions to present issues?

**Headmasters**
- When did you become a headmaster?
- For how many years have you been a headmaster in this school?
- What are the main difficulties you encountered in the management of this school/other schools?
- Do you support the EGRA teaching?
- What outcomes could be reached through this method?
- What are the main difficulties to the implementation of this method?
- What are your suggestions concerning the educational sector and the multilingual method?

\(^{64}\) Questions posed in Interviews 58 and 59 are not included in the Annex, because they mainly refer to technical information on the EGRA strategy itself and on its application across regions. At the end of the in-depth illustration of the multilingual method, interviewees were asked as well about their opinion on educational issues and on possible implementations to the present program.
**Parents**

- How many children do you have? How many of them study in this school? What is their age?

- What is your ethnicity?

- What is your occupation? What is the occupation of your wife/husband?

- Do you know about the program launched in 2015 and including national language teaching in lower grades? (If the answer is NO, the interviewer provides some information of the EGRA method, in order to refer to it in further questions)

- Do you think this method could help children in learning, or it would be better to employ only English in school?

- How many hours per day do your children spend studying? Do they help you in the housework?

- What are your expectations about the future of your children? What professional opportunities would you wish for them?