

Comparing Language Ideologies in Multilingual Classrooms across Norway and Zambia

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The article compared language ideologies among two groups of teachers: pre-service teachers in Norway and in-service teachers in Zambia. The study showed that, although teachers shared common challenges in handling multilingual classes present in both educational systems, their language ideologies were different, which affected the way they sought to overcome those challenges. Norwegian teachers preferred mostly monoglossic language ideologies, whereas Zambian teachers conveyed heteroglossic ideologies. These ideologies relate to local conditions, which are very different in Zambia and Norway.

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The study was motivated by the fact that both countries are facing challenges related to the multilingualism in early grade classrooms, even if the historical, political, and linguistic background of these two countries is very different. In Norway, the number of immigrants is reported to be increasing over the past decades, and there is a change

towards a multilingual society. Zambia, on the other hand, has a long history of multilingualism, with seven official regional languages and many more unofficial languages. Soon after independence, Zambia adopted a monolingual education system as part of nation-building project where English (a colonial language) was used as a national language and the medium of instruction from Grade 1 to university; this was the policy from 1966 to 1999.

- Comparing language ideologies of different countries opens a possibility to learn from each other as well as to learn about one's own culture.
- With the term *language ecology*, researchers are referring to the thinking about multilingualism that takes different dimensions of the relationships between languages into account. To be able to compare two countries, their language ecologies must first be defined.
- The dominant language ideology affects language policies in education as well as teachers' actions when facing multilingualism. The way languages are managed in a society is never neutral nor apolitical. Language ideologies define the value of languages.
- Educational programmes founded on monoglossic language ideology legitimate monolingual linguistic practises, whereas educational programmes founded on heteroglossic language ideology support dynamic multilingual linguistic practises in the community (García, 2009).



The Study

- The aim was to find out how teachers from Norway and

Zambia considered the role of multilingualism in their education systems and what kind of language ideologies we could find behind the teachers' views.

- The data was collected in focus group interviews. Norwegian teachers were pre-service teachers, and Zambian teachers were in-service. In Norway, seven focus group interviews were conducted with twenty-four pre-service teachers in total from two teacher education institutions. From Zambia, there were thirty-six in-service primary school teachers who participated in the study.
- Participant utterances were analysed with the qualitative content analysis method. The content was divided into three main categories: the teachers' comments on multilingualism as a challenge; comments on solutions to these challenges; and comments on language policies in education.
- Participant utterances were connected to either monoglossic or heteroglossic language ideologies. Then these language ideologies were considered in light of the language ecology of the given country.

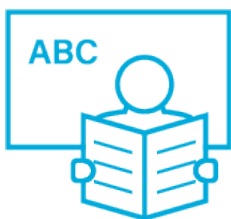


Findings

- Teachers of both countries expressed similar descriptions of challenges with multilingualism in education. Both groups mentioned pupils' limited proficiency in the language of instruction as a challenge and underlined the need for a common medium of communication in the classroom.
- In Zambia, teachers lacked suitable learning material and support from the government. In Norway, some

teachers mentioned that the support for teaching and learning resources was already available for the students.

- However, the Norwegian teachers' way of thinking when it came to solutions for addressing problems with multilingualism was different due to a different kind of language ideology. The approach of most Zambian teachers was practical, and their actions aimed to help learners from different language backgrounds to learn, even if the approach used was outside the provision of policy. Norwegian teachers insisted on following policy, and all pupils from other language backgrounds were expected to learn Norwegian, as this was the language used in class.
- The teachers of the two countries positioned themselves differently towards language policies in their countries. Zambian in-service teachers criticised the government for not providing enough tools to be able to teach multilingual students correctly. Norwegian pre-service teachers mainly aligned themselves with the current policies of their country.



The Implications

- The study shows that there are some similarities in the language ideologies of the two countries as both groups describe the same kind of challenges in multilingual classroom and idealise a classroom where everyone is able to communicate with others.
- In Norway, a clear line between the Norwegian 'us' and the multilingual 'other' was noticed. Student must have

sufficient proficiency before being able to participate in Norwegian classes; they needed to be assimilated into the Norwegian language.

- Zambian in-service teachers seemed to accept a higher extent of multilingualism in their classrooms, and they were ready to use other languages present in class other than the official language of instruction in a flexible manner.
- It seems that Zambian in-service teachers were following a heteroglossic language ideology, which does not fit the government's monoglossic language ideology, where one regional official language was expected to be used in class.
- Zambian in-service teachers' willingness to use other languages as support or as a resource can be linked to the language ecology of the country. In Zambia, people are used to interacting with different languages in everyday life.
- The paper urged Norwegian pre-service teachers to learn from Zambian in-service teachers' pragmatic ideology and openness towards multilingualism in the classrooms, a landmark concept that suggests the global north should tap knowledge from the global south.