Language Choice and Use on the Linguistic Landscapes of a Teacher Training College in Rwanda

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ABSTRACT

The presence of languages on signage in a given territory indicates their relevance, the attitudes that writers have towards them, and the reasons why they have been chosen for the landscape. This paper thematically analyses the language choice and use on the linguistic landscape of a Teacher Training College (TTC) in Rwanda. It adopted a descriptive research design, guided by Spolsky and Copper's (1991) Model of Language Choice. The target population comprised signposts located in the selected secondary school. Qualitative data were collected using a camera, 9 signposts were purposively selected. The data were analysed using thematic analysis. The findings indicated that the Kinyarwanda language is infrequently utilised in the linguistic milieu of the educational institution. The messages employed in Kinyarwanda are intended to raise awareness among support staff regarding the importance of maintaining cleanliness and orderliness within the school environment. The linguistic landscape of the investigated school also has English-only signage requesting the use of English by students and teachers within the school compound as a language of instruction and medium of international communication. In addition, signposts containing French are translated or coded in English, thus demonstrating that both languages hold equal importance within the school compound. The research revealed the absence of Kiswahili from signposts in the school, despite its status as official language and taught subject in the Teaching Modern Languages Option. This phenomenon may have arisen from a protracted negative attitude among Rwandan citizens towards Kiswahili, or from school leaders who do not possess proficiency in Kiswahili. It recommended that awareness sessions be held with school leaders in Rwanda to emphasise the importance of multilingualism in the country's development. The implementation of multilingualism in Rwanda is contingent upon the cultivation of a positive attitude towards the country's official languages within educational institutions. It is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education to establish a set of guidelines that will enable schools to promote the learning of all languages on signs within the school environment.

Keywords: Language choice, language use, linguistic landscape, Teacher Training College.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of the ecology of languages in educational spaces was initially introduced in a study conducted by Brown (2012; Widiyanto, et al. 2021). School, as a central civic institution, represents a deliberate and planned environment where learners are subjected to powerful messages about language(s) from local and national authorities. The language landscape of an educational environment is an equally important component that should be investigated in academic investigations conducted following existing laws and there is a growing interest towards the study of linguistic landscape in educational spaces also known as schoolscape (Widiyanto, et al. 2021; Braun, 2012; Bernardo-Hinesley, 2020). In educational institutions linguistic landscape serves different functions such as symbolic function which comprise semantic interpretation of cultural relationship, uniqueness, linguistic prestige and power dynamics (Dagenais et al. 2009; Du Plessis, 2011). Bernardo & Hensley (2020) posits that educational institutions as learning environment spaces not only play a fundamental role in the development of a leaner, but also perpetuate various ideologies related to politics, culture, society, and language among others. Andriyanti (2021) argue that linguistic landscape in schools serve the functions to communicate and to represent the schools' social reality relevant to the emerging themes through iconic and symbolic semiotic system. It is also a multifaceted social construct that also reveals the relationship between the sign makers and the addressees. Culture and teachers are important factors in language policy, focusing on

language teacher, language choice and attitudes towards different languages, target language country awareness, and language ecological awareness. Thus, due to the interaction needed between individuals, language policy can be micro-level rather that macro-level as teachers play an important role implementing the target language in learning environment, choosing the language, and attitudes towards the languages and dialects (Braun, 2007; Abuateyh, 2023).

Ben-Raphael (2006) examined the symbolic construction of specific public spaces by a range of factors, including public institutions, associations, firms, and individuals, stemming from diverse strata and milieus and found the gap on the multilingual signage. Stefano (2021) concluded that as long as this gap is ignored by authorities, it will be difficult to achieve a successful multilingualism.In contrast, Spolsky's (2004 cited in Akindele, 2011) work differentiates between policy and practice, highlighting the influence of ideologies, practices, and management. Spolsky's observations suggest that the real language policy of a community is more likely to be found in its practices than in its management. Akindele (2011) further asserts that empirical linguistic practices offer a valuable insight into the linguistic ideology of the local populace in the context of national language policy. The linguistic landscape thus provides an excellent means to study language ideology, for example, the way in which people themselves evaluate languages and multilingualism (Lanza & Woldemariam, 2009). Thus, schoolscaping provides tools for gaining important and interesting insights into the spatial aspects of language in education policy. These insights include an understanding of the sociopolitical context in which students live, an understanding of attitudes towards diversity, an appreciation of the usefulness of raising awareness, and an exploration of the visual displays of the hidden curriculum with regard to language ideologies in education (Amara, 2018).

Even though students in educational institutions should be exposed to the languages they understand well, education systems in Africa tend to prioritise the utilisation of global languages for instruction, often at the expense of national and mother tongue languages. Colonial languages are frequently employed, and in many cases, an international language such as English or French is incorporated into language policies, despite the fact that these languages are not commonly spoken at home by the majority of clients (Khohliso et al., 2024; Janks, 2020). As Alomoush & Na'imat (2018) demonstrate, the visualisation of English is linked to its relationship with globalisation, and it is the most widely used language on the planet as a result of this relationship, as well as that with internationalization. Lusekelo and Alphonce (2018) demonstrated in Tanzania that English predominance on signposts is indicative of the utilisation of English by the public domain as opposed African languages. This phenomenon is particularly evident in bilingual signposts, where English is employed in preference to Kiswahili.

As Braun (2007) contends that within educational institutions, culture and teaching staff play pivotal roles in the execution of language policy. The focal point of this study was the language instructor, the linguistic choices available, and the attitudes adopted towards diverse linguistic expressions, the target nation, the country of origin, and the awareness of linguistic ecologies. Jaworsky & Thurlow (2010) posit that language contribute to shaping the identity of places. Signs, advertisements and even graffiti help define the character of a city, neighbour or an institution. Tourist areas tend to display multilingual signs to accommodate visitors, while government offices use on the national language. Blommaert (2013 cited in Fortuna, 2025) observed that language seen in public spaces tells more than what the words say. It shows which groups are noticed, which one is supported and what kind of community a place wants to be. He posits that when official signs are only official language, it often builds a sense of unity and shared identity. However, when foreign languages are hardly used, it might show less interest in welcoming international guests or being part of a wider world.

Rwanda chose a multilingual policy made of English, French, Kinyarwanda (MINEDUC, 1996) and Kiswahili (Cabinet Meeting, 2017) official languages. A 2022 study by NISR showed that 77% of the population is literate in at least one of these four languages. Rosendal's (2009) research revealed that, at the time of the shift from French to English as the medium of instruction in 2008, the three official languages were not used equally across Kigali City. French was used more frequently than Kinyarwanda and English, except on billboards, where English and French were used equally frequently. However, soon after the shift, the use of official languages in signage and advertisements in Rwanda revealed competition between English and French, which were used to a degree that did not correspond to the population's proficiency in these languages (Rosendal, 2010). A study by Rosendal and Ngabonziza (2023) demonstrated a significantly increased use of English on shop signs, both monolingual and in combination with other official languages, and illustrated transformations

in the linguistic landscape. To this, Shohamy (2006a) contends that the absence or the presence a language in public space conveys it marginality versus its centrality in the community. Within the linguistic landscape, language fulfils informational and symbolic functions, providing readers with information and reflecting the relationship between language and power through linguistic signs associated with local leaders.

Although Kinyarwanda language is a national and official language in Rwanda and taught from primary school to university, research (Rosendal, 2010; Rosendal &Ngabonziza, 2023) have shown its absence in advertisement signage in Kigali City and Huye District. The African languages are segregated on the linguistic landscapes of cities as they complicate intra-continental communication, often hindering interaction between neighbouring countries (Omeni, 2024). The attitudes that Africans have towards their indigenous languages, which they perceive as educational dead ends and of limited use in formal job market is one of the negative factors affecting the development of African languages (Mthombeni (2024). Kinyarwanda, unlike most African languages, rises as ultimately as the only language that would guarantee the fulfillment of all political, economic, social and cultural development of Rwanda (Rusanganwa, 2012; Ndabaga & Tabaro, 2015).

Focusing on Kiswahili which was made official language in Rwanda in 2017, arrived in Rwanda during the colonial period (Chimerah, 2000), but underwent a negative transformation under Belgian rule, no longer being regarded as an important language of communication (Niyibizi, 2013; Niyomugabo, 2016). Mbori (2008) asserts that support for Kiswahili increased in Rwanda around 1970, when the Rwandan government signed a memorandum of understanding with the Tanzanian government to support the development of Kiswahili in Rwanda. The government did not make it the official language until 2017 and made to be taught to all secondary school students from Ordinary Level to university (language departments). Niyomugabo (2016) posits that Rwandans have a positive attitude towards Kiswahili, which is spoken by 3.2% of the population (NISR, 2022) and is regarded as a foreign language. Following the adoption of Kiswahili as an official language by East African Community member countries, Kawoya and Makokha (2009, cited in Masezerano&Niyirora, 2024) observed that there was a desire to learn Kiswahili in order to achieve greater integration within the region, although countries such as Burundi, Rwanda, and South Sudan had yet to adopt the language.

Although there are documents detailing language policies and use in African states, Puttz (2020) argues that investigations into linguistic landscapes, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, where there are substantial and heterogeneous language policies and multifaceted landscapes in urban areas, have been disproportionately few. In the current era of globalisation and the development of business centres, languages have become important tools for shaping these landscapes. Linguistic landscape tokens can be seen everywhere in the world where people live or have created visible, multimodal signs that communicate meanings and intentions in various ways, such as signposts, photographs, billboards, public road and safety signs, slogans, commercials, lighting, printed materials, building names, street names, shop names, names of areas of major tourist attractions, instructions, warning notices, prohibitions, graffiti, and signs in cyberspace (Puttz, 2020). According to Putz, the linguistic landscape is a relatively new approach to multilingualism and sociolinguistics. It emerged due to a growing interest in linguistic diversity and language ecology, as well as in an era of internationalisation and global integration, where people, languages and places interact to create a global yet local environment in public spaces. Gorter (2006) observed that language is everywhere in textual form, as displayed on shop windows, commercial signs, posters, official notices and traffic signs, but people do not pay attention to the linguistic landscape around them.

Literature On Linguistic Landscape

The Concept Of Linguistic Landscape

In their study of linguistic landscapes, Landry and Bourhis (1997) provided the first clear definition of the term, which has since become a foundation for further research in this field. 'The language on public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs and public signs on government buildings combine to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region or urban agglomeration' (Landry & Bourhis, 1997: 25). Dailey et al. (2005, cited in Čalovková, 2019) argue that linguistic landscapes include not only signs outside shops and businesses, but also a wide variety of other items, such as advertisements sent to one's home, the languages heard when walking in one's neighbourhood,

the languages heard on TV, and the language spoken by teachers in the classroom. Landry and Bourhis (1997) identified two major functions of sociolinguistic landscape signs: the informative and symbolic functions. The informative function, otherwise referred to as the indexical function of the sociolinguistic landscape, is a mechanism which provides information about the linguistic situation. This term is employed to denote the characteristics of a given language community and the boundaries that delineate its usage. The symbolic function, conversely, facilitates the discernment of the status or salience of languages (in relation to one another) within a specified language community. The determination of power relations between languages is facilitated by this process.

On the other hand, Gorter (2006) posits that the term 'landscape' has two meanings. The first is the more literal meaning of a piece or expanse of scenery that can be seen at one time from one location within a given territory. Secondly, a picture representing such a view of natural inland scenery, as opposed to a seascape or portrait. Both meanings are important in linguistic landscape studies because, on the one hand, they involve the literal study of languages as they are used in signs and, on the other hand, they involve the representation of languages, which is particularly important in relation to identity, cultural globalisation and the language policies of multilingual countries and the language attitudes of speakers.

Gorter (2006) and Sciriba and Vassallo (2001) argue that the concept of linguistic landscape has been approached in different ways. In literature, the term is often used rather generally to describe and analyse the language situation in a given country, or the presence and use of multiple languages in a larger geographic area. Thus, an overview of the languages spoken is referred to as the 'linguistic landscape'. Gorter (2006) suggests that the linguistic landscape can be synonymous with, or at least related to, concepts such as the linguistic market, linguistic mosaic, the ecology of languages, language diversity, and the linguistic situation. It is then the social context in which more than one language is present (multilingualism).

Benedicto (2022) asserted that the language used in signage is vital because selecting the right words can provide direction, instruction and education. Akindele (2011) also supports this, positing that signs are used to disseminate general public interest messages, such as photographic information, directions and warnings. Landry and Bourhis (1997) observed that the signage of a linguistic landscape holds informational and symbolic functions relating to the speech communities inhabiting the geographical location in question. It can influence personal perceptions of the relative vitality of languages. The linguistic landscape reflects language power and status in a given sociolinguistic setting, shaping this context as people interpret visual information, adjusting their perception of languages and their own language practices, and reflecting the relative literacy rates of various communities (Gorter, 2006; Spolsky, 2009). The linguistic landscape acts as a showcase for society, reflecting its social, political, economic, historical, linguistic and religious movements (Schmitt, 2018), and is the most immediate and direct identifier of people, as well as the most sensitive indicator of social change (Blommaert & Maly, 2014).

EMPIRICAL LITERATURE

Yavari (2012) demonstrated that the presence of students and staff from extremely different backgrounds, the use of different languages for communication and the availability of books in various languages indicated difficulties in choosing a language and implementing a language policy. On the other hand, the different parts of the university were independent, each with their own language policy use on the university landscape.

Rosendal (2011) reported the dominance of former colonial languages in Uganda (English) and Rwanda (French and English) in their respective linguistic landscapes. In Rwanda, the comparatively minor role of Kinyarwanda, even in private signage, is notable given its potential to reach practically all citizens as a widely spoken first language. This demonstrates that the choice of language for private shop signs and billboards is largely determined by the prestige, modernity and importance attributed to imported European languages, rather than by practical considerations regarding potentially broader outreach.

Kimambo and Mdukula (2024) investigated the languages used in the tourism sector in Tanzania. Their findings highlight the power dynamics between the languages used in the country, including ethnic community languages, with English dominating signage. This dominance not only highlights the primacy of English, but also the marginalisation of ethnic community languages. Top-down actors leverage language for profit and

pride, while bottom-up actors mainly use English for profit. Bruye'l-Olmedo and Juan-Garau (2009) supported this dominance of English, stating that English has played the role of a linguistic vehicle of globalisation, often to the disadvantage of other languages, which have been forced to suffer the consequences of its advance.

A review study by Duisenberg (2020 in Artawa et al., 2023) concluded that multilingual signs and packaging are often overlooked in many multilingual countries. This attitude is mainly influenced by merchants trying to attract as many customers as possible, or by people realising that they serve a multilingual community. This situation seems to align with Kasanga's (2012 in Artawa et al., 2023) idea that the languages used in public signage indicate which languages are locally relevant, or demonstrate which languages are becoming so.

Findings from Lusekelo and Alponce (2018) in five regions of Tanzania indicated the dominance of bilingual Kiswahili-English signposts in urban centres. Furthermore, the findings revealed a preference for English-only signposts, suggesting that English is favoured over Kiswahili in this public domain. Furthermore, English words are more prominent than Kiswahili words in terms of font size and colour. However, based on word counts, Kiswahili is used significantly more than English in bilingual signposts. Thus, they concluded that English is more important than Kiswahili in bilingual signage in urban Tanzania due to its status as a global language in business and international relations.

Edelman (2010) studied multilingualism in Amsterdam and concluded that the type of actor involved makes a difference. Government agencies tend to use official languages, whereas private organisations draw on a wider range of languages. Additionally, language distribution on shop signs differs according to sector. For example, shops in the electronics and music sectors, which are closely related to technology, had comparatively large amounts of English on their signs. Muriungi &Mudogo (2021) found that English was the most prevalent language used in universities in both bottom-up and top-down signs, with 77% prevalence. The findings also revealed that Kiswahili, an African language with Bantu and Arabic roots, is barely utilised in public signs despite its official status. This discrepancy has ramifications for the realm of language policy and its execution, as it signifies an incongruity between the stated objectives of policy and the actual practices observed in implementation. Frenz, et al. (2024) study also reveals the inequality in the number of signages, with the majority being monolingual and only a limited number being bilingual or multilingual. The investigation yielded a notable finding: English predominates as the language used on signages, notwithstanding the locale's heterogeneous linguistic and cultural milieu.

In the Philippines, as the language policy in education evolves towards the implementation of regional languages as the medium of instruction, Astillero (2017 in Bernardo-Hinesley, 2020) conducted an investigation into the linguistic landscape of a public secondary school in Irosin, Sorsogon, Philippines, where regional Bikol languages are spoken. The study identified the languages employed in the signs, their authors, and the regulation of signs within this school space. Photographs were taken both inside and outside the classrooms, and were analysed according to the languages displayed on the signs, the sign-makers, the functions of the signs, their intended audience or readers, and the materials used to produce the signs. In this setting, it is noteworthy that English signage on durable materials, which ensure a lasting presence, was primarily top-down and highly visible. The author concluded that, despite the utilisation of bilingual and mixed (Bikol, Filipino, and English) languages in some of the signs analysed in the study, the practice illustrated a paucity of support for multilingual speakers in the area in formal educational spaces. This absence of support thus manifests the uncooperativeness of the school concerning multilingualism as a language policy promoted by the Department of Education of the Philippines.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopts Spolsky and Copper's (1991) Model of Language Choice as its theoretical framework. This influential framework on language choice and policy is often cited as a foundational contribution to explaining why individuals, groups and communities choose languages in multilingual settings, influenced by social, cultural and power dynamics. The three-rule formula for language choice on public signage is based on their study of signs in Jerusalem. The researchers focused on observing signs and analysing the underlying motivations and social contexts. Landry and Bourhis (1997) state that public signs serve two main functions: informative and symbolic. The informative function involves communicating the intended message of the sign maker, while the symbolic function involves indexing the language used on the public sign. Language indexing

is interpretative and closely related to social, economic, political, and cultural and other interdisciplinary factors. The choice of language on public signs is influenced by three factors: the languages mastered by the sign maker; the languages known by the intended audience; and the sign maker's expectations arising from the audience's perceptions (Spolsky& Cooper, 1991 in Artawa et al., 2023).

Similarly, Benedicto (2022) commented that the Model of Language Choice comprises three rules that explain language choice on signs. The first of these is the sign-writer skill condition, which refers to writing a sign in a language that the writer knows. This rule requires signage writers to use a language they know to avoid spelling errors, which are more likely to occur if they choose a foreign language. This can prevent information from reaching the intended audience. The second rule is the presumed reader condition, which refers to writing a sign in a language that the intended audience can read. The communicative goal is that the intended audience can read the message displayed on signage. The third rule is the symbolic value condition, which refers to writing a sign in one's own language or in a language with which one wishes to be identified (Spolsky and Cooper (1991).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

According to Kombo and Tromp (2006) the research location which is carefully chosen has a significant impact as it can greatly impact of the information generated. The setting is a school with staff and students from Rwanda with multilingual educational background with regards to the country's language in education policy which requires the use English as medium of instruction and taught as subject as well as Kinyarwanda, French and Kiswahili taught as subject in ordinary levels. Considering that English, Kinyarwanda, French and Kiswahili to be languages of option for students who are learning to teach Modern Languages in primary schools, this research aims to study language choice and use on the signage in the target college. The present study employs a qualitative approach in the collection and analysis of data. The present study is an ethnographic analysis, a methodological approach which renders it particularly well-suited to the present investigation. The exploration of language utilisation in the formation of the linguistic landscape, and the establishment of communication within a specific community, is conducted through the processes of description, analysis and interpretation. The data set under consideration consists of nine (9) of photographs of signage. The signage in question includes, but is not limited to, notice boards and information boards, as well as direction signs. These were collected in a Teacher Training College in Rwanda.

DISCUSSION ON THE FINDINGS

Types Of Languages On The Signage

The present study examined the linguistic practices of a Teacher Training College (TTC) in order to ascertain the linguistic landscape of said institution. The focus of this study was on the languages employed in the landscape signage in relation to Rwandan language policy. As outlined in this section, the languages presented on the signage were categorised according to the established criteria:

Kinyarwanda Monolingual Signage

Fig 1: Monolingual Signage in Kinyarwanda

As can be seen in the figures above, the targeted school landscapes had two signposts written only in the local Kinyarwanda language. The messages indicate that they are intended for the school's hygiene support staff. The messages 'imyandaitaborwa' (meaning 'non-rotting or inorganic waste') and 'imyandaibora' (meaning 'biodegradable or decomposable waste') are intended to help the hygiene personnel differentiate between the types of waste and put them in the correct bins. This implies that this category of staff do not speak foreign languages such as English, French or Kiswahili. In fact, this finding aligns with the work of Spolsky and Cooper (1991), who stated that sign writers prefer to write in a language that can be read by the intended

audience. Even if there is truth in our analysis, Ndabaga and Tabaro's (2015) observations indicate that since the introduction of modern schooling by missionaries and colonisers, Rwanda has not accorded significant priority to Kinyarwanda, the mother tongue. This may have the effect of impeding Rwandan children's ability to explore all potentialities in education. The dearth of signage written in Kinyarwanda throughout the school under investigation is indicative of the neglect of the role of the Kinyarwanda language as a unifying tool among Rwandans. Muriungi, et al. (2021) observed in Kenya that Kiswahili as an African language is barely utilized on public signs despite it official status. This has implications on language policy and its implementation as it indicates a mismatch between a policy and practice. This may result in a diminution of its influence and usage of Kinyarwanda among the youth, who may perceive it as the language of citizens of a lower educational status. Brown (2012 in Reintegrado-Celino & Bernardo, 2023) emphasised that the use of language in schools can convey information that may be considered official. Therefore, the dominance or weakness of a language may therefore help to determine its preservation or decline. Consequently, if the young people come to despise their fathers' language, the chances are that at the same time they will reject their fathers' wisdom. The emotional importance of language lies in the fact that it contains the choices of one's mother, father, brothers and sisters and one's dearest friends. He contends that if we are ashamed of our own language we must certainly lack that minimum of self-respect which is necessary to the healthy functioning of society (Armstrong, 1963 in Hameso, 1997).

English Monolingual Signage

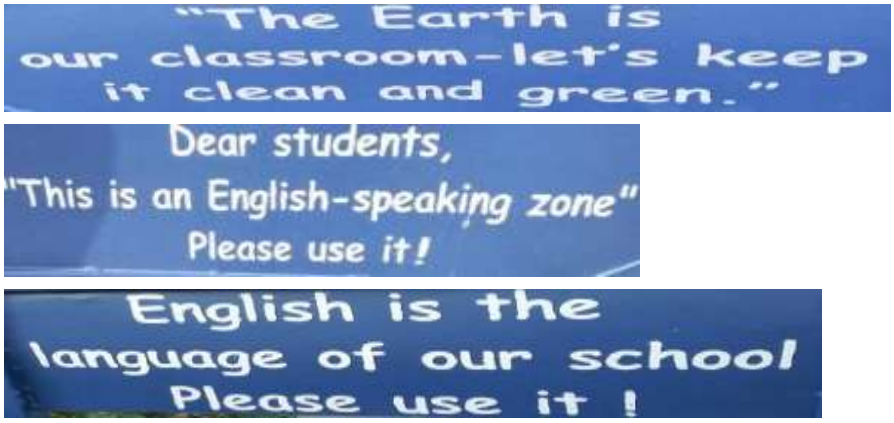

Fig 2: Monolingual Signage in English

As it can be seen on the signage above, the signposts are English monolingual. The first signpost raises awareness on the role of protecting and maintain green environment. Is says that "**The Earth is our classroom- let's keep it clean."** This signpost is a reminder that they must adhere to the schools policies among them, maintaining a school as a place of cleanliness. This emphasizes the belief that the planners of the language to be used on the signage in the school considered the foreigners in the selection of language on signage (Benedicto, 2022). Shohamy (2006 in Juanzo, 2022) posits that this kind of signage not only determine the authoritative power of certain institutions but also serve as a realistic and foundational aspects of sociological (and sociolinguistic) relationships between the dominant and subordinate groups. This is in line with Chimirala (2018) that the materials (languages and other modes) on the signs, posters, and general announcement boards outside the schools, foyer, and corridors that are visible to practically anyone and are produced by people with power represent the dynamic public top-down linguistic landscaping.

Dear students,

"This is an English speaking zone,

Please use it."

The second signpost encourages students to use English rather than the other officially accepted languages in the school compound. Indeed, Rwanda has adopted a multilingual approach to education, with all languages to be used equally by students and staff in their daily interactions at school. Nevertheless, given that English is the language of instruction, the value of other official languages is diminished. Notwithstanding the fact that English, French and Kiswahili and Kinyarwanda are taught in the Teaching Modern Languages Option (TML),

teachers and school administration have opted to encourage the use of English to the detriment of other languages required to be taught and used in Rwanda Teacher Training Colleges. It can also be observed that these signposts are authoritative in nature and written with a legitimized power in relation to English users (students and teachers). Juanzo (2022) observed that the power relationship of the people are manifested through the linguistic landscape promoted by the authorities in claiming their command, while it consumers and readers utilize the available linguistic landscape to solidify their membership in the community. As a purported repository of knowledge, the institution of education has emerged as a site through which pedagogues can exercise their authority over linguistic resources and their respective users. This assertion of authority is facilitated by the deployment of publicly accessible signage, through which the government seeks to consolidate its presence and assert its authority (p. 5). Brown (2012) stated that the state funded school, a central civic education represent a deliberate and planned environment where pupils are subjected to powerful messages about language(s) from local and national authorities. Lestianingsih & Sumardi (2023) posit the hypothesis that global languages may be given precedence over local ones and this has significant implications for the preservation and promotion of local languages and cultural identities in education. It is asserted that the aforementioned prioritisation may be attributable to an aspiration to equip students with the necessary skills to thrive in a globalised world where English is dominant. However, this pursuit may inadvertently result in the marginalisation of indigenous linguistic and cultural heritage. Furthermore, the third signpost like the second encourages the English use only among students and teachers.
It reads:

“English is the language of our school,

Please use it”

These monolingual signposts in English reflect the current status of English as a world language. Mohammed and Rasheed (2019) assert that it is of paramount importance for school leaders and English teachers to ensure that their students acquire a strong command of English. This proficiency is crucial for enabling them to articulate themselves effectively in both speech and writing, thereby preparing them to navigate and thrive in a globalised environment where the English language holds sway. Rao (2019) observes that English is being widely used in scientific research, business and education. Other fields such as travel, tourism and entertainment have benefitted by adopting English as their principal language of communication. Furthermore, English is regarded as a stepping stone to success, a gatekeeper to higher education and higher social status. Mashabela (1983 in Crystal, 2003) advanced the notion that mastery of the English language has the potential to serve as a unifying force, fostering a sense of shared purpose among its users. Furthermore, proficiency in English facilitates access to a vast array of ideas, thereby enabling individuals to engage with global thought leaders and to exchange experiences with their peers.

Even though English is an important language in teaching and learning, the instructions to use English only on linguistic schoolscapes by school authorities is putting the Kinyarwanda language in a weak position because as UNESCO (2003 in Wa Mberia, 2015) put it “a language is endangered when it is on the path to extinction” It adds that “language is in danger when its speakers cease to use it, use it in an increasingly reduced number of communicative domains, and cease to pass it on from one generation to the next. That is, there are no new speakers, either adults or children.” Commenting on this issue, Phillipson (2015) argued that schools need to be committed to articulating policies that can achieve greater social justice, for instance ensuring that any threat from English is converted into opportunities that do not impact negatively on the vitality of other languages.

English – French (Bilingual Signage/ Translation/ Codeswitching)

Fig 3: Translation/ Codeswitching on the Signage with both French and English

The linguistic environment of the investigated school is characterised by the presence of both translated French and English. The rationale behind translation in both languages, which are designated as foreign and second languages to students and staff, is rooted in their official status in Rwanda. In this case, the school authorities selected a particular language and text with the intention of attracting a specific bilingual audience from both national and international backgrounds, and of shifting towards English and French. This approach is also conducive to the education of students in languages and their cultural, social, economic and linguistic influences, whilst cultivating an awareness of the local and global context. Velasco & Garcia (2014) posit that translation is related to and includes doing translations and code-switching, and presuppose alternation of two languages or code separated entities. In the investigated school context, bilingual French/English signs were observed. The utilisation of both languages in these signs was for the purpose of conveying a specific message. Whilst the practice of co-languaging has been observed in this context, the information is reiterated almost verbatim, thus these bilingual signs are to be regarded as instances of translation (Allard, 2017). Nevertheless, given the concurrent utilisation and activation of both languages, this phenomenon can be designated as codeswitching (Cormier, 2019). The presence of two languages on the signage guide people to reach at the right place on time. Instead of waiting for services at the wrong place, students and teachers and visitors are able to read and follow instructions on time.

Backhaus (2007 in Koskinen, 2012) asserted that "the schoolscape is a place of language contact and the signs in public space are the most visible reminder of this. Therefore, the linguistic schoolscapes not only tell you in an instant where on earth you are and what the languages you are supposed to know, but it contains information going far beyond the school context. It provides a unique perspective on the coexistence and competition of different languages and their scripts, and how they interact and interfere with each other in a given place." The context of this translation was defined by Gorter and Cenoz (2015) that the dimensions of the local and the global combine in dynamic and complex ways influenced by rules and regulations by creative sign designers, by technology, and interaction with the passers-by who are readers of the linguistic landscapes. Considering the sign writer skill condition by Spolsky and Cooper (1991) that the writer use on the signpost the languages which are in her/his linguistic repertoire, the research concludes that the school authorities of the school investigated are bilingual and consequently, can speak English and French because "Rwandan bilinguals have been using translation/code-switching to signal educated status; the expression of divergent social identities; the demonstration of measures of power, authority and prestige; the narrowing or widening of social distance; and the maintenance of relationships" (Habyarimana, et al., 2017, pp.1).

The Absence of Kiswahili Language on Signage

Despite Kiswahili being designated as an official language in Rwanda, it was not observed that the language was present on the signposts of the school under investigation. Notwithstanding, it is among the core subjects taught in the Teaching Modern Languages Option (TML) and is recommended for integration into the curriculum of all secondary schools in Rwanda. The status of Kiswahili in the educational landscape of Rwanda can be defined as that of a covert language. It is evident that Kiswahili is not accorded a significant role in the daily interactions of Rwandans, who predominantly utilise it as a second language. As demonstrated by Muriungi (2021) in Kenya, Kiswahili, an African language with Bantu and Arabic roots, is scarcely utilised in public signs despite its official status. This phenomenon can be attributed to the prevalence of negative attitudes towards African languages, as well as the promotion of languages that facilitate wider communication, such as English and French.

In an analysis of the number of Kiswahili speakers in Rwanda, Masezerano (2024) posited that while there has been an improvement in the number of speakers, the number remains low in light of Rwanda's aspiration for its citizens to possess linguistic competence in order to effectively engage with both regional and international markets. Furthermore, in the context of examining the attitudes of Rwandans towards Kiswahili, Masezerano, ZangZang & Niyomugabo's (2023) research highlights the pivotal role that people's attitudes play in the promotion of Kiswahili. It was suggested that attitudes towards the development of Kiswahili among the Rwandan population should be given due consideration when formulating policies and programmes designed to promote Kiswahili in educational institutions.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The present study investigated the issue of language choice and use on the linguistic landscapes of a Teacher Training College (TTC). The findings of the study demonstrated that not all the languages specified in Rwanda's education policy were represented in the linguistic landscape of the school under investigation. The Kinyarwanda language was not used as extensively as English. Indeed, the researcher discovered a mere two signs bearing Kinyarwanda text throughout the school. Considering the message conveyed, it was determined that the signs pertained to the hygiene personnel (support staff) of the school. The second finding is the presence on the schoolscape of several English-only signage. The signage indicated that English was to be used exclusively within the school grounds, thus serving to underscore the status of English as both an international language and a medium of instruction within the educational institution. Thirdly, the research found that the school authorities also used translation/codeswitching with the signpost having two translated languages, French and English. This finding indicates that French maintains its status as a pivotal language in educational institutions and in daily interactions. It can also be concluded that the school authorities are proficient in both languages. Finally, the absence of Kiswahili in the linguistic landscape of the investigated school is worthy of note. Indeed, Kiswahili, a language spoken by 3.2% of the Rwandan population as a second language, has not yet become firmly established in the country. Furthermore, it has long been the subject of negative attitudes among the Rwandan population. It can be deduced from the available evidence that the school authorities hold a negative attitude towards Kiswahili, despite the fact that it is offered as a subject in the language option at the school under investigation. This research recommends that awareness sessions be held with school leaders in Rwanda to emphasise the importance of multilingualism in the country's development. The implementation of multilingualism in Rwanda is contingent upon the cultivation of a positive attitude towards the country's official languages within educational institutions. It is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education to establish a set of guidelines that will enable schools to promote the learning of all languages on signs within the school environment.

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