

Kinyarwanda language in education across times: myth or reality?

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Abstract. This discussion is a thought provoking discourse around the status of Kinyarwanda and its bearing on teaching and learning process, literacy, etc. The learning process presupposes the presence of the learner and the teacher as well as the tool of communication which is the language. It is widely and commonly known that throughout the history of Rwanda, Kinyarwanda language has been the repository of family and community knowledge especially in the ancient Rwanda where it was a vehicle of beliefs, customs, perception of the world, values etc. During colonial period, education was dominated by colonial experiences that trivialized indigenous education and social reality. From the independence of Rwanda in 1962 to date the position of Kinyarwanda has evolved positively at all levels and forms of education. Kinyarwanda language stands at the very heart of the most crucial educational, cultural and political issues of Banyarwanda.

Keywords: Medium of instruction, mother tongue, vernacular language, literacy.

INTRODUCTION

Kinyarwanda is a statutory and protected language in Rwanda as the mother tongue (MT) of all Banyarwanda, as the national language and as the official language. Kinyarwanda is one of African languages known under the appellation of "Bantu Languages". According to Guthrie (1971), Kinyarwanda is labelled D61. This classification was modified by Meeussen since 1953, who placed Kinyarwanda under the number of J60 in 1967. About its appellation, Bulck (1949) called it the language of Rwanda under the appellation «Rwanda». In this article the researcher prefers to use the appellation of "Kinyarwanda" of Guthrie, which seems to translate, without any ambiguity, the clear and precise meaning of the language. In fact, if you consider its nominal class system, Kinyarwanda is in class 7 (Coupez, 1980) and morphologically is represented as follows: i-ki-nya-rwanda.

The privileged status of Kinyarwanda is seen through the history of Rwanda. Before colonization, Kinyarwanda has been the only language which unifies Rwandans as it can be used all over the country (Rosendal, 2010). Regarding the teaching and learning of Kinyarwanda,

language learning principles stress beginning with the known and familiar and proceeding towards the unknown (Gagné et al., 1990). The known language for young children is considered to be home language or national language in case of Rwanda. The mother tongue is commonly the home language which is used in different interactions at home. That might be the reason why the Government of Rwanda decided to go back to Kinyarwanda as a medium of instruction (MOI) in lower primary (LP) by 2010 (MINEDUC, 2010). This decision aligned with the recommendations of UNESCO on the use of vernacular languages in education (UNESCO, 1953) and UNICEF (1999) which emphasize the importance of mother tongue in basic literacy and in learning other subjects efficiently. That is why there is a starting point which can be taken as an axiom in pedagogy which is that if pupils start their schooling through the medium of mother tongue, it means at their early age, they are more successful in acquiring an additional language or learning subjects like science and mathematics (Niyibizi, 2010). Kinyarwanda will be used as the only language of instruction from primary (P) 1 up

to P3 (Cabinet decision of 2010) but according to a researcher like Niyibizi (2010), Kinyarwanda should be used as a medium of instruction from P1 to P6. Rwanda, like many other countries have innovative educative programs which allow the children to start their schooling with their mother tongue, by learning with Kinyarwanda and later on study with English or French. Hence, children will have two or more languages to pursue their further studies. Not only will they have many tools allowing them to facilitate their studies but they will also acquire their mother tongue which is the foundation of their in depth knowledge as it is rooted in their culture.

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The methodology used in this research consists of gathering information from the existing literatures on the teaching and learning of Kinyarwanda in both traditional and modern Rwanda. Then other information were collected by the use of questionnaires and interviews from eighty teachers on the methods used in teaching Kinyarwanda. Perceptions on the teaching and learning in Kinyarwanda were collected randomly from fifty informants. Moreover, regarding the historical background of the teaching and learning of Kinyarwanda mainly in the ancient Rwanda, information were collected from some members of "Inteko Izirikana", an association of elderly people anxious about the undermined state of Rwandan language and culture. The objective of the study was to give a clear idea on how to marry the pedagogical principle of teaching in the mother tongue, the decision of the Republic of Rwanda on promoting Kinyarwanda and the real practice of this policy on the ground. The interpretation of data was done by confronting them with the theoretical considerations in course in the pedagogy of mother tongues in Africa. Views of informants were collected through interviews, group discussions and questionnaires for this purpose.

DISCUSSIONS OF KEY ISSUES RELATED TO KINYARWANDA IN EDUCATION

Findings from literature review and questionnaires, as well as interviews and group discussions revealed the concept of mother tongue in Rwanda; the historical background of the teaching and learning of Kinyarwanda; the importance of mother tongue in Education; the methods used in teaching and learning Kinyarwanda as well as the views expressed on Kinyarwanda as a medium of instruction.

The concept of mother tongue in the context of Rwanda

It is difficult to define the concept of the "Mother tongue" of Rwandans knowing that many of the times, as

Verma-Shivendra (1990) says, "My mother tongue is not my mother's tongue". But, how couldn't we know what is the mother tongue of Rwandans when Kinyarwanda is one of the most fundamental features of their identity? However, a researcher came up with surprising findings such as: Kinyarwanda, a mother tongue which is also a father tongue, an ideological language, a language of identity, a mythical language, a national language, a native language, a non-academic language, the first acquired language, a dialectal language, an affection language, etc.

Despite many ambiguities or confusions between notions, Kinyarwanda seems to respond easily to the status of the mother tongue for all Rwandans, apart from the existence of its social and regional dialects (Niyomugabo, 2007). This language is spoken by almost all citizens of Rwanda. According to Tabaro (2014:18), "Rwanda can therefore be classified as a monolingual-based community since almost all Rwandans primarily use Kinyarwanda in their interactions and daily communication (...) What one can confirm is that in most cases, Rwandans throughout the whole country prefer to interact into Kinyarwanda rather than using another language". That is why Kinyarwanda is an endoglossic language because it is the mother tongue of almost all Rwandans and it is spoken by almost every Rwandan citizen (Niyibizi, 2010). It is also the first language that a very large majority of children acquire from their parents and schools. This situation is more advantageous that, according to Cuq (1991), «everyone is in his mother tongue like the embryo in the womb ». This is the reason why in the course of this article, this term "Mother Tongue" is not rejected as it keeps this "affective value".

For Frijhoff (1991), "at the linguistic point of view, the mother tongue is not always a language: sociologically speaking, it is not always the language of the mother". The term of "mother tongue" has been, for a long time, utilized to name the language that a child acquires first around his mother or simply the one of his mother. The term exists also in other languages (mother tongue in English, muttersprache in German, lenga materna in Spanish, etc). In Kinyarwanda and in Kiswahili, the mother tongue is respectively called "ururimi kavukire" (which is well translated by 'native language') and "Lugha titi la mama" (which may be literally translated by 'the language of the breasts of the mother ', it means the language that I sucked from my mother's breast. However in the context of Rwanda, the use of this concept does not seem to translate well all realities of the acquisition of the first language of the children, seen that most of them have acquired another language which is not necessarily that of their mother, but rather the one of the father, the family, the country of exile, etc (Niyomugabo, 2007). That is why the first spoken language by the child is not inevitably the one of his mother. This mother tongue can be a foreign language to the society of the child and may be forced by special circumstances to leave it. The same, if both parents are foreigners in a country of refuge, the

child can speak, as a first language, the one of that country and not the mother tongue of his parents. Truly, at individual level, the mother tongue will be the language a child speaks first freely in his family. At the level of the large family, a mother tongue is mixed up with a national language. Verma-Shivendra (1990) argues that:

“The concept of mother tongue is closely linked with the awareness of one’s identity affiliations in the society. A declaration of mother tongue by an individual is primarily a conscious or a subconscious judgement of identifying one’s speech habits with the other through a general term (conventionally stabilized or still in flux) as a sign of cohesion or distinguishing them from others as a mark by distinction”.

Hence, the mother tongue of Banyarwanda exists and it is their identity and a sign of their Rwandaness. It is compared to the language of a mother of someone because it is the one which makes and gives him/her warm and care like the ones the mother gives to her child.

The concept of literacy

UNESCO (2004:13) defines literacy as the “ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society”.

From this definition, literacy encompasses a complex set of abilities to understand and use the dominant symbol systems of a culture for personal and community development and it is expanding to include the media and electronic text, in addition to alphabetic and number systems. These abilities vary in different social and cultural contexts. By the EFA global monitoring report (EFA, 2006) literacy is a human right at the core for Education for All. UNESCO (1978) introduced the concept of functionality in literacy. As it is stated a person is functionally literate if he/she can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his group and community also for enabling him to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his own and community’s development. This definition encompasses reading, writing and numeracy skills acquisition in the concept of literacy.

Taking into consideration different definitions of literacy according to different social and country contexts, the conclusion which may be taken includes the following points: literacy is a right and a need for personal, family, community and national development; literacy must

respect and be linked to national culture and history, and be conducted in the learner’s language; literacy is the key to the access of information, knowledge and wider communication; literacy is the foundation for autonomous, meaningful life-long learning and is the ability/capacity to read, write, computer and understand a text and communicate in writing.

In this research, it is considered that the key to all literacy is reading development, a progression of skills that begins with the ability to understand spoken words and decode written words, and culminates in the deep understanding of text. Reading development involves a range of complex language underpinnings including awareness of phonology, grammar, word meaning and orthography. All of these provide a necessary platform for reading fluency and comprehension. Once these skills are acquired the reader can attain full language literacy, which includes the abilities to approach printed material with critical analysis, inference and synthesis; to write with accuracy and coherence; and to use information and insights from text as the basis for informed decisions and creative thought. In the context of Rwanda, it is Kinyarwanda language that is appropriate to deal with issues of literacy in the Rwandan community. As expressed by Karera (2014:73-74), Kinyarwanda literacy has direct consequences on the success of other subjects taught in LP. Indeed, the performance in Kinyarwanda affects other subjects taught in LP. This shows the importance of the mastery of the MOI by the learners. According to Akinnaso (1993), there are reports of a positive correlation between the MOI and the quality of cognitive and academic achievements. According to Cummins et al. cited by Akinnaso (1993:271) studies have shown that children aged between 9 and 12 make more rapid cognitive and academic progress in literacy acquisition in both the MT and foreign language than children aged between 5 and 8. Children ought to learn in their MT until they reach the age of 12 before switching to foreign language education, because at 12 years old, they would have acquired sufficient concepts in their MT and would be apt enough to transfer the acquired knowledge into foreign language.

Historical background of the teaching and learning of Kinyarwanda language

According to Karani (1986), there is a very positive evolution of the teaching and learning of Kinyarwanda throughout its history. In fact, Tabaro (2014: 25-26) wrote that one cannot claim that there was no education in Rwanda before 1900. Indeed, there was no modern schooling as we know of it today, but Rwanda had its own education system. Traditionally, Rwandan education was home/family-based and fully provided in Kinyarwanda. Expressing on this aspect of education in the Rwandan pre-colonial period, Mutwarasibo (2003)

highlighted that before colonization, education in Rwanda was primarily the responsibility of the Family and Kinyarwanda was the only language used for that purpose.

Before colonial period, a Rwandan child was taught Kinyarwanda language as a mother tongue by the whole members of the community surrounding him: parents, sisters and brothers, neighbours, visitors and others. The child used to learn Kinyarwanda before he joined "Itorero" school. He was taught simple structure of the language, consisting of basic knowledge about Rwandan cultural values like "ubupfura" (magnanimity or the beauty of the heart), "ubutwari" (heroism) and "ubunyangamugayo" (integrity). Shortly these courses aimed at the preparation of the child to become a good Munyarwanda, valuing himself and giving value to the country in general. This way of training is quite normal for the communities that promoted oral literature mainly of Africa and elsewhere.

All the times Kinyarwanda was a language that unified local leaders and the population during the monarchical rule. Traditional Rwandan community use to have specific and formal organs in charge of promoting Kinyarwanda language. In this context two organs can be mentioned: evening gathering "Igitaramo" and "Itorero" which was a Rwandan traditional school.

Teaching and learning Kinyarwanda through evening gathering, "Igitaramo"

The Rwandan evening gathering "Igitaramo" was a very good moment of teaching Kinyarwanda to youth and teenagers. Surely it was like a Kinyarwanda course. We differentiate a family traditional and cultural evening from a higher cultural "Igitaramo" related to a specific purpose called "urubanza". The similarities between both "igitaramo" were to show the high level of the mastering of Kinyarwanda language which is a vehicle of Rwandan culture.

Family traditional cultural evening, a real session of Kinyarwanda lesson

This traditional cultural evening is a normal family "igitaramo" which was short and not formal. After work, in the evening, members of the family were gathered in "igitaramo". While waiting for the food or after the food taking, children or even sometimes all members of the family were competing in the use of good Kinyarwanda and in the mastery and knowledge of its literary genres like storytelling, riddles, enigma, songs, poetry.... This "igitaramo" aimed at teaching Kinyarwanda to young people and was more relaxing than the reading of books available in the so called civilized world. This traditional "igitaramo" was a real forum of teaching and learning Kinyarwanda as well as the opportunity to show that one

has mastered the language on a daily basis. That is why this "igitaramo" can be compared to the lesson of Kinyarwanda given in the classroom setting (like in primary school) where students are members of the family, the teacher being the chief of the family while the lessons are the genres of the Rwandan literature. The objective of this lesson was to equip young people with new knowledge as well as the mastery of different literary genres.

Higher traditional cultural evening, a Kinyarwanda exam session

This higher "igitaramo" was organized when there was a specific purpose called "urubanza". It is an "igitaramo" which goes beyond the only members of the family. It is an "igitaramo" going together with a specific activity and which gathers neighbours and friends when there is a specific event/ purpose in the family. In this "igitaramo", people drank, danced but mainly were competing in oratory speeches already memorized, to think quickly and show how you are clever in the mastery of Kinyarwanda language. The best performer was rewarded to drink on "*intango y'inzoga*—a big pot of beer" normally reserved to very important people. As we said that the previous "*igitaramo*" is comparable to the lessons offered in the class, this one related to a specific event is comparable to a session of an exam of Kinyarwanda language. It is understandable that as it is a habit in a modern school, in this "*igitaramo*" some who performed well, it was for them a source of value and pride, when those who performed poorly, it was for them a shame. As a conclusion we can rightly say and without exaggeration that this kind of "igitaramo" was a natural setting of teaching youth of Rwanda, Kinyarwanda culture and language.

"Itorero", a Rwandan traditional formal school

In traditional Rwanda, "Itorero" was a formal educational system. Indeed, its structure is comparable to a modern secondary school for boys—the requirements to be admitted to that school were the same; such as, age, level of knowledge of a candidate, admission in a boarding school, politeness and discipline etc. Female children were given their own lessons in the female school known as "urubohero" where they were initiated to some practices like "gukuna" aiming at sexually satisfying their husbands once married. Apart from various trainings offered in this male school were physical exercises, lessons on patriotism, protection of the sovereignty of the country when attacked by enemies,...; shortly in the "Itorero" they trained "Intore" ("the selected/ the chosen") to be eloquent in speaking and to show high proficiency and cleverness in Kinyarwanda language and culture. "Intore" normally showed their high knowledge of the

language in their usual conversations where they were asked to be smart in their speeches and actions especially when they had to go in oratory competition. Self-control was one of the requirements at the end of this training; candidates were trained in traditional arms drill like sword, spear and shield. A graduate from this training passed when he had the mastery of Kinyarwanda language as well as the Rwandan cultural values called “*Indangagaciro*”.

During colonial period: unvalued lessons of Kinyarwanda

The colonial period, Germans and Belgians, brought foreign languages in Rwanda like German, Kiswahili, French, Latin, Greek, Flemish, Arabic and English which had to co-exist with Kinyarwanda. During this colonial period, Kinyarwanda stayed as the language of the large Rwandan community. During the Germans’ protectorate, there were organized kinds of unvalued Kinyarwanda lessons knowing that, at that time, the prestigious languages were German and Kiswahili. Only White Fathers and missionaries took action for the promotion of Kinyarwanda like the writing of *Manuel de langue Kinyarwanda* by Hurel Eugène (1911), *Wörterbuch Deutsch – Kinyarwanda* by Dufays Félix (1912), *Ifiberi rya urunyarwanda* by Protestant missionaries (1914). During Belgium colonization, a book reserved for pupils of Rwanda was written by a Rwandan. This was *Igitabu cy’abany’ekoli bo mu Rwanda* by Balthazar Gafuku (1929). We can also mention that from 1928 to 1938, Kinyarwanda orthography was harmonized and standardized by Bishop Léon Classe (Munyakazi, 1979).

Kinyarwanda was somehow given a “prestige” as it was the medium of instruction in primary schools. But in our research we found that the idea behind (the hidden agenda) this was that Belgians wanted to strictly forbid Rwandan citizens to have access to French language “the Language of Civilization” (Niyomugabo, 2004). This made a serious impact on the promotion and the prestige of Kinyarwanda especially in the eyes of intellectuals. Another reason for teaching in Kinyarwanda was to banish Kiswahili, a language which was associated to Muslims and that was promoted by Germans (Niyomugabo, 1992).

From independence (1962-to date), a positive evolution of the promotion of Kinyarwanda in education

The Constitutions of the Independent Republic of Rwanda stipulate that Kinyarwanda is the National and Official Language of the Republic of Rwanda (Constitution of 1962 revised in 2003). The post-colonial period acknowledges the valorisation of Kinyarwanda as a language and culture. The educational reform of 1978 which made “the kinyarwandization of teaching and learning” at all levels of education compulsory is the optimal period of the policy of valorisation of Kinyarwanda

This orientation in cultural and linguistic area appears clearly in the revision of the article 4 of the Constitution of December 1978. Hence, since the independence of Rwanda in 1962, the Constitution of November 1962 (revised in December 1978 and in June 1991) stipulates that Kinyarwanda is the National Language while Kinyarwanda and French are official languages. However, since 1994, with the new sociolinguistic landscape of Rwanda, English joined the official languages with Kinyarwanda keeping its privileged status of being the only national language of Rwanda (Constitution of 2003). Since then, English was expected to be used alongside French and Kinyarwanda in all areas of life in Rwanda (Sibomana, 2010).

In general, the educational reform of the school year 1978/1979 aiming at teaching all subjects in Kinyarwanda showed that it is possible to teach and learn any subject in Kinyarwanda (Ntakirutimana, 2012). Indeed, since the school year of 1978/1979, Kinyarwanda was the medium of instruction in primary education of eight years. This decision was taken in order to comply with the pedagogic principle stipulating that if the child learns in his mother tongue he becomes strong intellectually (Karani, 1986).

In 2010, the Cabinet took a decision that Kinyarwanda becomes the medium of instruction for all subjects taught in lower primary, that is, from p1 to p3. Thus, in the Basic Education of twelve years (equivalent to primary plus secondary levels), Kinyarwanda is taught as a subject. At tertiary level, some Universities and Institutions of higher learning have a department of Kinyarwanda like in the College of Education of the University of Rwanda, PIAS, IPB and others. Moreover since 2010, the Rwandan Academy of Language and Culture, with the mission of the safeguard and promotion of Kinyarwanda as language and culture, was set up by the Law no 01/2010 dated 29/01/2010.

Importance of offering lessons in the mother tongue of the learner

Scholars and educationists unanimously agree that education is best carried out in the mother tongue and recommend that pupils should begin their schooling through the medium of the mother tongue, and the use of the mother tongue should be extended to a later stage in education if possible. It was observed that many children like dropping out of school before they finish primary school if they are forced to learn in the language they do not understand. Language plays a vital role in the teaching/learning activities. If they start learning with a language they know well—the language they use at home—the language often called mother tongue, they can understand what they are taught more perfectly than learning in any other language. Once the elementary education is acquired, they can learn the official or national language for advanced levels of education in their country or elsewhere.

The objective of teaching mother tongue is to equip children with a great range of vocabulary which enable them to communicate and understand the structure and the use of their language. The teaching and learning of mother tongue gives the learner the ability to understand more, the unique phenomenon inherent to human being which is speaking. This can also be the basis for learning foreign language very easily through written texts, dialogues, pictures, practices etc. That is why the human harmonious education through the mother tongue targets all the aspects of human life which include intellectual, social, aesthetical, psychological, and moral aspects.

Teaching in a child's mother tongue, however means that the learning of new concepts does not have to be postponed until learners grasp foreign language. As a result, teachers and learners are able to negotiate meanings together, thus competency in foreign language is gained through mutual interaction rather than memorization and rote learning. Cummins (1979) proposes the interdependence theory to explain the positive transfer of literacy skills from mother tongue to foreign language. He argues that the level of literacy competence in foreign language that a child attains is partially a function of the level of competence the child has in mother tongue at the time foreign language teaching begins intensively. Dutcher cited by Tucker (1999), noted that individuals not only develop literacy skills more easily in a familiar language but they also develop cognitive skills and master content material more easily when they are taught in this language. The children who attend school in any other language that is not their mother tongue encounter serious educational problems due to their lack of mastery of the medium of instruction.

An overview of current trends in teaching kinyarwanda as a subject

There are many methods used to teach languages. Methods used in teaching mother tongue are different from those prescribed in teaching second or foreign languages. Different methods used in Kinyarwanda teaching depend on each aspect of Kinyarwanda language to be taught. For example, literacy (elementary reading and writing letters, words and sentences) is taught differently from the ways grammar, spelling, text analysis, vocabulary, etc, are taught. In this point, assessment of some didactic principles and methods used in teaching Kinyarwanda as mother tongue mainly in primary education throughout the curricula and textbooks of Kinyarwanda are considered. This is because in secondary schools and at university, they combine methods like grammar-translation approach; direct approach, reading approach, audio-lingual method, community language learning, suggestopedia, the silent way, the total physical response, the natural way, communicative language teaching etc (Cuq and Gruca , 2009).

Teaching Kinyarwanda by global method

This method is at the same time analytic and synthetic because it starts from the analysis of the whole unit (sentences) in words, syllables, sounds and letters. This method is based on the fundamental principle of globalization. We perceive the whole before we make distinction between elements which compose the whole. A child who learns to speak Kinyarwanda from his mother and the community perceives small sets of words, sentences but which are entirely constituted. The child selects them and repeats them entirely without juxtaposition of syllables or words. Thus, we can conclude that our eyes or ears proceed like that since in all two cases it is the intelligence which interprets the perception. Psycho-physiological experiments show that in reading, eyes move by bound and do not perceive a letter by letter but in sets of words, visual groups. We only perceive details we use to formulate sets of words. It is those visual units, words or sentences which correspond to the idea or the meaning. This method has many advantages but, to be efficient, it requires a class which is not very big with necessary equipment and well trained teachers. Unfortunately the classes visited by the researcher, were overcrowded.

Teaching Kinyarwanda by synthetic method

This method starts with the letter and then goes to the syllable before word and sentence. It is a reading approach that focuses more on the reading than on the interest of the child. The synthetic method is based on the logical teaching principle of starting from simple to complex, but it does not take into account the psychology of the child. This method is boring because letters, sounds and syllables which are the starting point for the teaching reading to the child are the pure abstractions and has no interest for the child—the teacher, showing with a stick, reads each syllable and makes students read them many times by reversing order to avoid the repetition of memorised syllables. Students read individually and simultaneously. After reading syllables, students read words composed of syllables, letter-sounds already learned. These words are read syllable by syllable first, and thereafter as a whole. The new letter-sound is always written in a colour different from others. By this method, the letter-sound to be learned is out of context. Students have no participation in discovering the letter they have to learn.

Teaching Kinyarwanda by mixed method or analytic-synthetic method

This is a method which starts with the support of concrete language before arriving at abstract signs. The principle

of this method is shown as follows: starts from the whole and ends to the whole: sentence → words → analysis of the words in sounds → synthesize sounds in syllable → words → sentence. The mixed method is also called analytic-synthetic method. This method starts also with the last element of reading which is the sound, and makes it discovered by the child from a word type. The first step is the global method: word-type obtained from a short conversation or reading text which is followed by an analysis of that word. The method becomes synthetic since it takes the letter sound selected to make syllables, words and sentences. The advantages of these methods are that it takes into account the interest of the child. A short conversation enables learners to pay attention to the new lesson. This method tries to establish the link between the decoding and the understanding of the word read. Not only do we read to decode but also to get meaning.

Teaching Kinyarwanda by syllabic method

The syllabic method is normally used for adult literacy. It is like the analytic-synthetic method with the difference that it does not start from a letter-sound but from a syllable. In Kinyarwanda a syllable may be composed of one letter which is always a vowel at the beginning of a word and a group of consonants plus a vowel. The vowel is the basic element of syllable in Kinyarwanda. For example, the word “*amazi* (water)” is composed of three syllables: *a-ma-zi*. This method is also based on the notion of frequency of syllables in Kinyarwanda. The most frequent syllables are learnt before the least frequent. This helps illiterate adults to learn reading and writing quickly because they are able to read and write all Kinyarwanda words after one year. The advantage of this method is that it goes from the known to the unknown. The syllables we hear are the ones that we write and read. It is a good method for adults because they don't have enough time to learn compared to young people. In fact, they would be expected to write and read within a short period after one year, while it takes three years for children to be completely literate if they are well-trained.

METHOD OF THE TEACHING OF KINYARWANDA ORTHOGRAPHY

The dictation is the excellent means to learn orthography which is the spelling. The respect of spelling rules shows that the learner understands what he writes. The mastery of the orthography of Kinyarwanda requires knowing how to write blends, to separate or unite words in sentences. There is the dictation for evaluation which is given to learners without prior preparation. This dictation has to be short and relevant to the level of the learners. There is also the dictation for learning that aims at instilling in learners, the correct pictures of new words, new spelling difficulties and new rules to apply. This dictation must be

prepared by giving the general idea of the text, explaining words, and rules that are not well known and the difficult words are written on the chalkboard. The purpose of the dictation is to evaluate the correctness of writing skills. In learning orthography we also use the copy approach which is an excellent exercise to learn spelling if the teacher shows the spelling of words to learners who observe them attentively. This helps to develop the voluntary attention and the mental abilities of the learners.

Current trends of teaching Kinyarwanda Vocabulary

From p1 up to p6, the Kinyarwanda curriculum puts an emphasis on vocabulary lesson. New words are learned progressively when they are met in reading texts and with new letter-sound. The school has an objective of enriching progressively the vocabulary of learners and preparing them for their correct writing. At the beginning they learn words from their everyday life at home and at school such as family tools, domestic and wild animals, etc. As they progress in their education, they gain more knowledge according to their interest and adapted texts. At primary school level, in every lesson, the teacher makes sure that learners understand the meaning of words since they are not strongly equipped to search the meaning by themselves. For the beginners, the emphasis is put on exercises about naming concrete objects and things around them. A lesson about the environment is at the same time a vocabulary lesson. Learners study meanings of words and use them in sentences. Here, concrete objects, pictures, photos, etc are necessary for the effectiveness of the lesson. By using texts, learners have to precise the meaning of words in contexts. The word does not enter in the memory haphazardly, but as an element of context or a sentence. The vocabulary lesson is not an isolated exercise. It should go together with speaking and reading exercises. Words to be learned should be related to the topic of the day. There are many more methods used in teaching vocabulary like observation approach; analysis, association and comparison method; pictures, drawing and mimic technique. Pedagogically, teaching vocabulary must be contextualized.

Teaching Kinyarwanda by lexis technique, and front and back chaining

The lexis technique is used when teachers want to test if students understood the meaning of words. They give them sentences with missing words to choose from a list of words the correct word to be used or a convenient word according to the context. Teachers may also replace a word in a context with its synonyms, antonyms, homonyms, etc. For example a sentence like: Uyu ni umubyeyi(yanjye, abagabo, wanjye, ihene) and then

the teacher asks the learners to choose the appropriate word among the given list in brackets which is “wanjye”. The front chaining technique is used when the teacher asks students to give their own examples of words containing a certain syllable which has been learnt. First syllables are suggested by the teacher (like i-ngo-... and the students give the remaining syllables. Here they can give “ingo-ma”, ingo-mba-jwi, etc. The back-chaining is a technique used in teaching oral language skills, especially with polysyllabic or difficult words. The teacher can take “kugenda” (to walk) as an example. It has the following syllables: ku-ge-nda. The teacher pronounces the last syllable “-nda”, the student repeats “-nda”, and then the teacher continues “-ge-”, ku-, working backwards from the end of the word to the beginning which gives “nda-ge-ku”.

The “chalk and talk” pedagogy of Kinyarwanda

It is interesting to note that “chalk and talk” pedagogy is clearly the predominant teaching approach in most Rwandan primary schools. The chalk and talk pedagogy is the weakest method used in teaching Kinyarwanda in lower primary level. The most frequent teacher’s activity is to write on the blackboard while the students write in their notebooks. Teachers do not spend much time helping students to improve their reading or writing. In some schools, textbooks given are kept aside and students do not have the opportunity to use them for fear that they can be abused. Teachers do not give homework regularly because they do not have enough time to mark assignments. The work load of teachers is among the factors that influences the quality of their teaching. All public schools function on double shift. Teachers have responsibility to teach at least more than one grade and more than one subject. Thus, they have to make more than one lesson plan preparation every day. In reading and writing lessons, students are not given enough opportunities to practice reading or writing. Therefore, this method is inefficient.

Learner Centred Pedagogy in the teaching and learning of Kinyarwanda

The learner centred pedagogy in teaching Kinyarwanda is mostly needed in Rwandan schools. It is an interactive method where students contribute to the classroom interactions as it is, for teachers, a very important support in their teaching and learning activity. The method is appreciated according to its solid and rapid results as it is more economic and interesting. The pupils should be at the centre of all activities happening in classroom as the role of the teacher is to guide the learners who must be independent in their learning process. As the Internet has emerged as a powerful medium to teach and learn languages as well as other subjects, there are websites

that can provide various services geared toward effective teaching and learning of Kinyarwanda.

Challenges of kinyarwanda as a medium of instruction

Some views on the choice of Kinyarwanda as a medium of instruction have been expressed by teachers of Kinyarwanda, parents, scholars, etc, mainly in the following four categories:

Kinyarwanda is a very good tool and foundation of sustainable education

Research has shown that mother tongue-based education significantly improves learning (Benson, 2004:1). Some of the views stand out that Kinyarwanda is a very good tool of cognitive knowledge learning and teaching. The following are some views of teachers of Kinyarwanda:

“It is already known that if you give the first knowledge to a child in a mother tongue; this knowledge will be the pillar and foundation of the additional knowledge. The child will know foreign languages very easily and will be ready to acquire cognitive scientific knowledge in science and technology”.

Intellectually, the mother tongue should be the starting point for all knowledge to be acquired at school and out of school. It is the door to the treasure of culture and science. Without it, it would not be easy to make great progress in other subjects at school. The language is an instrument of thinking. Learning Kinyarwanda as a mother tongue and mastering it in writing is a sign of culture, logic judgment and critical thinking.

Kinyarwanda and the challenges of modern concepts in science and technology

Another colonial theory is the supposed inherent worth of European languages that they are the best vehicle of education knowledge than African languages. The following is a summary of views of mainly parents who have not studied languages:

“It is clear that you cannot express “good ideas” of science and technology using Kinyarwanda. I am categorically opposed to teaching all subjects in Kinyarwanda. It alienates our children. That is why; parents who are capable will send their children to private schools where they don’t apply this policy of teaching in Kinyarwanda”.

All human languages are equally able to express their speakers' thoughts and can develop new terms and structures as needed. This idea is emphasized on by Musau (2001) when he said that linguistically all languages are in principle equal. In my view this is a colonial view and some African scholars have been victims of it by being trained in a colonial education which was insisting on hating African cultures and languages.

Kinyarwanda as a better tool to promote bilingualism in Rwanda

Many researchers affirm that for succeeding to promote foreign languages in the bilingual school system, it is important to promote the mother tongue of the child first. It is for example the view of Gasimba F.X, an expert in Rwandan Literature, who told us that "for cultivating your talents and abilities in the area of literary creation in a second language or foreign language, it is to start primordially by mastering oral literature in the mother tongue and by there, you are sure that you will succeed". The research has shown that there is correlation between the level of the mastery of Kinyarwanda and the level of the knowledge of foreign languages in Rwanda. Children who have the mastery of the four linguistic competences in Kinyarwanda are the true bi/multilingual (Niyomugabo, 2007). The more highly the first language skills are developed, the better the results in the second or foreign language, because language and cognition in the second is built on the first. Countries like Sweden have achieved high levels of foreign language competence by teaching it as a subject and preserving the mother tongue for instruction (Thomas and Collier, 2002). Therefore, the teaching and learning of Kinyarwanda can foster bilingual and /or multilingual education at all levels of schooling in Rwanda.

Kinyarwanda, a social tool of integration and a vehicle of cultural values

The mother tongue is for the children, an instrument of communication with the social environment. More quickly and more correctly, the child is able to express his will, feelings and discoveries. He may engage in affairs, know and acquire thoughts of other people through reading. The target to place him vis-à-vis the group in which he lives constitutes one of the objectives of the teaching of mother tongue. Morally, we teach children the mother tongue to give them multiple occasions of observing, comparing, analyzing, judging and even selecting between situations presented in texts and stories. The questions they ask themselves or asked to them are often a magnifying occasion for adjustment of their current or future behaviour in the society.

Aesthetically, teaching the mother tongue has an objective to educate for the appraisal of the beauty and

the sense of literature for the students who are in front of texts with literature value. Kinyarwanda is also a vehicle of Rwandan cultural values as it is through it that the Rwandan identity is appearing (Inteko, 2013). According to Karangwa (1996), it is around Kinyarwanda that Rwandan Community feels unified. The use of Kinyarwanda is also "encouraged by a certain language nationalism which is building itself gradually to avoid the stamps of Francophone and Anglophone connoting sometimes division".

Challenges and hindrances to teaching and learning of kinyarwanda

Although the teaching of Kinyarwanda has been going on for over a century, it has not all been plain sailing (Ntakirutimana, 2012). Besides the inefficient methods of teaching and learning Kinyarwanda, there are numerous challenges that hinder its full success. Some of them are inadequate and insufficient terminologies. Even many efforts have been so far made in terminology development, for the time being all areas have not been covered mainly in science and technology. This lack of terminology in Kinyarwanda needs to be adequately addressed by all stakeholders in the Rwandan education system. Another challenge is the lack of reading materials in Kinyarwanda as well as pedagogical teaching and learning aids. Moreover there is lack of qualified teaching staff as well as motivated students to learn Kinyarwanda at all levels of education.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

The objective of the schooling is to grow the knowledge in the children. When children start school in a language they know, they are capable to learn. As they advance they learn to read and write in their mother tongue, they get cognitive basis for learning national or foreign language (Risipail, 2005). In conclusion, learning (in) Kinyarwanda will give possibilities to Rwandan citizens to value themselves in the world which is becoming more and more interdependent. It is indispensable in the first instance to use Kinyarwanda as a mother tongue of Rwanda and then learn in foreign languages of wider communication like English, French, Chinese, etc in order to access modern science and technology and then translate them in Kinyarwanda in order to let them be used by the citizens.

The introduction of mother tongues in education allows inevitably having large enrolment of children in schools. Primary education in Kinyarwanda mainly from P1 to P3 deserves to be encouraged and strictly respected though some private schools do not apply this policy. The present research is an exploratory qualitative research study that aimed at investigating and evaluating how the

teaching in Kinyarwanda has contributed to learner's cognitive Academic Language Proficiency development in Rwandan schools. It also aimed at investigating the challenges faced by Kinyarwanda language teaching and learning as a subject or as a medium of instruction throughout the history of Rwanda. More specifically, the aims of this study were to identify, describe and analyze the methods and approaches used in teaching Kinyarwanda in both traditional and modern Rwandan education systems. Positive or negative views on Kinyarwanda have been collected to investigate how they can be addressed in order to improve the quality of education in Rwanda. The historical background of the teaching of Kinyarwanda revealed that since a long time ago Kinyarwanda has been a vehicle of knowledge virile education in Rwanda. Findings from the study and the reading of existing literature on the topic also confirmed that Kinyarwanda is a strong language in Rwanda and what is needed is to have a clear language policy on all languages used in Rwanda.

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