



UMEÅ UNIVERSITET

**Contrasting Language-in-Education
Policy Intentions, Perceptions and
Practice:**

**The Use of English and Kreol Seselwa in the
Seychelles.**

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Contrasting Language-in-Education Policy Intentions, Perceptions and Practice: The Use of English and Kreol Seselwa in the Seychelles.

Abstract

Many studies have shown that Second Language (L2) Medium of Instruction (MoI) policies in Africa are linked to educational inequity, substandard teaching practice, low literacy skills and poor overall academic performance. In the light of this background, this thesis aims to make a more thorough inquiry into questions related to language-in-education policies, L2 as MoI, and academic success in the Seychelles, a small island nation in the Indian Ocean. Here the first language (L1), Kreol Seselwa, is used as MoI during the first two years of primary education and is then replaced completely, and quite abruptly, by English. While such L2 MoI policies exist in many parts of Africa, Seychelles is in many ways unique since approximately 98% of the student population all have the same L1, i.e. Kreol Seselwa. We are thus not dealing with a situation where the use of English in education is motivated by it being a lingua franca.

The Seychelles is also the smallest and least populated country in Africa, offering an easily accessible context for linguistic exploration into matters regarding language-in-education policies. The country's small size also enables one to gain real depth of insight into the language-in-education policy situation and the challenges faced by many nations in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Using an eclectic methodological approach, including critical discourse analysis of policy documents, classroom observations, writing experiments, semi-structured interviews, survey questionnaires and corpus analysis, the thesis investigates the "problem" on various levels of the educational system (macro, meso and micro). The main focus lies on challenges and consequences of current language-in-education policies, culminating into four individual papers which include: 1) an analysis of educational policy documents such as the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) and subject syllabi; 2) an investigation of the teachers' attitudes towards teaching through English and/or Kreol Seselwa; 3) an evaluation of learners' ability to write their subject knowledge in English and Kreol Seselwa and 4) an investigation of Primary Six pupils' ability to make meaning through their literacy practice in English and Kreol Seselwa.

Bernard Spolsky's (2004) comprehensive theoretical framework of language *practices*, language *beliefs* and *values*, and language *planning* and/or *management* is then used as the main analytical model to analyse the results and describe how these four studies are interconnected systematically in their quest to shed light on the current language-in-education context of Seychelles.

The main findings indicate that current language-in-education policies are contributing to educational inequity, especially given that the present-day system relies heavily on written examinations. The overall conclusion is that the full potential of using the mother tongue in learning contexts is not being realised, primarily a result of deeply rooted negative attitudes towards Kreol Seselwa being used in the Seychelles educational context.

The "language problems" in the Seychelles educational system are thereby investigated systematically and the results are highly relevant for all post-colonial contexts where L2s are used as MoIs.

Keywords

Code switching, Kreol Seselwa, L2 medium of instruction, Post colonialism, Language policy, translanguaging, bilingualism, multilingualism.

Language

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