

Lost in Translation: The World Bank's Position on Mother  
Tongue Literacy in Senegal and Niger

Lauren Aitken  
University Honors  
Spring 2012

Advisor:  
Professor Daryn Cambridge

Mentors:  
Professor Elizabeth Lang  
Professor Richard Cambridge

## ABSTRACT

Language-in-education planning decisions in Francophone Africa are subject to influence from a variety of stakeholders. While scholars have found that mother tongue literacy has significant cognitive, social and economic benefits, there is concern that foreign aid explicitly and implicitly promotes European language instruction. This study analyzes the position of World Bank lending on mother-tongue literacy for projects in Senegal and Niger. It also analyzes the influence of this position on the effectiveness of language planning efforts. Reflecting existing literature, the research hypothesizes that the World Bank is an influential actor that discourages mother-tongue literacy. To test this hypothesis, the research included an analysis of documents from 15 education projects, as well as Country Assistance Strategies in Senegal and Niger. The paper also examined primary and secondary interviews with high-ranking government officials and locals. The results indicate that the World Bank is actually a minor player in this debate due to its silent position on mother tongue literacy. While the World Bank is silent in an attempt to remain neutral, its history prevents effective neutrality. This paper provides policy suggestions for how the World Bank can address mother tongue literacy while respecting its mission. These policy suggestions indicate that the World Bank can sponsor an open forum on mother tongue literacy while ensuring country ownership of language-in-education planning.

*Karatu, farkonka madaci, karshenka zuma.*

(It may be bitter to begin studying, but the end is sweet.)

— Hausa Proverb

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor, Professor Daryn Cambridge, and my mentors, Professor Elizabeth Lang and Professor Richard Cambridge, for their incredible patience, knowledge and support throughout this process.

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## INTRODUCTION

A high quality education does not appear unintentionally. Someone must intentionally invest in good teachers, equitable access and plentiful resources. Ministries of education must deliberately choose an effective curriculum and standardized national evaluation process. One factor, however, is often forgotten, something without which education literally could not exist: language.

In some countries, the appropriate language of instruction may appear relatively obvious. The medium-of-instruction will be the language that students, teachers, and perhaps the community can speak. In Africa, the dense multilingual environment makes this decision infinitely more complicated, especially when the historical language-of-instruction was never a language spoken at home, but the language of the colonial power.

The former colonial language is also often the official language.<sup>1</sup> However, African countries usually declare some local languages<sup>2</sup> as official national languages.<sup>3</sup> While the medium-of-instruction is usually a European language, scholars, governments and citizens are increasingly discussing the integration of local languages in education. Research proving the cognitive, emotional and sociocultural benefits of mother tongue<sup>4</sup> literacy inspired this increase.<sup>5</sup> While this research

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<sup>1</sup> “Official language” refers to “a language that has legal status in a particular legally constituted political entity such as a state or part of a state, and that serves as a language of administration,” definition from *Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names*, United Nations Group of Experts on Geographic Names, United Nations, New York, 2002. <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/glossary.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> “Local languages,” often referred to as regional languages, are languages spoken in a given geographic area. While “local language” and “national language” are often used interchangeably, not all local languages are given the legal status of “national language.”

<sup>3</sup> “National language” refers to “Language in widespread and current use throughout a specific country or in parts of its territory, and often representative of the identity of its speakers,” definition from *Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names*, United Nations Group of Experts on Geographic Names, United Nations, New York, 2002. <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/glossary.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> “Mother tongue” literally refers to the language that one’s mother speaks, or the language one hears in the early years of childhood in a household. A person can have multiple mother tongues if multiple languages are spoken in the household on a regular basis. “Mother tongue education” (MTE) refers to formal education in which the medium-of-instruction is one’s mother tongue. “Mother tongue literacy,” (MTL) refers to knowing how to read and write a simple phrase in one’s mother tongue. While an individual may partake in MTE, there may be significant differences between dialects.

stimulates dialogue on the issue, there has been limited implementation of mother tongue education in many African countries, particularly in West Africa, due to resistance from parents and reluctance of the government.<sup>6</sup>

Such complicated linguistic environments inspired the language planning discipline, which generates suggestions for how to effectively and democratically address language issues. The discipline discusses the important political, economic and social considerations involved in language-in-education planning. Scholars also analyze the decision-making processes of relative stakeholders, such as those of government ministries, NGOs and international organizations.

While scholars also mention the role of foreign aid, there is little in depth analysis of the influence of multilateral donors over language planning decisions. While many parties influence language planning, this research aims to shed light on the specific role of one multilateral donor institution: the World Bank. This research will investigate the position of the World Bank on mother tongue literacy and how this position influences language planning. Since education strategies differ significantly from country to country, a global analysis is not particularly useful. This research therefore focuses on two specific case studies in Francophone Africa: Senegal and Niger. These countries were specifically chosen because of their shared history with the French education system, yet different economic histories. For example, Senegal is a coastal West African hub for trade, while Niger is a landlocked nation facing considerable economic challenges.

Previous literature suggests that the World Bank has historically favored European language instruction in Francophone Africa. Some literature even suggests that the World Bank intentionally continues the colonization of education.<sup>7</sup> Research also attributes the World Bank's influence over

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<sup>5</sup> See Cummins "Bilingualism metalinguistic awareness"; Trudell "Language, culture, development and politics"; Gove, *EGRA*.

<sup>6</sup> Ferguson, *Language Planning and Education*.

<sup>7</sup> See Mazrui, "The World Bank and the Language Question"; Brock-Utne, "Education for All."

language planning due to major financial contributions to education. Therefore, I hypothesize that the World Bank discourages mother tongue literacy and that this position significantly influences language planning in Senegal and Niger.

In the following sections, I will test this hypothesis by first analyzing how Senegal and Niger use World Bank education funding to address language issues. I will also analyze the countries' overall strategies for education. To determine how much these words and activities influence language planning, I will supplement previous research with interviews of African government officials and citizens of Senegal and Niger. Based on these results, I will provide suggestions for how the World Bank should address mother tongue education in the future.

## BACKGROUND

Regarding language and education issues, Senegal and Niger have long and complex histories with the World Bank and other donors. However despite popular misconceptions, these European donors did not bring education to the region. In fact, the scholar Ki-Zerbo claims that Africa was the “first continent to know literacy thousands of years before the Greeks and Romans.”<sup>8</sup> Africa is also home to many unique alphabets. For example in Niger, the Tamajaq language uses the Tifinagh-script alphabet (see Figure 1). West Africa is also home to the famous University of Timbuktu, which produced over 700,000 manuscripts in its time.<sup>9</sup>

Education in the region took many forms before the introduction of Francophone education. Oral education was considered a sufficient way to transfer knowledge, thus inspiring the term “oral literacy.” Knowledge was less individual and more communal, deriving its meaning from “the collective epistemological understanding and rationalization of the community.”<sup>10</sup> Once Islam entered the region, people began learning to read and write in Arabic in order to study the Koran. At this moment, literacy began to reach the population at large. With Islam, Arabic script also began to replace African scripts for certain

languages.

Several decades after Islam introduced Arabic literacy, Christian missionaries arrived to codify local languages using Roman characters as part of an

**Figure 1. Tifinagh Script (Source: WikiVerb)**

o	Θ	X	X <sup>u</sup>	Λ	E	⊙	H	K	K <sup>u</sup>	⊙
ya	yab	yag	yag <sup>w</sup>	yad	yad	yey	yaf	yak	yak <sup>w</sup>	yah
a	b	g	g <sup>w</sup>	d	d	e	f	k	k <sup>w</sup>	h
[a]	[b]	[g]	[g <sup>w</sup> ]	[d]	[d]	[e]	[f]	[k]	[k <sup>w</sup> ]	[h]
Λ	h	X	z	z	I	H	C	I	⊙	O
yah	yac	yax	yaq	yi	yaj	yal	yam	yan	yu	yar
h	c	x	q	i	j	l	m	n	u	r
[h]	[c]	[x]	[q]	[i]	[j]	[l]	[m]	[n]	[u]	[r]
Q	Y	⊙	⊙	C	+	E	U	5	X	X
yar	yagh	yas	yaş	yac	yat	yaţ	yaw	yay	yaz	yaž
r	gh	s	ş	c	t	ţ	w	y	z	ž
[r]	[y]	[s]	[s]	[j]	[t]	[ţ]	[w]	[j]	[z]	[ž]

<sup>8</sup> Fyle “Literacy in West Africa,” 61.

<sup>9</sup> “Discovery of Timbuktu Manuscripts,” Timbuktu Educational Foundation, last modified 2002, <http://www.timbuktufoundation.org/manuscripts.html>.

<sup>10</sup> Semali “Community as Classroom,” 315.

effort to transmit Christianity through these languages.<sup>11</sup> Through these efforts, missionaries made a substantial contribution to mother tongue literacy.<sup>12</sup> However once France colonized much of the region, French became the exclusive medium-of-instruction.<sup>13</sup>

### A Brief History of the World Bank in Education

The World Bank began analyzing human capital issues in the 1960s, largely due to a demonstrated need for increased human capital in order to maintain infrastructure and agriculture projects. The primary goal was determining the number of people needed to staff certain projects. This process, known as manpower estimation, focused on quantity rather than analyzing relative quality and value of certain kinds of human capital. Reflecting the emphasis on the manpower estimation technique, the Bank mandated that all education investments from 1962 to 1980 had to address manpower needs.<sup>14</sup>

Robert McNamara's presidency from 1968 to 1978 increased the focus on "family planning, public health and education."<sup>15</sup> As investments in education increased, however, issues with the Bank's overall strategy for education became more pronounced. First, there was an inordinate emphasis on the practicality of education, as well as a problem with the manpower estimation technique. The manpower estimation process ultimately distorted lending in favor of certain sectors. Manpower estimation also conflicted with a new technique called rate of return estimation.<sup>16</sup> Scholars also criticized the World Bank's limited investment in textbooks, which was largely due to a

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<sup>11</sup> Fyle, "Literacy in West Africa," 62.

<sup>12</sup> Bamgbose "Mother-tongue Education, Yoruba," 6-7.

<sup>13</sup> Adegbiya, "Language Attitudes," 32.

<sup>14</sup> Bartholomew, "Manpower Planning."

<sup>15</sup> Heyneman "History of World Bank," 320.

<sup>16</sup> For more information on the rate of return technique, see Levin (1983) *Cost Effectiveness*; Windham (1975) "Macro planning Education"; Psacharopoulos (1973) *Returns to Education*; Psacharopoulos and Woodhall (1985) "Education for Development: Investment."

poor interpretation of textbook expenditures as recurrent expenditures, rather than reusable investments. The culmination of these issues inspired the 1980 Education Sector Policy Paper.<sup>17</sup>

The 1980s was the dawn of a new era of public criticism of the World Bank. Some criticism stemmed from changes in organizational structure. In 1986, the World Bank reorganized due to a desire to increase the speed of the decision-making processes. While McNamara's presidency had introduced a "balance of power" between Regional Staff and Central Projects Staff, the reorganization increased decision-making power of central projects staff. The Bank also began to emphasize the rate of return methodology rather than manpower estimation techniques. While estimating rates of return encouraged support for primary education, it simultaneously discouraged spending for secondary and tertiary education.<sup>18</sup>

Due to the estimated lower rates of return on tertiary education spending, structural adjustment policies encouraged governments to cut spending in higher education. Subsequent privatization of universities and increases tuition caused widespread protests against the Bank. In fact, the University of Dakar declared one year in particular an *année blanche*, or a "blank year" due to the disruption of protests. As a result, universities required all students to repeat that academic year.

Growing criticism of how the World Bank addressed higher education inspired a new policy paper called "Strategies and Priorities for Education." Developing this paper was challenging, especially for those staff required to provide recommendations for unfamiliar regions. Conflict between central and regional offices also created tension. Despite considerable disagreement over drafts of the paper, there were few changes to the final document.<sup>19</sup> In the end, critics greatly criticized the report, arguing that the paper did not suggest a new vision for education.<sup>20</sup> The World

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<sup>17</sup> World Bank, "Education Sector Policy Paper."

<sup>18</sup> Psacharopoulos, *Returns to Education*.

<sup>19</sup> Heyneman, "History of World Bank," 328.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 329

Bank's response to this criticism became a new "*ex ante* agnosticism." This enabled the Bank to "avoid setting *ex ante* content and allocation choices" and instead provide general suggestions for enabling effective education.<sup>21</sup>

The World Bank's most recent development in education policy was the "World Bank Education Strategy 2020." The main objectives of the strategies are to finance "reform of countries' education systems," increase "results-based financing" and develop a "proven knowledge inventory of what works and what doesn't work in education reform."<sup>22</sup> Overall, the strategy focuses on increasing learning outcomes. The World Bank developed the strategy through a long and transparent consultation process with multiple advisors. However, some criticize this process, suggesting that the learning outcomes outlined by the authors "reflect ideological dispositions," and when imposed on developing countries, "have the potential to replicate the pattern of placing greater value on knowledge produced in 'developed' countries."<sup>23</sup> Despite the emphasis on improving learning and generating knowledge, the strategy does not make a single mention of the language issue.

### Language

Western Africa has long been a rich and diverse linguistic environment. The continent is home to over 2,000 languages.<sup>24</sup> Most sub-Saharan countries house this dense multilingualism, with the exception of some countries, such as Botswana, Burundi, Lesotho, Rwanda, Somalia, and Swaziland.<sup>25</sup> In Africa, "multilingualism is the norm, rather than the exception."<sup>26</sup> While

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 330

<sup>22</sup> "World Bank Education Strategy 2020 – FAQs," The World Bank Group, accessed 26 April 2012. [http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTEDUCATION/0,,contentMDK:22884992~pagePK:210058~piPK:210062~theSitePK:282386,00.html#strategic\\_objectives](http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTEDUCATION/0,,contentMDK:22884992~pagePK:210058~piPK:210062~theSitePK:282386,00.html#strategic_objectives).

<sup>23</sup> Collins, "Education Strategy 2020," 20.

<sup>24</sup> Mtesigwa "Kiswahili in Tanzania," 65.

<sup>25</sup> Adegbija "Language Attitudes," 15.

multilingualism has long characterized the continent, few languages native to the region are legally considered national languages, with even fewer considered official languages or media-of-instruction.<sup>27</sup>

Most African languages fall into the following categories, located in the following regions:

1. *Niger-Congo phyla* – 1514 languages (within which there are 500 cluster members); Most of the languages in West Africa fall into this phyla, in addition to a large family of Bantu languages that dominates the Central, South and East parts of the continent.<sup>28</sup>
2. *Afro-Asiatic phyla* – 375 languages; North Africa and the Horn across the savannah belt of Western Sudan.
3. *Nilo-Saharan phyla* – 204 languages; Eastern part of the Sahara and Southwards into Uganda and Kenya
4. *Khosian phyla* – 26 languages; Hunter-gatherer people of South Africa.<sup>29</sup>

All languages spoken in Senegal are in the Niger-Congo phyla, with the exception of Hassaniyya in the Afro-Asiatic phyla. According to the January 7, 2001 constitution, the official language of Senegal is French, although only 20% of the population can speak the language.<sup>30</sup> The official national languages of Senegal enacted by a 1971 presidential decree<sup>31</sup> are Balanta-Ganja, Hassaniyya, Jola-Fonyi, Mandinka, Mandjak, Mankanya, Noon, Pulaar, Serer-Sine, Soninke, Wolof and French.<sup>32</sup> In total, there are 38 languages spoken in Senegal, 37 of which are living languages.<sup>33</sup> Wolof is

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<sup>26</sup> Heine and Nurse, “African Languages.”

<sup>27</sup> Mtesigwa “Kiswahili in Tanzania,” 67.

<sup>28</sup> “Senegal,” SIL International, last modified 2009, [http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_country.asp?name=senegal](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=senegal).

<sup>29</sup> Mtesigwa “Kiswahili in Tanzania,” 65.

<sup>30</sup> Personal translation, Constitution of Senegal Article 1, paragraph 2.

<sup>31</sup> Presidential decree no. 71566 of 21 May 1971.

<sup>32</sup> While these languages are official national languages, French is the sole official language of government and official business.

<sup>33</sup> “Senegal,” SIL International, [www.ethnologue.com](http://www.ethnologue.com). A living language is a language currently spoken by at least one native living speaker in a country.

considered the *lingua franca*, or the language of wider communication, as it is spoken by over 80% of the population, 35% of whom speak it as their mother tongue.

In Niger, most local languages are part of either the Afro-Asiatic or the Nilo-Saharan phylum, with a few in the Niger-Congo phylum.<sup>34</sup> While French is the official language, Arabic, Fulfulde, Gourmanchéma, Hausa, Manga Kanuri, Tamajaq and Zarma are also official national languages. Including these languages, 21 languages are spoken in Niger, all of which are living languages.<sup>35</sup> Hausa is the lingua franca of Niger, spoken by 55% of the population as a first language and 25% as a second language.<sup>36</sup>

### Literacy

UNESCO defines a literate person as someone with “the ability to read and write, with understanding, a short, simple sentence about one’s everyday life.”<sup>37</sup> Fyle considers this to be an inadequate definition, in that it does not represent those who are unable to use their literacy regularly, either by a lack of materials or opportunities to practice. Therefore, Fyle describes the purpose of literacy in West African countries in four parts:

- 1) Literacy must provide a means of communication and identification with one’s kith and kin and with others of one’s mother-tongue group.
- 2) Literacy must provide a means of communication and identification with the wider community to which one belongs.
- 3) Literacy must provide a means of communication and identification with the nation in general.
- 4) Last, literacy must provide a means of communication and identification with the outside world.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> “Niger,” SIL International, last modified 2009, [http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_country.asp?name=ne](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=ne).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> “Hausa,” SIL International, last modified 2009, [http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_language.asp?code=hau](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=hau).

<sup>37</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics Glossary, accessed 3 March 2012, [glossary.uis.unesco.org](http://glossary.uis.unesco.org).

<sup>38</sup> Fyle, “Literacy in West Africa,” 66.

Adult literacy rates in West Africa are among the lowest in the world.<sup>39</sup> However, literacy measurements cannot be trusted completely. Fyle mentions that literacy statistics often “only refer to literacy in the adopted international languages of English, French or Portuguese.”<sup>40</sup> Literacy statistics also rarely include Arabic. Literacy in mother tongues using phonetic, non-standardized scripts is also irregularly recorded. Overall, literacy rates in West Africa are significantly higher than we perceive because of inadequate measurement techniques.<sup>41</sup>

According to these current measurement techniques, 61.8% of adult men in Senegal are literate, while only 38.7% of women are literate. The gender literacy gap is smaller among youth literacy rates; 74.2% of men ages 15-24 are literate compared to 56.2% of women.<sup>42</sup> Senegal’s 2002 census collected data for the number of citizens literate in specific languages. According to the report, the definition of literacy is “the ability for a person age six and older to know how to read and write in any language.”<sup>43</sup> Table 1 shows a disaggregation of literacy rates by language and region. According to the data, French (37.8%) and Arabic (25.9%) literacy rates dominate, while only 1.5% of citizens are literate in Wolof. Although the question on the Senegalese census asks about literacy in any language, perceptions of legitimate literacy could potentially be unclear between the surveyor and the respondent. Especially if the government gathers literacy data through a self-reported census,

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<sup>39</sup> See UNESCO Institute for Statistics, [www.uis.unesco.org](http://www.uis.unesco.org) for complete literacy statistics.

<sup>40</sup> Fyle, “Literacy in West Africa,” 63

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 64

<sup>42</sup> “Senegal,” UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

[http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableView/document.aspx?ReportId=124&IF\\_Language=eng&BR\\_Country=6860&BR\\_Region=40540](http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableView/document.aspx?ReportId=124&IF_Language=eng&BR_Country=6860&BR_Region=40540)

<sup>43</sup> ANSD, “Recensement,” 82,

[http://www.ansd.sn/publications/rapports\\_enquetes\\_etudes/enquetes/RGPH3\\_RAP\\_NAT.pdf](http://www.ansd.sn/publications/rapports_enquetes_etudes/enquetes/RGPH3_RAP_NAT.pdf).

Table 1. Percentage of literate population by region of residence and language

Languages	Dakar	Djourbel	Fatick	Kaolack	Kolda	Louga	Matam	Saint Louis	Tamabounda	Thies	Ziguinchor	Total
<b>French</b>	62.7	17.2	36.3	24.8	30.6	20.3	17	26.4	24.7	40.3	63.9	<b>37.8</b>
<b>Arabic</b>	22.3	28.3	21.3	43.5	23.9	25.5	18	38.3	23.5	21.8	10.5	<b>25.9</b>
<b>Wolof</b>	1.3	2.3	1.3	2.8	0.3	3.1	0.1	1.5	0.6	1.8	0.2	<b>1.5</b>
<b>Pulaar</b>	0.4	0.1	0.2	0.6	3.8	1.1	4.9	3.5	2.9	0.2	0.2	<b>1.2</b>
<b>Sereer</b>	0.1	0.6	2.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.0	<b>0.3</b>
<b>Mandingue</b>	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.3	<b>0.2</b>
<b>Diola</b>	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	<b>0.1</b>
<b>Soninke</b>	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	<b>0.0</b>
<b>Other languages</b>	2.0	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.5	0.2	0.2	1.1	0.2	0.7	1.9	<b>0.9</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>89.0</b>	<b>48.9</b>	<b>61.8</b>	<b>72.2</b>	<b>60.0</b>	<b>50.3</b>	<b>40.4</b>	<b>70.9</b>	<b>53.3</b>	<b>65.1</b>	<b>78.0</b>	

Source: Senegal National Census 2002

citizens may not know if their ability to read and write in a local language makes them literate. For example in Niger, the definition of literacy is the following: “A person is literate when he/she can, with understanding, read and write a simple text (in French, Arabic or any other language), on everyday life.”<sup>44</sup> While the definition says “any other language,” neither of the languages listed are local languages. Also, in the information from Senegal’s National Census seen in Table 1, it is unclear whether respondents could indicate on the census that they were literate in more than one

<sup>44</sup> UNESCO, “Annex: Introduction,” In *Education for All Global Monitoring Report*, 269. Paris : UNESCO, 2006. [http://www.unesco.org/education/GMR2006/full/annex1\\_eng.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/education/GMR2006/full/annex1_eng.pdf)

language (e.g. French and Pulaar). If respondents could only choose one language on the census, this may cause an underreporting of local language literacy.

Although census information suggests very limited literacy in local languages, a significant number of local language literacy programs exist in Senegal, sponsored by both government and non-governmental organizations. Adult literacy programs are increasingly popular, especially in Pulaar, the language of the Fulani people. The movement for Pulaar literacy began in the 1950s when a Senegalese Pulaar speaker in Cairo published the novel *Ndikkiri Joom Moolo*, or “Ndikkiri, the First Born, a Guitarist.” After growing enthusiasm for Pulaar literacy in the Near East, the Association for the Renaissance of Pulaar (ARP) was founded in Senegal. Unfortunately, the new enthusiasm for Pulaar literacy lacked significant reading materials to sustain literacy promotion efforts. This inspired the creation of the non-profit organization Associates in Research and Education for Development (ARED), registered in the United States. By 2006, ARED had sold over 800,000 books in six national languages.<sup>45</sup> Other prominent non-governmental organizations involved in local language literacy development include Tostan, the *Musée de l'Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire* (IFAN Museum of African Arts), the University of Cheikh Anta Diop (UCAD), the *Association pour la renaissance du pulaar* (Association for the Renaissance of Pulaar) and the *Association pour le développement de la langue saafi* (Association for the Development of the Saafi Language).

While local language literacy programs are expanding, functional literacy in Wolof requires minimal formal knowledge of Wolof spelling and grammar. In his research on the linguistic environment in Senegal, Shiohata describes how people in Senegal commonly encounter national languages in written form. He found that, “the use of Wolof and other local languages was limited mainly to scripted materials that were produced through government literacy programs. French was far more commonly used in all other types of materials: shop signs and advertising posters,

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<sup>45</sup> ARED, “Our History,” <http://www.ared-edu.org/en/Aboutus/History/tabid/133/Default.aspx>.

newspapers, magazines, and public notices. Therefore the process of becoming literate is rarely formal.”<sup>46</sup> According to his study, written communication is less dominant. On the other hand, the author notes that text messages were not included in observations. According to Lexander, an increasing number of young people are using Wolof for communication via Short Messaging Services (SMS), also known as text messaging.<sup>47</sup>

Adult literacy rates in Niger are considerably lower than those in Senegal. In Niger, approximately 42.9% of adult men are literate, compared to 15.1% of women. Youth literacy rates are slightly higher, with a 52.4% literacy rate for young men and 23.2% rate for young girls.<sup>48</sup>

The overall linguistic environment, such as the limited access to printed materials, also inhibits the development of local language literacy in Niger. However, research suggests that there are alternative methods for increasing exposure to written local languages. For example, after an evaluation of a literacy program in Niger, Aker suggests the use of SMS literacy and numeracy programs in local languages to improve and sustain literacy. Such literacy initiatives would not need printed materials such as “costly village-level libraries or local language newspapers.”<sup>49</sup>

### Formal Education

While colonialism introduced the French education system to many countries in Western Africa, current education systems in Western Africa differ significantly. This section will describe the Senegalese and Nigerien education systems in more detail.

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<sup>46</sup> Shiohata, “Literacy Environment: Senegal,” 264.

<sup>47</sup> Lexander, “Texting African Language.”

<sup>48</sup> UIS, “Niger,”  
[http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=121&IF\\_Language=eng&BR\\_Country=5620&BR\\_Region=40540](http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=121&IF_Language=eng&BR_Country=5620&BR_Region=40540).

<sup>49</sup> Aker, “ABC 123,” 18.

Senegal's medium-of-instruction legislation has a dual purpose: to promote national languages while maintaining the presence of French in the education system. The law on the orientation of education in Senegal enacted in 1991 vaguely describes the purpose of education. While the law states that one of the goals for the government should be about "enhancing education in national languages," it also says:

National education equally reflects that Senegal belongs to a cultural community of Francophone countries, is open to the values of global civilization, and is a part of the contemporary world, and through that it develops a spirit of cooperation and peace with others.<sup>50</sup>

In a typical Senegalese school, students first begin learning in their mother tongue, then Wolof, and then French. French instruction begins at the age of six or seven for public secular schools, but at the age of three for regional schools. In high school, students must additionally choose to learn another language and can choose among English, Arabic, Spanish or German. Despite varied options, English is by far the most commonly chosen foreign language elective.<sup>51</sup>

According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), twenty-four percent of government spending goes towards education, representing 5.6% of GDP. Of this, 44% goes to primary education, 30% to secondary education and 24% to tertiary education.

While French is usually the exclusive language of instruction after age six, some experimental schools use national languages for instruction throughout all of primary school. In 1979, the government sponsored a few experimental schools using Wolof and Serer as the media of instruction, but the program ended in 1981. In 1999, the Ministry of Education created an office for National Languages and introduced national language development as one of the primary objectives of the Decennial Plan of Education and Training (PDEF). In 2002, 155 experimental schools were using six different national languages. The number of experimental schools grew to 300 by 2004.

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<sup>50</sup> Law no. 91-22, *La loi d'orientation de l'éducation nationale*, February 16, 1991 (personal translation).

<sup>51</sup> Leclerc, "Senegal," <http://www.tlfq.ulaval.ca/axl/afrique/senegal.htm>.

Besides the creation of the Ministry of National Languages, some legislation formally supports the development of national languages. Law No.91-22, enacted on February 16, 1991, defined the goals of national languages in Article 6.1, saying: “National education is Senegalese and African: developing the teaching of national languages, privileged instruments for giving learners a living contact with their culture and rooting them in their history, it will form a Senegalese conscious of his heritage and his identity.”<sup>52</sup>

Recently, legislation in Senegal on curriculum reform has limited the ability for substantial changes to medium-of-instruction policies in the near future. According to a USAID report on the Senegalese education system, “the issue of language of instruction is effectively closed.” The new curriculum calls for the exclusive use of French as the medium-of-instruction from first grade onwards. Despite previous legislation promoting broad national language development, the government’s main way of developing national languages is by incorporating them into non-formal education programs for adult and youth literacy.<sup>53</sup>

In Niger, French and national languages are considered official languages of instruction, according to the 1998 *Loi d’orientation du système éducatif nigérien* (The Law of the Nigerien Education System). Also according to this legislation, education is compulsory for all students ages four to sixteen. While schooling is technically mandatory, enrollment rates remain very low.<sup>54</sup>

While schools in Niger may use national languages for the first three years, French is used exclusively after the fourth year of primary school. Similar to the policy in Senegal, students are required to learn another language, but must choose among English, Arabic, German or Spanish.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> USAID, “The Quality of Basic Education in Senegal,” 11.

<sup>54</sup> Leclerc, “Niger.” <http://www.tlfq.ulaval.ca/axl/afrique/niger.htm>.

<sup>55</sup> Leclerc, “Niger,” <http://www.tlfq.ulaval.ca/axl/afrique/niger.htm>.

Compared to Senegal, Niger spends slightly less of its national budget on education (approximately 19.3%), which represents about 4.6% of its GDP. The government spends a much larger portion of its budget on primary education (61%), with less on secondary (25%) and tertiary (12%) education. While spending differs between the two countries, pupil-to-teacher ratios only slightly exceed those of Senegal, with 39 pupils for each teacher on average compared to 35 pupils per teacher in Senegal.<sup>56</sup>

There are some experimental bilingual schools in Niger, primarily funded by the German International Cooperation (GIZ), the Swedish International Development Agency and USAID. Niger founded its first experimental schools in 1973. By 1998, the number had grown to 42.<sup>57</sup> Experimental bilingual schools, called “Bilingual French-National Language Schools,” continue to operate. However, Alidou et al. claim that there is little action beyond rhetorical support for bilingual education, forever keeping schools in the experimentation stage.<sup>58</sup>

In order to compare the relative success of education systems worldwide, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) developed an Education Index for the Human Development Report. The Education Index ranks countries on both mean years of schooling for adults and expected years of schooling for children. The index ranks Senegal poorly, placing it 155<sup>th</sup> out of 186 countries. However, Niger literally ranks worst in the world, with a raw score 0.177 in 2011.<sup>59</sup> While this ranking sheds light on certain aspects of education, it ignores literacy, numeracy and other learning outcomes. This index therefore only provides information on the quantity of education rather than quality.

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<sup>56</sup> UIS, “Niger.”

<sup>57</sup> Hovens, “Bilingual Education West Africa,” 253.

<sup>58</sup> Alidou et al., “Optimizing Learning,” 53.

<sup>59</sup> UNDP, “Education Index (expected and mean years of schooling),” Last modified 2011, <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/indicators/103706.html>.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Who Cares? Language Attitudes towards Mother Tongues

Perhaps the most important aspect of research on language and education would be the opinions of the speakers themselves. What do speakers of this language think about literacy? What are the opinions of other cultural groups in the region toward specific languages? Are endangered languages preserved in the interest of a large population of speakers, or in the interest of a small group of linguists and scholars?

In his influential article “Orientations in Language Planning,” Richard Ruiz (1988) describes the three types of orientations toward language produced in a society: language-as-problem, language-as-right and language-as-resource. According to Ruiz, most language planners focus on solving language problems. He suggests that this reflects a general aversion toward social and cultural diversity. Other language planners consider that the right to use one’s language is a civil liberty that should be enforced. However Ruiz warns that such rhetoric causes confrontation that can reduce the effectiveness of language planning.

The third dimension that views language as a resource receives significantly less attention, especially in the United States. If languages were “resources to be managed, developed and conserved,” then those language planners would consider “minority communities as important sources of expertise.”<sup>60</sup> Regarding African languages, the scholar Rubagumya agrees and states: “One factor influencing language policy in a diglossic situation is whether those in power see bilingualism as a resource or as a problem. If they consider it as a resource, they will encourage the development of all the languages (or as many of them as practically possible) in the given society.”<sup>61</sup> On the other

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<sup>60</sup> Ruiz “Orientations in Language Planning,” 17

<sup>61</sup> *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 4th ed., s.v. “diglossia.” Diglossia is “the use of two markedly different varieties of a language in different social situations, such as a formal variety at work and an informal variety at home.”

hand, if bilingualism is considered undesirable, only the dominant language will be developed while the others are neglected or even actively discouraged.”<sup>62</sup> Orientations determine the basic questions language planners ask and how they analyze data<sup>63</sup> and therefore will be considered throughout the course of this study.

Substantial anthropological research exists on local attitudes towards language. Depending on the region, people attach certain prejudices or stigmas to national languages. In Adebija’s *Language Attitudes in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Sociolinguistic Overview*, he discusses trends in language attitudes while focusing on survey data from Nigeria. Emphasizing attitudes toward English as a language-of-instruction or an official language, he found the following trends in his research:

- The dominant force of the historical past of colonialism in attitude formation seems evident.
- There is a generally positive evaluation of European languages, especially in official domains, because of their instrumental roles and the socio-economic gains associated with their command.
- There is also a positive evaluation of mother tongues and sometimes national languages (as Kiswahili in Tanzania), as symbols of ethnic, and national loyalty, or of nationhood and independence or sovereignty.
- A general attitude of ambivalence is sometimes evident with regard to European languages and indigenous languages.
- Ethno-linguistic minorities are sensitive to language issues and are often closely attached to their languages and cultures.
- There is a growing acceptance of European languages in many parts of Africa because that they serve unifying roles in largely multi-ethnic societies in Africa.
- Native varieties of European languages are developing and this may be contributing towards their increasing acceptance.<sup>64</sup>

Diallo also conducted original research on language attitudes in Senegal while sampling slightly different demographics. His sample included 404 observations comprised of students, business people, government officials and the general public. Researchers distributed the survey across the

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<sup>62</sup> Rubagumya, “Language Promotion,” 78.

<sup>63</sup> Ruiz, “Orientations in Language Planning,” 16.

<sup>64</sup> Adebija, *Language Attitudes*, 62-65.

country in rural and urban settings. However, the survey was not randomly distributed and therefore does not represent general population characteristics of the country. There is a slight overrepresentation of the Wolof ethnic group (48% of sample, compared to 43.8% of total population) and the Sereer population (23% of sample, 14.7% of population). Diallo does note that the survey had a significantly lower return rate in urban areas, causing the urban population to be underrepresented (32% of sample, compared to 42% of population). His research nevertheless provides some interesting results. Regarding the education system, 87% believed local languages should be introduced into the education system and 83% said local languages should play a more important role.<sup>65</sup> The most common reason for the importance of local languages in the education system was that it “facilitates access to knowledge.”<sup>66</sup> In Table 2, we see a convergence between the reasons why local languages should not be given more importance in the education system and themes from Adegbiya’s research. Also, we see convergence with former president Senghor’s original idea for Senegal to have a “universal language.” The most common support for French language instruction (26% in favor) was that it was a “universal language.”<sup>67</sup>

Diallo’s research provides interesting perspectives on specific attitudes towards Wolof. He says that, “most attitudes toward the Wolof speech community are negative. In particular, 27% believed the Wolof people are dishonest, 38% believed they are insincere, and 33% believed they are lazy.”<sup>68</sup> This aligns with findings in Tabouret-Keller et al.’s research of a resistance to the “Wolofization” of Senegal. The authors claim that this “Wolofization,” or the linguistic dominance

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<sup>65</sup> Diallo, “Language Planning Senegal,” 209.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 211.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 218.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 233.

Table 2. Reasons for resistance to local language instruction

Reasons	Percentages
Local languages are not important	24%
Just spoken in Senegal	22%
Language of division	15%
Other reasons	13%
Not official languages (not used in workplace, education...)	7%
French is more important than local languages	5%
Language not used in science and technology	4%
Country is not technically ready for the introduction of local languages in education	3%

Source: Diallo 2005, 212.

of Wolof in Senegal, is due to the “emergence of powerful Wolof speaking business classes and their hold over (informal) business and the public administration.”<sup>69</sup> On the other hand, attitudes towards the French-speaking community are “generally positive and high.”<sup>70</sup> Respondents considered French speakers to be creative (52%), generous (28%) hardworking (50%), sincere (43%) and reliable (39%). Interestingly enough, just as many respondents desired a French education as those who desired one in a local language.<sup>71</sup> However, these figures only represent desires, and not favoritism of one language as a medium-of-instruction in place of another.

These attitudinal surveys show no overwhelming desire for local language instruction by the communities themselves. In fact, local communities are not necessarily responsible for language preservation initiatives. This, however, does not limit literature on the preservation of endangered languages. Regarding literature on the causes of language endangerment, many linguists believe that a few core Western languages are causing the extinction of minority languages.<sup>72</sup> Hornberger

<sup>69</sup> Tabouret-Keller et al., *Vernacular Literacy*.

<sup>70</sup> Diallo, “Language Planning Senegal,” 233.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 236.

<sup>72</sup> See Cunningham et al. “Language Diversity Pacific”; Bradley and Bradley, *Language Endangerment*, Hornberger “Language Policy”; Bamgbose “Mother-tongue education: Yoruba”; Hale “On endangered languages.”

considers there to be an “aggression of world languages” towards less widely spoken languages.<sup>73</sup> In the book *Dying Words*, Nicholas Evans notes the epidemic of language extinction, predicting that half of the world’s languages will disappear in the next century.<sup>74</sup> Blench also discusses the dire situation for language extinction specifically in Western Africa. He explains that survey work on the endangerment of languages is “not a priority for governments or academics in West African countries.” He does note, however, that West African languages are “generally holding their own” despite the pressures of globalization.<sup>75</sup>

### Why Does It Matter? Educational Impact of Mother Tongue Education

#### Educational Benefits

In language acquisition research, a significant body of evidence proves the benefits of mother tongue literacy. Many researchers document the advantages of children reading and writing in languages spoken at home or in the community.<sup>76</sup> Research shows that becoming literate in one’s first language has significant benefits for cognitive and emotional development.<sup>77</sup> Multiple studies show a correlation between the medium of instruction and the “quality of cognitive and academic achievements.”<sup>78</sup> For example, Cummins’ work finds that mother tongue education helps students

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<sup>73</sup> Hornberger, “Language Policy.”

<sup>74</sup> Evans, *Dying Words*.

<sup>75</sup> Blench, “Endangered Languages West Africa,” 155.

<sup>76</sup> See Fishman, *Ethnic Revival*; Landers, “Language Rights”; Pattanayak, “Educational Use”; Pattanayak and Khatoon “Effect of difference.”

<sup>77</sup> See Landers, “Language Rights”; Spolsky *Language Education Multilingual*; UNESCO “Vernacular Languages”; UNESCO “Training Teachers.”

<sup>78</sup> PISA 2000/ADEA 2006, cited in Orekan “Mother Tongue Niger,” 32.

learn additional languages later in life.<sup>79</sup> While multiple other studies find similar benefits of bilingual education,<sup>80</sup> misconceptions that bilingual education negatively affects cognition still exist.

Children can better connect material learned at school with things at home when education is in their native tongue. Diallo says that with mother tongue education, “children directly perceive and feel the world from the perspective of their own language and culture.”<sup>81</sup> Cheikh Anta Diop, a famous Senegalese scholar and founder of the largest Senegalese university, proposed that “children are forced to make double efforts [when they learn] to assimilate the meaning of words and then, through a second intellectual effort, to capture the reality expressed by words.”<sup>82</sup> Children’s levels of self-esteem also benefit from literacy in native languages.<sup>83</sup> In addition, researchers found that it is through mother tongues that children acquire “social habits, feelings, skills and other cultural norms.”<sup>84</sup>

Studies also show that students have significantly higher test scores if they became literate in their first language.<sup>85</sup> However, accurate and consistent data on literacy rates, the quality of mother tongue education, and other educational indicators is difficult to find across the continent. In order to be effective, research often needs to involve randomized controlled trials or extensive survey distribution. Because of the costly nature of this data collection, data is limited, making empirically-based studies on the impact of language very difficult to produce.

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<sup>79</sup> See Cummins “Cognitive/academic language,” and “Bilingualism and Cognitive Functioning.”

<sup>80</sup> See Hakuta and Suben, “Bilingualism and Cognitive Development”; Pattanayak, “Educational Mother Tongue”; Kachru, “Bilingual’s Creativity”; Annamalai, “Bilingualism and Achievement”; Pattanayak and Khatoon, “Effect of Difference.”

<sup>81</sup> Diallo “Language Planning Senegal,” 35; Originally from Bamgbose, “Education in Indigenous,” “National Integration Nigeria”; UNESCO, “Vernacular Languages.”

<sup>82</sup> Diop, “African Renaissance,” 38.

<sup>83</sup> See Bamgbose, “Education in Indigenous,” “National Integration Nigeria” ; UNESCO, “Vernacular Languages.”

<sup>84</sup> Putz, “Linguistic Ecology Namibia,” 76.

<sup>85</sup> Gove, *EGRA*.

While it is difficult to make broad conclusions regarding the impact of language, some scholars claim to find a correlation between low literacy rates and European languages of instruction. In a World Bank study, the authors found that 50% of the children in the world not attending school live in areas where the medium of instruction is a language other than their mother tongue.<sup>86</sup> Multiple empirical studies also find “higher repetition rates, dropout rates and overall lower achievement” when the medium-of-instruction differs from a student’s first language.<sup>87</sup> While correlation does not prove causation, it warrants further investigation on the impact of the language of instruction on educational attainment.

### Why Education Matters for Development

The benefits of mother tongue literacy on education suggest even greater implications for the overall economic development of the country. Krueger and Lindahl found that education is “statistically significantly and positively associated with subsequent growth,” specifically for countries with poor education.<sup>88</sup> Literacy in particular is shown to have positive effects on economic development. According to a study using panel data from 1970-1990 in 44 African countries, including Senegal and Niger, literacy was a variable that had a positive effect on GDP per capita growth.<sup>89</sup>

While high enrollment is important, many scholars emphasize the importance of the quality of education. Hanushek and Woessmann find strong evidence that “cognitive skills of the population – rather than mere school attainment – are powerfully related to individual earnings, to

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<sup>86</sup> World Bank, “In their own language...education for all.”

<sup>87</sup> See Bamgbose, “Mother Tongue: Yoruba”; Klaus, “Indigenous Language Papua New Guinea.”

<sup>88</sup> Krueger and Lindahl, “Education for Growth.”

<sup>89</sup> Naudé, “Effects of Policy.”

the distribution of income, and to economic growth.”<sup>90</sup> If mother tongue literacy can improve the cognitive skills that make education effective, discussing MTL is even more imperative.

### *How Does it Work? Brief Overview of Language Planning Discipline*

In order to address these language education policy issues, the language planning discipline emerged in the 1960s. The purpose of the discipline is to suggest specific methods for how to change national and regional language policies. Language planning is specifically defined as follows:

Language planning is an activity, most visibly undertaken by government (simply because it involves such massive changes in a society), intended to promote systematic linguistic change in some community of speakers. The reasons for such change lie in a reticulated pattern of structures developed by government and intended to maintain civil order and communication, and to move the entire society in some direction deemed ‘good’ or ‘useful’ by the government.<sup>91</sup>

Language policy, as opposed to language planning, is “a body of ideas, laws, regulations, rules and practices intended to achieve the planned language change in the society, group or system.”<sup>92</sup> Haugen developed the first model of language planning in 1966, which included the following four elements: norm selection, codification, implementation/elaboration, and modernization.<sup>93</sup> Authors also tend to divide language planning into four main activities: corpus planning, status planning, acquisition planning and prestige planning. Status planning makes decisions regarding the relative roles of languages in a society in official settings. Corpus planning involves the codification of a language, by developing writing systems and standardizing languages. Language acquisition planning aims to increase the number of speakers of a certain language, which is often accomplished through language education planning.

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<sup>90</sup> Haunshek and Woessmann, “Role of Cognitive Skills,” 607.

<sup>91</sup> Kaplan and Baldauf “Language Planning Practice,” 11.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> See Baldauf and Ingram, “Language planning and language-in-education”; Ricento, “Historical Perspectives”; Haugen, “Ecology of Language”; and Fishman, “Language Loyalty.”

Language education planning is a sub-category of acquisition planning, which focuses on language use in schools. Language education planning determines the medium of instruction, defines the role of mother tongues and decides how to introduce secondary or foreign languages into the curriculum.

Ministries of Education usually organize and implement language education planning. However, this is not an absolute rule. Countries often have multiple institutions contributing to the process. In Senegal, for example, there is not just one office or ministry in charge of organizing and implementing language planning. Instead, language planning is coordinated between the Constitution and the Ministry of Literacy and National Languages, as well as non-governmental parties.<sup>94</sup>

Tollefson and Tsui note that while a demand to improve education may inspire language planning, political, social or economic priorities are often the most powerful forces in the process.<sup>95</sup> Despite conflicting priorities, language planning attempts to achieve a common set of tasks. Robert B. Kaplan and Richard B. Baldauf categorize goals of language planning into six categories:

1. To decide what languages should be taught within the curriculum.
2. To determine the amount and quality of teacher training.
3. To involve local communities.
4. To determine what materials will be used and how they will be incorporated into syllabi.
5. To establish a local and state assessment system to monitor progress.
6. To determine financial costs.<sup>96</sup>

While governments may have these goals for language planning, the process is usually more of a bottom-up approach. As Kaplan and Baldauf note, revitalization of a language “rarely arises in the Ministry of Education; rather, the Ministry of Education responds, to varying degrees to grass-

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<sup>94</sup> Diallo, “Language Planning Senegal,” 25.

<sup>95</sup> Tollefson and Tsui, “Centrality of Medium-of-Instruction,” 2.

<sup>96</sup> Kaplan and Baldauf, “Language Planning,” 195.

roots pressure from the community.”<sup>97</sup> Language planning is also not necessarily a nationwide process. Language planning can occur on a micro level, addressing individual needs of certain communities. NGOs and civil society members play a large role in this sort of micro planning.<sup>98</sup>

Ferguson notes in his book *Language Planning and Education* that sociopolitical and economic constraints primarily determine media of instruction in post-colonial Africa. Some ministries favor the continuation of colonial languages in education due to its ethnic neutrality. However while colonial languages are ethnically neutral, they are rarely socio-economically neutral, in that they are usually spoken by an elite population.<sup>99</sup> There is also a political bias toward the instruction of English because of its association with economic opportunities and social advancement. Coinciding with political pressures, governments also face significant economic constraints, thereby favoring less costly European language instruction. From dictionaries to textbooks to trained teachers, the cost of overthrowing an existing language policy is high. Governments already significantly rely on the financial assistance of donors for education expenditures. Therefore, the next section includes research on how these donors influence the language education planning process.

#### *Who Else Calls the Shots? Role of Foreign Aid in Language Planning*

As mentioned in the previous section, politics are a substantial factor in language planning decisions. One political influence is that of international donors. In Baldauf and Kaplan’s book *Language Planning and Policy in Africa Vol.1*, they found that “language-in-education policies are subject to sudden and radical changes in direction in accord with unstable political agendas” and are “sometimes driven by market forces.”<sup>100</sup> Foreign aid is likely to be one of these market forces in

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<sup>97</sup> Kaplan “Language Planning Europe,” 79.

<sup>98</sup> Kaplan and Baldauf, “Language Planning Local.”

<sup>99</sup> Ferguson, “Language Planning.”

<sup>100</sup> Baldauf and Kaplan, “Language Planning Africa,” 11.

many African countries because of a reliance on aid for education expenditures. For example in Niger, gross ODA disbursements to education were 51.63 billion annually from 2006-2011, while the Gross National Income (GNI) of Niger was only 5.7 billion in 2010.<sup>101</sup>

Some donors are vocal supporters of MTL. One of its biggest international advocates is UNESCO, which contributed a significant amount of research on the benefits of local language literacy.<sup>102</sup> The organization also sponsored the Intergovernmental Conference of Ministers on Language Policy in Africa in 1997. The declaration from the conference affirmed “the necessity and urgency for African clear policies for the use and development of mother tongues as well as community languages, national languages, inter-African and international languages.”<sup>103</sup> Development agencies particularly involved in this field include the German International Cooperation (GIZ), the Swedish Development Agency (SIDA) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

In addition, the French Development Agency (ADF) has recently become an advocate for mother tongue literacy. The past decade reflects a dramatic increase in French aid for local language literacy programs. Albaugh’s dissertation on language education in Francophone Africa notes this change in support, suggesting that the academic community in France was the cause for this dramatic change. According to her research, the academic community was able to garner support by framing mother tongue education as a tool for improving French test scores and overall French language acquisition under the threat of English linguistic imperialism.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> OECD/DAC Statistics, 2012.

<sup>102</sup> See UNESCO 1952, 1989, 2000.

<sup>103</sup> Trudell “Language, Culture, Development and Politics,” 404.

<sup>104</sup> Albaugh, “Colonial Image,” 391.

However, research previously intensely criticized the ADF for ignoring African languages in education in Francophone Africa.<sup>105</sup> From Alidou's personal communication as a development consultant, she writes, "as the main sponsor of African development programs at the World Bank, France will not support funding for programs that promote the comprehensive use of African language in schools."<sup>106</sup> Alidou also mentioned the complete lack of ADF assistance for bilingual education, saying that "there are no French or British government development agencies or non-government organizations supporting the bilingual education initiative in Mali, Niger, or Burkina Faso."<sup>107</sup>

While scholars discuss the role of former colonial powers in language education planning, few discuss the role of the World Bank. Albaugh categorizes the World Bank as an organization under largely "Anglophone" influence. However, Alidou finds a clear French influence on World Bank decisions, and suggests that the World Bank policies that favor French language education are intentional and "a careful consideration of the implications of such policies for French cultural and language policy in its former colonies."<sup>108</sup> Mazrui is also a vocal critic of the World Bank and even suggests that it is "destroying the future of African languages in education" by favoring European languages.<sup>109</sup> He suggests that the Bank is not neutral, but instead has "a vested interest in this interplay between linguistics and economics."<sup>110</sup>

One of the major ways that donors, such as the World Bank, contribute to education is through loans or donations for textbook manufacturing and distribution. For example, France

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<sup>105</sup> See Mazrui, "World Bank and Language"; Alidou, "Post-Colonial Africa," Kone, "Politics of Language."

<sup>106</sup> Alidou, "Post-Colonial Africa," 204.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 210.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>109</sup> Albaugh, "Colonial Image," 410. Originally from Mazrui, "World Bank and Language."

<sup>110</sup> Mazrui, "World Bank and Language," 55.

produces over 80% of all textbooks used in Francophone African countries.<sup>111</sup> Niger also relies significantly on free textbook grants, because of the government's limited expenditure capacity.<sup>112</sup>

Some scholars are concerned over how this dominance in spending on education affects the autonomy and effectiveness of language planning. For example, Alidou writes, "French and British publishing companies, such as EDICEF and Heinemann, continue to hold a monopoly on the textbook market in Africa, due to restrictive regulations imposed by the World Bank and international development agencies that finance African education."<sup>113</sup> Mazrui also provides the specific example of a World Bank loan for education to the Central African Republic that required the country to purchase all textbooks from France and Canada. Mazrui goes so far as to suggest that the European language policies of the World Bank prevent an "intellectual revolution" in Africa.<sup>114</sup> However, the World Bank states that promoting domestic production of textbooks is a major priority. It also financed programs that train in "authorship and publishing skills" to assist local publishing industries.<sup>115</sup>

The World Bank has also contributed an important amount of research toward a cost-benefit analysis of producing textbooks in local languages. One paper analyzes the unit-cost of producing textbooks in specific languages in Senegal. The paper concludes that local language materials are significantly more expensive to produce than French materials. However, they find that increasing economies of scale by expanding textbook production across country borders makes unit costs comparable to French textbook unit costs. The paper emphasizes the need for local demand, proper use and high quality maintenance in order for production to be worthwhile.

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<sup>111</sup> Nnana, "Livres Scolaires," 17.

<sup>112</sup> World Bank, "Textbooks in sub-Saharan Africa."

<sup>113</sup> Alidou, "Post-Colonial Africa," 200-201.

<sup>114</sup> Mazrui, "World Bank and Language," 46.

<sup>115</sup> World Bank, "Textbooks in sub-Saharan Africa."

Scholars are often left to speculate on the actual influence of donors over language planning decisions. As Albaugh found in her research, Ministries of Education are unlikely to admit to the influence of others over language planning decisions. With respect to the influence of the ADF, she writes:

A questioner must be aware of a power-play and a game of words happening between African leaders and France. Africans do not want to appear puppets, even while they complain of neocolonialism, and France does not want to appear the puppeteer. It is difficult, therefore, to get Africans to admit that France could communicate anything but support for French-only medium of education, and difficult to get French officials to admit they favor one policy over another.<sup>116</sup>

Overall, the research on the impact of foreign aid on mother tongue education is very limited. It characterizes the World Bank as an advocate for “new colonization” or a puppet for European preferences. While research sometimes distinguishes between the words and actions of the World Bank, it does not necessarily try to explain why they may be different. Furthermore, there is no research on the perceptions of World Bank influence and support. In the next section, I will outline the World Bank’s position on mother tongue literacy.

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<sup>116</sup> Albaugh, “Colonial Image,” 412.

## THE WORLD BANK'S POSITION ON MTL: TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

The position of the World Bank is not necessarily clear. Statements from the World Bank suggest that this may be an intentional attempt of the Bank to remain neutral. In an interview with Makha N'Dao, a World Bank employee visiting Niger, Mr. N'Dao said that local language literacy was “not a question for donors to have any opinion on, it was for the governments themselves to decide.” He actually criticized aid agencies such as GIZ and the Swiss for “setting tough conditionalities,” threatening to refuse aid if a certain national language policy is not adopted.<sup>117</sup> While the Bank may be attempting neutrality, the diverse nature of the institution also makes it easy for the World Bank to avoid a consensus.<sup>118</sup>

On the other hand, the World Bank sponsored a few working papers discussing mother tongue literacy. Thevenin's 1981 paper for the Bank was one of the first to mention mother tongue literacy. In this document, Thevenin synthesizes all previous publications, reports and studies written on bilingual or multilingual education. He emphasized the need for less linguistic analysis, but more sociolinguistic analysis to address the educational context within which mother tongue education might occur. The author specifically mentions a lack of literature on Francophone countries. In 1982, the World Bank sponsored another paper on MTL written by Nadine Dutcher, in which she analyzed the effectiveness of mother tongue education in multiple countries around the world.<sup>119</sup> Not surprisingly, the author failed to find a one-size-fits-all model for mother tongue education. The author did, however, recommend that education officials “think positively” about

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<sup>117</sup> Brock-Utne, “Education for All,” 122.

<sup>118</sup> Albaugh, “Colonial Image.”

<sup>119</sup> The paper analyzed case studies from the Philippines, Ireland, Canada, Mexico, Nigeria, Sweden, and the United States.

the use of first languages in education.<sup>120</sup> Other influential papers on mother tongue literacy analyze Southeast Asian case studies.<sup>121</sup>

Concerning African languages, the World Bank did in fact publish a series of notes titled *Indigenous Knowledge*.<sup>122</sup> Among the 60 notes written over a five year period, a number focus on local language literacy.<sup>123</sup> One note uses anecdotal evidence to suggest that some indigenous knowledge actually lies in the “medium of language itself.”<sup>124</sup> In another series titled *Education Notes*, one article specifically discusses the importance of first language instruction.<sup>125</sup> The authors argue that first language instruction increases access and equity in education, improves learning outcomes, reduces repetition and dropout rates, contributes to community inclusion and involvement in education, and reduces costs. They suggest that adoption of first language instruction is less widespread because of a fear of ethnic conflict, a lack of educational resources and resistance from parents. The authors note in the conclusion that first language instruction can coexist peacefully with coursework in European languages as well.<sup>126</sup>

The World Bank also published the paper “Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Policies for adjustment, revitalization and expansion” in 1988, which discussed how to improve education quality under restrained financial conditions.<sup>127</sup> The study inspired the creation of the Association for

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<sup>120</sup> Dutcher, “Primary and Secondary,” 50.

<sup>121</sup> See Dutcher, “Primary and Secondary”; Kosonen and Young, “Mother tongue Southeast Asia.”

<sup>122</sup> World Bank, “Indigenous Knowledge”; World Bank, “In their own language”; World Bank, “Pedagogical Implications”;

<sup>123</sup> See “*Burkina Faso*: Literacy for the ‘Little Ones’ in Nomgana,” “*Ghana*: Literacy and Local Governance in a Rural Community,” “Sahelian Languages, Indigenous Knowledge and Self-Management,” “West African Languages: Medium and Message,” “*Senegal*: Indigenous Language and Literature as a Non-profit Business.”

<sup>124</sup> Easton, “West African Languages: Medium or Message.”

<sup>125</sup> First language instruction is synonymous with mother tongue education. In World Bank, “In Their Own Language...Education for All.”

<sup>126</sup> World Bank, “In their own language.”

<sup>127</sup> World Bank, “Education in Sub-Saharan Africa.”

the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA). Originally functioning under the World Bank, it eventually moved to the International Institute of Education Planning (IIEP) of UNESCO in 1992. In 2008, it became part of the African Development Bank (AfDB). In 2006, ADEA held a conference in Libreville, Gabon on the theme “More and Better Education: What Makes Effective Learning in Schools, in Literacy and Early Childhood Development Programs.” Language issues were frequently discussed, and participants almost unanimously supported more incorporation of African languages in education.<sup>128</sup>

While the production of these working papers may imply institutional support for mother tongue education, all documents include a disclaimer that the document does not reflect the official position of the World Bank group. Even without these disclaimers, one cannot assume that all World Bank research informs and reflects all donor activities. As Abhijit Banerjee mentioned in an interview discussing the candidates for the Bank presidency, the World Bank struggles with a conflict of interests by being both an expert and a major donor.<sup>129</sup> Therefore, in order to determine the World Bank’s position as a donor, this research will specifically analyze how education projects use World Bank lending for mother tongue education.

### Methodology

In order to determine the World Bank’s position and support for mother tongue education, this paper analyzed 59 documents and reports from education projects. Since this research only analyzes Senegal and Niger, conclusions from this analysis should not extend beyond these two countries. I searched the World Bank project database for projects that addressed any of the following sectors: primary, secondary, tertiary, vocational training, adult literacy/non-formal

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<sup>128</sup> ADEA “More and Better Education.”

<sup>129</sup> BBC World Business Report Podcast, 27 March 2012.  
[http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/worldservice/wbnews/wbnews\\_20120327-1813a.mp3](http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/worldservice/wbnews/wbnews_20120327-1813a.mp3)

education and the general education sector.<sup>130</sup> Many projects in this region address a variety of human development goals, often incorporating a primary education component. I therefore limited the sample to projects that used at least 25% of funding on education issues. I also limited the analysis to projects specifically for Senegal or Niger, excluding regional and generally labeled “Africa” projects. This left 5 projects in Niger and 10 projects in Senegal (See Table 3 below).

This sample of documents excludes Environmental Assessments (EA) and Integrated Safeguards Data Sheet. It also only includes documents in English (See Appendix for a complete list of documents). Using the qualitative data analysis software *Nvivo*, this analysis asks the following questions:

1. How often do projects refer to language?
2. Do references to “mother tongue,” “local language,” or “national language” increase or decrease over time?
3. How often do the projects specifically refer to “mother tongue,” “local language” literacy? In what context are they referred to? How often is “French” or “English” referred to in a document compared to “mother tongue,” “local language,” or “national language?”
4. Are there any projects that stand out (outliers)?
5. Do references to “mother tongue” or “local language” differ between projects in Senegal and Niger?

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<sup>130</sup> While the database also included pre-primary projects, none existed in either Senegal or Niger.

Table 3. World Bank Education Projects in Senegal and Niger

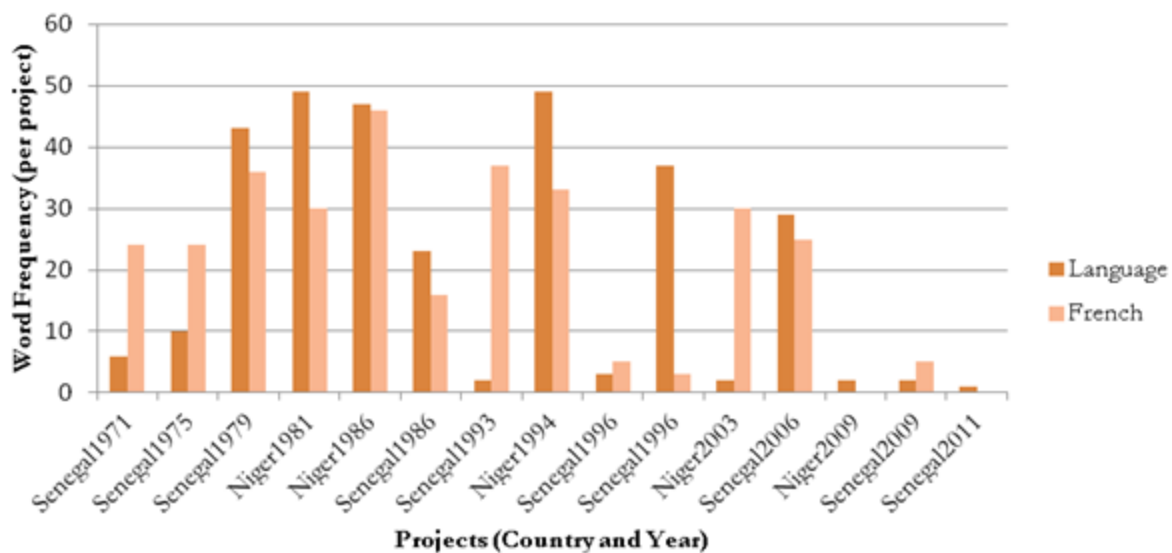
Project Title	Country	Project ID	Commitment Amount (millions USD)	Status	Approval Date
NIGER - Niger EFA-FTI Basic Education Project	Niger	P115436	8.00	Active	JUL 09, 2009
Basic Education Project	Niger	P061209	30.00	Closed	JUL 17, 2003
Basic Education Sector Project (Hybrid)	Niger	P001980	41.40	Closed	MAY 31, 1994
Education Project (02)	Niger	P001964	18.40	Closed	NOV 18, 1986
Education Project	Niger	P001952	21.50	Closed	MAY 26, 1981
Senegal Tertiary Education Governance and Financing for Results	Senegal	P123673	101.30	Active	MAY 26, 2011
Senegal EFA-FTI Catalytic Fund	Senegal	P116783	81.50	Active	JUL 09, 2009
Quality Education for All Project - Phase 2	Senegal	P089254	30.00	Active	AUG 30, 2006
Higher Education Project	Senegal	P002373	26.50	Closed	JUN 04, 1996
Pilot Female Literacy Project	Senegal	P035621	12.60	Closed	JUN 04, 1996
Human Resources Development Project (02)	Senegal	P002357	40.00	Closed	MAR 18, 1993
Primary Education Development Project	Senegal	P002325	12.00	Closed	OCT 14, 1986
Education Project (03)	Senegal	P002303	22.00	Closed	MAY 15, 1979
Education Project (02)	Senegal	P002291	15.00	Closed	JAN 28, 1975
Technical and Agricultural Education Project	Senegal	P002278	2.00	Closed	JUN 10, 1971

## Results

### **1. How often do projects refer to language?**

This research first investigates how often project documents refer to language, particularly national languages, in education projects in Senegal and Niger. No particular trend or pattern in references to language emerges from project documents, nor does there appear to be a difference between projects in Senegal and Niger. However, a couple of projects appear to be outliers. The second project in Senegal in 1996 shows a much larger frequency of the use of the word “language” over the use of the word “French,” because this project, the Pilot Female Literacy Project, was specifically geared toward local language literacy for rural illiterate women. Also, while the Niger 2003 “Basic Education Project” includes frequent mentions of “French,” this is due to the many references to the French Development Agency and its contributions to the project. This project also refers to French as a subject, and has frequent references to French in results tables and graphs.

Figure 2. Frequency of references to "language" vs. "French" in project documents



## **2. Do references to “mother tongue” or “local language” increase or decrease over time?**

In Figure 3 compares the number of references to French to references to African language by using the words “mother tongue,” “local language,” or “national language.” The first observation in Figure 3 is that there does not appear to be a trend in the usage of French or African languages. There were a similar number of references to “mother tongue,” “local language,” or “national language” in the 1979 Senegal “Education Project 3” and Senegal’s “Quality Education for All – Phase 2” project in 2006. Based on word frequency alone, there appears to be no increase in attention to local languages. If anything, this shows that projects have long given attention to the instruction of national languages.

If one instead looks at the context in which local languages are referred to, does one see a different story? In the Senegal’s “Education Project 3” in 1979, mother tongue literacy programs were primarily in the testing stages. They mentioned that experimental classes had started in 1978 in Wolof, Pulaar and Serer. They noted that one of the National Institute of Education’s main priorities was the “preparation of educational materials for pilot classes and related teacher-upgrading programs, as well as the preparation of test materials.”<sup>131</sup>

However, the 2006 “Quality Education for All Phase 2” project mentions that one of Senegal’s objectives for education was to “strengthen the leadership and management of literacy and local language programs both within and outside the education sector.”<sup>132</sup> Therefore, after analyzing the specific projects themselves, one notices that local language learning has in fact become more of a priority.

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<sup>131</sup> World Bank, “Staff Appraisal Report: Third Education Project,” Projects Department, West Africa Regional Office, Education Division, Report 2270a. Washington DC: World Bank, 1979.

<sup>132</sup> World Bank, “Project Appraisal Document on a Proposed Credit in the Amount of SDR 20.5 Million (US \$30 Million Equivalent) to the Republic of Senegal for a Quality Education for All Project in support of the Second Phase of the Ten-Year Education and Training Program,” Human Development II, Africa Region, Report No. 35798-SN, 8 August 2006, 25.

**3. How often do the projects specifically refer to “mother tongue” or “local language” literacy? In what context are they referred to? How often is “French” or “English” referred to in a document compared to “mother tongue” or “local language”?**

Figure 3 also shows that French outnumbers references to local, national, or mother tongues in almost every project.<sup>133</sup> As previously mentioned, the context of these references is most important. One report provides particularly interesting insight into the relative priorities of World Bank regional staff and central staff. The Project Performance assessment was written in 2004, and discusses three education projects in Niger from 1981, 1986 and 1994. In the report, one of the issues for future consideration is “Using Local Languages for Basic Children’s Literacy.” The section mentions that while Niger experimented with national language instruction in the 1980s, “positive outcomes, however, did not convince the government to promote literacy in national languages in later projects.”<sup>134</sup> The assessment goes on to mention that “the Bank was willing to make lending conditional on other highly unpopular policies, like contract teacher recruitment and double shifts, but it did not try to bring expertise and present a strong case to the government in favor of local-language instruction, even after a clear opportunity came in 2001 with the legislation calling for the development of national languages.”<sup>135</sup> While this report of the project was written three years after the last program ended (Niger 1994 project, which closed on December 31, 2001), it is interesting that the assessment would criticize the government for missing an opportunity to incorporate local language instruction.

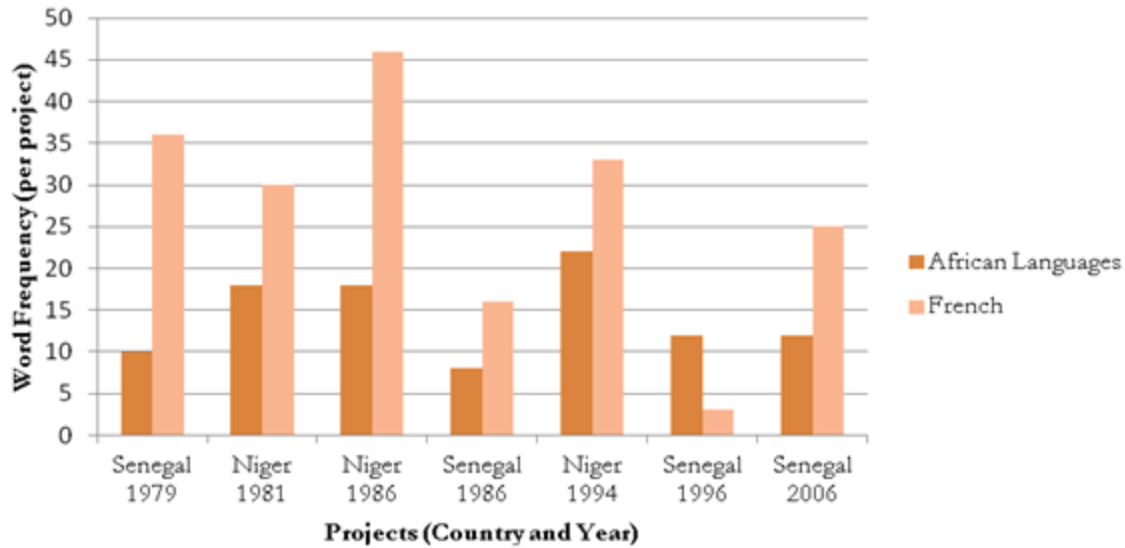
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<sup>133</sup> This is partially related to references to “French cooperation” or “French development agency.”

<sup>134</sup> World Bank, “Project Performance Assessment Report – Niger,” Sector, Thematic and Global Evaluation Group, Operations Evaluation Department, February 15, 2005. Washington DC: World Bank, 8.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 24.

Figure 3. Frequency of references to "mother tongue" "local language" or "national language" vs. "French" in project documents



The report also mentions a resistance of parents to local language learning. This resistance was characterized by parents' desires for higher social statuses through knowledge of European languages and a belief that their children "already know the local language."<sup>136</sup> Despite this claim, knowing a language does not necessarily mean the ability to read and write.

These recommendations also confirm previous research suggesting an influence of politics over language education planning. The report states, "For political reasons, local languages have been considered problematic in many countries. However, now that a law exists, Government officials state that there are no political obstacles to their use at this time." The report continues to suggest that the main obstacles were a lack of local language literacy among educators.<sup>137</sup>

The assessment also cites the failures of the French education system to improve reading outcomes. The authors actually suggest that in order to increase literacy, "early reading and basic

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 66.

information must be taught in local languages.”<sup>138</sup> According to this report’s assessment of project activities, while projects rarely used funding for local language literacy, the World Bank appears in favor of national language promotion in education.

#### **4. Do any projects stand out (outliers)?**

The one project that clearly stands out as an outlier in the graphs is the Pilot Female Literacy Project in Senegal implemented in 1996. This project specifically focused on improving literacy among women. Literacy programs such as this are typically in local languages to make classes more accessible to those without formal education. These non-traditional programs are also not usually associated with the World Bank. As Former Secretary of State Colin Powell writes in an editorial in the *New York Times*, people more frequently associate the World Bank with structural adjustment policies that cut education expenditures. However, in this editorial, Powell defends the World Bank and the IMF as institutions that contribute to development. Powell specifically cites the Senegal Pilot Female Literacy project as evidence of the World Bank’s new-found support for empowering development.

#### **5. Do references to “mother tongue” or “local language” differ between Senegal and Niger projects?**

While no difference exists between countries at first glance in these graphs, Senegal and Niger do differ in their strategies toward mother tongue education. For Senegal, project documents show a growing enthusiasm for national language education, particularly as a tool to provide access to education to rural, poorer citizens. Incorporating national languages into formal elementary school curricula is also increasingly a priority for Senegal.

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 27

However in Niger, mentions of local and national languages are in a more defeated tone. Assessments of projects emphasized a missed opportunity by the implementing Ministries to include local languages into their projects. According to the authors, resistance from parents and limited enthusiasm among government officials prevent local language integration. This suggests that while central World Bank staff may support MTL, funding is rarely used for this purpose in projects in Niger.

The differences between these two countries only further prove the World Bank's motto that one size does not fit all. Even within the same sub-region, every country has a different MTL strategy.

### Official Country Strategies

While project documents give us some notion of how countries use funding, it is important to compare this to previously constructed strategies. This section therefore analyzes each country's Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) and Education Strategy.

Each shareholder develops its own CAS and sector strategies through a dialogue with the World Bank board of directors. Each CAS incorporates compromises between the priorities of the country and what the Bank is willing to fund. The Bank intends for country ownership to drive the process. In theory, these strategies should therefore be the best representation of country priorities for uses of World Bank funding.

### Senegal

The primary document used to develop World Bank programs is the Country Assistance Strategy. Senegal's CAS briefly discusses objectives for education, including the explicit mention of the use of national languages. The Senegal Country Assistance Strategy discusses three ways in which Senegal plans to achieve universal primary education, one of which is by improving the

quality of primary and secondary education. As shown in an excerpt below, the strategy specifically suggests improving quality through “pilot primary education in national languages”:

1. Increasing coverage and equity through the expansion of primary & lower secondary enrollment, especially girls and children in under-served regions;
2. Improving quality & internal efficiency of primary/secondary through the reduction of dropout and repetition rates, especially in many under-served areas through school grants, pilot primary education in national languages, improving teacher training; and
3. Strengthening capacity for decentralized management through improved financial and budget management systems and programs for teacher career management.<sup>139</sup>

Separate from the CAS, two important documents compose the education strategy for Senegal. The first document is the *Lettre de politique générale pour le secteur de l'éducation et de la formation*, or the Letter of General Policies for the Education and Training Sector (LPG). Drafted in April 2009, it aims to readjust the policies of education and training for the years 2008-2015. This document was inspired by Senegal's commitment to achieve “Education for All” by 2015. The document emphasizes national languages similar to those found in project activities. In fact, strategic education goal 2-3 is for “the eradication of illiteracy and the promotion of national languages,”<sup>140</sup> suggesting the direct ability of national language instruction to eliminate illiteracy. The strategy further emphasizes the creation of a “literate environment” to ensure the promotion of national languages in school and public life, to prevent a relapse in illiteracy, and trying to “stimulate interest and motivation for learners.”<sup>141</sup>

The second document discusses the framework for the operation of Senegal's education strategy, which is called the *Programme décennal de l'éducation et de la formation* (PDEF) or the Decennial Program of Education and Training. The most recent document analyzes the third phase of the

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<sup>139</sup> Senegal, “Country Assistance,” 66.

<sup>140</sup> Senegal, “Education strategy LPG,” 2-3, personal translation.

<sup>141</sup> Senegal, “Education Strategy LPG,” 5.

national educational development plan for the program. It outlines the programs to be implemented in the third phase, strategies of the program, and its goals.

The document mentions language in multiple contexts. For the non-formal education program, one objective was to codify at least two new languages every year in order to improve access to non-formal education. In efforts to improve quality, the program introduced national language instruction into 450 experimental schools. They cited a 65.5% success rate on the CFEE exam in schools in Bakel, Kedougou and Tambacounda districts and a 100% success rate in schools in Mpal/St. Louis, Thilogne/Matam, Serigne M. Mbacke/Rufisque, Golmy/Bakel and Niankitte/Bignona.<sup>142</sup>

In this PDEF education strategy, it is clear that mother tongue literacy programs are not just intended for illiterate lower class populations. One of five primary objectives for education is to “extend curriculum in national languages into formal elementary education.”<sup>143</sup> Specifically regarding how to improve the quality of education, the strategy lists the following goals:

- To improve teacher qualification to follow the curriculum of basic education
- To adopt national languages to improve quality of education
- To create a new standardized curriculum for basic education among both public and private schools
- To acquire a sufficient number of textbooks
- To standardize evaluations and assessments across schools<sup>144</sup>

From this list and the suggestions above, it is clear that the Senegalese Ministry of Education has decided to use national language curriculum as a tool to improve the quality of education for both formal and non-formal sectors.

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<sup>142</sup> Senegal, “Education PDEF,” 22.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid, 41.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid, 51.

## Niger

The strategies for Niger tell quite a different story. The Country Assistance Strategy for Niger does not mention language once throughout the entire document. The education strategy similarly fails to mention language issues. This is a clear sign that for Niger, at least regarding World Bank funding, local language related initiatives are not a priority.

### Summary of Strategies

For both Senegal and Niger, there is a correlation between strategies and project activities. For Senegal, it seems clear that mother tongue literacy and education in national languages is a growing priority. There is evidence for this in the projects they implement (Pilot female literacy program), their priorities (such as in CAS for national language education) and the organization of their government (Ministry of National Languages). For Niger, it appears that mother tongue literacy is not a priority, even in their education strategy. While experimental bilingual programs exist in Niger, it is simply not a priority for World Bank education funding.

Results partially contradict the hypothesis that the World Bank discourages mother tongue literacy. In Senegal, there is clear support to use World Bank funds for MTL. Even in Niger, where the government is less enthusiastic about MTL, World Bank assessments encourage the inclusion of national languages into the curriculum.

In the next section, the research tests the influence of these patterns of World Bank funding on language education planning decisions.

### Implications of Position: Influence

Why is the position of the World Bank on mother tongue literacy relevant? It is only relevant if this position has a certain amount of influence over the supply and demand for local language instruction. Funding preferences can influence strategies and priorities of national governments.

Many scholars have made claims about the World Bank's influence in this respect.<sup>145</sup> However, as Albaugh mentions, to prove these claims is difficult, as African governments and World Bank representatives are unlikely to admit to this relationship. The second component of this research therefore seeks to analyze perceptions of influence using original interview data. In order to address Albaugh's concerns, this analysis does not exclusively look at the words themselves, but attempts to critically analyze underlying motivations.

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<sup>145</sup> See Mazrui, "World Bank and Language"; Brock-Utne, "Education for All"; Alidou "Post-Colonial."

## THE WORLD BANK'S INFLUENCE: INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

### Methodology

In order to prove the second element of the hypothesis, I conducted interviews with Senegalese and Nigerien citizens. These interviews included high-ranking Senegalese government officials as well as citizens without any official associations with the government. Through a standard questionnaire, I asked questions that addressed the following topics:

1. Importance and relevance of mother tongue literacy
2. Perceptions of purposes of literacy
3. Associations with the World Bank
4. Role of the World Bank regarding MTL issue and language planning
5. Senegal v. Niger: Country specific characteristics of language environment

The primary goal was to interpret the perceived influence of the World Bank on language-in-education planning decisions. The interviews also analyze whether the perceptions of the purpose of literacy converged with previous research on language attitudes. Unfortunately, the primary data for this interview analysis is limited. All three of the interview participants lived in Washington, DC, were highly educated, and were literate in both English and French. Furthermore, I was only able to interview three individuals: a Nigerien diplomat, a Senegalese national and a Nigerien national. Since primary interview data is limited, this research uses secondary research as a supplement.<sup>146</sup>

### Results

#### **1. Importance and relevance of mother tongue literacy**

I was generally surprised that few participants found mother tongue literacy to be an important issue. On the other hand, most education issues are not often considered to be pressing human rights disasters because of the delayed impacts of education policies. Therefore, one should expect a

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<sup>146</sup> This research originally planned to interview individuals from the World Bank. However, I was unable to get a response to my questionnaire from contacted employees.

certain level of apathy towards the subject. One Nigerien actually referred to it as a “non-issue,” saying that there were more pressing issues to be discussed.<sup>147</sup>

**R:** It might be more like a non-issue, really, as far as our national languages are concerned.

**I:** Mmhmmm

**R:** And as you say...uh we we just speak them and uh...I haven't seen really the need of uh, how do you say, teaching them at school. You know it's a good initiative, for *sure*, but uh, I haven't come across uh any, how do you say, uh, initiative, you know just just, you know to do just that.<sup>148</sup>

Other respondents were less direct, but instead hesitated over questions regarding general perceptions of mother tongue literacy. For example, one respondent expressed some uncertainty about whether it was really an issue.

**I:** What is your impression of people's attitudes towards becoming literate in their mother tongue?

**R:** Literate in their mother tongue...um uh I think it depends...uh...the people for example who have who have formal education in French schools...I do not have the impression that they are very enthused about the idea of learning uh how to read and write in their mother tongues. At least that's my impression – they're not very passionate about it.<sup>149</sup>

The hesitancy of responses suggests a limited discussion of mother tongue literacy on a regular basis, or a limited consensus on the issue. Again, these results are limited to my sample of participants.

## **2. Perceptions of purposes of literacy**

All of the participants clearly associated literacy with learning colonial languages. I sometimes had to explain further the meaning of local language literacy when interviewing participants. Some respondents seemed unsure of their literacy in certain local languages. For example, one participant mentioned that there was not an alphabet specific to Zarma or Hausa, and

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<sup>147</sup> In the following passages, “I” represents interviewer and “R” represents respondent.

<sup>148</sup> Interview with Niger citizen, March 26, 2012.

<sup>149</sup> Interview with Senegalese citizen, February 27, 2012.

that he used his knowledge of Roman characters from his French education to spell words phonetically:

**I:** Do you know how to read and write in either or Zarma or Hausa at all?

**R:** Uh no, no, no I can't. You can make it sound you know, Roman characters, you know ABC and so on but I haven't uh, I can *read* it, like I mean I can *read*, but what I'm saying that they don't have uh their own characters.<sup>150</sup>

This confirms previous research about the local language literacy in Senegal, described by Shiohata, which requires limited formal knowledge of Wolof spelling and grammar for daily comprehension.

Because participants associate literacy with learning colonial languages, they also perceive the benefits of literacy to be directly related to employment benefits for the future. Literacy is considered to be a marketable skill. However, literacy has not always served this purpose. While some believe that literacy in Africa came from Europeans, there are a significant number of indigenous African writing systems. In these eras, literacy was not necessarily used to gain profits, as they were rarely used in markets. However, as previously discussed, literacy often served religious and cultural purposes.

Despite this history of culturally focused literacy, today a language is not perceived to have value if not spoken outside of the country of Senegal or Niger. In the interview with the Nigerien diplomat, he suggested that it might be more valuable to learn another European language, instead of learning local languages. The diplomat said the following when referring to a past conversation about MTL:

**R:** I said yeah that's great, but you can't just learn a language to learn a language. You learn a language to succeed later in life and to earn money.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Interview with Niger citizen, March 26, 2012.

<sup>151</sup> Interview with Nigerien diplomat, February 29, 2012, personal translation from French.

As I mentioned before, my sample is limited to people who had had the opportunity to attend formal French schooling. For those who did not have access to formal education, literacy often has very different purposes. For a research paper conducted in Senegal, I attended an adult Pulaar literacy class. The class was entirely women from a small poor suburb of Dakar. Their motivations for literacy were quite different from those above. Instead, the purpose of literacy was to record expenses, keep a diary, and to make ancestors proud.<sup>152</sup>

### 3. Associations with the World Bank

Perceptions of the World Bank's status and influence are particularly important when determining the influence of the World Bank over language-in-education policies. Responses to this question tended to change over the course of the response. At first, the respondent had a more politically correct answer. He would later reveal other perceptions of the World Bank. For example, one respondent first noted that people associated with the World Bank with "aid." Later in the interview, the respondent said the following:

**I:** Do you think that people have a positive or negative kind of view of the World Bank in general or is it sort of neutral?

**R:** Uh I guess it's more like positive for the average, average joes, as you said, but uh the more educated you are the more you see that, if you take my, how do you say, my example for instance, when I started [school] my main objective is when I graduate is to work for the World Bank. But as I progress as my education I see that these international institutions *harm* us more than they do us any favor. You know I did international relations right away and it really opened up my eyes you know so this is the last place that I wanna work. It's a bank, and banks are meant to make profits, you know and that's uh so I don't really believe in their actions, you know that I don't really believe that they are helping.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Personal observation, reported in paper, "Senegalese Motivations for Local Language Literacy," for a course in Senegal in 2011.

<sup>153</sup> Interview with Nigerian citizen, March 26, 2012.

As seen in the passage above, respondents tended to characterize the World Bank as an institution that focused on making “profits.” The diplomat actually went into great detail in his response.

**R:** Now all countries have offices at the bank. There are local citizens that work for the bank. So there are ideas of the locals, to fix erroneous policies. Again though, the bank is who? The bank is Americans, it's the French, and it's the superpowers. They have their vision for the world. They want everyone to become capitalist... ...That's always going to be complicated though because the people before had another plan for their life. Me, I never wanted to make millions. All I wanted was to have my small house, to have my cows, and to have a life by the river. But they said no, you have to make a profit!<sup>154</sup>

While the respondents criticized the World Bank for perpetuating capitalist values, they themselves alluded to capitalist utility-maximizing values when discussing the purpose of literacy.

#### **4. Role of the World Bank in mother tongue education and language planning**

Given the negative associations with the World Bank's structural adjustment policies, I assumed that participants would believe that the World Bank actively discouraged mother tongue literacy. However, few suspected the World Bank of preventing these policies. Instead, participants were unsure about the World Bank's policies, or assumed that it did not have a particular strategy.

When I asked a Senegalese citizen if he thought that the World Bank would hypothetically support local language literacy, he said no.

**R:** Um I'm not sure. We would have to prove to them that it is economically sustainable and that it has concrete benefits. We would have to be able to prove that it's more efficient in terms of resources, more efficient than using than the education in French language. If we can prove to them, okay these kids that go to school, they are more likely to succeed and go all the way to university than these kids that go to school in French. If we can move to that maybe we can make a case for funding from the World Bank, but we would have to make that case.<sup>155</sup>

Similarly, when I asked a Niger citizen if he thought the World Bank supported MTL, he was unsure but pessimistic. Others more familiar with the World Bank's policies expressed their

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<sup>154</sup> Interview with Nigerien diplomat, February 29, 2012, personal translation from French.

<sup>155</sup> Interview with Senegalese citizen, February 27, 2012.

knowledge of some support by the World Bank. At the same time, they suggested that the language issue was not a priority.

Few respondents admitted to the possibility of a donor influencing the priorities of a country's government. This kind of response is to be expected and converges with Albaugh's findings that prove it is difficult to discern to what degree an entity is influenced, for they may not know themselves. While this specifically refers to the relationship between the French and former colonies, the relationship can be extended to any donor-recipient relationship.

## **5. Senegal vs. Niger: Differences in language environments**

I originally hypothesized there to be a difference in responses for two reasons:

- 1) Niger has significantly higher levels of poverty
- 2) Niger has a largely accepted lingua franca *Hausa*, while there is some hostility toward the promotion of the lingua franca *Wolof* among Senegalese citizens

Some interviews confirmed some of these differences. Nigerien respondents were quick to emphasize that Niger had more pressing issues than language-in-education policies to deal with, such as poverty and malnutrition. The Senegalese respondent rarely expressed such "zero-sum" concerns. This is especially interesting considering that Niger has been using experimental schools since 1973.

The Senegalese respondent did in fact discuss the perception of Wolof in the country, alluding to the potentially divisive qualities of national language education. He expressed particular concern about the domination of Wolof, or making Wolof the national language. On the other hand, I found little to no hostility towards Hausa by Nigeriens, even if Hausa was their second language. This is interesting considering Hausa is more widely spoken in Niger than Wolof is in Senegal.

### Summary of Interview Results

Many of the interview responses converge with previous literature regarding attitudes toward language. While the sample is limited, it provides anecdotal evidence that supports previous research on mother tongue literacy and education.

Regarding the influence of the World Bank, interviews and previous research imply that people rarely associate the World Bank with MTL. Respondents are unaware of the World Bank's position, which aligns with the Bank's attempt to remain neutral. However, when asked about whether they thought the World Bank would hypothetically support these initiatives, respondents did not assume the World Bank remained neutral, despite the World Bank's intentions. Instead, respondents used the World Bank's historical strategies toward education to inform their suppositions, which went as far as to assume hostility of the World Bank toward local languages.

## CONCLUSION

Language planning is a process influenced by many stakeholders. Donors are one of these stakeholders due to their financial influence. This research analyzed one donor in particular, the World Bank, to determine its position on mother tongue education and that position's influence over language planning decisions. The hypothesis was that the World Bank is an influential stakeholder, but discourages mother tongue literacy, specifically in Senegal and Niger. The World Bank's financial influence and priorities in the region informed this hypothesis, as well as previous literature on the World Bank's history of involvement in education.

The results contradict the original hypothesis that the World Bank is a hostile, influential actor toward MTL. After analyzing project documents, country assistance and education strategies, I found that countries do in fact use World Bank funding for mother tongue education and the promotion of national languages. However, the amount of funding differs between countries. Despite support in certain contexts, the World Bank's position is relatively unknown in an attempt to remain neutral. However, this neutrality is not well known either. Instead, people assume the World Bank has not changed its position on education. Specifically, people assume that the World Bank discourages MTL and considers language issues to be a limited priority. As a result, the World Bank's actual position, one of country ownership of the language planning process, is lost in translation.

Due to the ineffectiveness of the World Bank's strategy for neutrality, I suggest it is time to break the silence on the issue. In the following sections, I provide guidelines for how the World Bank might discuss mother tongue education in a way that aligns with its current mission, goals and priorities. However, the World Bank should implement these strategies with caution. The Bank should ensure that the primary message of its position is one of country ownership and autonomous language planning decisions. Otherwise, the Bank could be imposing a language plan not demanded

by local communities. While discussing language issues is a delicate process, one cannot move toward complete country autonomy of language-in-education planning with simply silence.

## POLICY SUGGESTIONS: HOW TO ADDRESS MOTHER TONGUE EDUCATION

The results indicate that the World Bank does not have a well-known position on mother tongue literacy. While the World Bank is the largest multilateral donor to these countries, smaller development agencies dominate the conversation. The World Bank attributes its lack of dialogue to an attempt to remain neutral. However, because of the history of the World Bank in the region, it will never be depicted as a neutral institution. Therefore, I believe it is in the Bank's interest to make its position known on how to address mother tongue education. Below I analyze values of the World Bank, and make suggestions on what the Bank should say in its discussion of the issue.

### **Country Ownership:** *Promote community-based initiatives for mother tongue education*

Increasing country ownership is a major World Bank priority, based on the idea that development will be more effective when developing countries decide what to do with Bank financing. Therefore, through a process of developing country assistance strategies, each country should set its own priorities for development.

This same theory should be applied to the promotion of mother tongue education. While research shows the educational benefits of mother tongue literacy, it is not necessarily the place of multilateral and bilateral donors to set a country's educational agenda. This echoes World Bank representative N'dao's criticisms of how other agencies impose language policies on developing countries.<sup>156</sup> N'dao's statement suggests that silence on mother tongue education reflects an attempt to remain neutral. However, this silence may not necessarily convey neutrality, but instead may suggest a general lack of support for mother tongue education. Therefore, the World Bank should clarify why it does not mandate the use of mother tongue education worldwide. Simultaneously, the

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<sup>156</sup> See the section titled "The World Bank's Position on MTL: Textual Analysis," 38, for more details.

World Bank should vocally support those countries wishing to expand the use of local languages in education.

**Knowledge and Learning:** *Study the impact of MTL on the quality of education for specific countries*

The World Bank is not just a donor, but a major research institution, providing wide access to data, reports and working papers. One of the Bank's missions, explained on its website, is "To ensure that countries can access the best global expertise and help generate cutting-edge knowledge, the Bank is constantly seeking to improve the way it shares its knowledge and engages with clients and the public at large."<sup>157</sup>

Therefore, one small way in which the World Bank can contribute to global knowledge and learning would be to sponsor more research on the impact of mother tongue education on the quality of education. This sort of research should be conducted on a country-by-country basis, rather than conducting worldwide assessments,<sup>158</sup> in order to generate relevant conclusions and suggestions for individual education systems. Due to the expensive nature of this data, the World Bank might be one of the best equipped institutions to fund this sort of research.

**Entrepreneurship:** *Create opportunities for local textbook manufacturers*

The World Bank cares about jobs. As a former Managing Director of the World Bank Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala said, "I have yet to meet a single poor person who did not want the dignity of the

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<sup>157</sup> World Bank, "What We Do," *The World Bank Group*, 2012.  
<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTABOUTUS/0,,contentMDK:20103838~menuPK:1696997~pagePK:51123644~piPK:329829~theSitePK:29708,00.html>.

<sup>158</sup> See Dutcher, "Primary and Secondary."

job.”<sup>159</sup> A major way in which the World Bank contributes to job creation is by promoting entrepreneurship.

Textbook publishing is one avenue for entrepreneurship that the World Bank should continue to address. As cited earlier, scholars often criticize the Bank for its undemocratic process of giving grants to textbook manufacturers. The monopoly held by European companies on textbook manufacturing makes creating textbooks in local languages expensive. However, the World Bank has the power to create opportunities for these local textbook manufacturers by providing loans and resources. The Bank should also continue its support of local NGOs such as ARED in their production of materials in local languages.

**Transparency and Open Data:** *Create a page on the education website that discusses language*

Finding information on the World Bank’s position on language and education was surprisingly difficult. This contradicts the Bank’s commitment to “open development.”<sup>160</sup> An easy solution would be to create a section on the Education website that discusses the issue of language. This would create a forum for discussion on how to approach multilingualism in educational development.

**Quality-Consistent Data:** *Encourage a worldwide definition of literacy to include mother tongue*

A major problem with literacy data are the differences in relative definitions of literacy. Literacy statistics in the World Databank, compiled by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS),

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<sup>159</sup> Elizabeth Flock, “Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, World Bank presidential candidate, says she would focus on job creation,” Washington Post, 9 April 2012. [http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/ngozi-okonjo-iweala-world-bank-presidential-candidate-says-she-would-focus-on-job-creation/2012/04/09/gIQAxR7j6S\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/ngozi-okonjo-iweala-world-bank-presidential-candidate-says-she-would-focus-on-job-creation/2012/04/09/gIQAxR7j6S_story.html)

<sup>160</sup> World Bank, “What We Do,” *The World Bank Group*, 2012. <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTABOUTUS/0,,contentMDK:20103838~menuPK:1696997~pagePK:51123644~piPK:329829~theSitePK:29708,00.html>.

was mostly gathered from national census data. The lack of a standardized process for literacy data collection causes discrepancies, making worldwide statistical comparison difficult. A minor suggestion would be for the World Bank to encourage countries to include mother tongue literacy as a legitimate form of literacy. Until then, the Bank should explain in their metadata how literacy statistics were gathered for each individual country.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> This information is actually available in the Appendix of the *Education for All Global Monitoring Report* on Literacy from 2006: [http://www.unesco.org/education/GMR2006/full/annex1\\_eng.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/education/GMR2006/full/annex1_eng.pdf). It is not, however, published in the World Databank's metadata.

## APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE (ENGLISH)

### **African Citizen Supplemental Questions**

#### Personal Information

- What languages do you speak?
- What language did you first learn how to speak?
- What language did you first learn how to read in? Write in?
  - When?
- Can you read and write in the other languages you speak? If yes, which ones?
  - When did you learn how to read and write in these other languages?
- Which languages were you specifically taught in school?
- What languages do your parents speak?
  - Can they read and write in these languages? If so, which?
- Do you have any siblings? Are they literate? If so, in what languages?

### **General Questions (for World Bank/Development Contractors/Citizens)**

#### Perceptions of Language Attitudes

- Have you visited/lived/worked in (Senegal/Niger) or Francophone Africa?
  - If yes, what was your impression of people's attitudes toward becoming literate in their local language?
- Do you think there is demand for local language literacy in (Senegal/Niger)? Which languages?
- What is your perception of government attitudes toward local language literacy?
  - Attitudes of teachers?
- What is the general public opinion of the World Bank in Senegal/Niger? In other words, what do people associate with the World Bank?
- Do you think the World Bank supports local language literacy?

#### Personal Opinions of Local Language Literacy

- What do you think are the advantages or disadvantages of becoming literate in one's local language?
- Do you think local languages should be taught in schools, with or without French?

- If a school could only choose to teach one language, should it choose a local language or French?
- Is it important to you for your children to be literate in their Mother Tongue?
- What makes teaching local language literacy in schools difficult?

### **World Bank/Development Contractor Supplemental Questions**

#### French Government Policies

- Do you know if the French development agency (AFD) supports any local language literacy efforts? Specifically in Senegal/Niger?
- Are you aware of any French literacy programs funded by the AFD? Specifically in Senegal/Niger?
- Do you think the French government would be more likely to fund a French literacy program or a local language literacy program?

#### World Bank Policies

- Are you aware of any official strategies of the World Bank toward local language literacy?
- Can you think of any specific programs that the World Bank has sponsored that involve local language literacy?
- According to my findings, a major contribution of international donors to education is textbooks. Do you know who usually publishes and manufactures these textbooks? How is this determined?
- In Senegal/Niger, what were the largest expenditures by the World Bank toward education in the past five to ten years?
- Does the World Bank spend more money on primary, secondary or higher education in this country?
  - Do you know how much the government generally spends on each of these sectors?
- Who are some major non-governmental partners in education in Senegal/Niger?

## APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRE (FRENCH)

### Questions pour citoyens d'Afrique Francophone

#### Renseignements Personnels

- Quelles langues parlez-vous?
- Quelle est votre langue maternelle ?
- Dans quelle langue avez-vous appris à lire et écrire d'abord?
  - À quel âge ?
- Est-ce que vous pouvez lire et écrire les autres langues que vous parlez ? Si oui, quelles langues ?
  - Quand est-ce que vous avez appris à lire et écrire ces langues ? À quel âge ?
- Quelles langues est-ce que vous avez appris à l'école?
- Vos parents parlent quelles langues ?
  - Est-ce qu'ils peuvent écrire et lire ces langues ? Si oui, lesquelles ?
- Avez-vous des sœurs ou des frères ? Est-ce qu'ils/elles peuvent écrire ou lire ? Si oui, quelles langues ?

### Questions générales

#### Les perceptions des attitudes linguistiques

- Est-ce que vous avez déjà visité/ vécu / travaillé au (Sénégal/Niger) ou en Afrique francophone ?
  - Si oui, quelle était votre impression des attitudes des gens vis-à-vis de l'alphabétisation en langues locales ?
- Pensez-vous qu'il y ait une demande pour l'alphabétisation en langues locales au Sénégal/Niger ? Quelles langues ?
- Quelle est votre impression des attitudes du gouvernement vis-à-vis de l'alphabétisation en langues locales?
  - Les attitudes des enseignants ?
- Quel est l'avis du grand public vis-à-vis de la Banque mondiale au Sénégal/Niger? En d'autres termes, la Banque mondiale est synonyme de quoi au Sénégal/Niger?
- Pensez-vous que la Banque Mondiale soutienne l'alphabétisation en langues maternelles ?

#### Les opinions personnelles sur l'alphabétisation en langues locales

- Quelles sont les avantages ou les désavantages de l'alphabétisation en langues locales ?

- Pensez-vous que les langues maternelles doivent être enseignées dans les écoles ? Avec ou sans le français ?
- Si une école ne pouvait choisir qu'une langue, devrait-elle choisir une langue locale ou le français ?
- Est-il prioritaire pour vous que vos enfants soient alphabétisés dans leur langue maternelle ?
- Quelles sont les difficultés à enseigner les langues locales dans les écoles ?

### **Questions pour la Banque Mondiale et les Entrepreneurs de Développement**

#### Les politiques du gouvernement français

- Savez-vous si l'Agence Française de Développement (AFD) soutient les efforts pour l'alphabétisation en langues locales ?
- Êtes-vous au courant des programmes pour l'alphabétisation en français financés par l'AFD ? Spécifiquement au (Sénégal/Niger) ?
- Selon vous, est-ce que ce serait plus probable que le gouvernement français finance un programme pour l'alphabétisation en français ou en langue locale ?

#### Les politiques de la Banque Mondiale

- Êtes-vous au courant des stratégies officielles de la Banque Mondiale relatives à l'alphabétisation en langues locales ?
- Connaissez-vous des programmes financés par la Banque Mondiale qui soutiennent l'alphabétisation en langues locales ?
- Selon mes recherches, les donateurs internationaux contribuent beaucoup dans la fourniture en manuels scolaires. Savez-vous qui publie ces manuels généralement ? Selon quels critères ?
- Au (Sénégal/Niger), quelles c'étaient les plus grandes dépenses par la Banque Mondiale pour l'éducation depuis les cinq ou dix ans ?
- Est-ce que la plus grande dépense de la Banque Mondiale est pour l'enseignement primaire, secondaire ou supérieur au (Sénégal/Niger) ?
  - Savez-vous combien ce gouvernement dépense pour chacun de ces secteurs ?
- Qui sont les partenaires non-gouvernementaux importants dans le domaine de l'éducation au (Sénégal/Niger) ?

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