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CHOICE OF LANGUAGES, CHOSEN TONGUES.

ADVOCACY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL LANGUAGES

CHOIX DE LANGUES, LANGUE(S) CHOISIE(S).

PLAIDOYER EN FAVEUR D'UN DÉVELOPPEMENT DURABLE DES LANGUES NATIONALES

Arguments

From Dard (1826) to Creissels (2017), via Hardy (1917), Cornevin (1967), Tabi Manga (quoted in Dumont, 1992), Cheikh Anta Diop (2009), Tadadjeu & sq. (2004; 1984); Diki- Kidiri (2004), Assoumou (2010) or Diakhaté (2017), the problem of choice of language or language chosen in a sphere that mainly speaks another continues to fuel debates in amphitheatres and public spaces, in many African countries. The issue has become more complex with the advent of the idea of emergence.

Historical points of view and facts clearly prove that a language conveys cultural facts, helps to better understand the world, but also can assimilate... The roles played by the school and the French language in colonization have amply been demonstrated.

The function that Georges Hardy (1917, pp. 6-7) attributed to the French school of AOF, for example, is very clear: « *Pour transformer les peuples primitifs de nos colonies, pour les rendre le plus possible dévoués à notre cause et utiles à nos entreprises, nous n'avons à notre disposition qu'un nombre très limité de moyens, et le moyen le plus sûr, c'est de prendre l'indigène dès l'enfance, d'obtenir de lui qu'il nous fréquente assidûment et qu'il subisse nos habitudes intellectuelles et morales pendant plusieurs années de suite ; en un mot, de lui ouvrir des écoles où son esprit se forme à nos intentions .* » [We translate]. " *To transform the primitive peoples of our colonies, to make them as devoted as possible to our cause and useful to our enterprises, we have at our disposal only a very limited number of means, and the surest way is to take the native from childhood, to obtain from him only he frequents us assiduously and submits to our intellectual and moral habits for several years in a row; in a word, to open schools for him where his mind is formed for our purposes* ".

After the independence of the African States, the languages of the former colonizers – for

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many countries – became official or co-official languages in front of a multitude of African languages, however vehicular. In this context, Denis Creissels (2017, p. 1), speaking of the situation of the languages of Africa vis-à-vis the languages of the former colonizer, underlines: « *En dehors de la Mauritanie (dont la langue officielle est l'arabe), aucun pays ouest-africain n'a accordé le statut de langue officielle à une langue autre que celle de l'ancienne puissance coloniale. [...] La plupart des pays ouest-africains reconnaissent une partie de leurs langues comme "langues nationales", mais ce terme ne correspond à aucun statut juridique précis.* » [We translate] « *Apart from Mauritania (whose official language is Arabic), no West African country has granted official language status to a language other than that of the former colonial power. [...] Most West African countries recognize part of their languages as "national languages", but this term does not correspond to any precise legal status* ».

The fight for the promotion of these languages is still a hotly debated subject, more than half a century later. African languages are struggling in their fight to be recognized as official languages and are content to be “national”, without this status allowing them to be languages that can play real institutional, diplomatic and economic roles.

Ideas linking the emergence of African nations to an efficient use of their national languages are not new. They have been defended and continue to be defended by many African nationalists according to whom, without a good place granted to national languages, there would be no total development for a nation. Cheikh Anta Diop (2009, p. 405) is among the first to mention this need to promote the national languages of Africa when he argues: « *Il est plus efficace de développer une langue nationale que de cultiver artificiellement une langue étrangère.* » [We translate] « *It is more effective to develop a national language than to artificially cultivate a foreign language* ».

In the context of teaching/learning, some pedagogues have realized the need to use national languages. It is, moreover, in this context where it is question of the importance of the mother tongue of the child in their teaching/learning that we insert the intervention of Jean Tabi- Manga (quoted by Dumont, 1992, p. 133) who emphasizes: « *En Afrique, les instances dirigeantes semblent oublier que c'est bien la langue maternelle qui permet le véritable décollage intellectuel de l'enfant. C'est elle qui lui donne la possibilité d'articuler sa pensée, de saisir son rapport au monde. Lui refuser de tirer profit de l'acquis du substrat linguistique dans l'apprentissage du français, c'est lui ôter les moyens de répondre au besoin d'expression et de créativité. C'est pourquoi l'enseignement du français doit s'appuyer sur les langues africaines.* » [We translate] « *In Africa, the governing bodies seem to forget that it is indeed the mother tongue which allows the real intellectual take-off of the child. It gives them the possibility of articulating their thoughts, of grasping their relationship to the world. To refuse a child to take advantage of the acquisition of the linguistic substrate in learning French is to deprive them of the means of responding to the need for expression and creativity. This is why the teaching of French must rely on African languages.* »

It is in this context, marked by challenges linked to living together, to the economy and to the governance of decentralized territorial communities, that Africa today faces the challenges of the didactic-pedagogical phenomenon of national languages and official languages. Thus, several foreign languages, in particular Indo-European ones, share the African linguistic horizon alongside a plurality of African languages, the latter being neglected by the educational system.

We are therefore witnessing today, in African educational institutions in general, an

almost absolute and intensive use of Western languages. This situation could lead to the total disappearance of the African linguistic richness, if nothing is done for its preservation. Indeed, foreign languages such as English, French, Portuguese or Arabic... excel in an almost absolute way in many African schools. While at the same time, learners live in other national languages, those of their cultures and their environment, without conflict with that of their schooling.

These multilingual didactic-pedagogical situations deserve to be reconsidered if indeed our national languages are not "patois" and could even quite well complement the teaching/learning of the official languages, in particular French and English in most cases. What would the new didactics of national and/or official languages consist of in context? What can be the reproducible methodologies and approaches in a didactic-pedagogical situation for a better economic benefit? How to make the teaching of national and foreign languages more effective in an African context? These are some of the issues raised by this collection.

Cinétismes, as an online multidisciplinary and international scientific journal that promotes a transversal look at the phenomena of language (sign, text, language, memory), aims to serve as a focus and cluster for scientific research and reflection between language experts, such as they are taught, used and valued in Africa, with sharing of experiences in this area. One of the particularities of this issue is therefore to examine and review the didactic-pedagogical practices of national and official languages with a view to improving these practices, reporting experiences and opening up economic prospects towards the language market.

Objectives and contents

The content of this volume 1 is provisionally organized around the following axis:

- Axis 1: Dynamics of national/official languages
- Axis 2: Return of didactic and pedagogical experiences in multilingual and intercultural environments
- Axis 3: Languages in the economy and at work

Topics

The contributions to this issue of the journal *Cinétismes* are well circumscribed without being limiting. Thus, several topics can be subject for this collection:

- *The description of the linguistic landscape in bi/pluri/multilingual African environments;*
- *Language literacy and teaching/learning issues;*
- *National languages in the context of teaching/learning official languages;*
- *The problem of choosing national languages for the status of official languages in a multilingual context;*
- *The level of codification of local minority languages today (should they all be codified?);*
- *The stakes of the linguistic codification of national languages;*
- *National/official languages in African school systems;*
- *Raising awareness and preserving national languages;*
- *Language education in bi/plurilingual and multilingual environments;*

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- *Language planning and acquisition;*
 - *Efficiency of linguistic and didactic policies;*
 - *Training of teachers;*
 - *Didactic-pedagogical feedback on the promotion of national/official/minority/minorized languages;*
 - *Language teaching methods/approaches in Africa;*
 - *Textbooks for teaching national and official languages in Africa;*
 - *The didactics of national and official languages in the African context;*
 - *The representation of national languages and didactic perspectives;*
 - *Issues of linguistic assessment in language didactics;*
 - *Effectiveness of language policies in the economy;*
 - *The role of languages in economic activity (quantification of the effect on linguistic and economic variables, on linguistic skills and on practices);*
- Added values of plurilingualism or multilingualism in terms of professional training and experience, etc.*

Calendar

- Launch of the call: **February, 2023**
- Deadline for submission: **August 1, 2023**
- Notification of acceptance: **August 1, 2023**
- Deadline for receipt of corrected articles: **August 20, 2023**
- Publication: **September 05, 2023**

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