Promoting Multilingualism as a Resource in Education: *A Minor Field Study on a Senior Secondary School in The Gambia*

by Melinda Malmström
Acknowledgments

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Abstract

The study aims to explore how students’ linguistic resources are used for learning in a school in Gambia. The study is a field study and was conducted at a Senior Secondary School during January and February 2023. As a postcolonial country, Gambia is a culturally and linguistically highly diverse country with English as the official language and several native languages, also called local languages. Despite this fact, English is the only language of instruction. The local languages are used as the main means of daily communication, while English is used in communication with the authorities and as a language of instruction. The students, in other words, do not learn to read and write in their first language, which is one of the local languages.

The theoretical framework for the study is Janks’ theory of critical literacy (2010) which emphasizes the concepts of domination, access, diversity, and design. The method is a qualitative research method with an ethnographic approach, based on interviews with both students and teachers, as well as participant observation and documentation of lessons in several school subjects. The material consists of audio-recorded interviews and field notes from the lesson observations. The results show that the majority of the study’s participants expressed advantages in using all their common linguistic resources in school. However, one teacher considers that he, as a state school employee, is obliged to use only English as the language of instruction and sees no reason to question it. Also, according to one student’s opinion, it is right to use English as a common language, and not to use the local languages as a support for students’ understanding.

The result from the classroom observations shows that there is a gap between the students’ requesting more language support in teaching and the teachers’ use of multilingualism as a resource for learning. Only occasional examples and no systematic use of local languages were observed during lessons for promoting learning and multilingual development. Despite this, there were teachers, who, although they were obliged through the curriculum to only use the English language, chose to include students’ linguistic resources, interests, and earlier experiences in the curriculum. One conclusion of the study is that the issue of linguistic and cultural diversity in the classroom is not easy to solve, due to the complex language situation in Gambia. Another conclusion is that teachers, through their choice of a didactic design based on students’ linguistic resources, interests, and earlier experiences, can support students’ access to the curriculum and contribute to a more equitable education.

Keywords: Access to the Curriculum, Didactic Design, First Language, Language of Instruction, Language Domination, Linguistic and Cultural Diversity, Multilingualism
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Introduction

Many years of teaching languages made me interested in how multilingual students’ linguistic resources are used in school. My interest in this led to further studies. For my Master thesis project, I was searching for a locality that historically is characterized by a cultural and linguistic diversity. Gambia was a relevant choice for examination of students’ use of multilingual resources in school, due to its diverse linguistic landscape. Through a Minor Field Studies (MFS) scholarship-program I was given an opportunity to collect material for this thesis, for two months, in January and February 2024 in the southwestern region of Gambia. My background of teaching Swedish as a second language for immigrants has given insights of language barriers, when the language of instruction is not the student’s first language. My research thus draws upon my own experiences as a teacher and here added with an international perspective as the study has an ethnographic approach.

The focus of this research is to capture thoughts and practices from a Gambian Senior Secondary school about the use of linguistic resources. Thus far, there exists a shortage of broader research that concentrates on education in Gambia. However, research (Axelsson, 2015; Cummins, 2007; Svensson, 2015) shows that there appears to be many positive aspects to using students’ first language and most frequently spoken languages in their everyday life, in education. It is indicated that language fluency is crucial not only for understanding new information but also for expressing oneself. This is a prerequisite for the access and development of new knowledge.

Gambia has an official language, English, and several native languages also called local languages. English is the language of instruction. Despite of this, English cannot be considered as a full scale and complete majority language as it is hardly in widespread use (Jammeh, 2012). Local languages are used in everyday life in the society and English is formally practiced only in education, in contacts with authorities and in politics (Levin, 2022). Additionally, one must consider the number of Gambians that are illiterate or not educated in English (Jammeh, 2012). Local languages, and not English, are the teachers’ and students’ first language or mother tongue (Levin, 2022). The terms first language, mother tongue, and L1 are frequently used synonymously in the literature. However, the term mother tongue has been debated and there are different definitions of it (for a detailed discussion, see Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981, p. 20–61). A child can master several first languages in a home environment where the parents and other family members speak different local languages due to their original ethnic group or other background (Makalela, 2015). In the present study I consequently use the term first language except in excerpts where the study participants themselves use the term mother tongue.

This study may contribute to the field of multilingualism in education. The term multilingualism is according to Makalela (2015, p. 201) defined as “using plural practices (...) in multilingual contexts where more than three languages are used simultaneously”. A multilingual context exists in Gambia as more than two local languages are used in the transition to English as the language of instruction.
1.1 Aims and objectives

The aim of this study is to explore how students’ linguistic resources are used for learning at a Senior Secondary School in Gambia. The following research questions guide this study:

1. What are the teachers’ and students’ opinions about the use of students’ linguistic resources at a Senior Secondary School in Gambia?

2. To what extent and in which ways do students get the opportunity to use their local languages in school to promote learning?

The research aims to conduct a critical analysis of the collected data to answer these questions.
2 Background

In this chapter information with significance to the study will be presented. As the study was conducted through a scholarship, a brief description of Minor Field Studies will be provided in 2.1. In 2.2 the study’s connection to Sustainable Development Goals will be considered. In part 2.3 the language situation and the education system in Gambia is outlined.

2.1 Description of Minor Field Studies

Malmö University offers scholarships for Minor Field Studies (MFS) to students for conducting studies abroad at bachelor’s or master’s level. The MFS scholarship is financed by Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and one of the criteria for this scholarship is that the field study is conducted in an approved low-income country. Another important criterion is that the stay for collecting data must be for a minimum of 2 months. An added requirement to consider for the MFS scholarship is to connect the field studies to the process of development of education as outlined in the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015).

2.2 Sustainable Development Goals

The purpose of UN Sustainable Development Goals is to improve the lives of everyone in the world. The focus of this study is how a certain school in Gambia deals with the language of instruction and how this affects students’ conditions for learning. The choice of topic is specifically linked to one of the seventeen UN Sustainable Development Goals, concerning education. Goal 4 in the 2030 Agenda is related to this study by its description: “Quality education, to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (U.N. 2015). The students’ equal and inclusive access to quality education depends on the possibilities of learning and understanding during lessons. Inclusive education provides linguistic support where all students’ language skills are seen as a resource (Herzog, 2012; Jammeh, 2012). This study also looks at how language use in school and teaching strategies are perceived by teachers and students in the school. Language rights on equal terms for all students in school makes education an investment priority and contributes to development and tolerance according to Goal 4. In the long term this affects students’ future possibilities of becoming an inclusive member of the society, necessary for success in life. This goal is clearly stated in the UN declaration in the 2030 Agenda.

2.3 Language situation and Education system in Gambia

Gambia was colonized by Britain in 1888 and received independence from British colonial power in 1965 (Levin, 2022). Gambia’s language situation and education system are affected and have clear traces of postcolonial impact (Jammeh, 2012). The country has been forced to undergo drastic societal changes since receiving independence and the Gambian society is still struggling with for example language issues. As English has remained the official language in the country, the spoken indigenous languages have a secondary status (Richmond, 1980).

Before the colonization of Gambia none of the ethnic languages were written but existed purely in oral form. The first schools were introduced by Christian missionaries and teaching materials were written in English by colonials (Jammeh, 2012, p. 23). Gambia received independence from British colonization in 1965, however English continues to be used as the official language and as the language of instruction.
Mandinka, Fula, Wolof, Jola and Serer are the most spoken local languages in the whole country (Levin, 2022). According to the same author, Gambians speak two or three of these local languages and around half of the population is also fluent in English. Even though English is used as the medium of instruction in school, the local languages are primarily used as languages of communication in daily life (Levin, 2022).

There are 7 regions in Gambia: the Lower River Region, and North Bank Region, the Central River Region, the Upper River Region, the West Coast Region, Kanifing and Banjul. The last one is also the capital. According to the Gambia Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) report (2018), Mandinka is the largest ethnic group in the country at 38% of the population, followed by Fula at 21% and 18% are Wolof speaking. The existence of different local languages varies geographically between rural and urban regions in Gambia and have different dialects spoken in many countries of West Africa.

Most regions have a mixture, even though certain ethnic groups are more concentrated in the districts of other regions. Mandinka are concentrated in the Lower River Region, and North Bank Region, these regions have some Fula and Wollof speakers as well. Wollof dominate the central river Region, while Fula dominate the Upper River Region. The Jolas are highly concentrated in the West Coast Region in the Fonis, though they don’t form the majority in the West Coast. These regions, Kanifing and Banjul are dominated by the Wollof, but the two are the most cosmopolitan areas. It is important to note that Madinkas are found in all the regions, like the rest of all local languages.

According to Gambia’s National Education Policy (2016-2030) Gambia has a basic education system encompassing nine years of compulsory school. In recognition of this provision the policy has created a growth in the upper basic level in terms of increased enrolments and expanded infrastructure. The Gambian education system is like the one in the UK and starts with Nursery, usual from age 3 to 6. Then the first years of schooling make up the route of Basic Education: Lower Basic Schools have grades 1-6 with age of children from 6 to 12, followed by Upper Basic Schools which have grades 7-9 with the age of students from 12 to 15. Senior Secondary level have grades 10-12 for students from 15-18 years old. At the end of Senior Secondary students take the West African Senior School Certificate (WASSCE). The stages of education can then be followed by undergraduate and graduate university education depending on their results. It is also common with private schools of which some are international schools and religious Qur’anic education for students of all ages, funded by high school fees.

Gambia is divided into seven school districts, according to Gambia’s National Education Policy (2016-2030), and the first years in school the children are taught in English. The teachers blend the teaching with local languages based on the teacher’s discretion (McGlynn, 2013). Early education is grounded on oral pedagogy and teaching the alphabet and numbers by songs and memorization in English (McGlynn, 2013).

Teachers are employed and randomly posted into different districts and regions of the country. Due to this they do not necessarily understand students' all local languages. In this case English is the common language in the classroom. But there are challenges for both teachers and students as it is not fully sufficiently for the understanding (Jammeh, 2012). Students in school at times

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1 Information from personal communication with teachers at the Senior Secondary School where the study was conducted.
understand each other’s local languages. They often switch between several languages when speaking to different classmates (Jammeh, 2012).

To increase opportunities to study in higher education, to study abroad and for employment it is considered particularly important to have a good command of English. Many Gambian students pursue a career abroad, for example in Europe, for education after finishing Senior Secondary School (McGlynn 2013).

UNESCO’s data of education demographic (2015), underscore there is an urgency of providing inclusive education in Gambia. Socioeconomic inequality existing across the regions of Gambia is showing that the education infrastructure including teaching and learning materials need great investment. Statistics of poverty status showed that approximately 45% of the population were living under circumstances considered below of a minimum existence index. A lack of foundational skills in reading and numeracy was seen with disparities within and between regions of Gambia. Additionally, the closure of schools due to the Covid 19 pandemic worsened the learning crisis in Gambia.

Due to a growing population in Gambia combined with an underfunded education sector, the goal of expanding the compulsory school from 6 years to 9 years to all Gambian children is still not a reality. Compulsory school is free and open to all girls and boys (the nation implemented gender parity in education in 2007) but still a considerable number of girls never finish Senior Secondary School according to data from UNESCO (2015). For girls, involuntary pregnancy can be a reason that they don’t finish school. Also, fees for school uniforms and school materials become an obstacle for many children. The country depends on major funding from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) for school supplies, constructions of more schools and teacher training as there is a need to provide school buildings with equipped classrooms, especially in rural areas. Accessibility on neglected roads in rural areas is another challenge. The lack of qualified teachers is also an urgent problem. But some progress and positive development in education access has been noted regardless of the many issues standing in the way. According to Gambian Bureau of Statistics (2021), an increase of qualified teachers is occupied in Gambian education. However, fewer qualified and trained teachers are still existing in the provinces.
3 Review of the Literature

This chapter contains a literature review that describes published research relevant from the actual field due to the study’s aim and objectives. Initially in part 3.1, the process and method for database search is described. The literature has been organized using a few distinct themes that will be explicitly described and discussed under the following subheadings: 3.2 Language as a democratic right and 3.3, Multilingualism as resource in education. And finally, a summary of the literature and its relevance to this study in described in 3.4.

3.1 Process and method for database search

According to Nilholm (2017), one should document a transparent and reproducible search procedure for the literature review. I initially created a template which resulted in ten pages to enter all the information from the search procedure. Because of the long wait prior to departure to do field studies in Gambia, which was prevented by the worldwide Covid pandemic, I had additional time to conduct the literature search. This was done on eight occasions during the period between October 2021 and December 2022 and after the first data collection, another six occasions between March 2023 and August 2023. A reading through abstracts finally resulted in a selection of several both new and older, literature with a focus on language of instruction as its effects were of greater interest for this study’s purpose. The literature was chosen from the relevance of the research questions in the present study (see Appendix 1). The selected literature has then been sorted according to a few themes that can be distinguished to language factors affecting on schooling and learning.

3.2 Language as a democratic right

Studies that have examined postcolonialism (Bhabha, 2016; Cherki, 2000; Macey, 2000; Fanon, 1952/2008; Hall, 1999) have revealed the idea of legitimizing colonialism by introducing the colonials’ language as the official language of the colonized and as the language of instruction in school, even though this language is not the students’ first language. They also show that the countries which have been colonized embrace the colonials’ language without question even after the colonial power has left the country. One of these studies, and the most influential of them, is Frantz Fanon’s study, Black skin, White masks (2008) that was first published in French in 1952. Both the French original publication and the English translation are used in this work.

Fanon’s study is not a research study, but an analysis and an academic reflection with relevance for the present study. It has had a major impact on identity and critical race and literacy theory, the last one is the theoretical framework for the present study.

As a Francophone Afro-Caribbean, Fanon has experienced social and cultural consequences from colonialization and struggled for native’s rights in colonized countries and for decolonization. One of the most important issues in the process of decolonization must be the language issue, according to Fanon, because the language is not only grammatical structures, but also incorporates culture and societal development (Fanon, 1952, p. 13). A child’s opportunities for literacy in a school language that is the child’s first language can be a decisive factor for the possibilities of inclusion or exclusion as a citizen (Hall, 1999).
Other studies highlight that language is every person’s foremost tool for thinking, communicating, and learning (Juffermans & Van Camp, 2013; Richmond, 1980) and, as such, a right of every human being.

Richmond (1980) examines literacy and language programs in Gambia but also possibilities to improve curriculum and materials development. He could see problems with illiteracy in multilingual and postcolonial countries like Gambia. Richmond’s study is based on observations and interviews at a Senior Secondary School, situated in the capital, Banjul. Richmond’s research shows (1980) that it is through language, that people develop their identity, express feelings, and thoughts, and understand how others feel and think. The result of his study shows that having access to varied language skills in classrooms could be an important democratic right to enable understanding of other people and in a longer perspective, work in a society where cultures, generations, and languages meet. According to Richmond (1980) the view of students’ first language as a linguistic resource is a decisive factor for success in education. However, it appeared in this study that local languages were regulated to a secondary status.

Another study presenting aspects of the school system in Gambia is Juffermans and Van Camp (2013). Their study investigated local language ideologies by taking the voices directly from the field, asking in interviews for opinions from children in Primary Schools and parents and teachers concerning language policy in Gambian education. Expectations from the authors were there to find if the school in Gambia not just included English as the only language in classrooms but also considered what the children would bring to school as resources, helping the country consisting of a multilingual population. The results show that it is important for students to get the opportunity to use and develop their first language. Nevertheless, the interviewed group of students was most unwilling to leave the English language and implement a larger platform for the spoken indigenous languages. According to the researchers, this is due to a long term of considering English as the common medium of instruction.

A different study, in comparison with the others here, is Fattal and Alon (2020) who studied teaching students from different countries who studied abroad in four study programs (India, South Korea, Israel, and Gambia). They also studied these students when they returned to their home countries, continuing to work as teachers. The result of the study is that these teachers, through the study abroad programs, have developed both a linguistic and an intercultural awareness. They were more open to teaching cultural diversity in classrooms and trying new strategies than teachers who had never studied abroad.

3.3 Multilingualism as a resource in education

Several studies examined multilingualism as a resource in education. A couple of former Minor Field studies (Sey, 2011; Valterio, 2020) have the same aim as the present study. Valterio (2020), used interviews with headmasters, teachers, and parents, added to classroom observations in a Lower Basic School in Banjul. She studied how ideological boundaries are affecting students’ first language in education, influenced by historical legacies. The result shows that the function of using local languages in classrooms beside the positive impact on understanding and learning outcomes, also introduced a social inclusion of ethnical identity. The interviewed participants believed the supporting of the children in schoolwork was facilitated.

Sey (2011) studied how the local languages are being used as a complement to English, as language of instruction in a Gambian Upper Basic School. She did observations during lessons
and breaks focusing on situations of interactions and the use of languages in the school area. The findings from Sey’s study show that possibilities of expressing themselves in local languages made both teachers and students more comfortable and improved understanding, interactions, and dialogues. According to Sey, an achievement of understanding was not the sole factor to develop learning skills but also an improvement of teaching methods is necessary. The results from these two Minor Field studies are comparable to the present study but none of them were studied at a Senior Secondary School and the present study was conducted more ten years later than the one from Sey.

Two studies from African education context (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2006; Makalela, 2015) show that, as in Sweden, efforts are made to create an education which promotes students’ linguistic and cultural diversity. Nyati-Ramahobo is describing tensions between multiple realities in Botswana. Botswana has, like most African countries, a language policy with English as the only language of education in a multilingual society where 96% of the population speaks a minority language, a fact that impacts on learning and social integration. Nyati-Ramahobo claims that there is a need for people in Botswana to demand the use of multilingualism as a resource in education. She also shows that parental involvement in schoolwork could play a key role if local languages in schools were introduced in Botswana as the parents, then could more easily help their children with studies. From a sociocultural perspective, Nyati-Ramahobo (2006) shows a need to develop and maintain local languages and to link language and culture as a resource for social inclusion.

Another study, Makalela (2015), is conducted in a South African education context, and shows the importance of changing in teacher education and to educate pre-service teachers in using their own and their students’ linguistic and cultural diversity as a resource for learning. Makalela (2015) is the only study among the studies in this chapter to experiment with flexible use of students’ language resources in the classroom. The study shows that, because of these teaching strategies, the students’ vocabulary improves and that they develop an identity as a multilingual individual.

Also, studies from Western countries that have received many refugees have also investigated the issue of language in education. Research on a compulsory school with Swedish as language of instruction (Lupsa, 2022; Snoder, 2022; Wedin, 2017) shows how teachers reflect on pedagogical approaches and how they in practice incorporate students’ all languages as resources in their teaching. These studies highlight that the students’ opportunities to use their linguistic resources enhance participation in classroom activities and promote learning. One of these pedagogical approaches that allows students to use all their linguistic resources in learning has been called translanguaging pedagogy by Ofelia García (2009), an American researcher. Translanguaging pedagogy, which involves the use of various languages and non-verbal elements such as pictures and gestures, is rooted in an understanding of language as a tool for sociocultural meaning-making (Svensson, 2017).

In a study conducted at an elementary school in Sweden, Wedin (2017) has observed and interviewed students to examine how teachers’ attitudes in practice can impact possibilities of learning in multilingual classrooms. The teachers in the study use a writing teaching method called identity texts, developed by two Canadian researchers on multilingual and multicultural schools (Cummins & Early, 2011). This method has the purpose to strengthening a student’s identity by encouraging the use of all the student’s linguistic resources and experiences. When writing identity texts, and using different languages, students can share and learn about each other’s values and cultural behaviors which can be a way to create intercultural education and inclusion in classrooms. Multilingual text writing helps students to negotiate of their identity and sense of belonging. The
result of the study confirms that the concepts of “identity” and “engagement” are crucial in critical literacy.

Like Wedin (2017), Lupsa (2022) studied teachers’ attitudes on multilingualism and how teachers use the students’ linguistic and cultural diversity in teaching. The teachers in Lupsa’s study have no multilingual background. The study shows that though the students’ first language and cultural diversity were considered important, the teachers did not encourage the use of them in the classroom. However, the study does show that teachers reflected on strategies for the development of the language of instruction and content knowledge, such as discussing abstract concepts and thoroughly studying texts. Lupsa’s study even implied that teaching strategies that considered the students’ own experiences were more successful. The author’s conclusion of the study is that changing methods and strategies in teaching in multilingual school settings demands continuing education and access to new research, time to try new methods in the classroom, and support from the school management (Lupsa, 2022).

Another study presenting multilingual teachers’ perspectives is Snoder (2022). With observed lessons in Primary School and conducted interviews, her work examined the effects of using all language skills as a resource and not only Swedish as language of instruction in teaching.

Methodologically, Snoder (2022) is a linguistic ethnographical study with focus on both interaction and a wider social context. It highlights the benefits of the use of minoritized languages, when possible, in regular teaching, necessitated by the increasing number of multilinguals pupils in Swedish schools through immigration. The use of the pupils’ all languages was seen as a resource to facilitate subject learning and gave a sense of cultural emotional safety. It also strengthened the relation to the students’ caregivers. However, Snoder’s data (2022) show that minoritized multilingual practices were limited and that teachers related to their own multilingualism with ambivalence. This ambivalence is because the teachers in this study are Primary School teachers, employed in Swedish state schools.

3.4 Summary and relevance of literature

The chosen literature with a focus on language as a democratic right is relevant to this study with the aims and objectives to examine if there is an increased attention and space in the schools to ensure that children’s rights to multilingualism are safeguarded in Gambia. The most important results from the earlier studies show that lack of equivalence results in reduced opportunities, and that language, identity, and learning are intricately linked. According to the above paragraph, school is not a socially neutral place regardless of its national belonging. Current research additionally shows that a child’s background obviously provides the foundation of their education.

Multilingualism as a resource in education is an important factor to this study and in the chosen literature given support to an assumption of relevance in teaching. A pedagogy using the students' entire linguistic repertoire and experience, such as translanguaging pedagogy, is necessary to the understanding of language, and this pedagogy describes how a person’s multilingualism is an integrated system, a resource where language and learning are linked together. The power of language is obvious as literacy is a prerequisite to being able to function in the cultural community. Having access to one’s first language also facilitates language development and learning in various areas. Notably a multilingual identity has an important theoretical and analytical concept from a democratic perspective but also as a valuable skill and resource. In summary, the chosen research has relevance since they illuminate topics within the profession of teaching in multilingual
classrooms as this study examines multilingualism utilized within the educational context of Gambia.
4 Theoretical framework

This chapter provides an explanation of some basic thoughts with importance for understanding the choice of theory and perspective. The aims and objectives have previously been presented (1.2) but will here be repeated for further elaboration. Furthermore, the research questions are linked to the chosen theory, that for this thesis is the theory Critical literacy and is presented in 4.1.

4.1 Critical literacy (Janks, 2010, 2014)

The theory of critical literacy is chosen as the theoretical framework of the study. As an important part of the postcolonial theory, critical literacy theory examines how languages are used and the effects of different approaches to language use in education. Critical literacy, as described by Hilary Janks (2010), professor in Applied English Language, Johannesburg, South Africa, is a theory for analyzing teaching approaches with critical thinking as justice agenda. According to Janks, the theory of critical literacy and its didactic potential are divided into four concepts:

- domination
- access
- diversity
- design

**Domination** focuses on power. The concept is originally inspired from a perspective both according to Marx’s and Foucault’s ideas. Janks’s opinion is that one should not only pay attention to and observe what **Domination** is expressed in literature and language, i.e., what is said, but also pay attention to what is not verbally expressed in critical literacy, which could be interesting.

**Access** stands for possibilities of accessibility to language and literacy which means that dominant literary discourses should not be the only ones but a wider representation in classrooms is needed. Then the access is connected to knowledge as financial resources will permit.

**Diversity** focuses on a varied diversity of multicultural inclusion. Cultural and social values as a resource have a place in the classroom to strengthen students’ identity through language and literacy.

**Design** explores how teachers translate the curriculum in the classroom practice with a concern for the development of the students’ abilities and ways of thinking, which involves teaching methods and didactive perspectives.

These four orientations need to be considered simultaneously as they are linked and interact and relate to each other.

In her books, *Literacy and Power* (2010) and *Doing Critical Literacy* (2014), Janks examines students’ access to equivalent teaching and gives prominence to the idea that power relations can change if the pedagogical lesson design includes a diversity of multiple identities. The author emphasizes that critical thinking of teaching approaches could create a possibility to a linguistic identity through agency of expression own thoughts and attitudes.

Critical literacy can show that literacy is a social practice depending on what level of opportunity exists for students to employ their local language within the school environment. Regarding Vygotsky’s socio-cultural perspective, literacy is defined as a broader concept than only reading and writing skills. According to Janks’ definition of literacy, these skills include
understanding, identifying, interpreting, creating, communicating, and calculating when using varied materials in varying contexts (2010; 2014).

The use of the theory is linked to the two research questions:

What are the teachers’ and students’ opinions about the use of students’ all linguistic resources at a Senior Secondary School in Gambia? And to what extent and in which ways do students get the opportunity to use their local languages in school for promoting learning?

Based on the purpose of the study the analysis of data (see next chapter) the four concepts in Janks’s model (2010) are adapted to this specific study as follows:

- the concept of domination is used as language domination
- the concept of access is used as access to the curriculum
- the concept of diversity is used as linguistic and cultural diversity
- the concept of design is used as didactic design.

A detailed explanation of how these concepts is used in the present study will be presented in next chapter (see 5.3). Furthermore, the analysis of these concepts is presented in the same order as that in Janks’s model (2010).
5 Method and data

This chapter explains the procedures of research methods and materials to conduct the study. Initially the study setting is described in 5.1. Then a description of research methods will be presented in 5.2. Information about the processing of materials and selection of these is communicated in 5.3 followed by aspects of methodological analysis in 5.4. Finally, the chapter ends with an episode on ethical considerations when conducting a study in 5.5, and another consisting of critical aspects on method in 5.6.

5.1 Study setting

This study was conducted in a public school that is situated in a district of a smaller city of the west region area of Gambia. The city is part of a large urban area that is formed together from nine small villages. Mandinka, Fula, and Wolof are the most spoken local languages and 70% of the inhabitants in this area are Wolof speakers. The population in the region is estimated to exceed 6,500 inhabitants in 2022 (Levin, 2022). The school is situated in an area 20 km from the country’s capital, Banjul. Close to the school is SOS Children’s Village which is a community funded by sponsors offering a home and education to orphaned and abandoned children. A large Municipality dumpsite is located nearby and sometimes the school is forced to close after harsh fires as the site sent thick black smoke into air. The district belongs to an area with several schools educating Upper-Basic-Secondary and Senior-Secondary students. The school is the largest in the district with a capacity of 3,000 students in grades 7-9 in Upper Basic School and grades 10-12 at Senior Secondary School. The school management consists of one Principal and one Vice Principal.

Outside the school a sandy and non-existent road gives access to the school. The school entrance is guarded by a man with a stick to prevent unauthorized individuals from entering and to prevent students from leaving. The school buildings consist of three different blocks, each having three floors. The school yard is filled with sand and a couple of trees give shelter from the sun. The classrooms accommodate about 60 students most of them sitting on wooden benches together with two to four other students. Every classroom has a blackboard. No glass windows exist, and it enable outside noise to permeate. Every morning the school day starts with an assembly to gather students and staff in the schoolyard. This assembly is introduced by a prayer, first a Muslim and then a Christian one, led by the principal, and afterwards, a teacher is given a speech to the students to encourage and motivate the students to study.

5.2 Research methods

To achieve the purpose of my study, a qualitative research method that consists of interviews and classroom observation has been used. In a study, it was relevant to get an understanding of teachers’ and students’ natural context and everyday life. When using a qualitative method with an ethnographic approach the social context is crucial to get close to a near truth, according to Aspers’ description (2011). As a researcher, it is required to spend a longer time in the country where the field study takes place to be able to understand the culture. I regularly visited the Senior Secondary School being studied and invested time in preparations before leaving Sweden, to understand the culture for the field study. Lifelong experience in a school environment as a teacher gives me insight and understanding of the field. But coming from another culture, it is also challenging to
understand and interpret what is said and done and it requires distancing and balance to draw conclusions based on collected data.

In the context of this study with an ethnographic approach, it is decisive to be aware of certain historical events that have impacted the local valorization of certain languages as superior and others as inferior. On the one hand, there is a distinct hierarchy of languages in Gambia, where the English language, a language imported through colonialism, is still considered superior to local, indigenous languages. It is important to recognize how the colonial past has shaped and determined Gambians’ hierarchization of languages and the perception of which languages should be deemed prestigious and which should not. It was crucial for me to be conscious of these cultural differences, given that to report and describe the locals’ ideas of language, I had to first grasp the historical and cultural events and assumptions that underlie those ideas. In this way, I could describe their perceptions of language more faithfully and in a more informed manner.

5.2.1 Interviews

The interviews were audio recorded in writing field notes and on an iPad. The interpreter, a former contact was also present at the interviews and could, therefore, clarify the cultural and linguistic subtexts of the participants’ verbal and non-verbal language. Moreover, she also read the interview transcripts and engaged in discussions about it with me to bring a local perspective to the material and to clarify the impact of local school policies on the participants’ approach to teaching.

Semi-structured interviews in focus groups for preparing space for the study participants’ opinions and experiences were eventually settled to give valuable insight into the participants’ perspectives. According to Johansson (2005), this method seeks to create narrative representation through interviews that prompt participants to share their own experiences and express opinions about languages and to also engage with other participants’ experiences and opinions. The materials would, therefore, consist of the participants’ own voices.

I held four interviews with a total of six teachers and four students. Four of the teachers formed a focus group and two of the teacher interviews were conducted individually (see Table 1, page 21). The four students formed one focus group (see Table 2, page 22). The language spoken in the interviews was English. However, because two French teachers from Senegal preferred to conduct the interview in French, I had to conduct an additional two interviews with each of those teachers individually. The aim of the interviews was to elicit the teachers’ and the students’ perspectives on language and the teachers’ ideas on the pedagogical approaches that they believed would benefit their students’ subject knowledge the most. The focus group interviews had the character of a conversation or more like a discussion. The participants were asked to speak freely one at a time and not to interrupt one another as the interview was recorded. The individual interviews, on the other hand, were more traditional in the sense that I asked questions, and the participant gave answers. The questions were drawn from a set of preprepared open-ended questions (see Appendix 2) meant to introduce and encourage the participants to reflect and share their thoughts. The participants’ answers inspired new questions that kept the conversation going. As the conversation progressed, the atmosphere became relaxed and the participants more talkative and open. According to Kvale and Brinkman (2014), it is important for the researcher not to interfere too much but rather confirm what has been told. The interviews were held in the teachers’ office.
5.2.2 Classroom observations

After the interviews, I conducted classroom observations, attending lessons taught by the interviewed teachers. Owing to an agreement between the government and the union, the start of the school semester was only delayed by a week because of the strike (see 5.2.1). The shortness of the delay was a relief because it allowed me to start collecting the material from classroom observations sooner than expected. I attended eleven lessons about a variety of subjects held in different grades. This was done with the aim of observing the didactic approaches of teaching a subject in English as the language of instruction, especially if the instruction was scaffolded with the use of local languages. Shortly after introducing myself, I mostly occupied the role of a non-active observer during the lessons, sitting quietly in the back of the classroom. The plan was to complement the visual observations with audio recordings. However, due to the noise of around 50 to 60 students in each classroom in combination with the lack of windows letting in more noise from outside, recording good-quality audio was made impossible. I, therefore, opted to take field notes instead and used a schedule (see Appendix 3) to focus my observation and avoid overlooking information of importance for the study. After each observation session, I had a brief conversation with the teacher about unclear observations that prompted questions.

5.3 Data

The data for the study consists in four interviews and eleven classroom observations. Three of the interviews have been conducted with teachers and one with students.

I visited the school together with a former contact, the interpreter, who facilitated my communication with the participants as she speaks English, Wolof, and Fula. The field study takes a qualitative ethnographic approach, where data was gathered through the methods of observations and interviews about the language of instruction used in schools. These two methods were adopted to investigate the effects of using or the absence of using local languages in the classroom to easier understand a school subject. To achieve the aim of the study, different choices for collecting materials were considered.

5.3.1 Preclusion of data

The initial plan for the data collection was to do classroom observations and to examine teaching materials, such as textbooks, used for language learning in school. I wanted to understand how the actual teaching material in a specific subject might affect students’ learning and potentially facilitate communication between students and between students and teachers. Combining data gathering from teaching materials and classroom observations would enable a comparison between how lessons are meant to be conducted and how they are conducted in the classroom and an identification of underlying causes. However, this selection of material for the study was prevented by the fact that the school chosen to participate in the study did not have enough resources for varied school supplies of larger scale. Attending lessons for observations was at first, unfortunately, also prevented from being conducted due to a nationwide teachers’ strike. Not knowing how long the strike would last, alternative ways of gathering information were identified, considered, and then selected. Interviews were identified as the most viable method for gathering data under these circumstances and observations conducted in classrooms had to wait. A reason for this is due both to the teachers’ strike, which prevented the initial plan to conduct classroom observations, and to an agreement with the school staff to prioritize the interviews.
5.3.2 Selection and presentation of participants

The participants of the study are six teachers and four students. The selection of participants for the first round of interviews was made by a local contact, a teacher at the school who conveyed the purpose of the study to potential teacher participants and then facilitated contact with the teachers who finally consented to participate. Because a teacher strike prevented the initial plan to observe lessons, the field study had to begin with interviewing teachers. The intention was to find participants teaching different subjects. The chosen participants are teaching subjects as English, History, French, Government, Geography, Science and Agriculture, Mathematics, and French. Gender and age were not included in the selection criteria as these characteristics were found to be irrelevant to the study. Five of these six teachers in the study are teaching in Senior Secondary public schools and one of them is teaching in Upper Basic public schools. This type of selection is referred to as a choice of convenience (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). The teachers are referred to as T1-T6 in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Teachers participating in interview.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>Male. Has been teaching for 20 years at Senior Secondary public school. Is also the Head of the Math Department of the School.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2</td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>Male. Has been teaching for two years at Senior Secondary public school. Is an Assistant teacher with one year left of his education studies in Ghana.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3</td>
<td>Science and Agriculture</td>
<td>Male. Has been teaching for three years at Senior Secondary public school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4</td>
<td>English and Geography</td>
<td>Male. Has been teaching for seven years at Senior Secondary public school. Has completed his education but is still studying to build on his qualifications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5</td>
<td>French and Government</td>
<td>Female. Has been teaching for five years at Senior Secondary public school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T6</td>
<td>French and English</td>
<td>Female. Has been teaching for five years at Upper Basic public School.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The selection of participants for the second round of interviews, the interviews with students, was made on the criteria active student and prudent student, and eligible students were identified through classroom observations. Two girls and two boys from grade 12 in Senior Secondary Public School met these criteria and consented to participate in the study. The students participated in six of the ten observed lessons. The students are referred to as Student A - Student D in Table 2 below.
Table 2. Students participating in interview.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student A</td>
<td>Grade 12 Senior Secondary Public School. Fula, girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student B</td>
<td>Grade 12 Senior Secondary Public School. Mandinka, boy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student C</td>
<td>Grade 12 Senior Secondary Public School. Serer, boy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student D</td>
<td>Grade 12 Senior Secondary Public School. Wolof, girl</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3.3 Processing of data

The data was selected, recorded, observed, and documented (see chart 1). Out of the recorded interviews with teachers, one was held in English, a focus-group of four teachers, lasting 41 minutes, another was in French, individual with teacher, 22 minutes and a third was also, preferred by the teacher, in French, individual, 17 minutes. The recorded interview with students held in English was in a focus-group of four, duration 52 minutes. All interviews with both teachers and students were held at the teachers’ office in the Senior Secondary School. The notes taken during interviews and observations consist of 26 handwritten pages. Over and above, these notes a photo was taken after each lesson as background material and proof of completed observation. The time length of classroom observations was from 30 minutes to one hour. The school visits included approximately 1-3 visits a week during a period of 45 days, excluding ten days of strike.

Chart 1. Materials for study with information of type, number, date, and extent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time/Extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recorded interviews, teachers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9 January 2023</td>
<td>41 minutes 14 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12 January 2023</td>
<td>22 minutes 42 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20 January 2023</td>
<td>17 minutes 11 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>27 January 2023</td>
<td>52 minutes 45 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recorded interviews, students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total: 2 hours 2 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom observations</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23 January –7 February 2023</td>
<td>10 hours 30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcribed field notes from:</td>
<td>14 pages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>observations and interviews</td>
<td>25 pages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The processing of data has been completed as follows: The recorded interviews were relistened several times and transcribed into nine pages on computer each focus group, teachers, and students. For individual interviews, teachers translated from French into English resulted in seven pages. The literature of methods (Johansson, 2005) recommends a rough transcription of recorded data as the content analysis in this case is central. If the study was of a linguistic nature a detailed transcription model with all including markings would be of crucial importance. For this study, a more selective and rough rendering was considered sufficient. Auto transcription method was not possible to use in this case. The method of relistening repeatedly permits the listener to analyze not only what is said, the content, but also to reflect on how it is said, the participant’s dictum and opinion. The interviews started with some questions but continued as a discussion between
participants. Only confirming and supplementary comments were added during the interviews. The questions were connected to the aim of the study but also had an intention to allow the participants to reflect on others within the area (Kvale & Brinkman, 2011). The fieldnotes from lesson observation are summed up to 14 pages and those from the interviews, 25 pages (see Chart 1).

5.4 Methodological Analysis

In this section the method for data analysis will be presented and be explained.

The methods for analyzing the data are as follows: A first analysis has been done according to the research question; a second analysis has been done with Janks’ theoretical concepts (2010), domination, access, diversity and design. These concepts constitute analysis categories and can thus make the materials visible from different perspectives.

In this study the critical literacy perspective focus is characterized by how norms and values on languages, are conveyed through language use. After relistening to the interviews and thoroughly rereading the transcriptions, notes from selected examples were added to analyze. Importantly, distinguishing features were highlighted, and a systematic review was done to compile the data. After completion, an analysis was made to see patterns. The four concepts from Janks (2010) are in this study interpreted and designed in a certain way to deconstruct what is said in the interviews about teaching and what occurs in the observations.

Firstly, Language Domination, as well as the owners of this power, must be connected to a relationship and made visible to understand the existence of this power, if a reconstruction of another allocation may be possible.

Secondly, Access to the Curriculum, is connected to Language Domination, as the meaning of domination is transferred to the meaning of Access to the Curriculum. Access depends on the possibilities to take part, i.e., on the individual’s conditions. An example of this is if teaching in Gambian schools is only enforcing English as the language of instruction and no other languages are permitted to be used in the classroom, then the denial of access will exclude some and the result of Language Domination leads to a group of marginalized students.

Thirdly, Linguistic and Cultural Diversity, aims to lift norms in languages and cultures and becomes central to relate to as it is crucial when it comes to raising questions about identity. As an example, the view of British English can be seen as normative in Gambian society. Intersectionality, with its different markers such as class or ethnicity, is assumed to be included implicitly in critical literacy.

The last, Didactic Design, is in this study to be interpreted as a product of change in designing education to give students possibilities to learn based on how teachers understand and translate the curriculum in the classroom, and on previous knowledge of their learners. It focuses on how lessons are designed when it comes to didactic methods and approaches. Construction or reconstruction can take different forms. An example of this is when a teacher encourages students to reflect on meaning-making and the influence of the student’s own future lives and purposes. Didactic Design is the least common in this study but is particularly relevant as an important part of critical literacy. With didactic possibilities, Didactic Design will be able to create opportunities to influence the attitudes and norms identified through the rest of the concepts.

The presentation of results (see Chapter 6) is divided into 3 parts of data where interviews are presented firstly, from teachers’ opinions and secondly from students’ opinions, connected to the research question: What are the teachers’ and students’ opinions about the use of students’ all linguistic resources in a Senior Secondary School in Gambia? Thirdly, field notes from classroom
observations are presented and connected to the research question: To what extent and in which ways do students get the opportunity to use their local languages in school for promoting learning? The data is theoretically analyzed out of Janks’ model including a normative interpretation and the results follow the order of Janks’ four concepts: language domination, access to the curriculum, linguistic and cultural diversity, and didactic design.

5.5 Ethical considerations

When conducting a research survey with humans involved, one must take responsibility for several ethical principles such as information, consent, confidentiality, and use according to the Swedish Scientific Council (Vetenskapsrådet, 2018). As a researcher I have taken these principles in consideration for my study.

At first, before my arrival to Gambia I e-mailed my former contact, the interpreter to get information about whom to contact for admission to do my study. After approval from the Ministry of Education and further on, in Gambia from the Principal for visiting the school and conducting the study there. Later the persons concerned were verbally and literally informed of the purpose of this study. A written consent was given from each of the participant for the recorded interviews. Furthermore, the participants in the study were told about their right to voluntarily participate and to withdraw participation if and whenever wanted.

Students as well as teachers were aware that notes were taken in the classroom observations and to be part of pictures photography was asked for permission and voluntarily.

Participants were given a guarantee of the utmost confidentiality and the researcher’s data was stored in such a way that no unauthorized persons would have access to them. Collected information, such as transcriptions, notes, and pictures of individuals, was to be used for research purposes. The school is left anonymous, and participants are protected by using fictitious and coded names. The students and the teachers also got the information that data only is used for this study and then canceled.

When doing interviews, one must consider ethical concerns as it is important to acknowledge that there are certain risks involved in interviewing individuals for the first time. One such risk was related to the teachers’ strike, which because of the time constraints meant that the interviews had to be conducted without the desired amount of time spent on establishing a good rapport with the participants and a comfortable environment for the interviews.

According to Johansson (2005), creating an environment that is conducive to open discussion and the willingness to honestly voice participants’ opinions and thoughts is important from an ethical perspective as well as a power perspective. Coming to the interview setting as an outsider asking participants for opinions requires sensitivity to questions related to the power relation between researcher and participant and to ethical elements such as consent (Kvale & Brinkman, 2014). Fortunately, these risks were averted because the participants had received thorough information and were well-prepared thanks to the contact teacher. Furthermore, I managed to establish a good relationship with the participants despite the time restraints and laid the groundwork for a comfortable interview setting. But a necessary fact to consider was the historical and cultural contexts of the participants’ perceptions of language.
5.6 Reliability and validity

Based on the method I used for the study I observed critical aspects concerning selection of participants, implementation of material collection, power perspective and transaction in language comprehension.

The number of participants for interviews was limited and therefore cannot represent a Gambian school overall. Another reason to be critical is the way the collected data was implemented. A focus group of four teachers and a focus group of four students were interviewed. This was held as more of a conversation between the participants. On the other hand, two more interviews were held individually with the French teachers. This is to be discussed as a different situation for the participants. On the other hand, it can also add another perspective with chosen methods. Furthermore, my role as observer can be considered since my earlier experience of the Gambian school system is limited. Based on what I perceived I also noted in my notebook.

An important and additional critical aspect is the power perspective when one comes into a situation as an outsider. I do not have a local and national perspective from the participants point of views but have a distinct perspective with my Western European and Swedish cultural values and experiences. It is inevitable to highlight the fact that the recorded interviews as well as the observed lessons are held in a language that is not my first language. I do understand English and French at a level that can be communicated but still there are many words and concepts that pass by. Neither did the participants speak their first language which contributed to an omission of subtle details. Also, to transcribe the recorded interviews required many hours of relistening and correcting what was said, also by assistance of the interpreter which facilitated the documentation. There is also some data that was filtered out because of irrelevance after a first analysis. This means that there is more interesting material that can be used but not for this study's purpose. It is not an unimportant factor for the reliability and validity that an agreement with the participating school to reveal the result of this study contributes to a transparency of the study.

According to Aspers (2011) a researcher has an outside perspective with one’s way of perceiving and observing, interpreting, and evaluating based on one’s own imaginary world, knowledge, and experiences. The participants have answered questions from an inside perspective with other frames of reference. A researcher can never avoid an outside perspective but can be aware of the different perspectives and understanding.
6 Results

In this chapter the result from analyzing data according to the theory of critical literacy will be presented. The theoretical analysis of results is presented out of Janks’ model, divided into four categories from Janks’ (2010, 2014). The results occur in the following order: firstly, analysis of interviewed teachers, secondly, interviewed students and thirdly, analysis of field notes from classroom observations are presented and connected to the research questions. The chapter ends with a summary of results.

Part 6.1 presents the analysis of the theoretical concept Language Domination, followed by the analysis of the concept, Access to the Curriculum in 6.2. In 6.3 the result of analysis of the concept Linguistic and Cultural Diversity is presented and in 6.4 the analysis of the concept Didactic Design is presented. Separating the different concepts in analytical purpose illuminates different perspectives which can later be woven together in the concluding discussion. The specifics of each concept are defined as well as the overall narrative that the analysis provides, by clearly presenting excerpts from and explanations about both interviews and classroom observations. The interviews quotations are printed in full, but repetitive comments have been omitted with following characters (...). I have also supplemented the excerpts with small explanations in square brackets.

6.1 Analysis of Language Domination

The first excerpt from an interviewed teacher in this focus group is an example of the obligation of English as language of instruction. One of the questions that was asked to the focus groups in the interview was: To what extent do students get the opportunity to use their local languages in school? The teacher (T2) admitted following:

Excerpt 6.1.1

We normally don’t incorporate the students to use their local languages (...) English is our official language (...) basically from Ministry, coming down the policy (...) they are asking us to enforce the English language (...) The English language in class is a must, because we are altogether, we will have to practice this, we must speak it. (Interview T2)

This statement from the teacher indicates that it is compulsory to use English in the classroom, and that, as a state-school employee, this teacher must use English as language of instruction. There is, according to this teacher, no reason to question it.

An agency of English as the language of instruction which is a system inherited from the colonizers could be constructed as an inequitable Language Domination when asking critical questions. Analyzing the excerpt indicates that the teachers are forced to enforce the English language in school, which can be understood as a sign of regulations from the country’s language policy. According to Janks (2014), language and literacy are closely related to power. They are crucially interdependent. Drawing upon the South African education context, Janks states that language means political activities and teachers are political agents (2010). This Language Domination could be transmitted to the Gambian education context.

The analysis of Language Domination shows that this domination could either be maintained or redesigned. The below examples are comments after asking a question in the interview with the focus group if the teachers wish to add something when talking about lessons and teaching languages:
Excerpt 6.1.2

Yeh, I would like to add something, basically what we understand about languages – it’s just a medium that you can use to explain to someone to make them understand. So, I personally from my own philosophy I do not see why (…) English should be a compulsory language where every student must understand English to get what the topic or what the lesson is about. Using their own local language should also be one of the most important things to teach students or a child to be able to understand what you want the child to understand because (…) it is not (…) for example, before you go to school, you do learn but it is not in English. (Interview T3)

In this teacher’s opinion (T3), language is a medium of communication. From his perspective the students’ local languages are suitable to build knowledge as well as English language is. The teacher is reflecting and looking upon students as capable learners even outside school, bringing valuable knowledges and experiences to an understanding of a subject. The analysis of Language Domination shows that this teacher can see an unfairness in teaching all subjects only in English, which means that he looks upon language skills as a resource for learning. The analysis shows that literacy education and more specifically language education cannot be considered as a neutral activity from a Language Domination perspective. Janks claims that the status of languages could be held by maintaining and reproducing relations of domination (Janks, 2010, p. 23). The selection of language as the medium of instruction, which is imposed by the Gambian government, is also a fundamentally political issue. As the teacher says, “local language should also be one of the most important things to teach”.

However, an awareness of the existing interest of dominant languages, operating as power then might produce negative effects on relations caused by the inclusion and exclusion of representations of cultures. Another teacher (T4) can see delicate issues when it comes to choosing a local language as a standard national language in Gambia:

Excerpt 6.1.3

If you adapt one local language it is like you’re promoting that language’s culture and traditions so then you put the others aside, where is their culture then? Where are their traditions? You will see that by time, all those cultures and traditions should be excluded then. This is one of the difficulties we are facing in Africa and that is why particularly in Gambia still we cannot have a standard national language. Some would say that one is not a real Mandinka language that should be part. This comes back again to Mandinka as an ethnicity. They will even have an eternal war because of which of the dialects you are going to get to adapt as a national standard language in Gambia. (Interview T4)

The teacher (T4) states that language is inevitably connected to tradition, culture, and identity. He sees therefore severe difficulties in choosing one of the local languages as the language of instruction because of different ethnic groups. A dominant local language could also exclude others. He further exclaimed in his statement of account that even the dialect of the local language could be a source of severe conflict in the country. Though wishes would exist to choose one local language of instruction or even go further and use it as an official language it would be a great challenge according to this teacher. The analysis shows that English as the language of instruction also unites the people when analyzing the excerpt out of Language Domination.

As there are several local languages in Gambia this will bring obstacles in politics and strong attitudes vary among the Gambians when it comes to ethnic group belongings which a student (Student D) expresses in the next excerpt:
Excerpt 6.1.4

As there are many local languages among Gambian people when it comes to tribe belongings. Choosing just one local language will be very hard (...). The Mandinka claim to be the owner of this country and the Jolus would be like, no we were the first to come here, so the language has to be the Jola and then you see it is going to be very hard and we can’t have a teacher that explain in Fula and then leave the others out. (Interview Student D)

According to what this student (Student D) emphasizes, it would be exceedingly difficult to choose one local language like some other countries having their own local language which they can use. The student (D) maintains what is claimed by the teacher (T4) in the excerpt above even though she is not emphasizing that it could start a rebellion to choose a local language as a standard in Gambia. The analysis of Language Domination shows that the student’s opinion is that Gambia cannot yet choose which language people are going to use, because if one local language was to be chosen, the speakers of the other languages would complain. It would be extremely hard to satisfy everyone in this matter.

Another student (Student B) did not seem completely comfortable in speaking English during the interview. When asking if teachers were using local languages during lessons, he had another point of view on this matter and added:

Excerpt 6.1.5

No, we are used to English. We learn English in school. Our French teacher translates it into English, it is better.
(Interview Student B)

This student (Student B) considers that only English should be used in school. In this student’s opinion, using English as a common language, and not keeping the local languages alive as a resource to for students’ understanding does not seem to be an issue for discussion. Put it in the study’s conceptual framework, this student does not perceive English as a dominant language. Then his friend, (student A) suddenly interrupted him and wanted to explain that this was not a full answer and gave another example.

Excerpt 6.1.6

No. the French teacher does cause she teaches another language and then translates to local languages. It’s often we don’t understand what she is saying. But then she has to translate it into local languages to make us understand. Then we “Oh, OK that is what she means”, like write a letter about your friend, for us we have a name like “Amy” and if we are going to write about “ami” we think we are going to write about someone whose name is Amy! So instead, she will say in local language so we will understand that ami means friend, so write about a friend. But apart from that (...). None.
(Interview student A)

Student A does not agree with student B and explains the negative effects of using English which could limit understanding in learning a foreign language. According to this student (Student A), certain and specific subjects like French as a foreign language are treated differently as she sees the need of translation not only into English but also into local languages to facilitate the
understanding of oral French. From the student’s (A) quote “Oh, OK! That is what she means” it is understood as clarifying the instructions. From a critical view, translation into the students’ local languages instead increases understanding according to the example when analyzing the excerpt out of Language Domination.

During a classroom observation, a teacher (T5) sees advantages if local languages are accepted and used in school and could also benefit information to citizens in Gambia. The below part of field notes is from a lesson in Government.

Excerpt 6.1.7

The teacher is informing the students about the constitution and their rights as Gambian citizens. She emphasizes the importance of knowledge in politics and how to be able to influence in the future. The teacher asks the students to explain how the current government functions. A student raises his hand answering, “There are challenges” and the teacher exclaims: “And one of those is corruption. And it’s easy to get the votes from the poor by persuading them with promises. Politicians are manipulating the uneducated promising them things they can’t keep”. A student reflecting of what is being said is expressing her thoughts: “As president, it is not easy to lead a whole country”. More students are getting involved in the discussion, encouraged by the teacher to share their opinions. Some students sitting next to me are talking to each other first in local languages. Then in English to the teacher. The teacher looks at them saying: “Local languages are important to use to get everyone to understand and be included. To represent the whole population of Gambia and to protect everyone’s interests the government need to include an ethnic diversity of citizens. As a secularized country there are big differences between rural and urban areas as well. We also have a freedom of religion. But what we see now is an increase of religious and private schools”. (Field notes 23-01-2023 Subject: Government. Grade: 11)

When the teacher (T5) in the excerpt expresses that “local languages are important to use to get everyone to understand and be included” it can be interpreted that English language of instruction as dominant is excluding. Instead, this teacher value all students’ and citizens’ languages as equal and that the use of local languages is a democratic right. The teacher in the excerpt is worried about the inequalities in education connected to Language Domination. The analysis of the field notes from this classroom observation shows that the teacher actualizes the challenges in society if different ethnic groups and languages are excluded because of the use of only English in politics. The use of English as an official language in politics will exclude certain non-privileged groups, emphasizing this teacher to the students.

6.2 Analysis of Access to the Curriculum

Janks sees the relation between Domination and Access as an access- paradox (2010, p. 24) when dominant representations can perpetuate a marginalization by maintaining certain patterns in a society. This means that a dominant language that values highly can on other’s less valued languages behalf develop an inequality among a diverse student population.

This teacher (T3) stated in excerpt above (6.1.2) that it was important to use the students’ local languages as a resource for understanding and to take advantage of students’ earlier experiences for learning, but in below excerpt he sees challenges in teaching. During the interview the teacher (T3) rises severe problems with limited economical resources in school such as providing materials, digital technology and equipment added to the large number of students in each classroom and added following.
Excerpt 6.2.1

*You do all the talking, do all the presentation, you do everything. So, the students will only be spectators. Just to watch you, to listen to you. When you're done you go out.* (Interview T3)

This teacher (T3) in the excerpt shows that he does not experience the working environment optimal to what it could be instead. Because of circumstances that teachers are not able to remedy it consequently affects students’ possibilities to learn and understand a subject in school. *Access to the Curriculum*, based on this excerpt, can be interpreted in the form of knowledge on more equal conditions and inclusive education. According to Janks (2010), equality consists of meaning making for students and reconstruction of values according to languages and identities.

Another teacher (T1), because of the current situation of working conditions in the example below, promotes a larger space for students’ actions on lessons to provide them wider access for understanding by using their local languages:

Excerpt 6.2.3

*Some of them are sitting in the class, looking at you and you're thinking that they are getting what you are explaining or some of them might somehow be sleepy (...). All is because, they are not part of the lesson. Why? Because they are not getting it with the language we are using! But when you put it to them in their local languages, they can more handle it, in Wolof for example. You will see many hands and see a lot of participation. So sometimes bring it in their local language. It is a motivation to the students. Some of them can be seated for quite a while but whenever you start using any of their local language you will see a lot of participation.* (Interview T1)

This teacher (T1) indicates that teaching requisites didactic adaptations to attract students to learn and to succeed with the studies. He highlights the importance of students’ motivation and seeks to find ways to interact with the students but finds it difficult to explain to such large classes. The analysis of *Access to the Curriculum* also shows the necessity of students’ understanding in the language that is used for communication in the classroom.

Additionally, a student (student C) indicates that English as medium of instruction is linked to poor understanding when teaching specific subjects and the student mentions school subjects with complicated, advanced words and concepts:

Excerpt 6.2.4

*Subjects like (...) Government (...) especially Science, because these big words, I don't understand them honestly (...). It is very critical. Even the pronunciation of words... Topics like with distinguish word problems (...) Mathematic, if you don't understand what they are saying, there is no chance that you're getting it. So, it is stopping us.* (Interview Student C)

This student (Student C) states that critical subjects with complicated concept using are highlighted from a learning perspective. The student mentions topics with “distinguish word problems” and gives example of school subjects like Science, Government and Mathematic. The student expresses a limitation in learning when he says, “it is stopping us”. Data analysis shows that certain school subjects need other linguistic approaches to give students *Access to the curriculum*. 
During the discussion of difficulties in understanding subjects in school, using only English in subject instruction, a student (Student A) suggests where certain parts of the lesson content could be translated to local languages:

Excerpt 6.2.5

If they (the teachers) use the local language and break it down to our own level we will be getting it more and it will stay inside you, if they can use our local languages that we understand more than English. (Interview Student A)

The student (Student A) is expressing a wish to get an opportunity of explanations in local languages for better understanding and for sustainable learning. Access to the Curriculum is a democratic practice to generate more students to succeed in school. Following example gives a hint of the student’s perspective when talking about learning, because of his attitude to his own ability to learn and a will to an understanding from teachers.

As an answer to the question to which extent the students would have such methods of support to understand certain concepts of school subjects that they find difficult, a student (Student D) mentions a situation of exams and tests in school and describes as follows:

Excerpt 6.2.6

Yeah, that is what we do, sometimes we ask them (the teachers), and they will explain in our local language so you can understand. Not all. Not always. Sometimes you just must cope with it. That’s why most students don’t want to attend math classes. They will do it but when it is time for exams, they will try to have absence at their result. You can solve the question, but it can be hard to cope with it because it is not all the teachers that are willing to explain in local languages. Some would, but some wouldn’t. They are like “it’s not my fault that you can’t understand English, I am not here to teach your local language. I am here to teach you math.” So, when you are in a situation with that type of teacher I mean obviously, you just look around - what will you do when it comes to not understand and you can’t solve that question then? (Interview student D)

This student (Student D) describes a situation where she sees a need of explanation in local languages to understand mathematics. The problem she raises is at times, students choose to not attend lessons instead of failure in producing high scores during exams. The student in the excerpt points out that some teachers are unwilling to explain subject literacy in students’ local languages. She means it prevents the students’ Access to the Curriculum which also leads to prevention of knowledge in long terms. The student speaks out about a situation that is frustrating to her and is open about her opinion, criticizing the teaching. This outspoken manner, despite the presence of the same teacher in mathematic she is speaking about was sitting in the corner of the teachers’ office where the interview took place. The consequences of English as lingua franca when learning in school are sincerely and critically expressed.

However, during classroom observations it appeared that various teachers occasionally made attempts to use local languages in teaching as a strategy to develop new concepts and skills and to attract students. Thus, from the teachers’ side the extremely limited resources and working conditions prevented possibilities to adapt the teaching under current circumstances which is described in field notes from a classroom observation in English with teacher (T6).
Most of the students are prevented to attend the morning assembly at school this morning. The gate is intentionally closed to exclude those who are late to school. The lesson starts at time but there are a lot of students dropping in during the lesson. The teacher writes on the black board: Oral English. The teacher summarizes the lesson last week when they were practicing listening and praises their efforts. Today they are about to do a listening test. The teacher is encouraging the students to listen carefully to the Bluetooth speaker. She looks friendly, smiling to the students. The teacher is struggling with the technique. A boy runs forward to help her. The noise and laughter are getting louder. Finally, a colleague assists fetching a big speaker on wheels that was used during the morning assembly connected to a microphone. The students are preparing and trying to share a few papers and pens. They look concentrated. "You will have to pay attention. Write one of three options", says the teacher. When I sit, back in the classroom it is almost impossible to hear. Noise from outside is slipping into the crowded and dark classroom. It is hot and dusty, and the door is open to let in some air. The benches are uncomfortable, and it is hard to see above all the students’ heads in front, what the teacher is writing on the black board. When I look on their notes, I can see that students have difficulties in hearing or recognizing the pronunciations of the words. (30-02-2023 Subject: English. Grade: 12)

Many students were coming late to school because of long walking distance or difficulties in transports to getting to school. During this classroom observation efforts were made of using suitable learning materials such as a recorder for a listening test in English. With no availability of quality learning materials as technic to facilitate learning and understanding, the circumstances to perform well decreased. As an extra fact of reason, very large class sizes were making teaching and learning more difficult. At the school the classrooms had no glass windows, but barred windows, to let in some from the heat. However, this made it impossible to isolate the sounds from the surrounding area. Access to the Curriculum is primarily prevented due to the limited resources like poor conditions of school buildings and learning spaces, and large classes affecting the sound and sight to perceive what is said or being written on the board. The lack of schoolbooks and materials, for example, papers and pens is another severe issue for learning which is not available to everyone in the classroom. The analysis also shows difficulties in hearing because of a bad sound from the recorder but also a pronunciation from the recorder British voice is hard to recognize for the students as it does not match the pronunciation they are used to hearing from teachers in school.

6.3 Analysis of Linguistic and Cultural Diversity

The teachers participating in interviews were serious about education and committed to making teaching count in the struggle against small economic resources in school. The Access to the Curriculum in the section above shows that the teachers are conscious of discourses linked to social and cultural identities and aware of progressive approaches in teaching to include a larger group of students. Then Linguistic and Cultural Diversity work interdependently in the same process of a field for learning. The following excerpt is a teacher (T5) that sees the benefits of using local languages:

Excerpt 6.3.1

Yes, sometimes we use it. Sometimes it’s convenient when you quickly want to make them understand. Because if you only use French, it will be hard for them to understand. As a teacher you have to be aware of this, you have to look at them. Then their faces will tell if they have understood. So, you are obliged to use their local language so they can understand more easily. I will also notice by the way they ask questions; their comprehension will thereby be revealed. But I tell them, you’re here to understand and when you do not understand you have the right to ask me. I am here to explain to you so you will understand. (Interview T5)
This teacher (T5) points out the benefit in using local languages when teaching a foreign language to make the students to understand quickly. Her experience as a teacher shows that she is aware of and responsive to if the students’ faces express that they understand the content or not. The analysis of Linguistic and Cultural Diversity shows in the excerpt above from this teacher (T5) that it is also a matter of important attraction to get more young people into study. From this teacher’s perspective it is necessary and a teacher’s responsibility to make the students to understand. If the school acquires new and alternative way of teaching, in addition to more traditional forms, then different and various learning practices would be more accepted. This will cost reflections on the present education in school and changing consciousness linked to diverse institutions. Another example from the data set, relevant to add, is where the teacher (T6) looked upon the use of local languages with another point of view:

Excerpt 6.3.2

But as the official language is English and here, we tell them (students) not to use their mother tongue in school, so that’s why they most of the time use English. But it is obvious that they sometimes even have difficulties in producing sentences in English. And then they must use their local languages, their mother tongue. (Interview T6)

The main idea analyzed, from Linguistic and Cultural Diversity this excerpt shows that using local languages can be considered as beneficial, though the teacher (T6) is obliged to emphasize and strengthen English as a medium of instruction. However, according to previous statement, from the teacher’s voice (T6), efforts are desired to be taken, to transform Gambian multilingual background as a resource into classrooms and is highly probable a necessity for inclusion.

Relevant features to the theme Linguistic and Cultural Diversity were to discover when listening to the students’ united answer as I was asking if teachers include local languages in explaining or for translation during lessons. The first answer was, - No one does. But after rethinking and reflecting on the question, following answer then was given from a student (Student D):

Excerpt 6.3.3

English is a language that is very poor and also in our schools like, I don’t see here, in the school where I am right now, they are using only English (…) this may going to stop some of the students, including myself, cause there are some subjects if they are explained, sometimes you have to use your local language to be able to understand. And sometimes teachers use words like, words that are very big and you have to break them down like she is saying so using local language sometimes it should be done. It would help us a lot. Not always (…) but sometimes. Like if you can speak English it’s like you can have a job now, literally, like a good job, a good paying job or you can have it like you can be a mechanic this and that but if you can speak the English language you can maybe work at an office, you can work for an international organization, you can work outside Gambia, you know, it’s more of communication and if you can’t speak English and you want to learn it’s going be hard so I think that English has a lot of advantages. Why? So (…) without English you can’t have a good job, but with English you can communicate with others, I mean it’s like good to know many languages. It also has its disadvantages cause academically students want to perform but because of the English language they can’t perform well. Cause they want to spell words and while they’re imagining them you spell words wrongly (…) but the moment you say it in a local language they all know what you’re talking about. (Interview student D)

This student (D) was reflecting on challenges with subjects containing “big words” when she did not understand without explanations in local languages. She also stated that to master English language at a high level will be necessary for a professional career. The analysis of Linguistic and Cultural Diversity shows in the excerpt above first that the student considers the use of only English
as language of instruction as a barrier to learning and understanding. Additionally, the same student (student D) can see advantages using English because the language knowledge gives opportunities as citizen in the form of education and a future well paid employment in Gambia elsewhere in the world as it is an international language.

Excerpt 6.3.4

The other question about a teacher who sometimes use local languages, I have one teacher, he is a science teacher. He teaches Science and Agriculture. We sometimes don’t ask but I have a teacher sometimes he will explain to me. But others only if he’s in the mood and you ask, he will tell you. They could say like here it is not a local language school. Then you start losing interest. The teacher must also have (…) should have confidence in the student. 
(Interview Student C)

The given example from student C is the same the teacher (T3) mentioned before, who is reflecting on language as a medium of communication, claiming that it is every student’s important right to use their own local language to be able to understand what you want students to understand. Analyzing from a Linguistic and Cultural Diversity aspect, this is a positive result from a student’s experience, being allowed to choose a local language as medium of communication to feel comfortable and be able to express himself. It then can underline a preferable factor to adapt new ways of teaching, treating languages as valuable and cultural resources instead of obstacles, causing anxiety in classrooms.

However, the result from analyzing classroom observations has shown that despite the thoughts and attitudes from the interviewed teachers and students about the importance of using and explaining words and concepts in the students’ local languages, there is hardly any or no traces of this in the observed lessons. Following classroom observation is an example of a teacher (T3) reflecting and implementing just mentioned, on Linguistic and Cultural Diversity:

Excerpt 6.3.5

It’s the first lesson of the day and the teacher welcomes the students with “Good morning” and closes the door. He writes the content for the lesson “The cells of living species” on the black board and draws four lines of field with following headlines “Humans”, “Animals” and “Plants”. “These three are all made from cells”, the teacher says. The students are quiet and listening very focused. None of them have any book, pen, or paper on the bench. The teacher speaks with a loud voice. Some noise from outside is disturbing. It is hard to see from the back what the teacher is writing on the board. He starts the topic asking the group of students what these 3 fields have in common and most of the students reply all together at the same time “living Materia”. The teacher starts talking about fertilization, writing the words, man-sperms, woman – eggs. During the lesson many students drop in late, entering the classroom quietly but the teachers continue without intentionally noticing. At the end of the lesson, in total 17 students were coming late. The teacher repeats, Cells = life and underlines the words on the board. He is explaining in English but is occasionally using Wolof as well. He asks the group of students “how can I explain so that everyone understand in this classroom?” “You speak Wolof?” he asks two girls. They are nodding and smiling. The teacher then continues explaining and using pictures that he draws on the board and apologizing for his not perfect pictures. Afterwards he writes the terms beside the pictures, starting to explain DNA and the process of the cells. (26-01-2023 Subject: Biology. Grade: 11)

During the biology lesson this teacher made efforts to include a diversity of languages and cultures. In addition to making use of Wolof as well as English he also uses other strategies by using pictures, drawn on the board. The analysis of field notes from other classroom observations showed that this was only occasionally visible and that there was a lack of structural strategies to implement this. Analyzing from a Linguistic and Cultural Diversity aspect when students’ local
languages are to be seen as valuable knowledge and experience to bring to school, it is most likely it can bring new young identities confident with their culture.

6.4 Analysis of Didactic Design

When asking questions in teachers interviews about didactic implications shows that different teachers understand and translate the curriculum in the classroom in different ways, based on previous knowledge of their learners.

When the French teacher answers the question about her ideas about how to learn a language and what strategies she uses promoting students’ language development, following explanation came up:

Excerpt 6.4.1

After the lesson, I offer them, especially those who do not understand, to come to my office to get extra support and it’s popular! When they come, they will be brave enough to ask questions. Because I have such large classes, of about 60 students and there are students who will feel a shame of asking questions in the class. That’s why I give them the opportunity to come and see me at the office. After the lesson. Maybe during break time. Whenever they want to, they can come to see me. And they will often say I did not understand this or that (...) I will explain things - and they will quickly understand. This morning, when I arrived, I wanted to see if they had understood the instructions, I gave them last week. And I realized some of them did really good from last week so I think they will do fine now. But it’s a method I have reflected on, and I could see it would help the students to learn and to develop a vocabulary in a way, because as they will write a letter, they need to know some special words. So, I invented this method myself to facilitate for the students; first they had to reflect on what words to use and, then write. So, they shouldn’t write at once but first reflect. (Interview T6)

The excerpt shows that this teacher (T6) is in a position where she is too, just like the students are, abandoned to cope with a poor financial situation in school. Probably these effects on teaching methods and didactic approaches. In addition, the strategy of sometimes using translations into local languages in the classroom, other examples of strategies were given to support the understanding for the students. The teacher explained in the excerpt that she has “an open door” for students to come. Another supporting strategy used by the teacher was a didactic method using a “Mind-Map” during lessons. The teacher tries to be available to a greater extent by letting students come to her office after the lesson to ask more questions and to facilitate for herself by explaining to a smaller group of students. She also sees advantages to try different methods to help the students to develop a vocabulary. The analysis of Didactic Design from this excerpt is a product of change in designing education, to give students possibilities to learn.

The next example shows a teacher’s metalinguistic awareness and attempts to implement comparisons between different languages while teaching English:

Excerpt 6.4.2

I can remember teaching English, these parts of speeches, figural speeches or let’s say vocabulary, those homophones, homonyms, and their likes. Sometimes I relate it back into the local language for example homonyms, one word having different types of meaning, you can take it into Wolof, you can take it into Jola, take it into Mandinka. When you do it, they start becoming interested. Cause we are using their own “material” to teach and make them understand by using their own language. (Interview T4)

The statement expresses a will to meet the students on their own level and to use strategies to facilitate learning, demonstrating similarities and differences between languages and comparing
them. This will, in fact, allow the possibility to create a profound understanding and respect not only to neighbors’ language but also to their culture. The teacher emphasizes that it is important to get the students motivated to learn in school. This teacher (T4) expresses his metalinguistic strategy to make the students aware of the variety of word comprehension by comparing different languages. He also sees value in using the students’ first language when he compares the languages. The method the teacher uses when he relates back to the students’ local languages also means he is confirming their ethnic culture and attract them to learn the English language when analyzing the excerpt out of Didactic Design.

And the same teacher (T4) continues explaining why this is necessary when I ask if there are words in local languages you cannot really translate into English:

Excerpt 6.4.3

Exactly! You don’t have those cause people also use mechanism in a local language and we can attract to understand and bring it. You know English is a foreign language that comes here during the colonization that they left it here and we are not taken it as an official language. There are things that we have only in local languages. The English man doesn’t know them (...) because they are not exposed to such situations so that is why, even in our right of writing I will put it into quotation marks to indicate that this is not an English word, so we also have such challenges to face too. Bringing those things of understanding from the eye of a child is a different type of mechanism we also use in the classroom. (Interview T4)

The teacher (T4) has linguistic knowledge and experiences from situations in the classroom where words cannot be directly translated into English and therefore, he communicates those concepts in local languages. When comparing languages, the teacher notices that English is not a complete official language as it is inherited from colonization. The analysis of Didactic Design shows that this teacher (T4) has knowledge about a child’s or a student’s perspective about learning and that in Gambia certain words exist with no similar translation into English. These facts enforce the teacher’s didactic implications.

The excerpt below is reinforcing a change of Didactic Design. According to the student’s opinion she wishes to go as far as to introduce English no longer as a medium of instruction but as a subject of its own:

Excerpt 6.4.5

It’s like OK it’s good to speak English, when you learn English in school you can go to other countries and communicate with other people but then it should not be like here, we are speaking only English, cause sometimes on an exam, students want to spell out things but they can’t because it is the English language, but if we use our local language which we understand very well I think the students are going to be more comfortable and understand things better. English could be a subject like (...) It could have like its own subject, like the English language itself (...) then we could try to use and explain in our own local language because other countries are using their own language in schools, and they are developing. It doesn’t mean that with English language we can’t develop but if we use our own language and have English language as its own subject the students can learn English to communicate, it would be much better. That is my opinion. (Interview Student A)

This student wish to value English just like other school subjects, because she would be more comfortable in expressing herself in a local language. It seems like this student (Student A) has according to herself found a solution to the problem with multilingual context where English is used as the only language of instruction, as the norm of English as the only teaching norm versus
multilingual classroom practices. It is obvious that the student can see advantages of mastering English as a global language and on the other hand there is a strong will to get possibilities to understand and to express herself in a language with which she is comfortable. Reflecting on Didactic Design, students are exposed to new terminologies that they cannot understand it is therefore experienced as a necessary detour to practice new concepts in English. In research and in literature (Makalela, 2015), critical literacy in education often includes critical thinking and analyzing texts, but for this study critical thinking and redesign foremost is about the use of students’ multilingualism as a resource for learning.

The following excerpt shows a student’s point of view on not seeing any motivation and use to continuing studying French in Senior Secondary:

Excerpt 6.4.6

I don’t have the capability for those things (learning foreign languages) so I lose interest (…) but having a teacher teaching me French in a way that makes it interesting I think I would get the feeling and interest to it. (Interview Student C)

The excerpt indicates a lack of supporting strategies from a teacher to learn a foreign language and to motivate the student to get access to a wider linguistic repertoire. This student (Student C) has lost motivation to learn French as a foreign language, because he does not believe that he has the “capability” as he points out. If he would meet a teacher that he finds “makes the subject interesting”, it would from his perspective enhance motivation to language learning.

Analyzing the excerpt, out of Didactic Design, indicates that the teaching must then come from a recognition of a student’s perspective and an assumption of important development to future education, through challenging change of discourses.

However, the result from analyzing classroom observations, not many traces of interacting with students in activities during the observed lessons were visible. Such a reason may depend on circumstances as limited resources and very large groups of students. An exception from this is described in field notes below from a classroom observation when a teacher (T4) during a lesson, made such efforts to involve the students in activities while he was teaching Geography.

Excerpt 6.4.7

The students are focused as the teacher explains about the equator, different poles and how to calculate distances. To illustrate for the students, the teacher pulls out a large beach ball representing the globe with a world map on. New students, coming late keep dropping in during the lesson, and the teacher is constantly making sure that everyone is seen and given an opportunity to speak up if anything is misunderstood. His body language, smiling to the students is genuinely showing that he wants to know if anyone has any question about the topic. By integrating the beach ball in the lesson, he gets the full attention and participation in the classroom. One boy is asked to point out the distance between Spain and South Africa, while the teacher encourages him to use proper terms, such as north and south. Looking at all the raised hands waiting for their turn, is showing an important level of activity and excitement throughout the classroom. (20-01-2023 Subject: Geography. Grade: 10)

The analysis of field notes from classroom observation conducted in a Geography lesson shows that this teacher (T4) has a high awareness of the vital role of the communicative function and an interaction with students.

This teacher teaches according to the belief he shares in the interview. When analyzing out of Didactic Design the method this teacher uses when he is interacting with the students shows that
despite all challenges in classroom context in this Senior Secondary School, he makes attempts to
attract students to the topic he is teaching. The teacher makes sure to see everyone as he moves
around the classroom and keeps asking if the students have understood by repeating “Are we
getting it?” (see Appendix 4). The teacher uses non-verbal elements such as a beach ball and
gestures, for a more profound understanding and as a tool for meaning making.

Truly little of this was observed in the other teachers’ lessons, on occasions that I attended.

6.5 Summary of results

In the following I summarize the result of this study, based on the research questions, which
are:

- What are the teachers’ and students’ opinions about the use of students’ linguistic
  resources in a Senior Secondary School in Gambia?
- To what extent and in which ways do students get the opportunity to use their local
  languages in school to promote learning?

Firstly, the result of the interviews shows that the majority of the study’s participants express
advantages in using all their common linguistic resources in school. The teachers see advantages in
using local languages in teaching to attract students to learn and to prevent a loss of motivation
and possible students’ dropouts. The students, on the other hand, consider that to understand new
concepts and subjects then prerequisite access to their linguistic repertoire is a necessity. Both
teachers and students mentioned specific challenges in some subjects, such as Mathematics,
Government and Science. With exception of only one teacher (T2), throughout the interviews, the
participating teachers could see the advantage of using local languages to facilitate the students’
acquiring knowledge. Several of them stated that it is crucial to make students understand a certain
subject through their strongest language and not only English, even meaning it is necessary to
attract students to learn. Others emphasized the positive impact on ethnic and social inclusion.
three out of four students are of the opinion that only English as medium of instruction prevents
learning and understanding in school. One student (Student B) did not express a need for language
support thus, despite difficulties in communication in English during the interview. One conclusion
is therefore that the issue of linguistic and cultural diversity in the classroom (Janks, 2010) is not
easy to solve, due to the complexity of language situation in Gambia.

Secondly, the results from classroom observations show that despite the students requesting
more language support in teaching, there is a gap between the students’ requesting and the teachers’
unwillingness of using of multilingualism as resource in classroom practice. Only occasional
examples and no systematic use of local languages were observed during lessons for promoting
learning and multilingual development. The students highlighted the problem with teachers
unwilling to give students support and explanations in other languages than English only. The
teachers emphasized the poor existing resources, large classes, and lack of possibility to support all
students during lessons. Despite this, there were exceptions and indications of an attempt to
introduce students’ linguistic resources as a strategy for learning. Teachers, who although they were
obliged through the curriculum to strengthening the English language, chose to include students’
linguistic resources, interests, and earlier experiences. The conclusion, put it in Janks’ theoretical
concepts (Janks, 2010, 2014), is that teachers, through their choice of a didactic design based on
students’ linguistic resources, interests, and earlier experiences, can support students’ access to the curriculum and contribute to a more equitable education.
7. Discussion and conclusion

In this chapter, the results from the study are discussed in comparison to previous research in section 7.1. The results are discussed in relation to the methodological implications of this study with reflections on limitations of the study in 7.2. Furthermore, a reflective conclusion with an intention to reciprocate the research questions of this study is presented in 7.3. The chapter ends with suggestions for further research in section 7.4.

7.1 Discussion of results

The results show that using Gambian local languages to explain terms and information in topics to clarify and ease the understanding is recognized as an important didactic method according to most teachers. Most of the participating teachers could see the efficiency of using local languages to facilitate learning and understanding. Several of them stated that it is crucial to make students understand a certain subject through their strongest language and not only English, even meaning it is necessary to attract students to learn. Nevertheless, the lessons observed show hardly any of the teachers encouraging students to use their first language during teaching. In conversations with the students, the relationship between English as the only language of instruction and the opportunity to assimilate knowledge in school subjects showed evidence of challenges.

A comparison between the teachers’ and the students’ opinions shows that teachers are positive to inclusion of a linguistic diversity in teaching but consider it as a problem. An explanation of this result may depend on students express a lack of support in local languages for understanding and learning subject concepts and new topics. Teachers’ opinions can be interpreted as they are being comfortable in the use of English because it is the unifying language over a linguistic and cultural plurality in classrooms.

In comparison with previous research, the result of this study shows too what has been emphasized in earlier research of Wedin (2017), that a child or a student will learn more efficiently when having access to one’s first language from a daily life context.

Analyzed material of classroom observations in my study showed a slippage from what was in opinions recommended to what was implemented in classrooms. The results from interviews with teachers showed that they were obliged to enforce English language in classrooms which was a clear fact during lessons I attended for observations. Some teachers made efforts to use the students’ local languages in teaching, but these traces were of more randomly character and not systematically processed. Besides, the research of Juffermans and Van Camp (2013), also presented aspects of ambivalence in using local spoken languages in classrooms as the result of this study shows as well. Expectations from former traditions within Gambian education to use English as language of instruction may be the cause of the teachers being unwilling to include and implement local languages in school. Another obstacle is the difficulties in choosing what language to use with the great number of local languages that exist among the different ethnic groups of students, and they could therefore see the English language to unite.

As research indicates, language is crucially linked to identity and this highlights the level of the issue (Richmond, 1980; Wedin, 2017). Additionally, both Nyati-Ramahobo (2006) and Snoder’s (2022) studies also stress the ambivalent relation students could have to their first language. The
result of the study highlights that using the students’ own languages in teaching as a supporting strategy helps students with their understanding of a subject’s content. The application of language pedagogies to broader contexts from the teachers’ perspective indicates that students’ multilingualism must be taken advantage of as a resource in teaching. An important observation was that of how the teaching practice relates to the curriculum from the teacher’s perspective. Here may the historical legacy be discerned. If languages are considered of superior or inferior status, important changing in teacher education and in long term education in schools will be absent.

If previous knowledge of local minority languages is regarded as fewer valuable assets, this knowledge will not be rewarded within the walls of the school. Nyati-Ramahobo (2006) emphasizes the problems to implement multilingual education in a multicultural society as there exist risks of excluding some local languages and cultures. In comparison the results from the teachers’ and students’ opinions and what have been observed on this Senior Secondary School, common factors for improvements in education as in the Botswanan study by Nyati- Ramahobo (2006). The fact that the education in Gambia like most African countries need to maintain and develop local languages to link language and culture as a resource for social inclusion.

Fattal and Alon (2020) meant that teachers acquiring education and experiences abroad could give important intercultural knowledge that contributes to students’ democratic rights of interactive communication in future classrooms. Many Gambian teachers’ and students’ wish to get an opportunity to study abroad, using their language skills, for successful effects on learning and leading to a professional career. As they are coming back to Gambia and bringing new knowledge and an intercultural awareness these experiences can lead to develop the education in the country. When the teacher handles the students background and native language as a resource the classmates are taught that all skills are valuable and will gain global competence (Fattal & Alon, 2020).

In this study the extent the studied school in Gambia allows students to use their multilingualism for learning was limited. Lupsa’s research on multilingual students’ learning (2022), claims that interactional supporting classrooms strategies, such as translinguaging pedagogy, allow students to support each other and teachers to support students when languages are looked upon as a medium and valued as resources. Though, translinguaging as a supporting strategy could be widely debated in Gambia (cf. Makalela, 2015). The results from the present study gave examples of successful learning when students could use local languages as support to learn new words and concepts, not only in English as the language of instruction but also in French as a foreign language. Compared to another study, recommending translanguage pedagogy in classrooms is based on a sociocultural understanding of languages as tools for meaning-making and describes linguistic repertoires as integrated systems (Svensson, 2017) as resources for learning and understanding. According to Janks’ theory (2010), literacy in a broader context is understood as a social practice, and this is proof to giving possibilities to students to use Gambian local languages in lessons, as most of the teachers gave prominence to in the interviews.

However, limited knowledge exists regarding students’ perspectives on learning, particularly concerning the language of instruction and the understanding of words and concepts in teaching. To facilitate students’ understanding of subject contents a great need to use translanguage pedagogy, in addition to verbal language such as pictures and gestures was revealed in the research of Svensson (2017) and McGlynn (2013). Occasionally these results of supporting pedagogy in the present study were observed during observed lessons. The other problem is a centralized curriculum that does not consider students’ language practice as facilitating tools to incorporate a learning process.
7.2 Discussion of method and limitations of the study

By answering the research questions, this study aims to contribute to fill the gap in existing previous research, hoping to add new perspectives. Thus, by conducting a method where the participants' own opinions are spoked out, emerge a specific need of analyzing and interpretation of data. According to Garcia (2009) the importance of intercultural awareness for understanding should not be neglected. For myself, during my field studies in Gambia, not being able to communicate in a language that is spoken around you as the local languages are most common in daily life gave me a feeling of isolation. When one cannot interact with the native speaking people in their local languages, like Mandinka, Wolof, or Fula, it will be a factor of exclusion for the researcher. This also explains the importance of learning languages for communication and understanding and the benefits of multilingualism which is evident for Gambian teachers and students speaking several local languages beside English.

During observed lessons the students were omitted to listen and memorize and sometimes, if possible, copy what the teacher wrote on the blackboard. To encourage the motivation and understand the importance to learn, an interactive communication in classrooms is to prefer. As different levels of proficiency in English exist and various conditions are to be accommodated then comprehension challenges must become less.

Importantly to add are the limitations of this study. With no previous experience of the prevailing Gambian school culture the result should therefore be described as a detached perspective. As a researcher one must be aware that previous experiences and knowledge, influence interpretations of what has been documented. To provide the study an evaluative result, more material and from other’s perspective should give more potential of evidentiary results. Absences in this study are identified and this could be explored in a wider perspective by for example investigating what support and supplies the school and teachers need to be able to develop more equal and efficient teaching.

This study with an ethnographic approach can contribute to new knowledge in the research field. However limited financial resources and time invested for this project may affect the choice of methods. For example, in the role of the observer in a classroom, one needs to be aware that the probability is high that this affects the teacher's teaching and can also have effects on the student’s efforts. To reduce the impact of another teacher's presence, it would be preferable if I as a researcher could visit the class before the project starts with observations. However, I initiated a meeting to introduce myself to students and teachers and talked about my work and the purpose of the study and they were also allowed to ask me questions. After this, there was a familiarity with my presence to some extent, during my field study.

7.3 Conclusion

From the results of this study, I summarize below the conclusion drawn, based on my research questions, which are: What are the teachers’ and students’ opinions about the use of students’ all linguistic resources in a Senior Secondary School in Gambia? And to what extent and in which ways do students get the opportunity to use their local languages in school to promote learning?

The analyzed data shows an especially principal factor. There is an approach from teachers to introduce students’ linguistic resources as a strategy for learning. Though the teachers’ opinions are positive to implement a multilingual classroom very few traces or almost none of these were
found in classroom observations. However, exceptions from the participants’ teaching methods indicates that it is clear those teachers’ way of teaching will influence the policy in the school with English as medium of instruction.

It can be stated from collected empiricism that this school in a specific Gambian context, need to work hard over time to provide new directions for language and literacy education. Despite very scarce resources, the participant teachers at this Senior Secondary School, where this field study took place, are struggling every day and the relevance for each student will be clear, with their open mind and an inclusive way of teaching, have come far to actualize promoting multilingualism as a resource in education in the future. Though, this study’s contribution is limited considering the results that the study can produce.

The conclusions that emerge must thus be regarded as one of the possible interpretations given based on the conditions that exist for the project. It is not an absolute truth that is given but has several limitations as well. The analysis includes my own and individual interpretation process of field studies and material. But the reflecting conclusion that can be drawn from this study has the ambition of some extent of validity. A contributing factor is the quantity of time exclusively for this study that has been able to be maintained for quite a long time by being at a great distance, solidly focusing on the field work.

This field study has been conducted with an attempt at a reflective look, the concern of this study is the critical consciousness and use of students’ local languages in education. The data was gathered by voice recorded interviews and classroom observations with help of field notes. Based on postcolonial approach with the theory of critical literacy in focus the result shows that the education in the studied Senior Secondary School perpetuated a postcolonial view of language of instruction. That means emphasizing the language of English due to the country's history leads to a prohibitive cost to students' limited access to the curriculum. Importantly to highlight are the exceptions made visible from teachers’ attempt to adapting teaching practice by taking students' different languages, identities, and experiences into account. As understanding is dependent on subjective interpretation, teaching methods then requires fewer comprehension challenges for students in a classroom where many different levels of proficiency in English exist and various conditions are accommodated (Janks, 2010). This is an essential issue when analyzing the data in this study and discussing the findings connected to critical literacy.

7.4 Future research

In recent years, a special focus has been placed on questions regarding participants of different spoken and written language practices and how the practices are constituted. This includes exposing the norms and values on which these practices rest and how they can contribute to marginalization of certain groups in a society. These established language uses affect choices and later opportunities to a professional life. This study shows that disparity in education and learning needs to be understood from a social, cultural, and historical perspective. Therefore, continued research on language use in education and internationalization is needed in an increasingly global world with large migration groups. This study with a juxtaposition of students’ and teachers’ voices in a school in Gambia can enable us to add new perspectives and contribute to a difference to futural research on multilingualism as a resource.

More longitudinal studies are needed but require higher funding. A proposal for future research could be field research where the teachers and the researcher together try different pedagogical
models to let teaching content and language collaborate with the aim to develop students social, critical, and cognitive abilities.

In some extent, there are possibilities that my field study in Gambia can generate an international perspective, which in turn can lead to a developed understanding of cultural diversity in schools. The purpose of internationalization is to increase knowledge through information but also in human encounters with others as the school acts as a cultural and social meeting place where living conditions, backgrounds and values find a place. Norms are created and shaped depending on place and time, but also changed in relationships with other people in society. By doing a field study with an ethnographic approach, makes me as a student and a teacher aware of the challenges to adapt intercultural capacity. Research abroad, in another country gains insight far wider than solely theoretical frameworks. It emergent experiences that are valuable towards lifelong learning and a sustainable global future.
References


Appendix 1

Method and Search process

Based on the purpose of the study, inclusion and exclusion criteria have been established (Skolforskningssinstitutet, 2018). Inclusion criteria provide conditions for answering the research questions: What are the teachers’ and students’ opinions about the use of students’ all linguistic resources at a Senior Secondary School in Gambia? And to what extent and in which ways do students get the opportunity to use their local languages in school for promoting learning? Exclusion criteria indicate how studies were sorted out and how a selection was made (see table 1). To get an overview of previous research a database search was done. I used Libsearch and Swepub to survey the Swedish national literature and then I used ERIC via EBSCO to survey international literature and the database Ulrichsweb for scientific journals. Different keywords were used to find material connected to the research questions, such as “multilingualism in school” and “language of instruction.” New keywords were added for further searching, for example in database Google Scholar, Gambia OR ”the Gambia ”AND language*. Another database, ERC (Education Research Complete) made available more advanced ways for searching, such as (Gambia OR ”the Gambia”) AND educat* AND langua* AND “English as language of instruction”.

Thus, for the collection of material to be manageable, a demarcation was needed to limit the selection for Peer review. A review of abstracts narrowed the selection to literature with a focus on language of instruction as its effects were of greater interest for this study’s purpose. The selected literature has then been sorted according to a few themes that can be distinguished to language factors affecting learning. For example, an article about translanguaging pedagogy with a group of Afghan teenagers in Sweden was considered too narrow for the selected field and of minor relevance for my study in Gambian context. Another such exclusion was a master thesis on Basic and Secondary education in Gambia but a connection to my research questions were not to be found as it was a study on pedagogical strategies for outdoor education.

Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inclusion criteria (ex. keywords)</th>
<th>Exclusion criteria</th>
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<td>Bilingual education</td>
<td>No focus on language</td>
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<tr>
<td>Postcolonialism</td>
<td>Exclusion of non-African countries</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mother tongue as resource for learning</td>
<td>Exclusion of research younger children/ preschool/subjects</td>
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<td>Multilingual students’ learning</td>
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<td>Language of instruction</td>
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<td>(Gambia OR ”the Gambia”) AND educat* AND langua* AND “ English as a language of instruction”</td>
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Appendix 2

Interview questions to teachers and students:

1) To what extent are students’ multilingualism taken advantage of? To what extent do students / do you as students get the opportunity to use their/your local language in school?

2) What opportunities for support do students/do you as students get in school?

3) What learning strategies are used that benefit language development from your opinion?
Appendix 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Language</th>
<th>Comments/Reflections</th>
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Appendix 4

Classroom observation. Extract from field notes 20 January 2023

One hour Geography lesson for 10th grade, 28 girls and 22 boys. Four students sharing a bench made for two. On the blackboard, the teacher has written, “Distance calculation with longitude and latitude,” Methods: “Multiplication and division” and Units: “Degrees and kilometers.” There are very few papers and schoolbooks on the tables, so the students must share. The same geography books are used for all countries in West Africa, written by a writer from Nigeria.

The students are focused as the teacher explains about the equator, different poles and how to calculate distances. To illustrate for the students, the teacher pulls out a large beach ball representing the globe. New students keep dropping in during the lesson, and the teacher is constantly making sure that everyone is seen and given an opportunity to speak up if anything is misunderstood. His body language, smiling to the students is genuinely showing that he wants to know if anyone has any question about the topic. By integrating the beach ball in the lesson, he gets the full attention and participation in the classroom. One boy is asked to point out the distance between Spain and South Africa, while the teacher encourages him to use proper terms, such as north and south. Looking at all the raised hands waiting for their turn, is showing an important level of activity and excitement throughout the classroom.

The teacher continuously asks follow-up questions and making eye contact with the students to make sure that everyone is following his lesson. Another student is asked to point out the distance between Lagos and Cairo while asking the whole class in chorus in which countries those cities are located. The teachers smile and enthusiasm is drawing the whole class together as a unit. To honor me, the class is asked the distance from Sweden to Gambia and the students quickly realize how far I have travelled from northern Europe.

The students are given a final task for 15 min. to calculate the distances between Banjul - Dakar, and between Senegal - South Africa. Some work individually or in groups, using a bit of English mixed with their own local languages, Mandinka, Wolof, Fula and Jola. During the last minutes, another teacher walks in and starts communicating to the teacher in Wolof. While the students are leaving the classroom, a girl stops and points at the Black Sea on the globe. She is clearly baffled to why a sea is called black and wondering the reason why.