

**BILINGUAL EDUCATION IN BURKINA FASO: WHERE DO
PARENTS AND TEACHERS STAND?**

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Abstract

Except for Tanzania where Kiswahili is used as the language of instruction throughout the entire elementary education process, various attempts to implement mother tongue education in most African countries have been unsuccessful. In some countries the use of local languages is restricted to the lower grades of elementary education. In other countries such as Burkina Faso, local languages are kept out of formal education. One of the main excuses is that the population does not support the use of local languages in education.

The purpose of the present study is to lay the groundwork of mother tongue education in Burkina Faso by surveying parents' and teachers' attitudes towards instruction in both French and local languages. The study draws on quantitative and qualitative analyzes of data collected from 85 parents and teachers in Burkina Faso by means of a questionnaire. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. The results of the study revealed that parents and teachers have a positive attitude towards bilingual education in Burkina Faso. The implication is that the government of Burkina Faso should enact policy that will enable the use of local languages along with French as languages of instruction in elementary school because parents and teachers are in favor of mother tongue education. Many of them believe that the use of local languages in education promotes the students' cultural identity, raises their self-esteem, and builds a foundation for solid learning.

I. INTRODUCTION

The issue of whether independent African nations should continue with the colonial legacy of providing instruction in the language of the former colonial power, or break away from the colonial languages and teach in African languages, is still not resolved. Burkina Faso is one of these African countries, where more than forty years after independence from France, instruction is still conducted in French. The shortcomings of this unilingual system of education, which is characterized by high dropout and repetition rates at the elementary school level (UNESCO, 2005) have convinced scholars and policy makers of the need for both mother tongue and French education. Indeed, many studies in language policy, language planning and education have documented the academic, cognitive, cultural, and economic benefits of bilingual education (Baker, 2006; Bialystok, 2000; Cummins, 2000; Lavoie, 2008a; Thomas & Collier, 2002). Persuaded by the relevance of bilingual education for elementary school children in Burkina Faso, a Swiss NGO in collaboration with the government of Burkina Faso has started a few pilot bilingual programs, which serve as models for possible nationwide bilingual education in the future.

Past studies on bilingual education in Burkina Faso have focused on evaluating the experimental bilingual programs in comparison with the classical French-only schools. The results of these studies have shown that students in the bilingual programs perform better on the national elementary exit exam (CEP)¹ than their peers who attend the classical schools, where French is the only medium of instruction (Ilboudo, 2003; Lavoie,

¹ CEP (Certificat D'Etudes Primaires Elementaires) is national elementary school exit exam that all students sit for in sixth grade. Only students who pass the exam are allowed to start secondary school.

2008a). The bilingual students also develop bilingualism and biliteracy in both French and their mother tongues and acquire some knowledge that allows them to better understand their environment (Lavoie, 2008b).

Other studies have explored some potential obstacles to the implementation of mother tongue education in Burkina Faso (Kouraogo & Dianda, 2008; Napon, 2002; Ouedraogo, 2002). The multiplicity of local languages, the lack of funding and teaching materials and the lack of political will from the part of the authorities have been highlighted as major obstacles to bilingual education in Burkina Faso. One of the major, but sometimes neglected obstacles to mother tongue education in Burkina Faso is the opposition of some intellectuals, teachers, and parents to the use of local languages in schools. In the current educational context in which the government of Burkina Faso is conducting major educational reforms, special attention needs to be paid to parents' and teachers' attitudes towards mother tongue education before any generalization of the experimental bilingual programs to the entire country can take place.

Statement of the problem

Bilingual education has always been a controversial topic in Burkina Faso since the country gained independence in the 1960s. A significant number of research studies have been conducted on the issue (Kouraogo & Dianda, 2008; Napon, 2002; Ouedraogo, 2002). The problem, however, is that the protagonists of elementary education have been excluded from the debate on bilingual education. Although the implementation of a successful bilingual education program requires parents' and teachers' support, little attention has been paid to their beliefs and opinions on the issue.

Benefits of the study

There is a need for research on parents' and teachers' attitudes towards bilingual education before any move can be made to generalize the experimental bilingual programs to the entire country. Any attempt to implement bilingual education without prior investigation of parents' and teachers' beliefs, opinions, and feelings about the issue might be a recipe for disaster. Baker (2006) warns that bilingual education, in order to be successful, has to involve parents and teachers. They are the main actors in any educational setting besides the students themselves. Therefore, their support is critical to the success of bilingual education. The results of the present study will assist the government of Burkina Faso in deciding what language-in-education policy is in the best interest of the country.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to lay the groundwork for a successful implementation of mother tongue education in Burkina Faso. The government of Burkina Faso is known for its preference for the top-down approach to educational reforms, where decisions are made at the top and handed down to teachers for implementation. Kouarago and Dianda (2008) argue that sometimes teachers implement certain reforms without really understanding their content and the motives behind them. Not surprisingly the results of such reforms have been catastrophic. In that regard, the goal of this study is to promote a bottom-up approach to language policy and reform in education by involving parents and teachers in the planning process.

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The specific objective of this study is to investigate parents' and teachers' knowledge and attitudes toward bilingual education. Also, the present study sets out to determine whether a correlation exists between parents' and teachers' knowledge of bilingual education and their attitudes towards it.

Research questions

The present study attempted to find answers to the following research questions:

1. What are parents' and teachers' attitudes towards bilingual education in Burkina Faso?
2. What is the extent of parents' and teachers' knowledge of bilingual education?
3. Is there any correlation between parents' and teachers' knowledge and their attitudes towards bilingual education?

Definition of Key Terms

Bilingual education: The term “bilingual education” has been used ambiguously by various scholars to refer to different models and types of educational programs. In an attempt to clarify the meaning of the term, Baker (2006) identifies two types of bilingual education in relation to their aims:

Transitional bilingual education aims to shift the child from the home minority language to the dominant, majority language. Social and cultural assimilation into the language majority is the underlying aim. Maintenance bilingual education attempts to foster the minority language in the child, strengthening the child's

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sense of cultural identity and affirming the rights of an ethnic minority group in a nation. (p. 213)

The type of bilingual education that is implemented in the experimental bilingual schools in Burkina Faso is closer to transitional bilingual education. The programs are transitional in the sense that the amount of time devoted to instruction in the local language decreases as the children move from grade one to grade five. The local languages fade away to give place to French, which becomes the dominant language in the final grade of elementary education. In other words, the bilingual programs start with a strong emphasis on the mother tongue (90% of the instructional time), and shift the child to almost French-only instruction (90% of the curriculum taught in French) in the final grade (Ilboudo, 2003; Lavoie, 2008a).

On the other hand, the bilingual programs in Burkina Faso can also be regarded as maintenance programs, since their goal is for the children to develop bilingualism, biliteracy, and biculturalism (Ilboudo, 2003; Lavoie, 2008a). In these programs, both French and the dominant language in the area where the school is located are used as the means of instruction in the entire elementary education even though both languages do not have the same weight in curriculum instruction except in grade three.

The term “bilingual education” is used in the present study to refer to the use of French and any indigenous language of Burkina Faso as mediums of instruction in elementary education. This study does not advocate for the choice of one single local language to be used along with French as languages of instruction at elementary school. Instead, it argues that the dominant language in the area where the school is located should be used in addition to French for instruction.

Mother tongue education: The term “mother tongue education” will be used interchangeably with “bilingual education” in the present study. It is intended to mean the use of the child’s mother tongue and French as mediums of instruction, but not a replacement of French with any given local language.

II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON BURKINA FASO

Burkina Faso is a landlocked country in West Africa. It is surrounded by Ghana, Benin, Togo, Niger, Mali, and the Ivory Coast. The population is estimated at 14,017,262 (National Institute of Statistics and Demographics, 2006). The people of Burkina Faso are called Burkinabè, and they speak 59 different languages (Nikiema, 1996) or 68 according to Gordon (2005). Mooré, Jula, and Fulfuldé have been given the status of national languages. However, this official recognition is merely symbolic, and does not translate into any concrete policy in favor of these languages. Nonetheless, it is important to remember that Mooré is the dominant language in Burkina Faso. It is spoken by 48% of the population (Wolff, 2006). Jula and Fulfuldé are spoken not only in Burkina Faso, but also in neighboring countries such as Cote d’Ivoire, Mali, and Niger.

Despite the fact that French is spoken by only 10% to 15 % of the population of Burkina Faso, it remains the official language of the country (Nikiema, 1996). As the official language of Burkina Faso, French is used in government, business, mass media communication, and education. French is the only language of instruction in all public schools from the first day of elementary school through the last day of college.

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As is the case in many post-colonial African nations, the use of French-only medium of instruction has not been less of an issue because the majority of elementary school children come to school without any knowledge of French. Their first contact with the French language appears as a shock to them, and many of the children struggle to access the curriculum, which is taught entirely in French. The result of this submersion of children into French is cultural alienation, poor academic performance, high repetition and dropout rates at elementary school. It is not surprising that UNESCO (2007) reported that the highest rate of elementary school dropout rate in Sub-Saharan Africa occurs in grade one. There is no doubt that with such a dysfunctional system of education, Burkina Faso will have a hard time in trying to raise its youth literacy rate, which is estimated at 31% (UNESCO, 2007).

Throughout its history, various attempts have been made to solve the language problem in the Burkinabè education system, but all of them have proved unsuccessful due a strong opposition of some government officials. Burkina Faso was a French colony until 1960, when it gained its independence. During that period of French domination, French was the only medium of instruction in schools. Contrary to the British who were flexible in terms of mother tongue education during colonization, the French and Portuguese adopted a stricter language policy, which forbade mother tongue education (Bangbose, 2000). However, such inflexible language policies did not yield positive results in terms of raising the literacy rate in Burkina Faso. In clear terms, colonial education in Burkina Faso was a failure. After more than forty years in the country, the French left Burkina Faso in 1960 with a literacy rate of 5% (Kouraogo & Dianda, 2008, p. 23).

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After independence, while one would normally expect a change in language policy, the authorities of Burkina Faso have opted for continuity over change. Today, French is still the sole medium of instruction in schools. However, in 1978 the government initiated an educational reform, which allowed for the creation of a few experimental bilingual education programs that used French and three local languages as means of instruction. The goal of the reform was to generalize the bilingual system to the entire country. Sadly, the program was stopped in 1984 due to poor performance and the strong opposition by some intellectuals and government officials. In 1994, interest in bilingual education resurfaced when OSEO², a Swiss NGO, started a few experimental bilingual schools in the country. These bilingual programs have been very successful. The number of experimental bilingual schools as well as the number of local languages used as sources of instruction keeps increasing every year. According to Lavoie (2008b), eight national languages are used in the experimental program. The goal of OSEO is to describe 14 languages in order to cover 90% of the population with mother tongue education.

These success stories from the experimental bilingual schools have brought the debate of bilingual education into the national arena. Some scholars such as Kouraogo and Dianda (2008) argue that the government should take a bold step in generalizing the bilingual education system to the entire country. However, others warn that some intellectuals, teachers, and parents may not be in favor of the idea. This study aims at shedding some light on parents' and teachers' opinion about mother tongue education in Burkina Faso. Teachers' and parents' attitudes towards mother tongue education are a

² OSEO (Oeuvre Suisse d'Entraide Ouvrière) is a Swiss NGO operating in the domain of rural development.

critical factor in the success or failure. Baker (2006) could not be any clearer on the issue when he argues that community, parental, and teacher support is important in the implementation of a successful bilingual program.

So far, all the attempts to implement nationwide mother tongue education in Burkina Faso have been unsuccessful, except the few bilingual programs that are still in the experimental phase. Despite the advantages that such an educational reform offers the country, some intellectuals, parents, and scholars are opposed to the idea. The main reason is that complex scientific concepts cannot be expressed in local languages. Also, there is this desire of the elite to use French as a gate keeper for the poor illiterate masses. The result is that today, French is still the only language of instruction in all public schools except the few experimental ones mentioned previously in this study. The next section highlights the theoretical framework for bilingual education.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR BILINGUAL EDUCATION

When talking about bilingual education in elementary schools and the problems that are associated with its implementation, one might ask the following question: What is wrong with children learning academic content in a second language (L2)?

Research has demonstrated that bilingual education has cognitive, academic, social, and cultural benefits for elementary school students (Cummins, 1980, 1984, 2001; Lavoie, 2008a, 2008b; UNESCO, 1953). At the cognitive level, research in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) has shown that literacy in a child's native language can facilitate their learning of an L2 (Cummins, 1980, 1981, 2000; Daws, 1988; Hawess, 1979; Maclaughlin, 1987; Obanya, 1985). These researchers argue that children who are

literate in their first language (L1) can transfer their literacy skills into the second language (L2) learning situation, thereby making its acquisition easier. Cummins' (1981) Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) model stipulates that the two languages of bilingual children operate through the same central processing system. Even though both languages may look different at the surface, they are fused underneath. The implication of this theory is that when the child's L1 reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills are sufficiently developed, they can serve as a basis for learning the L2.

At the academic level, bilingual education allows children to access the curriculum and perform better in elementary school. Past studies have demonstrated that children learn academic content faster in their L1 than in an unfamiliar foreign language (Bamgbose, 1991; UNESCO, 1953). Other studies such as Miti (1995), Ngara (1982), and Wallwork (1985) have highlighted the numerous difficulties that learners experience when trying to access the curriculum in an L2. Chaudron (1998) argues that learners not only have to understand the task that they have to complete, but also the language of the task. Cummins, (1984a, 1984b) introduced the concepts of basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) in order to explain the linguistic and academic difficulties that children of minority language speakers experience in schools. According to Cummins' theory, children who have developed the BICS may be able to communicate fluently, but may not have the advanced language skills (CALP) which are necessary to cope with complex academic content. The researcher argues that schools should develop the CALP skills of children in both their L1 and their L2 in order to allow them to fully access the curriculum and

succeed. When the L1 and/or the L2 are poorly developed, children experience serious academic difficulties that can lead to poor academic performance and dropout.

At the social level, bilingual education has the advantage of producing individuals who are tolerant of other people and cultures (Baker, 2006). For example, many students in dual language programs interact with their peers who are from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and learn to depend on each other in order to learn the academic content taught in both languages. Through this interaction the students improve their social skills and become more tolerant of other people.

Finally, bilingual education preserves the students' native language and culture (Baker, 2006), which increases the students' self-esteem and sense of cultural identity. The issue of cultural identity is especially important in the African context. One goal of African colonization, especially French and Portuguese colonization in Africa, was to promote the cultural assimilation of Africans (Lavoie, 2006). The colonial education system pursued the same goal. Colonial education was intended to impose colonial languages and cultures on Africans and promote cultural assimilation. Now that colonization is over, the formerly colonized countries have the choice of reforming their educational systems in order to better reflect and promote their native culture or retain the old colonial system despite its shortcomings. On the negative effects of excluding the mother tongue from school, Cummins (2001) argues that "to reject a child's language in school is to reject the child" (p. 4).

Most of the theories of bilingual education and bilingualism agree that bilingual education has cognitive, academic, social, and cultural benefits for children. UNESCO (1953) has echoed the findings of research in bilingual education in its declaration, which

has stated that the mother tongue is the best medium of instruction for a child. Since then, UNESCO's position on mother tongue education has remained the same and the organization has assisted several African countries in their effort to promote mother tongue education. The next section of this study presents an overview of the literature on language attitudes in Sub-Saharan Africa in order to provide a background for understanding language attitudes in Burkina Faso.

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

Despite the critical role of language attitude research in language planning and policy in education, Francophone Africa registers one of the lowest numbers of studies in the field. In this literature review an attempt will be made to examine the issue of language attitudes in both Anglophone and Francophone countries in Sub-Saharan Africa as it may provide a background to understanding language attitudes in Burkina Faso, which is a Francophone country.

1. Language Attitudes in Anglophone Sub-Saharan Africa

Language attitude research is a relatively new field in Anglophone African countries. As a result, only countries such as Nigeria, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Kenya are well represented. The results of studies conducted in these countries indicate that an overwhelming majority of Africans have negative attitudes towards their own languages (Adegbiya, 1994; Ngugi, 1986; Robinson, 1996). In his book *Decolonizing the Mind*, Ngugi (1986) regretfully notes that after many years of independence, Africans' minds are still colonized. He points out that many Africans still believe that the colonial

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languages are superior to their own local languages. According to the author, this negative attitude towards indigenous African languages, which stems from colonization, can be a serious obstacle to Africa's development. Colonization has taught Africans to believe that anything African, including their languages, is inferior to anything European. Sadly, this colonial mentality still persists in African societies. Ngugi concludes his book, which is based on the Kenyan experience with the English language by arguing for a decolonization of Africans' minds. This decolonization starts with literacy and production of literary work in African languages. Ngugi himself, who is a writer, has set a good example by deciding to write all his books in Kikuyu, his mother tongue, instead of English.

Also, Adegbija (1994) argues that the vast majority of Africans undervalue their own languages, but have a positive attitude towards European languages. The author argues that these negative attitudes are the result of colonization, and advocates for an empowerment of African languages starting with their official use in government, education, and the media. In the majority of African countries, the colonial language is the official language, and it is used in government, mass media communication, and education. On the other hand, the use of African languages is reduced to family communication, cultural activities, and village solidarity. As a result, European languages have a higher status because they are associated with success, modernity, and socio-economic mobility. According to that mindset, African languages have no economic value, which explains why many Africans have negative attitudes towards them.

Similarly, Robinson (1996) found that Africans have negative attitudes towards their own local languages. He also points an accusing finger at the unfair functional use

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of African and European languages in African society. The researcher argues that in most African societies, European and African languages are considered as being opposed to each other rather than complementary. European languages are characterized by their use in official domains such as education, administration, business, and mass media. On the other hand, local languages are relegated to a low rank, and are used for village communication and solidarity. Robinson believes that the exclusion of African languages from official domains not only contributes to people developing negative attitudes towards them, but may also hinder development. The studies reviewed in this section provide a general overview of language attitudes in Anglophone countries, thus providing a good foundation for further study of language attitudes within educational settings.

1.1. Learners' attitudes

Education is one of the sectors of society that receives a tremendous amount of attention in terms of language planning and policy. Language attitudes in education influence students' motivation and thereby their academic performance (Baker, 2006). For that reason, since learners, teachers, and parents are the main actors in the educational setting, it is critical for language attitude research in education to take them into consideration.

The results of a number of studies that have focused on language attitudes in education suggest that African students have negative attitudes toward indigenous languages, and prefer to be taught in the languages of their former colonial powers. Roy-Campbell (1995) has reviewed a study by Rubagumya (1991) who investigated secondary level students' preference between English and Kiswahili medium of

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instruction in Tanzania and has found that students prefer the retention of English over Kiswahili as the medium of instruction at secondary level. The researcher is puzzled by the results of the study, considering that the majority of the students did not have a solid command of the English language, yet they wanted to be taught in English.

Similarly, Rwambiwa (1993) argues that Zimbabwean students have negative attitudes towards the indigenous languages in the country. The researcher arrives at that conclusion after observing that university students in Zimbabwe have little respect for teachers of local languages compared with teachers of English. According to the researcher, this lack of respect for teachers of Zimbabwean languages underscores negative attitudes towards the languages they teach.

In the same line of thought, Guerini (2008) claims that University students in Ghana are opposed to the use of Akan as a medium of instruction in the educational system. The researcher, who has surveyed students in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Accra, has found that the majority of the students prefer that the government keep English as the medium of instruction in schools and universities. According to the researcher, the students reject the use of Akan as the medium of instruction on grounds that it is unfit for discussing sophisticated academic matter.

The results of studies on language attitudes in education suggest that the majority of African students undervalue their indigenous languages and tend to minimize their potential use as languages of instruction in the education system. However, students' attitudes alone cannot give a complete and accurate picture of language attitudes within the educational setting. In order to give an overall picture of language attitudes in education, one needs to look at parents' and teachers' attitudes.

1.2. Teachers' and parents' language attitudes

Motivated by the desire to give a complete and more accurate account of language attitudes in African education, some researchers have looked at parents' and teachers' language attitudes. The findings of these studies have revealed that parents have negative attitudes towards the use of local languages in the educational system. Ndamba (2008) conducted a study in Zimbabwe in order to elicit elementary school students' and their parents' attitudes towards the use of Ndebele or Shona as mediums of instruction. The results show that parents have negative attitudes towards Ndebele or Shona, and want their children to be taught in English only. Employment is the main reason parents give to support their preference for instruction in English. Ndamba (2008) goes on to argue that parents want their children to be taught in English-only as opposed to English and a local language despite the fact that the children struggle with English.

Similarly, Eche (2004) reports that in Cameroon, parents want their children to start learning English and French (the two official languages of the country) as early as possible, but there is no place for mother tongue education. The following commentary nicely captures the researchers' portrayal of parents' attitudes towards mother tongue education in Cameroon:

Several parents send their children to nursery schools as early as the age of three, where the language of communication is English or French. It is obvious that parents who expose their children at an early age to the official language will be totally against the introduction of indigenous languages in the early years of

primary education. Such unfavourable attitudes do not augur well for the introduction of indigenous languages in the school system. (Eche, 2004, p. 28)

Finally, in a study that surveyed the language attitudes of student-teachers at a college of education located in the Yoruba speaking area of Nigeria, Ejieh (2004) found that the majority of them were not willing to teach in mother tongue when they leave college. The researcher went on to claim that these negative attitudes that student-teachers have towards mother tongue education may be related to the low status that Nigerian languages have acquired as a result of colonization.

The findings of these studies converge towards the conclusion that attitudes towards local languages and their use in education are negative in Anglophone countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. These findings, however, cannot be generalized to Francophone countries given that both types of countries have experienced different language policies during colonization. This is true, especially when one considers that language attitudes are complex and change depending on the political, historical, and socio-economic context in which the language is used.

2. Language Attitudes in Francophone Sub-Saharan Africa

Research on language attitudes in Francophone countries in Sub-Saharan Africa is very scarce. However, the results of the few studies reviewed point to positive attitudes towards local languages. Diallo (2005) in his study on language attitudes in Senegal reports that Senegalese have positive attitudes towards their indigenous languages. The researcher argues that most Senegalese are loyal to their mother tongues and wish to see their introduction at elementary school as sources of instruction. However, according to

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the researcher Senegalese do not want the promotion of their mother tongues at the expense of French. Most of the participants have expressed their attachment to French and their fascination for the English language. This attitude makes sense given the fact that Senegalese value the promotion of their culture, but at the same time they have to network and communicate with the outside world in French and English.

Concerning language attitudes in Burkina Faso, no known empirical study has investigated the issue. The few studies that have been found only address language attitudes indirectly, but do not focus mainly on language attitudes. Lavoie (2006, 2008a) observes an increased level of interaction between teachers, parents, and students in two experimental bilingual schools in Burkina Faso. The researcher establishes a comparison between the level of parental involvement in the bilingual schools and the classical unilingual schools. She finds that parental involvement is low in all-French schools. The results of her study may suggest that parents of children who attend bilingual schools in Burkina Faso appreciate the fact that their languages are used for instruction in school. Based on the results of her study one may speculate that parents of children in the unilingual schools may be eager to see their children being taught in both their mother tongue and French.

Another study that suggests that parents may have positive attitudes towards mother tongue education in Burkina Faso comes from Kouraogo and Dianda (2008). In an attempt to predict the future of Burkinabè educational system, the authors mention bilingual education as one of the most promising educational innovations. Like Lavoie (2008a) Kouraogo and Dianda (2008) also stress the potential of bilingual education in bridging the gap between school and the community, which results in high parental

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involvement in school. However, the researchers regret that despite the potential benefits of bilingual education for Burkina Faso, some intellectuals and teachers - the very people who are supposed to understand the usefulness of mother tongue education - do not favor the use of local languages along with French in the educational system of Burkina Faso. The results of the few studies on language attitudes in Francophone Africa in general and in Burkina Faso in particular suggest that the population may have positive attitudes towards local languages and their use in education, but these attitudes may be overridden by a strong opposition from some intellectuals, teachers, and government officials.

In sum, previous studies that have investigated language attitudes in Anglophone countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have sadly reported that the majority of people have negative attitudes towards their local languages and their use as mediums of instruction in schools, but have a positive attitude towards the colonial languages. On the other hand, the results of research on language attitudes in Francophone Africa are encouraging. The findings point toward positive attitudes towards local languages and their use as sources of instruction in school.

Due to the small number of studies that have investigated language attitudes in Francophone West Africa in general and in Burkina Faso in particular, it would be over-pretentious to attempt to predict the results of the present study. Nonetheless, one may hypothesize that teachers and parents will have a positive attitude and a good knowledge of bilingual education in Burkina Faso. Also, the results of the present study will show a strong positive correlation between parents' and teachers' knowledge of bilingual education and their attitudes towards it.

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The goal of the present study is to lay the groundwork for a successful implementation of mother tongue education in Burkina Faso. The study intends to elicit parents' and teachers' attitudes towards bilingual education in Burkina Faso as well as their knowledge of bilingual education. Also an attempt will be made in this study to answer the question as to whether a correlation exists between parents' and teachers' knowledge of bilingual education and their attitudes towards it. The results of the study will give some insights to the government as to whether it is advisable to attempt a nation-wide mother tongue education or not. Without surveying parents' and teachers' attitudes towards mother tongue education any attempt to implement mother tongue education in Burkina Faso may be perceived as an imposition on the main actors of the education system.

V. METHOD

Participants

Eighty-five subjects (35 parents and 50 elementary school teachers) participated in the study. Even though teachers and parents are two distinct categories of people, there was an overlap between the two groups because some teachers also qualified as parents. They had children who were attending elementary school at the time the data for the present study was collected. However, these participants were counted as either parents or teachers, not both. Among the 85 participants, there were 49 males and 36 females. The majority of the subjects (70) lived in urban areas. Only 15 participants lived in rural areas. Their ages fell in the range between 20 and 80. The majority of the participants had a secondary level of education, which is not surprising because most of them were

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elementary school teachers; and elementary school teachers are recruited at the secondary level. Ninety four percent of the subjects reported that they speak at least two languages. Only six percent of the participants were monolinguals. The participants live in five provinces of Burkina Faso, which are: Kadiogo, Houet, Comoé, Boulkiemdé and Sanguié. They were identified by means of convenience sampling because the data collection took place in December 2008 when the teachers and students were on Christmas break. For that reason, it was difficult to locate teachers and parents. If it were during the school year, it would have been easier to locate them in schools. Questionnaires could also be distributed to parents through their children.

Instrument

The instrument that was used to collect the data consisted of a questionnaire adapted from previous attitudinal studies (Adegbija, 1994; Krashen, 1996; Shin, 2000). The questionnaire was carefully designed in order to collect both qualitative and quantitative data that allowed for data triangulation. It contained two main sections (see appendix). The first section was aimed at collecting some biographical information from the participants. The second section, the actual questionnaire, consisted of 11 questions: Eight Likert items with five response options for each item (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree), two multiple-choice questions, and one yes-no response question. The first item in the main part of the questionnaire surveyed the subjects' overall perception of the quality of elementary education in Burkina Faso; items number two, three, four, and five were used to elicit parents' and teachers' attitudes towards bilingual education; items number six, seven, eight, nine, and 10 assessed

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parents' and teachers' knowledge of bilingual education. The last item took a poll of parents' and teachers' opinion on mother tongue education in Burkina Faso and assessed their knowledge of the bilingual education theory. The participants were given the opportunity to justify their position on the issue of mother tongue education in Burkina Faso. The questionnaire was proofread by scholars in the field of sociolinguistics, which allowed the researcher to improve it. Finally, the questionnaire was piloted before being administered. The results of the pilot study were not included in the present study. Anonymity was ensured for all the participants because of the political implications of the study.

Procedure

In total, 100 questionnaires and consent forms were handed to elementary school teachers and parents identified by means of convenience sampling in the South West, Central, and Central West regions of Burkina Faso. The questionnaires were translated into French because the majority of the participants did not know any English. In some cases, the questionnaires were orally translated into local languages in order to ensure a better comprehension for some participants who were not proficient in French. Some subjects were illiterate and could neither read nor write French. In such situations, the subjects' responses were recorded by the researcher. The illiterate participants signed the consent forms by fingerprint. The data collection took place between December 15, 2008 and January 5, 2009. As of January 5, 2009, 85 questionnaires were returned.

Data analysis

The data was analyzed quantitatively by mean and percentage calculation. The standard deviation is reported in order to show the discrepancy between the scores. Concerning the Likert items, each response option was assigned a number ranging from 5 (Strongly Agree) to 1 (Strongly Disagree) for scoring purpose. Scores for items that addressed the same target were summed up and averaged. Note that the scores were reversed for items that were negatively phrased (items eight, and nine). The quantitative data for the multiple-choice items was analyzed by mean and percentage calculation. The data for item 11 was analyzed qualitatively because it relates to how the participants justified their preference or non-preference for mother tongue education in Burkina Faso. Also, a Pearson correlation test was run in order to determine the relationship between the participants' attitudes towards mother tongue education and variables such as knowledge of bilingual education, age, level of education, place of residence and gender. According to Adegbija (1994) the interplay between these variables is something that language attitudes research in Sub-Saharan Africa should take into consideration.

IV. RESULTS

In order to ensure greater reliability and validity, both quantitative and qualitative data have been collected in order to investigate parents' and teachers' attitudes towards bilingual education in Burkina Faso. The use of data triangulation can be explained by the fact that language attitude research is highly subjective and cannot be accurately measured by one single instrument. The results of the quantitative data analysis are reported first, followed by the qualitative data.

1. Results of Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative data analysis concerns the data collected with the Likert items and multiple-choice questions. The quantitative data has been used to elicit parents' and teachers' perception of the quality of elementary education, and their knowledge and attitudes towards bilingual education. Also, they provide an answer to the question as to whether there is a correlation between parents' and teachers' attitudes and other variables such as age, gender, level of education, and place of residence. The mean scores for the Likert items are interpreted as being on a scale from 1 represents Strongly Disagree (SD), 3 a neutral opinion (N), and 5 represents Strongly Agree (SA).

1.1. Perception of elementary education quality

1. Elementary education in Burkina Faso is in good shape.

SA A N D SD

The first item on the questionnaire asks the participants to assess the quality of elementary education in Burkina Faso. Their responses are reported in Table 1. The number of participants as well as the mean scores, standard deviations, significance, and t-values are reported in the columns. The rows are reserved for the participants.

Table 1: Perception of elementary education quality

Item	Participants	N	Mean*	SD	Sig	t
1.	Parents and teachers	85	2.47	1.539	.251	-1.158
	Parents	35	2.71	1.808		
	Teachers	50	2.30	1.313		

*5 = Strongly Agree, 3=Neutral, and 1= Strongly Disagree.

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The results of the study show that parents and teachers have a negative perception of the quality of elementary education in Burkina Faso. No significant difference is found between the two groups in regard to their perception of elementary education quality ($t = -1.158, p = .251$). However, in terms of gender, women show a more positive perception of elementary education quality than men ($t = -2.195, p = .031$). The next section reports the results of the quantitative data on parents' and teachers' attitudes towards bilingual education.

1.2. Attitudes towards mother tongue education

2. *Elementary school students in Burkina Faso should learn academic content in their native language before transitioning to all French schooling.*
3. *Elementary school students in Burkina Faso should learn to read and write in both their mother tongues and French.*
4. *Bilingual education is not possible in Burkina Faso because there are too many local languages*

SA A N D SD

Burkina Faso is contemplating an implementation of bilingual education in the entire country. However, not everyone is unanimous on the need for mother tongue education in the entire country. On one side, some educators and linguists in Burkina Faso argue that bilingual education should be implemented in the entire country. On the other side, some politicians and top civil servants are against mother tongue education, and argue that the French-only medium of instruction should be maintained. In this

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heated debate, one needs to ask the following questions: Where do teachers and parents stand on the issue of mother tongue education in Burkina Faso? This question is worth asking because parents' and teachers' attitude towards bilingual education is known to be critical to its success (Baker, 2006). Items two, three and four on the questionnaire elicit parents' and teachers' attitudes towards bilingual education in Burkina Faso. The results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Attitudes towards bilingual education

Items	Participants	N	Mean*	SD	Sig	t
2	Parents and teachers	85	3.48	1.513	.772	-.291
	Parents	35	3.54	1.721		
	Teachers	50	3.44	1.514		
3	Parents and teachers	85	3.46	1.637	.288	-1.070
	Parents	35	3.69	1.711		
	Teachers	50	3.30	1.581		
4	Parents and teachers	85	3.27	1.621	.644	-.464
	Parents	35	3.37	1.784		
	Teachers	50	3.20	1.512		
2, 3, 4	Parents and teachers	85	3.40	.116	.130	-1.901
	Parents	35	3.53	1.135		
	Teachers	50	3.31	1.129		

*5 = Strongly Agree, 3=Neutral, 1= Strongly Disagree.

The results of the study as presented in Table 2 show that parents and teachers have a positive attitude towards mother tongue education in Burkina Faso. No significant difference is found between parents' and teachers' attitudes towards bilingual education when they are compared ($t = -1.901$, $p = .130$). The next section reports the results of the study on the participants' language preference. This item assesses parents' and teachers' language preference. The participants' responses to item 5 are recorded in Table 3.

1.3. Language preference

5. *I would like my child (-ren) to be taught in:*
- a. *French only*
 - b. *A local language only*
 - c. *French and another Foreign language (English)*
 - d. *French and a local language*
 - e. *Other (specify)*

Table 3: Parents’ and teachers’ language preference

Participants	Parents and Teachers		Parents		Teachers	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	percent
Fr.	4	5	1	3	3	6
Loc Lge	2	2	1	3	1	2
Fr & Eng	39	46	16	47	23	46
Fr & Loc Lge	32	38	13	38	19	38
Other ³	8	9	4	12	4	8
Total	85	100	35	100	50	100

*Fr: French, Loc Lge: Local language, Eng: English

The results of the study reveal that the majority of parents and teachers prefer their children to be taught in French and English (46%) as opposed to French and a local language (38%). No significant difference was found between parents and teachers in relation to their preference for French and indigenous language bilingual education in elementary school.

The results of the quantitative data have revealed that parents and teachers have a positive attitude towards bilingual education in Burkina Faso. As the debate over mother

³ The responses that were categorized under “other” concern participants who prefer elementary education in Burkina Faso to be conducted either in English-only or in three languages (English, French and a local language).

tongue education in Burkina Faso continues, one may ask the following question: How much do parents and teachers know about bilingual education?

1.4. Knowledge of bilingual education

Research has shown that parents' and teachers' knowledge of bilingual education affects their attitudes towards it (Baker, 2006). With the political controversies that have surrounded bilingual education in the United States and the rest of the world, many parents and teachers are misinformed and believe certain negative myths about mother tongue education. One of the myths about bilingual education is that using two languages as mediums of instruction at elementary school confuses the children and prevents them from properly acquiring the target language. Other people, especially in the African context, believe that the use of local languages in school causes illiteracy and academic failure. However, research on bilingualism and bilingual education has demonstrated that bilingual education has academic, cognitive, professional, and cultural benefits for children (Baker, 2006; Cummins, 2000; Hakuta, 1986) and does not have adverse effects on children's school performance. Amid this debate on bilingual education in Burkina Faso, it is important to assess the extent of parents' and teachers' knowledge of bilingual education. Five items on the questionnaire (see Appendix for details) are designed to elicit parents' and teachers' knowledge of bilingual education. The results are presented in Table 4.

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1.4.1. General knowledge

6. *I know what bilingual education is about.*
7. *Bilingual education (local language and French) has many benefits for elementary school students.*
8. *Teaching academic content to elementary school students using their mother tongues and French will be a handicap to their academic progress.*
9. *Teaching elementary school students using French and their native languages will prevent them from speaking proper French.*

SA A N D SD

Table 4: Parents' and Teachers' knowledge of bilingual education

Items	Participants	N	Mean	SD	Sig	t
6	Parents and teachers	85	4.05	1.353	.806	.247
	Parents	35	4.00	1.698		
	Teachers	50	4.08	1.066		
7	Parents and teachers	85	4.45	.906	.074	-1.812
	Parents	35	4.66	.873		
	Teachers	50	4.30	.909		
8	Parents and teachers	85	3.68	1.441	.437	-.781
	Parents	35	3.83	1.505		
	Teachers	50	3.58	1.401		
9	Parents and teachers	85	3.78	1.442	.300	-1.043
	Parents	35	3.97	1.524		
	Teachers	50	3.64	1.382		
6,7,8,9	Parents and teachers	85	3.99	.344	.430	-.846
	Parents	35	4.11	.370		
	Teachers	50	3.90	.347		

*5 = Strongly Agree, 3=Neutral, 1= Strongly Disagree. Please, note that the score for items 8 and 9 was reversed.

The findings of the quantitative data show that parents and teachers have a good knowledge of bilingual education (3.99 on a scale from 1 to 5). A comparison between teachers' knowledge and parents' knowledge yields no significant difference between the two groups ($t = -.846, p = .430$). The participants believe that bilingual education has several benefits for elementary school children. However, it is not clear what benefits the participants have in mind. Item 10 goes into depth to clarify the types of benefits that parents and teachers consider to be more important for their children.

1.4.2. Knowledge of the Benefits of bilingual education

10. *Bilingual education (French and a local language) has many benefits for the students:*

- a. At the academic level*
- b. At the professional level (Employment)*
- c. At the cultural level*
- d. All of the above*
- e. None of the above*

The results of the study on parents' and teachers' knowledge of the benefits of mother tongue education are reported in Table 5.

Table 5: Parents' and teachers' knowledge of the benefits of bilingual education

Participants Responses	Parents and Teachers		Parents		Teachers	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Academic	7	8	1	3	6	12
Professional	13	15	8	23	5	10
Cultural	28	33	10	28	18	36
All of the above	34	40	14	40	20	40

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None of the above	3	4	2	6	1	2
Total	85	100	35	100	50	100

An analysis of parents' and teachers' responses to statement ten shows that the majority of them believe that mother tongue education has many benefits for elementary school children at the academic, professional, and cultural levels (40%). This finding strengthens the argument that parents and teachers have a good knowledge of bilingual education.

In summary, a careful analysis of the quantitative data collected with the questionnaire has revealed that parents and teachers have a positive attitude towards mother tongue education in Burkina Faso. Also, the participants have a good knowledge of bilingual education. The next section will determine whether there is a correlation between parents' and teachers' knowledge and attitudes towards bilingual education or not. If the two variables are interrelated, one may argue that sharing information about bilingual education with parents and teachers across Burkina Faso may result in increased positive attitudes towards mother tongue education.

1.5. Correlation

According to Adegbija (1994) many variables such as gender, level of education, place of residence influence people's language attitudes. In order to determine the relationship between parents' and teachers' attitudes towards mother tongue education and other variables such as gender, level of education, place of residence, and age, a Pearson correlation test was run.

The results of the Pearson correlation test show a strong positive correlation between parents' and teachers' knowledge of bilingual education and their attitudes towards it ($r = .514, p = .000$). As one variable increases the other one also increases. The present study has only reported a relationship between knowledge and attitude, but does not argue that one variable causes the other. No significant correlation is found between the participants' attitudes and their gender, level of education, and place of residence.

The results of the quantitative data have revealed that parents and teachers have a positive attitude towards mother tongue education in Burkina Faso. Also, the participants have a good knowledge of bilingual education. The Pearson correlation test results have shown that there is a strong correlation between the participants' knowledge of bilingual education and their attitudes towards it.

Even though the quantitative data analysis has its own merits in attitudinal research, it is important to note that language attitudes are very elusive and cannot be accurately measured by numbers alone. The quantitative data has to be supplemented with qualitative data. Qualitative data are valuable in getting the subjects' opinions, beliefs and feelings about bilingual education in their own words.

2. Results of Qualitative Analysis

Item 11 on the questionnaire is used to assess parents' and teachers' attitudes towards mother tongue education in Burkina Faso. Even though the original question was designed as a forced yes-no answer question, the participants' responses compelled the researcher to create a neutral response option when analyzing the data. Some participants indicated that they have no opinion on the issue. The merit of this question resides in the

fact that it provides the subjects with the opportunity to justify their opinion in favor or against mother tongue education. The arguments that the participants use to justify their responses to question 11 reveal a great deal of information not just about their opinion on mother tongue education but also about their knowledge of bilingual education.

2.1. Opinion on mother tongue education

11. *Would you like instruction in public elementary schools in Burkina Faso to be conducted in French and the children’s native languages? Why, or why not.*

Item 11 is a double question. The first part of the question is intended to get the participants’ opinion on mother tongue education, and the second part asks them to justify their answer. Table 7 summarizes the subjects’ opinion on whether bilingual education should be implemented in Burkina Faso or not.

Table 7: Parents’ and teachers’ opinion on bilingual education

Item 11 Responses	Parents and teachers		Parents		Teachers	
	Number	Percent	Number	percent	Number	Percent
Yes	55	65	25	71	32	64
No	28	33	8	23	18	36
Neutral	2	2	2	6	0	0
Total	85	100	35	100	50	100

The results of the study show that 65% of teachers and parents combined are in favor of mother tongue education in Burkina Faso; 33 % are against mother tongue education; and two percent of the participants are neutral. No significant difference is found between teachers’ and parents. The slight difference observed between the two groups may be simply due to the unequal sample sizes of teachers and parents.

2.2. *Why mother tongue education?*

The arguments that the participants use to justify their opinion in favor of mother tongue education constitute solid evidence that they understand the essence of bilingual education. Most of the participants argue that bilingual education has some academic and cultural benefits for the students. Unlike the quantitative data, which does not allow the participants to demonstrate their knowledge of the academic benefits of mother tongue education, the qualitative data allow the subjects to show that they understand the academic advantages of teaching children in both their mother tongue and French. One female teacher said the following about bilingual education: *L'apprentissage dans la langue maternelle de l'enfant lui permet de comprendre mieux les disciplines comme la lecture, le calcul et la résolution de problèmes en calcul.* "Mother tongue education allows the child to have a better understanding of academic subjects such as reading, mathematics, and problem solving in mathematics"(Researcher's translation).

Also, the results of the study indicate that the participants not only understand that bilingual education has numerous benefits for their children/students, but also consider the local languages and French as being complementary rather than opposed to each other. For example one male participant clearly articulated the complementary relationship between French and the local languages in Burkina Faso in these terms: *Enseignement en langue maternelle pour sauvegarder la culture, et en Français pour une ouverture au monde.* "Mother tongue education -to preserve the culture, and French education -for an opening to the world (Researcher's translation)."

The results of the qualitative data show that most parents and teachers in Burkina Faso are in favor of mother tongue and French bilingual education. The participants indicate that it has some academic, cultural, and economic benefits for elementary school children.

VII. DISCUSSION

1. Quantitative Analysis

1.1. Quality of Elementary Education

The results of the present study indicate that parents and teachers in Burkina Faso have a negative perception of the quality of elementary education. Even though the focus of this research is not on quality of education, clearly, a connection can be established between language of instruction and quality of education. Language of instruction can affect the quality of education in the sense that if instruction is conducted in a language that the children do not understand, their academic performance suffers. Parents and teachers combined agree that the current elementary education system in Burkina Faso is in bad shape. Anyone who is familiar with the current elementary educational system in Burkina Faso is not surprised by these findings. The system is dysfunctional and plagued with a high dropout and repetition rate (UNESCO, 2005). Socio-economic, geographical, and gender factors are known to contribute to the difficulties that elementary education faces in Burkina Faso. However, one very important but sometimes-neglected factor that contributes to academic underachievement in elementary education in Burkina Faso is language. Most elementary school students in Burkina Faso live in rural areas and come

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from families where both parents are illiterate. There is no doubt that these children experience tremendous difficulties trying to learn academic content taught in French during their first years of elementary education. Their parents who could have been their natural tutors are helpless because they do not speak or write French. In Burkina Faso, the majority of children come to school unprepared to learn. This lack of preparation results in poor academic performance, cultural alienation, and high rate of dropout and grade repetition.

1.2. Attitudes towards Bilingual Education

Previous studies conducted in Burkina Faso have shown that parents have a positive attitude towards instruction in French and local languages. Lavoie (2008a) reports that parents appreciate it when their children are taught in a language that they (parents) can understand, which leads to a high level of parent involvement in school activities. Parents volunteer their time to conduct activities such as traditional dances, story-telling, and gardening in school. Also, Diallo (2005) argues that Senegalese have a positive attitude towards mother tongue education. The researcher claims that most people in Senegal feel loyal to their mother tongues, but are also attached to French. For that reason, they feel that bilingual education is the best model of education for the country because it combines mother tongue and French as mediums of instruction.

This study has shown that parents and teachers in Burkina Faso prefer their children to be taught in French and English as opposed to French and a local language. This result can be surprising at first. However, considering the position and status of English as an international language, it should be expected that most parents and teachers

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would prefer elementary school students to be taught in English. English has a high symbolic value on the world market (Bourdieu, 1991). It is the language of scholarship, trade, and international communication (Crystal, 2003).

Even though the majority of the subjects prefer French and English medium of instruction, a significant number of teachers and parents favor French and mother tongue education (38%). Thirty-eight percent of parents and teachers combined prefer their children/students to be taught in French and their mother tongues. It is evident that parents and teachers are torn between promoting their cultural identity through the use of local languages in schools and acquiring knowledge that will allow them to communicate with the rest of the world and access resources and economic benefits through the use of English in schools.

An interesting phenomenon worthy of note in relation to the participants' language preference is that the majority of them are in favor of bilingual education. Only five percent of the participants are in favor of French-only medium of instruction; and two percents of them are in favor of mother tongue-only medium of instruction. This is an indication that parents and teachers in Burkina Faso are increasingly becoming aware that they now live in a global village; and that this globalization puts pressure on people to become bilingual in order to effectively operate in the global world. At the same time, the results of the study also indicate that parents and teachers in Burkina Faso are dissatisfied with the current French-only medium of instruction in Burkinabè elementary education, which does not satisfy the educational needs of their children. These needs include developing a solid knowledge of their native languages and culture as well as knowledge of other foreign languages and cultures, so that elementary school children in

Burkina Faso can be better prepared to face the challenges of the twenty-first century global world.

1.3. *Knowledge of Bilingual Education*

The findings of this study show that parents and teachers in Burkina Faso have a good knowledge of bilingual education. Based on these results, one can argue that most parents and teachers do not believe the myths about the negative effect of mother tongue education on children's academic and linguistic performance. Parents and teachers in Burkina Faso are well informed about the principles of bilingual education, and believe that it has academic, cultural and professional benefits for their children/students.

Even though the results of this study show that parents have a good knowledge of bilingual education, it is worth noting that the study could have produced different results if it were conducted exclusively in a rural setting using illiterate parents. Parents in rural areas may show little knowledge of the essence of bilingual education because of illiteracy and unavailability of media resources.

1.4 *Correlation*

The results of the correlation test reveal that there is a strong positive correlation between parents' and teachers' knowledge of bilingual education and their attitudes towards it. Further investigation is, however, needed in order to determine causal relationship between the participants' knowledge of bilingual education and their attitudes towards it. Also, even if a causal relationship is established between the two variables, the direction of the causality may still be unknown. It could be that knowledge

of bilingual education causes participants to have a positive attitude towards it, or a positive attitude towards bilingual education causes the participants to learn and thereby know more about it. Based on these results one may argue that awareness raising campaigns may be helpful in changing people's attitudes towards mother tongue education.

2. Qualitative Analysis

These findings of the qualitative analysis confirm the results of the quantitative section on attitudes, according to which parents and teachers are in favor of bilingual education. However, the main focus of the qualitative section of the study is not on the percentage of respondents who are in favor of mother tongue education, but more on how the participants justify their opinion. The results of the qualitative data show that bilingual education enjoys a wide support from parents and teachers in Burkina Faso. On the basis of the arguments that the participants gave to support their opinion in favor of mother tongue education, one can argue that they have a solid understanding of the academic benefits and cultural benefits of mother tongue education for elementary school children.

It should not be surprising that teachers and parents demonstrate a good knowledge of the benefits of bilingual education. Teachers are in perpetual contact with the students in the classroom, and as a result, every day, they witness the children's struggle to understand the curriculum because of language barrier. Lavoie (2008a) also claims that many children in the classical all-French schools in Burkina Faso have

difficulties solving basic mathematics problems because they do not understand the language of the problem.

Also, the comment from one participant according to which French and the indigenous languages are complementary shows that the participants are not totally satisfied with the current French-only medium of instruction at elementary school. On the other hand, they are not in favor of mother tongue-only medium of instruction either. They prefer bilingual education, which combines French and a local language because the two languages are complementary. French and local languages in Burkinabè education should be treated as two faces of the same coin rather than being viewed as mutually exclusive. It is clear from this participant's response that Burkina Faso cannot afford to completely withdraw French from its educational system. The country strongly depends on French for employment, education, media, and international communication. On the other hand, it may not be a good idea to learn other languages and cultures at the expense of one's own. French and the local languages should be promoted equally. Diallo (2005) also found the same strong reliance on French for international communication and mother tongue for cultural identity in Senegal. Most Senegalese are in favor of instruction in local languages, he argues, but not at the expense of French.

One important issue that should be noted in relation to the qualitative data is that very few participants mention that mother tongue education has some professional benefits. This should not surprise anyone because in Burkina Faso, competency in a local language does not open many employment opportunities to the participants. Local languages in Burkina Faso are kept out of official domains and tend to be used for interethnic communication and the transmission of cultural knowledge. That situation

confers a very low status to local languages compared to French and other foreign languages such as English.

VIII. IMPLICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE POLICY

The present study has investigated parents' and teachers' attitudes towards mother tongue and French bilingual education in Burkina Faso. The study has used both quantitative and qualitative data in order to increase its validity. The results have shown that parents and teachers in Burkina Faso are well informed on bilingual education and have a positive attitude towards mother tongue education. Also, a strong correlation has been found between parents' and teachers' knowledge of mother tongue education and their attitudes towards it.

These findings are cause for optimism and augur a bright future for mother tongue education in Burkina Faso. The results of the present study may imply that bilingual education in Burkina Faso is likely to be successful because it will benefit from a strong parental and teacher support if the government decides to implement it in the entire country. This evidence is intended to allay the fears of the government that mother tongue education may fail because it does not have the support of the majority of teachers and parents. This study has demonstrated that bilingual education enjoys wide support among parents and teachers, and therefore necessary steps should be taken to implement it in the entire country.

Even though the results of the present study indicate that most parents and teachers are in favor of mother tongue education, caution should be exercised in the way bilingual education is implemented in Burkina Faso. It is important to notice that a

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significant percentage of parents and teachers (33%) do not favor the implementation of mother tongue education in Burkina Faso. Their main arguments are the multiplicity of the languages and their perceived lack of benefits of mother tongue education for children. The concerns of these parents and teachers cannot simply be ignored or dismissed as ungrounded by supporters of mother tongue education. In order to maximize the chances of a successful implementation of mother tongue education in Burkina Faso, there is a need to win the support of these parents and teachers who are still skeptical of the value of bilingual education.

First of all, before getting into the discussion about language policy in Burkina Faso, it is important to address the issue of the multiplicity of languages. Linguistic diversity is not an obstacle to the implementation of mother tongue education; it is rather an asset. Burkina Faso is rich with 59 different languages, of which eight are described (Lavoie, 2008b). Mooré is the dominant language in the country, but choosing one local language to go with French as medium of instruction at the elementary level in the entire country can be a recipe for an ethnic conflict. Even if it would not result in ethnic conflict, the choice of one language may not be the right thing to do. If one looks at the situation in Tanzania where Kiswahili power is threatening the other local languages to extinction (Gadelii, 1999), one realizes that there is a good reason for language planners in multilingual settings to move away from any policy aimed at promoting one language at the expense of the others. Bamgbose (2009) could not be any more explicit on this issue when he argues that official language policy in multilingual countries may not be aimed at promoting one official language. He explains that several languages can be promoted as the official languages of a country and be used in education instead of one.

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Burkina Faso should adopt a multilingual approach to language planning in education. Baker (2006) outlines three basic approaches to language planning and policy: Language as a problem, language as a right, and language as a resource. Governments that adopt the approach according to which language is a problem are in favor of monolingualism and against bilingualism and multilingualism. For these people, multilingualism is the source of social disunity. In countries where language is considered as a right, people are more likely to advocate for the accommodation of minority languages in courts, schools and other official instances by the provision of translation and/or instruction in these languages. The final group is the one which considers language as a resource. Governments which adopt a language-as-a-resource policy are more likely to work hard and devote a certain amount of financial resources to the promotion of all languages. The last two approaches are more adapted to the situation of Burkina Faso than the first one. The local languages are invaluable resources that the country cannot afford to lose. In that regard, language policy in Burkina Faso should be aimed at developing and promoting as many languages as possible. In short, the multiplicity of languages in Burkina Faso cannot be used as an excuse to reject mother tongue education. Linguistic diversity is an asset for mother tongue education, not a handicap. The country may be confronted with a lack of financial resources to provide mother tongue education in all the local languages, but it should strive to use as many local languages in education as possible.

That being said, there is a need to adopt a regional language policy in Burkina Faso. The country is implementing a decentralization policy in terms of development. It would be helpful if every province among the 45 provinces in the country could use the

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dominant language in the area as its official language. That language can be used for bilingual education. Such language policy will allow the country to promote many local languages, instead of one foreign language (French) as it is doing now, or one local language. Even though this approach implies that some children will not learn using their mother tongues, the regional majority language chosen is closer to their local culture than French.

In order to win the support of the opponents of mother tongue education who argue that bilingual education has no benefits for their children, there is a need to conduct awareness raising campaigns in which the success stories of the experimental bilingual programs operating currently in Burkina Faso are publicized in order to educate the population on the benefits of mother tongue education. Also, the status of local languages should be raised so that there is an incentive for learning them.

The government of Burkina Faso should publicize the results of the experimental bilingual schools that are currently operating in the country. These programs are success stories that may convince parents of the benefits of mother tongue education. Also, awareness raising campaigns should be undertaken to disseminate the theories of bilingual education in the entire country, especially at parent-teacher conferences and teacher training colleges. Sharing the knowledge about the benefits of bilingual education for elementary school children may contribute to changing parents' and teachers' attitudes from negative to positive. The results of the present study have shown that knowledge of bilingual education correlates with language attitudes.

Also, in order to win the support of the detractors of bilingual education, the government should raise the status of the local languages. In order to achieve that goal,

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the authorities of Burkina Faso should institute regional language policy and promote the use of these regional languages in education, administration, law, and media communication. On the issue, Napon (2002) makes a compelling argument that the government should also make literacy in a local language a requirement for any candidate who is applying for a position as a civil servant at the regional level. Raising the status of local languages is more likely to give people an incentive for learning to read and write in these languages.

One would normally expect the results of the present study to be echoed by the government of Burkina Faso. Attitudes towards mother tongue education are positive. Therefore, the government should enact the necessary policies and steps that will eventually lead to generalizing mother tongue education to the entire country. There is no need to maintain the status quo with French-only medium of instruction at elementary school while the local languages are excluded from education, unless the government chooses to disregard the detrimental effects that mother tongue exclusion from school has on the performance of elementary school children in Burkina Faso. These negative effects are highlighted by the Center for Applied Linguistics in the following terms: “When the mother tongue is not used, they [the children] are made to feel backward, inferior, and stupid. Their culture is denigrated, and the children are scared, confused and traumatized. This can have long-term effects (as cited in Baker, 2006: 294).” The present study argues that French and mother tongue education are complementary, and one should not be privileged over the other. Instead, bilingual education should be implemented in the entire country.

IX. LIMITATIONS

Despite the fact that the present study has attempted to achieve greater reliability in its results by means of data triangulation, it is important to note that it has a few limitations in terms of methodology and sample. One methodological issue is related to the procedure that was followed in the data collection process. The original questionnaire was translated into French and sometimes into local languages in order to accommodate participants who did not speak English and/or French. The researcher has taken the necessary steps to ensure accuracy in the translation process. However, taking into consideration that no translation is perfect, the researcher acknowledges the possibility of meaning loss or change in the translation process.

Also, the sample used. When interpreting the results of this study, it is important to keep in mind that the samples of teachers and parents used in this study may not be representative of the general population. One problem is that the researcher was not able to obtain two equal samples of parents and teachers. Another issue is that the sample of parents may not be representative of the general population of parents of elementary school students in Burkina Faso, since most of the parents surveyed in the present study are educated and live in urban areas. However, the majority of parents in Burkina Faso live in rural areas and have neither formal education nor do they speak French.

One final limitation of this study is incomplete biographical information on some participants. Some participants did not provide any biographical information such as their age and place of residence. This incomplete information made it difficult for the researcher to run certain statistical tests that require it. Participants with incomplete data

were simply discarded from the tests. However, these limitations do not jeopardize the value of this study. They are only mentioned in order to help the reader make an accurate interpretation of the results. Also, researchers who intend to replicate this study should take good note of these limitations.

X. CONCLUSION

This study has looked at parents' and teachers' knowledge and attitudes towards mother tongue and French bilingual education in Burkina Faso. In order to increase the reliability of the results, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed. The results have revealed that the participants have a good knowledge of bilingual education and a positive attitude towards it. Also, a strong positive correlation has been found between parents' and teachers' knowledge of mother tongue education and their attitudes towards it. These findings are very encouraging in regard to the future of bilingual education in Burkina Faso. The government should consider the issue seriously and make a move to implement mother tongue education throughout the entire country in order to reduce the rate of drop out in elementary school.

However, before this change is made, there is a need to conduct awareness raising campaigns to educate the population about the benefits of bilingual education in order to win the support of those people who are either undecided or against mother tongue education. Also, the status of local languages should be raised in order for them to be favored by parents and teachers as mediums of instruction in school. Only by doing so, can policymakers successfully implement mother tongue education for the greater benefit of millions of Burkinabè children, especially those who live in rural areas.

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The majority of the subjects who participated in the present study live in urban areas and have received some type of formal education. Future studies should consider researching parents' and teachers' opinion on bilingual education in rural areas in order to give a complete picture of language attitudes in elementary education in Burkina Faso.

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Appendix: Questionnaire

Bilingual Education in Burkina Faso: Parents' and Teacher's attitudes towards Instruction in French and Indigenous Languages.

Instructions

In the first part of the questionnaire, please provide the necessary information by filling the blanks or circling the appropriate answer. In part 2, circle the letter corresponding to your response to each question. Answer question 11 and give reasons to support your opinion. Remember that there is no right or wrong answer.

Part 1: Demographics

Please, fill in the necessary information or circle the word corresponding to your choice when appropriate.

Gender: -----M-----F

Age:-----Place of residence:-----

Native language:----- Languages you speak:

Level of education:----- Profession----Elementary school teacher----parent

Do You have children?-----Yes---No. Can you read or write in your native language?
Yes---No

Part 2: Answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge

1. Elementary education in Burkina Faso is in good shape
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral

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- d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
2. Elementary school students in Burkina Faso should learn academic content in their native languages before transitioning to all French schooling.
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
3. Elementary school students in Burkina Faso should learn to read and write in both their mother tongues and French.
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
4. Bilingual education is not possible in Burkina Faso because there are too many local languages.
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree

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5. I Would like my child (-ren) to be taught in:
 - a. French only
 - b. A local language only
 - c. French and another Foreign language (English)
 - d. French and a local language
 - e. Other (specify)

6. I know what bilingual education is about.
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree

7. Bilingual education (local language and French) has many benefits for elementary school students.
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree

8. Teaching academic content to elementary school students using their mother tongues and French will be a handicap to their academic progress.
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree

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- c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
9. Teaching elementary school students using French and their native languages will prevent them from speaking proper French.
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
10. Bilingual education (French and a local language) has many benefits for the students:
- a. At the academic level
 - b. At the professional level (Employment)
 - c. At the cultural level
 - d. All of the above
 - e. None of the above
11. Would you like instruction in public elementary school in Burkina Faso to be conducted in French and the children's native languages? Why, or why not?