

Promoting Inclusive Educational Practices: The Reclamation, Revitalisation, and Digital Integration of Historically Marginalised Linguistic Communities in Teacher Training Programs

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Abstract

The revitalisation and digitalisation of endangered minority languages are essential for fostering an inclusive society, a concern increasingly acknowledged by linguists, human rights advocates, and sociologists. This study examines the status of formerly marginalised languages and the challenges associated with their de-marginalisation, revitalisation, and digitalisation within teachers' colleges in Zimbabwe. It argues that insufficient training for native-speaking teachers, lack of curriculum integration, and limited digital resources and language learning applications hinder efforts to revitalise and digitalise formerly marginalised languages, which are vital for enhancing inclusivity and cultural diversity. Using Fishman's (1991) analytic framework and sociolinguistic theory, the study contends that socio-economic conditions significantly impede efforts for the revitalisation of formerly marginalised languages in Zimbabwean teacher education. It posits that de-minoritisation, revitalisation, and digitalisation are critical in reversing language decline and potential extinction by providing accessible learning resources. The study outlines strategies for de-minoritisation, revitalisation, and digitalisation of formerly marginalised languages in teachers' colleges to promote inclusivity and cultural diversity. Employing qualitative methods, including document analysis and interviews, the research examines the integration of formerly marginalised languages in college curricula in ten teachers' colleges. Findings reveal that formerly marginalised languages remain marginalised and underrepresented, underscoring an urgent need for revitalisation and digitalisation initiatives. The study concludes that incorporating formerly marginalised languages into teacher training programs promotes inclusivity and enhances cultural diversity. It recommends that teacher training institutions integrate formerly marginalised languages into their curricula and establish online platforms to support the de-minoritisation, revitalisation, and digitalisation of these languages.

Keywords: cultural diversity, de-minoritisation, formerly marginalised languages, inclusivity, language revitalisation

1. Introduction

The Zimbabwean Constitution of 2013 (Amendment No. 20) officially recognises sixteen languages that are Chewa, ChiBarwe, English, Kalanga, Koisan, Nambya, Ndau, Ndebele, Shangani, Shona, Sign Language, Sotho, Tonga, Tswana, Venda, and Xhosa.

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This means the national constitution promotes linguistic diversity and multilingualism in Zimbabwe. Before the enactment of the National Constitution, there was language hierarchisation that had English on the pinnacle, dominating as the de facto official language, Shona and Ndebele occupied the second stratum as national languages. All the other indigenous languages suffered from domination, exclusion, and marginalisation, and assumed the pejorative label, 'minority' languages.

The post-2013 era saw higher education institutions, including the previously marginalised languages, introduced into the curricula in line with the constitutional provisions (Section 6, 3a, 4) that mandate all state institutions and agencies of government to treat all officially recognised languages equitably, promote and advance their use, and create conditions for their use. However, it is critical to mention that the term 'equitable' loosely means being reasonable, fair, and just. Unlike the explicit term 'equal', this constitutional provision was crafted in euphemistic and implicit ways to promote vagueness and ambiguity. It is not clear what aspects should be considered for the languages to be regarded as having been treated equitably. This, arguably, was deliberately done to create room for non-implementation of a language policy. This fits well into the defining characteristics of most national language policies in Africa. Bamgbose (1991, p. 117) aptly describes this as an instance of a declaration without implementation, where a language policy may be declared with escape clauses, let-outs, opt-outs, modifications, alternatives, and stringent conditions.

This study applauds the National Constitution as one legal framework that spells out a near-national language policy for Zimbabwe. Apart from it, Zimbabwe does not have a policy document on language that spells out the national language policy. Before the enactment of the 2013 National Constitution, the language policy could be inferred from policy-related documents (Ndlovu, 2013; 2015). Despite the above technical challenges in the crafting and morphology of the National Constitution highlighted in Section 6, as discussed above, this study examines the treatment of previously marginalised language in teacher training colleges as part of the efforts to mainstream linguistic pluralism and democratise the operational space for the languages.

The motivation for examining the extent of including indigenous languages into the curriculum in teacher training institutions also stems from the 2018 Language in Education Policy that promotes mother-tongue education during the learners' formative years (Grade 0-4). This was done to promote the learners' understanding of realities at home and school, since they are critical socialisation spaces. The Government of Zimbabwe recommended that educators should be proficient in at least three indigenous

languages for this objective to be achieved. Given this position, this study explores how teacher training colleges have conformed to this policy.

This study contributes to debates on language revitalisation, reversing language shift and death in the contemporary world. It is critical to mention that most indigenous languages in Zimbabwe were at different stages of extinction because there was little or no intergenerational transmission of the language. After all, they had suffered systematic marginalisation, exclusion, and subordination from Shona, Ndebele, and English for an extended period. Extant literature has explored the mainstreaming and inclusion of formerly marginalised languages in the basic education sector (in schools). These studies evaluated how the national education system has implemented the mother-tongue education policy espoused in different policy documents (Hungwe, 2007; Marupi, Tshotsho & Nhongo, 2021; Ndlovu, 2013; 2015). The implementation of the language provisions of the 2013 National Constitution in state media has also been a subject of study (Mabika & Salawu, 2014; Mamvura, Masowa & Ndlovu, 2022). This study provides another front, the inclusion of formerly marginalised languages, in the curricula of teacher training colleges, to the discussion of language revival, promotion, and development. No study has looked at how teacher training institutions have worked towards implementing the language provisions of the 2013 National Constitution and the 2018 language in education policy.

2. Literature review

In recent years, the conversation surrounding the de-minoritisation and revitalisation of formerly marginalised languages within higher education has ignited a vibrant debate (Ferrerós, 2024). This discourse is particularly compelling as it reflects a significant shift in the language hierarchy and educational practices (Jourbet, 2022). However, the integration of formerly marginalised languages into the digital environments of teacher training colleges is fraught with challenges. Despite the potential for these institutions to serve as vital platforms for language empowerment in our increasingly digital world, there remains a glaring gap in the training of educators to elevate the status of minoritised and marginalised languages (Ferrerós, 2024).

Numerous studies have highlighted the hurdles faced in implementing indigenous minority language programs within educational settings. Key among these challenges is the scarcity of qualified teaching staff, insufficient opportunities for teacher training, and a lack of adequate resources for language instruction. The strategies and methodologies required to effectively incorporate indigenous languages into the curriculum are often underdeveloped (Dołowy-Rybińska & Hornsby, 2021). Moreover, a critical language

dichotomy has emerged, exacerbated by the predominance of certain languages on digital platforms. The dominance of Shona and Ndebele on digital platforms is caused by the lack of full implementation of the language policy and policymakers who favour the dominant languages. This has resulted in the marginalisation, segmentation, and underutilisation of formerly marginalised languages, further complicating efforts toward their revitalisation. The intersection of digital technology and education thus presents both an opportunity and a challenge, calling for innovative approaches to ensure that formerly marginalised languages not only survive but also thrive in this modern landscape.

Zivave (2023) expresses a pressing concern regarding the need for de-minoritisation of languages that are marginalised, oppressed, and suppressed. This concept encompasses the processes aimed at dismantling the marginalisation of formerly marginalised languages, a shift often dictated by socio-political dynamics and the overwhelming presence of dominant languages such as English, Shona, and Ndebele. Researchers like Marungudzi, Chiwewe, and Mhute (2014) have underscored the historical favouritism embedded in Zimbabwe's language policy, which has consistently prioritised dominant languages at the expense of linguistic diversity. Zivave (2024) further argues that these policies inhibit the de-minoritisation and revitalisation processes, as government institutions tend to favour dominant languages in their operations. Consequently, formerly marginalised languages such as Nambya, Tonga, Venda, Shangani, Chewa, and Sotho face significant marginalisation, adversely impacting the identity and cultural heritage of their speakers. This is particularly evident in educational contexts, where a reverse language shift is crucial. Language revitalisation efforts seek to counteract the detrimental effects of de-minoritisation by advocating for the use and teaching of formerly marginalised languages within teacher development programs. By prioritising these languages in educational settings, it is possible to foster a renewed sense of identity and cultural pride, ensuring that these linguistic heritages not only survive but thrive in an increasingly globalised world.

Scholars such as Van Dongera, Van Der Meer, and Sterk (2024) underscore the critical role that teacher training institutions play in strategies for language maintenance. In Zimbabwe, initiatives aimed at incorporating formerly marginalised languages into teacher education programs have been proposed to enhance cultural diversity and inclusivity among trainee teachers (Chitando, 2014). Despite this, efforts to revitalise formerly marginalised languages, especially within the context of a digitalised educational landscape, have faced significant challenges due to the slow implementation of language policies in higher education institutions, including teacher colleges. Many of these colleges have made minimal progress in promoting 'minority' language revitalisation in

the current digital era. Critics argue that such efforts are often perceived as a 'waste of time and resources' with their success deemed unlikely or even impossible (Fishman, 1991p. 38). However, Fishman, a leading advocate for language revitalisation, asserts the necessity of believing in the value of these efforts, stating that one must believe that finding a cure is worthwhile" (Fishman, 1991, p. 39) before any meaningful progress can be achieved. The processes of language de-minoritisation and revitalisation are vital for fostering cultural value and strengthening community identity. Fishman elaborates on the intrinsic link between language and culture, noting that language serves as the primary vessel for cultural expression (Cantoni, 1996). This interdependence underscores the importance of revitalising formerly marginalised languages, as doing so not only preserves linguistic diversity but also enriches cultural heritage, ultimately benefiting communities and society at large.

In many teacher training programs, the use of formerly marginalised languages as a medium of instruction remains exceedingly rare (Van Dongera, Van Der Meer, & Sterk, 2024). This trend is particularly evident in post-colonial Zimbabwe, where English and dominant indigenous languages such as Shona and Ndebele continue to prevail at tertiary levels, reflecting deep-seated structural inequalities in language use. Some languages are, as Cantoni (1996) poignantly notes, 'wished to be dead' because of institutional barriers which promote exclusivism and impede cultural diversity. Consequently, language revitalisation becomes essential in dismantling these hierarchies and reinstating formerly marginalised languages within teacher education, thereby fostering a more inclusive pedagogy. Achieving this objective requires the de-minoritisation and revitalisation of these languages within teacher education curricula and digital spaces.

Digitalisation plays a transformative role in the revitalisation process of formerly marginalised languages. According to Marungudzi, Chiwewe, and Mhute (2014), the integration of digital tools and resources in teacher education can significantly enhance language learning and promote cultural diversity. Moyo (2017) further illustrates how online platforms and mobile applications can facilitate the creation of accessible learning materials in formerly marginalised languages. This digital shift not only aids in language acquisition but also connects speakers globally, fostering a sense of community among users of formerly marginalised languages (Kucherbayeva & Smagulova, 2023). Recognising the importance of this language shift is crucial (Kucherbayeva & Smagulova, 2023). Language revitalisation thus serves as a vital safeguard against linguistic death and potential extinction, ensuring that formerly marginalised languages thrive and contribute to the rich tapestry of human culture. By embracing these digital advances,

teacher colleges can play a pivotal role in promoting linguistic and cultural diversity, thereby enriching the educational experience for all.

Grenoble and Whaley (2006, p. 10) aptly describe education as “a critical domain” for formerly marginalised languages, emphasising that language education is often central to revitalisation efforts. One effective strategy to combat language shift is to ensure that teacher training colleges equip future educators with proficiency in formerly marginalised languages. This initiative has the potential to create a ‘language nest’ within these institutions, as Daigneault (2019) proposed. However, establishing such language nests in teacher colleges is not without its challenges. Many institutions face significant resource limitations, particularly in human capital, as there are often few fluent speakers available to provide instruction (Kucherbayeva & Smagulova, 2023). These obstacles can hinder the processes of de-minoritisation and revitalisation, impeding efforts to promote linguistic diversity.

Much of the existing literature on language revival and revitalisation tends to focus on primary school settings, which are viewed as crucial sites for cultivating new speakers (Chevalier, 2017; Todal, 2018). Yet, there is a growing recognition of the need for a more comprehensive approach that integrates de-minoritisation awareness, revitalisation strategies, and digital innovation in the teacher education sector. Such an approach is essential for fostering inclusivity and cultural diversity within higher education institutions, ultimately equipping future educators with the necessary skills and knowledge to support a linguistically and culturally diverse society. Despite this recognition, research on the integration of formerly marginalised languages into teacher education curricula and digital spaces remains limited. As we move forward, it is imperative to expand this research to better understand how to effectively incorporate minority languages into teacher training, thereby enhancing the inclusive educational landscape and contributing to the preservation of linguistic heritage.

3. Theoretical framework

Fishman’s (1991) analytic framework, particularly his theory on language shift and maintenance, provides a foundational lens for understanding the dynamics of formerly marginalised languages in the digital landscape in teacher education in Zimbabwe. His model emphasises the social and contextual factors that influence language vitality, proposing that language use is intricately tied to identity, community, and power relations. In Fishman’s perspective, “deminoritisation” refers to the process by which languages that were once marginalised become even less visible and important. This typically happens when formerly marginalised languages lose their value because of societal

factors that promote the use of more dominant languages. Resultantly, the societal pressures increase as they adopt dominant languages, causing formerly marginalised languages to be pushed out of everyday contexts, leading to their decline. This shift can be exacerbated by digital platforms that prioritise widely spoken languages, thereby marginalising minority voices. The digital landscape can inadvertently contribute to language endangerment by providing limited resources and visibility for formerly marginalised languages in teachers' colleges. Conversely, revitalisation efforts can leverage digital technologies to counteract the minoritisation of indigenous languages belonging to minority groups. Social media, online communities, and digital content creation empower speakers of formerly marginalised languages to reclaim and promote their linguistic heritage in teacher education. Furthermore, digital tools can facilitate language learning and transmission, offering innovative approaches to teaching formerly marginalised languages by teachers trained in teachers' colleges. For instance, mobile applications and online courses can make language learning more accessible, thus revitalising interest and usage among college students in teacher development institutions. Ultimately, Fishman's framework underscores the need for a multifaceted approach to language policy that integrates digital initiatives with community-led efforts. By recognising the interplay between digital environments and sociolinguistic factors, stakeholders can better support the maintenance and revitalisation of formerly marginalised languages in an increasingly globalised world in institutions of teacher training. This holistic approach is crucial for ensuring that linguistic diversity thrives in the face of ongoing challenges posed by dominant indigenous languages such as Shona and Ndebele in teachers' colleges.

4. Research Methodology

This research employed a qualitative approach to explore the digitalisation of formerly marginalised languages in teachers' colleges, drawing on methods defined by Marshall and Rossman (2006) that include naturalistic, interpretive, and ethnographic techniques. The flexibility of qualitative research allowed for in-depth examinations through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and web analysis, facilitating open-ended discussions that encouraged participants to share relevant insights. Before data collection, participants provided verbal and written consent, with names and personal information anonymised to protect their privacy. Participants for the study were selected through purposeful sampling to ensure a diverse representation of perspectives. Five formerly marginalised language speakers were chosen based on their enrolment in teachers' colleges, allowing insights from individuals actively engaged in language education. Additionally, five lecturers specialising in indigenous languages were selected

for their expertise and experience in the field. To further enrich the data, two committee members involved in the promotion of languages such as Nambya, Shangani, and Tonga were included, providing a broader context on language advocacy and preservation efforts. This combination of participants aimed to capture a comprehensive view of the challenges and opportunities facing formerly marginalised languages in education. Discussions focused on the progress of digital initiatives and participants' perceptions of these efforts as tools for de-minoritising and revitalisation of indigenous languages. Focus groups further enriched the data by capturing diverse perceptions and experiences from various speakers and academics. Additionally, web analysis assessed the online availability of formerly marginalised languages, particularly on platforms like Google, to evaluate the impact of digitalisation efforts in Zimbabwe. Overall, the study aimed to highlight the feasibility and effectiveness of digitalisation in preserving and promoting formerly marginalised languages within the educational context, contributing to their revitalisation and documentation in a rapidly changing digital landscape in teachers' colleges.

5. Research questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the status of formerly marginalised languages in teacher training programs?
2. What key factors influence the effectiveness of minority language revitalisation programs in teacher education institutions within the context of the current digital landscape?
3. What are the potential benefits of de-minoritising, revitalising, and digitalising strategies for formerly marginalised languages in teacher education institutions?

6. Research findings and discussion

This section presents and discusses the findings from data collected from interviews with key informants. It discusses the different views from the participants on what they perceived to be salient issues in the de-minoritisation and revitalisation of formerly marginalised languages in light of the evolving digital landscape in teacher education. The participants are coded as P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9 and P10 respectively. Data is thematically presented and discussed below.

6.1 Formerly marginalised languages are offered in teachers' colleges

When the participants were asked about the formerly marginalised languages offered in teachers' colleges, the participants lamented the deplorable status of formerly marginalised languages among many colleges in Zimbabwe. P1 said:

The teaching of formerly marginalised languages such as TjiKalanga, ChiNambya, ChiTonga and Shangani in teacher education institutions is pathetic. Our college does not have any minority language that is offered as a main subject, and even in the Professional Syllabus, B.

P1 characterised the situation as 'pathetic,' indicating a profound lack of support for formerly marginalised languages such as Kalanga, Nambya, Tonga, and Shangani. The absence of these languages as main subjects or within the professional syllabus suggests institutional neglect, which could hinder the preservation and revitalisation of these languages in teachers' colleges.

On the other hand, P6 said:

At our institution, Chishona and IsiNdebele are the only indigenous languages offered, with other formerly marginalised languages not visible.

It emerged from the study that Shona and Ndebele are offered at their institution, with other formerly marginalised languages lacking representation. This reflects a trend where dominant languages overshadow minority ones, limiting students' exposure to linguistic diversity.

P9 also underscored:

Our college offers Nambya and ChiTonga because of its location. Other formerly marginalised languages like Venda and Shangani are not offered.

The participant provided a more nuanced view, stating that Nambya and ChiTonga are available due to the college's geographical context. However, the exclusion of languages like Venda and Shangani highlights the selective nature of language offerings based on regional demographics, which may reinforce existing inequalities of languages in teachers' colleges.

With a similar view, P2 said:

Our college is offering only one minority language because of its proximity to the ethnic group, but IsiNdebele is a dominant language at the college.

This could suggest that some colleges are offering very few formerly marginalised languages, primarily due to their proximity to the ethnic group associated with that language. The dominance of IsiNdebele at one college further emphasises the marginalisation of other indigenous languages, demonstrating how institutional policies can prioritise certain languages over others.

On the contrary, P3 stated:

Our college is in the capital city with so many people from diverse backgrounds coming from all the corners of Zimbabwe, but ChiShona and IsiNdebele are offered as the only indigenous language. The visibility of the minority language here is not even there.

This could suggest that formerly marginalised languages are less visible in teachers' colleges found in the capital city, where a diverse population resides. There is a missed opportunity for linguistic inclusivity and promotion of formerly marginalised languages, with Shona and Ndebele being the only indigenous languages offered. This raises concerns about the representation of formerly marginalised languages in settings that could otherwise support a rich tapestry of linguistic heritage in Zimbabwe.

Interviewees provided valuable insights regarding the status of formerly marginalised languages in teachers' colleges in Zimbabwe. Their responses highlighted significant disparities in the status and visibility of formerly marginalised languages in teachers' colleges in Zimbabwe. The collective insights of participants underscore a troubling trend in the treatment of formerly marginalised languages within teacher education institutions. The dominance of a few languages, often dictated by geographic and political factors, limits the visibility and viability of formerly marginalised languages. This situation calls for a re-evaluation of language policies in educational contexts to foster a more inclusive approach that values and supports inclusivity and linguistic diversity in teachers' colleges in Zimbabwe.

6.2 Key factors affecting the effectiveness of de-minoritisation and revitalisation programs for marginalised languages in teachers' colleges in the digital era.

When the participants were asked about their views on factors that influence the effectiveness of the formerly marginalised languages revitalisation programs in teachers' colleges, P1 underscored a:

... lack of institutional support from colleges impedes language revitalisation. Our college does not have policies that prioritise formerly marginalised languages, and I feel the government is to blame for the lack of support for formerly marginalised languages in teachers' colleges.

This insinuates that teachers' colleges do not have policies prioritising formerly marginalised languages, and this hinders revitalisation efforts across government institutions. Teachers' colleges can revitalise indigenous and formerly marginalised languages by integrating them into the curriculum and offering specialised training for educators. Additionally, fostering community engagement, supporting research, providing incentives for language courses, organising cultural events, advocating for supportive policies, and establishing mentorship programs will further enhance language revitalisation efforts. The finding further suggests that the government is neglecting its responsibility because of its attitudes towards formerly marginalised languages. This has influenced teachers' colleges to ignore and undermine the value of formerly marginalised languages. Without strong advocacy and support from the government and teachers' colleges, revitalisation initiatives of formerly marginalised languages will continue to struggle to gain traction.

P7 said:

There is adequate funding and resources dedicated to minority language programs in teachers' colleges. Many colleges are understaffed or do not have staff catering for formerly marginalised languages.

This probably suggests that there are a lot of inconsistencies in resource allocation. While some colleges may be adequately funded, the overall staffing issues, such as being understaffed or lacking specialised staff for formerly marginalised languages, suggests that even when resources are available, they are not effectively utilised towards the revitalisation of formerly marginalised languages. This lack of personnel dedicated to formerly marginalised languages in teacher education institutions limits the ability to

implement successful de-minoritisation and revitalisation programs in a digitalised landscape.

P5 asserted:

The curriculum design in teachers' colleges favours the dominant indigenous languages. I feel that indigenous language curricula should be relevant and promote inclusivity by integrating formerly marginalised languages alongside dominant languages in all teachers' colleges. This would ensure that there will be more student engagement and linguistic diversity.

This could suggest that the curriculum in teacher education is heavily biased towards dominant languages, which stifles the integration of formerly marginalised tongues. The teacher education curriculum on indigenous languages fails to promote inclusivity and cultural diversity, resulting in the disengagement of students from formerly marginalised languages in teacher development programs.

P1 also underscored:

There is a lack of integration of digital tools and platforms for teaching and learning formerly marginalised languages in teachers' colleges.

Technological access and literacy further complicate the revitalisation efforts, as revealed by the study. The absence of digital tools in teacher education institutions specifically designed for formerly marginalised languages limits the effectiveness of language programs. In the current digital landscape, leveraging technology is essential for engaging college students and providing innovative methods for minority language learning. The lack of such technological tools and access can severely hinder revitalisation initiatives in teacher colleges.

P3 believed that:

... lack of training and professional development in teachers' colleges reflects the lack of valuing of formerly marginalised languages.

This could imply that teacher education institutions' lack of training and professional development reveals a significant gap in the de-minoritisation and revitalisation efforts. Teachers who are trained in teacher colleges are not trained to value or teach formerly marginalised languages effectively. This hinders the revitalisation programs. Thus,

teachers' colleges should foster an environment where formerly marginalised languages can thrive by embracing them in their curriculum.

P10 asserted:

There is a lack of partnerships with local minority language speakers and communities to enrich the learning experience in teachers' colleges. This has limited the use and appreciation of formerly marginalised languages in teachers' colleges.

From this study, it may be deduced that the lack of partnerships with local minority language speakers is critical in the de-minoritisation and revitalisation of marginalised languages in the digital landscape. Teachers' colleges should form partnerships with local indigenous speakers, academic institutions, NGOs, technology companies, cultural institutions, government agencies, and other educational programs to enhance curriculum relevance, resource development, community involvement, and policy support. This means that community involvement is essential for enriching the educational experience and fostering a genuine appreciation of formerly marginalised languages. Without collaboration with local communities, colleges miss the opportunity to create culturally relevant and engaging learning environments that support language use. However, the informant's qualification to assess whether their college conducted stakeholder consultations is questionable, given the noted lack of partnerships with local, formerly marginalised language speakers and communities. This suggests that the informant may not have sufficient insight into the college's decision-making processes or stakeholder engagement practices, which are crucial for the effective revitalisation of marginalised languages.

P8 believed that:

Technological access and literacy are limiting the revitalisation process in teachers' colleges. There are no digital tools that promote effective digital language programs best suited for formerly marginalised languages.

The insufficient integration of digital tools such as language learning apps, online course platforms, virtual reality technologies, interactive e-books, social media platforms, podcasting, online forums, language translation software, digital storytelling tools, and collaborative writing platforms presents a missed opportunity to enhance educational practices for formerly marginalised languages. Digital platforms like Duolingo, Coursera, EdX, YouTube, Facebook Groups, Reddit, Podbean, Storybird, Google Docs, and

Kahoot!, can significantly facilitate access to resources and learning materials that support these languages. In particular, Shona and Ndebele are benefiting from platforms like Duolingo, YouTube, Facebook Groups, WhatsApp, and Google Classroom in higher and tertiary education. However, the limited presence of formerly marginalised languages on these platforms indicates a substantial gap in modern educational practices within teachers' colleges, which could otherwise strengthen efforts toward de-minoritization and revitalisation.

6.3 The potential benefits of de-minoritising, revitalising, and digitalising strategies for formerly marginalised languages in teacher education institutions.

Research participants were asked about the benefits of revitalising formerly marginalised languages in higher education in a digital learning environment. P1 indicated:

If colleges are going to embrace formerly marginalised languages by revitalising them in this digital era, I am sure the cultures of minority groups will be preserved. Digitalisation can assist in preserving unique cultural identities and traditions associated with formerly marginalised languages.

The digitalisation of formerly marginalised languages helps safeguard the unique cultural identities and traditions associated with these languages. In line with this finding, Mumpande (2006:11) believes that revitalisation is critical in "imparting new vigour to formerly marginalised languages through the expansion of domains to reverse language shift and empower the language". Language revitalisation in the teacher education context has to be anchored on cementing people's identity. This suggests that integrating technology can not only enhance the learning experience but also play a crucial role in maintaining the cultural heritage of marginalised people. Language is essential for maintaining the cultural heritage of these peoples, as it preserves traditions, fosters community identity, and supports the continuation of cultural practices. Additionally, it serves as a medium for transmitting knowledge, resisting assimilation, facilitating emotional expression, and promoting cultural revitalisation, thereby encouraging younger generations to engage with their heritage.

P7 indicated:

Revitalising formerly marginalised languages through digitalisation is essential in academic enrichment because college students will be introduced to varied worldviews and epistemologies of all indigenous people.

Revitalising formerly marginalised languages enriches academic experiences by exposing students to diverse worldviews and epistemologies. This indicates that formerly marginalised languages are not just tools for communication but gateways to understanding different cultural narratives and knowledge systems, enhancing overall educational experiences and richness.

P10 also underscored that the revitalisation of formerly marginalised languages in teacher colleges had the potential to promote research. The participant said:

Digitalisation enriches interdisciplinary research that incorporates linguistic, cultural, and social dimensions of all people. If all colleges do embrace formerly marginalised languages, cultural diversity and inclusivity will be promoted.

The potential benefits of revitalisation are seen in boosting interdisciplinary research that encompasses linguistic, cultural, and social dimensions. This underscores the idea that formerly marginalised languages can contribute significantly to scholarly work, promoting inclusivity and diversity in research agenda.

P2 asserted:

Revitalisation has the potential of benefiting students in teachers' colleges by improving their engagement. Student from minority cultural groups whose languages are marginalised would feel more connected and motivated when learning in or about their native languages.

Revitalisation plays a crucial role in enhancing student engagement, especially for those from marginalised cultural backgrounds. Maseko and Moyo (2013) argue that political and economic marginalisation, along with discrimination and dehumanisation, contribute to the undermining of these students' languages and cultures. When students in teachers' colleges learn in or about their native, marginalised languages, they are likely to develop a stronger connection to their education.

P9 stated:

Revitalisation of minority makes citizens multi-lingual competent because the proficiency in multiple languages is promoted.

Revitalising formerly marginalised languages fosters multilingual competence among citizens, especially college students. Maseko and Moyo (2013) argue that revitalisation

should leverage digital media. This can be achieved by creating cultural content through methods like scanning, modelling, and archiving. Powerful search engines and database management tools can help manage this content, while the World Wide Web enables dissemination to audiences who might otherwise lack access. This reflects a broader educational goal of preparing students for a globalised world where multilingualism is increasingly valuable, enhancing communication and cultural understanding.

P3 was of the view that the:

Revitalisation of formerly marginalised languages promotes justice and equality among students in teachers' colleges. Furthermore, this process can assist in coming up with inclusive policies that recognise and validate linguistic diversity in educational institutions.

The revitalisation of formerly marginalised languages is a means of promoting justice and equality, particularly in developing inclusive educational policies. This augurs well with Adegbija's (1997, p. 6) observation that:

Before confronting and tackling all other problems that bedevil the development of small-group languages is the need for a strong, unshakeable policy and commitment of the will to the philosophy that all languages, no matter the number of speakers, qualify for, and should be given, a chance to survive, develop, and grow to their maximum without being stifled by government policy actions.

This perspective aligns with social equity goals, indicating that recognising linguistic diversity is essential for ensuring that all students feel validated and supported in teachers' colleges.

P6 believed that:

In line with heritage-based curriculum in teacher education, revitalisation of formerly marginalised languages has the potential of improving community engagement between teachers' colleges and local communities.

Language revitalisation with community engagement suggests that a heritage-based curriculum can strengthen ties between educational institutions and local communities. This collaboration can benefit both students and the communities they represent, fostering a mutual exchange of knowledge and support.

P4 underscored:

The revitalisation of formerly marginalised languages in this digital era benefits educational institutions by availing research opportunities on languages. This is because digitalisation results in language documentation calling for research on these formerly marginalised languages.

The importance of digitalisation in language documentation opens up new research avenues. Ndlovu (2009) believes that formerly marginalised languages could benefit from government support in the form of funding for research activities and documentation (Ndhlovu, 2009). This not only aids in preserving formerly marginalised languages but also encourages academic inquiry into these languages, potentially leading to greater awareness and appreciation of linguistic diversity.

7. Conclusion

This paper has highlighted that enhancing inclusivity and cultural diversity through the de-minoritisation, revitalisation, and digitalisation of formerly marginalised languages in teacher education institutions in Zimbabwe is essential for fostering an equitable educational landscape. By prioritising formerly marginalised languages, these institutions can empower diverse linguistic communities, ensuring that all students feel valued and represented. This approach not only preserves cultural heritage but also enriches the learning environment by incorporating varied perspectives and knowledge systems. Digitalisation plays a critical role in this process, providing innovative platforms for language learning and resource accessibility. It enables the creation of interactive educational materials and connects educators and students to a broader linguistic community. Moreover, revitalising formerly marginalised languages in teacher education cultivates culturally responsive teaching practices, equipping future educators with the skills necessary to navigate and celebrate linguistic diversity in their classrooms. Ultimately, these strategies contribute to a more inclusive society where all voices are heard and respected. By embracing the linguistic richness of Zimbabwe, teacher education institutions can lead the way in promoting social cohesion and understanding, ensuring that every learner has the opportunity to thrive in a culturally diverse educational setting. This commitment to inclusivity will strengthen both the educational system and the nation as a whole.

8. Recommendations

The study submits the following recommendations for enhancing inclusivity and cultural diversity through the de-minoritisation, revitalisation, and digitalisation of formerly marginalised languages in teacher education institutions:

1. **Curriculum integration:** Teachers' colleges should incorporate formerly marginalised languages into their curriculum to promote bilingual and multilingual education models.
2. **Training of minority language teachers:** Provide training for teachers from formerly marginalised languages to cultivate cultural diversity in educational institutions.
3. **Resource development:** Teachers' colleges should create and disseminate teaching materials in formerly marginalised languages, including textbooks, online resources, and digital applications. Furthermore, they should collaborate with local communities to develop culturally relevant content that reflects the linguistic diversity of students.
4. **Community engagement:** Teachers' colleges should foster partnerships with local minority language communities to promote language use and cultural exchange.
5. **Digital platforms:** Teachers' colleges should utilise digital platforms to create accessible language-learning resources and online courses in formerly marginalised languages.
6. **Policy implementation:** Teacher education institutions should implement policies that support the recognition and use of formerly marginalised languages.

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