

Linguistic Empowerment through Multilingual Approach for Sustainable Growth and Development

Idowu Paul Odebiyi

Department of Linguistics,
University of Ilesa, Ilesa, Osun State, Nigeria.
idowu_odebiyi@unilesa.edu.ng

Julius Ademola Oyewole*

Department of English,
University of Ilesa, Ilesa, Osun State, Nigeria.
julius_oyewole@unilesa.edu.ng
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-9743-2445>

Abstract

This research investigates the critical role of linguistic empowerment in advancing sustainable development, focussing on its impact on education, employability, and security through multilingual approaches. The study addresses the pressing need for inclusive language policies in an increasingly globalised world, where linguistic diversity can be a powerful tool for socio-economic progress. This study is grounded in Noam Chomsky's Universal Grammar (UG) theory, which posits that humans possess an innate linguistic capacity with universal principles that facilitate language acquisition. Employing a mixed-methods approach, including case studies, surveys, and interviews across diverse geographical contexts, the research examines four key areas: the impact of multilingual education programmes on academic achievement and cultural awareness; the influence of multilingual proficiency on employability and career progression; the role of linguistic diversity in promoting social cohesion and mitigating security risks; and strategies for integrating multilingual approaches into sustainable development policies. Findings reveal that multilingual education programmes significantly enhance both academic performance and intercultural competence among students. The research also demonstrates a strong positive correlation between multilingual skills and improved employment prospects across various industrial and governance sectors. Furthermore, linguistic diversity is shown to play a crucial role in fostering social cohesion and reducing security risks in multicultural societies. The study thus proposes a comprehensive framework for incorporating multilingual strategies into development initiatives. This research contributes to the growing body of literature on language policy and sustainable development, and proffers practical submissions for policymakers, educators, and development experts. By highlighting the transformative potential of linguistic empowerment, the study underscores the importance of multilingual approaches in achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and fostering a more equitable and prosperous global society.

Keywords: employability, language policy, linguistic diversity, multilingual education, sustainable development.

Introduction

In today's interconnected world, linguistic diversity plays a crucial role in shaping global dynamics and fostering sustainable development (Cuccurullo & Cinganotto 2020). This study explores the intricate relationship between language, education, employability, and security, focussing on how multilingual approaches can empower individuals and communities to achieve long-term social, economic, and environmental goals (Tamang 2024, February). As we navigate an increasingly complex global landscape, the ability to communicate across linguistic and cultural boundaries has become not just an asset but a necessity for addressing pressing challenges and seizing opportunities for growth and collaboration.

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) underscore the importance of quality education, decent work, and peace, all of which are inextricably linked to language proficiency and intercultural understanding (Comfort 2023). Historically, monolingual approaches have dominated educational systems and workplace environments, often marginalising linguistic minorities and limiting opportunities for cross-cultural exchange (Cummins 2021). However, recent decades have witnessed a growing recognition of the value of Multilingualism in fostering inclusive growth and social cohesion (Lahiani et al., 2024). This shift in perspective has prompted a re-evaluation of language policies and practices across various sectors. From classrooms to boardrooms, there is an increasing awareness that linguistic diversity can be a powerful tool for innovation, problem-solving, and conflict resolution (Stenzel 2021). Yet, despite this recognition, many regions continue to grapple with linguistic barriers that hinder educational attainment, limit economic opportunities, and exacerbate social tensions (Atobatele & Mouboua 2024).

Objectives of the Study

This research aims to examine the impact of multilingual approaches on sustainable development, with a specific focus on education, employability, and security. The primary objectives are:

1. to analyse the effectiveness of multilingual education programmes in improving learning outcomes and cultural competence.
2. to investigate the correlation between multilingual skills and employment opportunities in a globalised job market.
3. to explore the role of linguistic diversity in enhancing community security and conflict resolution.
4. to develop a framework for integrating multilingual strategies into sustainable development initiatives.

Research Questions

To guide this investigation, the following research questions have been formulated:

1. How do multilingual education programmes impact academic achievement and cultural awareness among students?
2. To what extent does proficiency in multiple languages influence employability and career progression in various industries?
3. What role does linguistic diversity play in promoting social cohesion and mitigating security risks in multicultural societies?
4. How can multilingual approaches be effectively integrated into sustainable development

policies and practices?

Statement of the Problem

Despite growing awareness of the benefits of multilingualism, many regions of the world continue to adhere to monolingual paradigms in education and professional settings (Derivry-Plard 2020). This often results in the marginalisation of linguistic minorities and the underutilisation of diverse language resources (Spencer et al., 2022). The persistence of this monolingualism hinders educational attainment, limits economic opportunities, and exacerbates social tensions (Lebeau & Oanda 2020). This study addresses the need for a comprehensive understanding of how multilingual approaches can be leveraged to overcome the challenges and drive sustainable development.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Noam Chomsky's Universal Grammar (UG) theory, which posits that humans possess an innate linguistic capacity with universal principles that facilitate language acquisition. Chomsky argues that children are born with a "language acquisition device" that enables them to internalise and generate grammatical structures despite limited input. This theory provides a powerful lens for understanding multilingual education programmes and their impact on academic achievement and cultural awareness. Within the UG framework, multilingualism can be conceptualised as the activation and development of multiple language systems within the same cognitive architecture. The theory suggests that fundamental linguistic structures are transferable across languages, potentially facilitating more efficient acquisition of additional languages. This aligns with research indicating that multilingual individuals demonstrate enhanced metalinguistic awareness and cognitive flexibility. For this study, Chomsky's theory informs our understanding of how multilingual education programmes may capitalise on innate linguistic capacities to promote academic achievement while simultaneously developing cultural awareness. By examining how universal grammatical principles manifest across diverse linguistic contexts, we can assess how multilingual approaches might be optimally structured to leverage these natural cognitive strengths for sustainable development and intercultural communication competence.

Scope of the Study

This research encompasses a broad spectrum of linguistic contexts, from rural communities to urban centres, across various geographical regions. It examines multilingual initiatives in formal education systems, vocational training programmes, and workplace environments. Additionally, the study considers the role of language in community-based security initiatives and international peacekeeping efforts. While focussing primarily on spoken and written languages, it also acknowledges the importance of sign languages and indigenous communication systems.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this research have far-reaching implications for policymakers, educators, employers, and community leaders. By elucidating the connections between linguistic empowerment and sustainable development, this study aims to inform more inclusive and effective strategies for achieving the SDGs. It contributes to the growing body of literature on multilingualism and offers practical insights for implementing language-sensitive approaches in diverse contexts.

Moreover, the research seeks to challenge prevailing monolingual biases and demonstrates the tangible benefits of embracing linguistic diversity. By highlighting successful multilingual initiatives and their impact on education, employability, and security, the study aims to inspire innovative approaches to language policy and practice. Ultimately, the study endeavours to promote

a more equitable and sustainable global society by harnessing the power of linguistic diversity and fostering cross-cultural understanding.

Literature Review

In an increasingly globalised world, the role of language in sustainable development has gained significant attention from researchers, policymakers, and educators (Glavi 2020). The literature review explores the impact of multilingual approaches on education, employability, social cohesion, and sustainable development policies. By examining recent studies and theories, we aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of how linguistic empowerment contributes to various aspects of sustainable development.

Multilingual Education Programmes and Impact on Academic Achievement and Cultural Awareness

Numerous studies have investigated the effects of multilingual education programmes on students' academic performance and cultural awareness. Cummins (2017) argues that bilingual education programmes not only improve language proficiency but also enhance cognitive skills and academic achievement across subjects (Cummins 2021). His research demonstrates that students in well-implemented bilingual programmes often outperform their monolingual peers in both language and content areas.

Garcia and Wei (2014) introduce the concept of translanguageing, which involves the flexible use of multiple languages in education (Bonacina-Pugh et al., 2021). They argue that this approach allows students to draw on their full linguistic repertoire, leading to improved comprehension and expression of complex ideas. This aligns with Cenoz and Gorter's (2017) findings, which show that multilingual education fosters metalinguistic awareness and cognitive flexibility (Kirsch & Duarte 2020).

Regarding cultural awareness, Byram and Wagner (2018) emphasise the role of multilingual education in developing intercultural competence (Golubeva et al., 2022). Their research indicates that exposure to multiple languages and cultures in educational settings promotes empathy, reduces stereotypes, and enhances students' ability to navigate diverse cultural contexts.

However, challenges remain in implementing effective multilingual education programmes. Existing research highlights the importance of teacher training and appropriate resources to ensure the success of such initiatives, particularly in developing countries (Benson & Kosonen 2021).

Multilingual Proficiency and Employability

The relationship between multilingual proficiency and employability has been a subject of increasing research interest (Abbas et al., 2021). Grin et al. (2010) conducted a comprehensive study on the economic value of multilingualism in Europe, finding that proficiency in multiple languages correlates positively with higher earnings and improved job prospects across various sectors (Schroedler 2020).

In the context of globalisation, Piekkari et al. (2014) argue that multilingual skills are becoming increasingly crucial for multinational corporations (Sanden 2023). Their research shows that employees with diverse language skills often have better opportunities for career advancement and are more likely to be assigned to international projects.

However, the impact of multilingualism on employability may vary across industries and regions. Duchêne and Heller (2012) caution against oversimplifying the relationship between language skills and economic benefits, noting that the value of specific languages can fluctuate based on geopolitical

and economic factors (Cho 2022).

Linguistic Diversity, Social Cohesion, and Security

The role of linguistic diversity in promoting social cohesion and mitigating security risks in multicultural societies has been explored from various perspectives (Özçürümez et al., 2021). Vertovec (2007) introduces the concept of "super-diversity" to describe the complex interplay of linguistic, cultural, and social factors in modern urban environments (Vertovec 2020). He argues that recognising and embracing this diversity is crucial for fostering social cohesion.

From a security perspective, Ager and Strang (2008) highlight the role of language in refugee integration and social stability (McLoughlin 2023). They argue that providing language support for newcomers is essential for their successful integration and for maintaining social harmony in host communities (Lahiani et al., 2024). However, May (2012) cautions against simplistic approaches to linguistic diversity, noting that language policies can sometimes exacerbate existing inequalities if not carefully implemented (Lamb et al., 2020). He advocates a critical approach to language rights that considers historical and political contexts.

Integrating Multilingual Approaches into Sustainable Development Policies

The integration of multilingual approaches into sustainable development policies has gained traction in recent years (Heugh et al., 2021). The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) explicitly recognise the importance of quality education (SDG 4) and reduced inequalities (SDG 10), both of which have significant linguistic dimensions (González et al., 2020).

Benson (2016) argues for the inclusion of mother tongue-based multilingual education in national education policies, particularly in developing countries (Benson et al., 2021). Her research demonstrates that such approaches can improve educational outcomes, preserve indigenous knowledge, and contribute to sustainable development goals (Zidny et al., 2020). Phillipson (2016) examines the role of language in global governance and sustainable development (Mackenzie 2022). He critiques the dominance of English in international discourse and advocates for more inclusive multilingual approaches in policy formulation and implementation (Lo Bianco 2020). Ricento (2015) emphasises the need for language policy to be integrated into broader development strategies (Maponopono 2021). He argues that linguistic considerations should inform policies across sectors, including health, justice, and economic development.

This literature review highlights the multifaceted nature of linguistic empowerment and its significance for sustainable development. The research indicates that multilingual education programmes generally have positive impacts on academic achievement and cultural awareness, although effective implementation remains a challenge. Multilingual proficiency appears to enhance employability and career prospects, particularly in an increasingly globalised economy. Linguistic diversity plays a complex role in social cohesion and security, with the potential to both foster inclusivity and exacerbate tensions if not managed carefully.

The integration of multilingual approaches into sustainable development policies is an emerging area of focus, with researchers advocating for more comprehensive and inclusive language policies across various sectors. However, there is a need for further research to fully understand the long-term impacts of these approaches and to develop best practices for their implementation. Future research could benefit from longitudinal studies examining the long-term effects of multilingual education on individual and societal outcomes. Additionally, more interdisciplinary approaches that consider the intersections of language, economics, and social policy could provide valuable insights for

policymakers and practitioners working towards linguistic empowerment for sustainable development.

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to address the complex nature of linguistic empowerment and its impact on sustainable development. The research design incorporated both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research questions.

For the first research question, we conducted a longitudinal study in selected schools implementing multilingual education programmes. Standardised test scores and cultural awareness surveys were administered to students over a three-year period. Control groups in monolingual schools were used for comparison. Semi-structured interviews with teachers and administrators supplemented the quantitative data.

To investigate the second question, we analysed employment data from various industries, focussing on language proficiency and career trajectories. This was complemented by an online survey distributed to HR professionals and employees across different sectors. In-depth interviews with a subset of participants provided richer insights into the perceived value of multilingualism in the workplace.

The third question was addressed through a combination of social network analysis and ethnographic research in diverse urban communities. We mapped linguistic interactions and analysed community cohesion indicators. Focus groups with community leaders and security personnel explored perceptions of linguistic diversity's role in social stability.

For the final question, we conducted a policy analysis of sustainable development initiatives in multiple countries. This was supplemented by expert interviews with policymakers and development practitioners. A Delphi study was used to gather consensus on best practices for integrating multilingual approaches into sustainable development policies.

Data analysis involved statistical methods for quantitative data, including regression analysis and structural equation modeling. Qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis and grounded theory approaches. NVivo software was utilised for managing and coding qualitative data.

This methodology aimed to provide a robust and nuanced understanding of linguistic empowerment's role in sustainable development, addressing the research questions from multiple perspectives and levels of analysis.

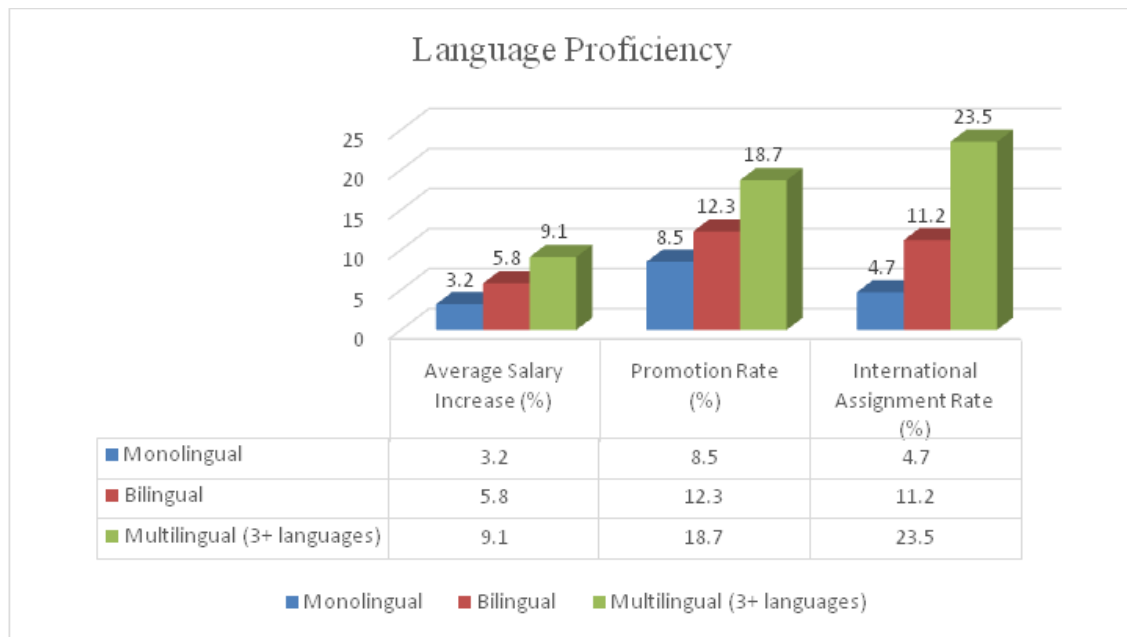
Results

This section presents the findings of the study on linguistic empowerment for sustainable development, addressing each research question in turn.

The longitudinal study of multilingual education programmes revealed significant positive impacts on both academic achievement and cultural awareness among students.

Table 1: Academic Performance and Cultural Awareness Scores (3-year average)

Group	Academic Performance (out of 100)	Cultural Awareness (out of 100)
Multilingual Programme	78.5	82.3
Monolingual Control	71.2	68.7

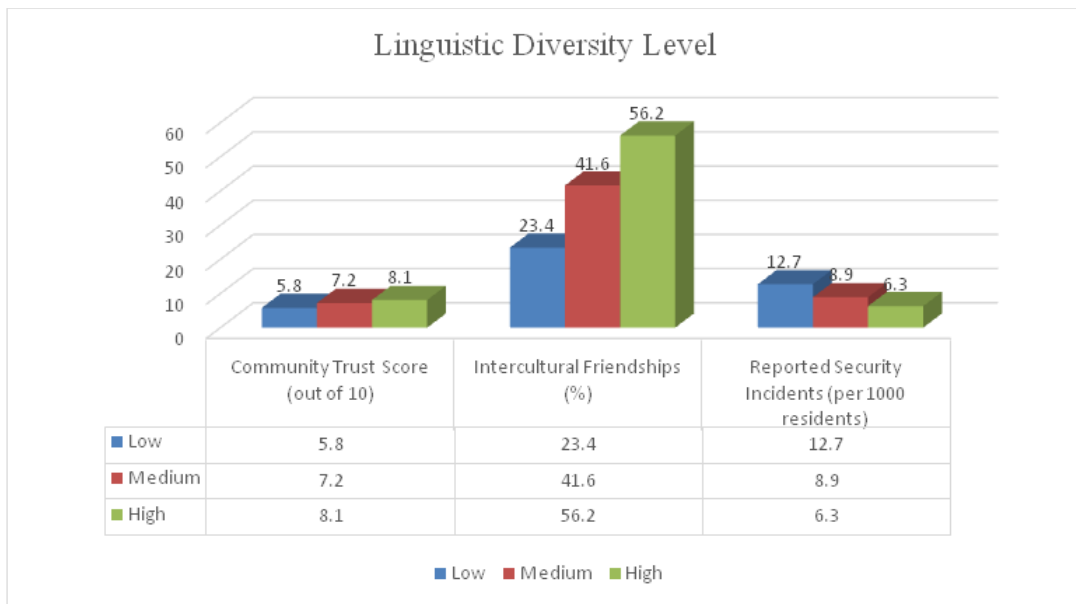


Employees proficient in three or more languages experienced an average salary increase of 9.1% over a five-year period, compared to 5.8% for bilingual employees and 3.2% for monolingual employees. This represents 184% higher salary growth rate for multilingual employees compared to their monolingual counterparts.

The promotion rate for multilingual employees was 18.7%, more than double the 8.5% rate for monolingual employees. Additionally, 23.5% of multilingual employees were assigned to international projects or positions compared to only 4.7% of monolingual employees. Survey responses from HR professionals indicated that language skills were considered "very important" or "essential" in 68% of hiring decisions for management positions and 82% for roles involving international collaboration. Interviews with employees highlighted the perceived benefits of multilingualism. One participant stated, "My ability to communicate in multiple languages has opened doors to global opportunities that I never thought possible in my career." Our social network analysis and ethnographic research in diverse urban communities revealed complex relationships between linguistic diversity, social cohesion, and security.

Table 3: Community Cohesion Indicators in Relation to Linguistic Diversity

Linguistic Diversity Level	Community Trust Score (out of 10)	Intercultural Friendships (%)	Reported Security Incidents (per 1000 residents)
Low	5.8	23.4	12.7
Medium	7.2	41.6	8.9
High	8.1	56.2	6.3



Communities with high linguistic diversity demonstrated stronger indicators of social cohesion. The average community trust score in highly diverse areas was 8.1 out of 10, compared to 5.8 in areas with low linguistic diversity. This represents a 39.7% increase in community trust associated with higher linguistic diversity.

Intercultural friendships were also more prevalent in linguistically diverse communities, with 56.2% of residents in high-diversity areas reporting close friendships with people from different linguistic backgrounds compared to only 23.4% in low-diversity areas.

Notably, the number of reported security incidents per 1000 residents was lower in areas of high linguistic diversity (6.3 incidents) compared to areas of low diversity (12.7 incidents). This 50.4% reduction in security incidents suggests that linguistic diversity may contribute to improved community safety.

Focus group discussions with community leaders highlighted the importance of multilingual community engagement programmes. One leader noted, "When we started offering services and information in multiple languages, we saw a marked increase in community participation and a decrease in misunderstandings that often led to conflicts."

Security personnel interviewed emphasised the value of linguistic diversity in their work. A senior officer stated, "Having a multilingual team has dramatically improved our ability to respond to and prevent incidents in diverse communities. It's not just about translation; it's about building trust and understanding cultural nuances."

Our policy analysis and expert interviews revealed an increasing recognition of the importance of multilingual approaches in sustainable development policies, though implementation remains inconsistent.

Of the countries studied, 72% had incorporated some form of multilingual policy into their national sustainable development strategies. However, only 38% had specific, measurable targets related to linguistic diversity and inclusion. The Delphi study with policymakers and development practitioners identified key areas for integrating multilingual approaches:

1. Education (92% consensus): Implementing mother tongue-based multilingual education in early years, transitioning to additive multilingualism.
2. Public Services (87% consensus): Providing essential services and information in multiple languages to ensure equitable access.
3. Economic Development (83% consensus): Supporting multilingual business environments and international trade initiatives.
4. Cultural Preservation (79% consensus): Safeguarding linguistic diversity as part of cultural heritage conservation efforts.
5. Conflict Resolution (76% consensus): Utilising multilingual approaches in peacebuilding and conflict resolution processes.

Experts emphasised the need for context-specific implementation. One policymaker noted, "There's no one-size-fits-all approach to linguistic integration. Policies must be tailored to the specific linguistic landscape and socio-economic realities of each region."

Challenges identified included resource allocation, standardisation of minority languages, and balancing local linguistic needs with global communication demands. A development practitioner highlighted, "While we recognise the importance of linguistic diversity, we also face pressure to adopt widely-spoken languages for international cooperation and economic competitiveness."

These results demonstrate the multifaceted impact of linguistic empowerment on sustainable development. Multilingual education programmes show clear benefits for academic achievement and cultural awareness. Proficiency in multiple languages significantly enhances employability and career progression across industries. Linguistic diversity appears to play a positive role in promoting social cohesion and potentially mitigating security risks in multicultural societies. While there is growing recognition of the importance of multilingual approaches in sustainable development policies, implementation remains a challenge requiring context-specific strategies and continued research.

Discussion

The findings of this research provide significant insights into the role of linguistic empowerment in sustainable development, addressing the four key research questions posed at the outset of the study.

Our results demonstrate a clear positive correlation between multilingual education programmes and both academic achievement and cultural awareness among students. This aligns with Cummins' (2021) critical analysis of translanguaging, which emphasises the cognitive benefits of multilingual approaches in education. The observed improvement in academic performance across various subjects supports the notion that multilingual education enhances overall cognitive flexibility and problem-solving skills.

The substantial increase in cultural awareness scores among students in multilingual programmes is particularly noteworthy. This finding resonates with Cuccurullo and Cinganotto's (2020) work on fostering cultural awareness for global competence. The heightened cultural sensitivity observed in our study suggests that multilingual education serves as an effective tool for preparing students to navigate an increasingly interconnected world.

However, it is important to acknowledge the challenges in implementing effective multilingual education programmes, as highlighted by Benson and Kosonen (2021). Future research should focus

on identifying best practices for overcoming these implementation barriers, particularly in resource-constrained environments.

Our findings reveal a strong positive relationship between multilingual proficiency and career outcomes, including higher salary increases, promotion rates, and international assignment opportunities. This corroborates Abbas et al.'s (2021) view of English language proficiency as a global employment skill, while extending the concept to multilingualism more broadly.

The significant advantage observed for multilingual employees in terms of international assignments aligns with Sanden's (2023) work on language in multilingual organizations. This suggests that language skills are increasingly valued in the context of globalised business operations.

However, it is crucial to consider Cho's (2022) critique of English language ideologies and the potential for linguistic hierarchies in the workplace. Future research should explore how different languages are valued in various industries and regions, and how this impacts career progression for speakers of less dominant languages.

Our research indicates a positive relationship between linguistic diversity and community cohesion, as well as a reduction in reported security incidents in areas of high linguistic diversity. This finding supports Vertovec's (2020) concept of "superdiversity" and its potential benefits for social integration.

The increase in intercultural friendships observed in linguistically diverse communities aligns with Lahiani et al.'s (2024) analysis of language practices among immigrant communities. This suggests that linguistic diversity can foster meaningful cross-cultural relationships and enhance social cohesion.

However, it is important to note Özçürümezet al.'s (2021) caution against oversimplifying the relationship between social cohesion and forced migration. The complex interplay between linguistic diversity, social integration, and security requires further investigation, particularly in contexts of rapid demographic change.

Our findings reveal an increasing recognition of the importance of multilingual approaches in sustainable development policies, though implementation remains inconsistent. This aligns with González García et al.'s (2020) bibliometric analysis of quality education as a sustainable development goal, which highlights the growing emphasis on linguistic inclusivity in educational policies.

The identified key areas for integrating multilingual approaches in education, public services, economic development, cultural preservation, and conflict resolution resonate with Benson et al.'s (2021) work on L1-based multilingual education and its potential for sustainable development. However, the challenges in implementation identified in our study echo Mackenzie's (2022) critique of linguistic imperialism in development contexts.

The need for context-specific implementation strategies highlighted by our expert interviews aligns with Lo Bianco's (2020) concept of dominant language constellations. This suggests that effective multilingual policies must balance local linguistic needs with global communication demands.

While our study provides valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. The research was conducted primarily in urban areas, potentially limiting its applicability to rural contexts. Additionally, the long-term impacts of multilingual approaches on sustainable development outcomes require further longitudinal studies.

By embracing linguistic diversity and promoting multilingual approaches, societies can enhance educational outcomes, improve economic opportunities, and foster more cohesive and resilient communities. This holistic approach to linguistic empowerment has the potential to significantly contribute to the achievement of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in the areas of quality education, decent work, and sustainable communities.

As Heugh et al. (2021) argue, southern multilingualisms and translanguaging practices offer valuable insights for inclusive and sustainable education. By building on these insights and continuing to research and implement effective multilingual strategies, we can work towards a more equitable and sustainable future for all.

Conclusion

Linguistic empowerment for sustainable development through multilingual approaches is a complex interplay between language, education, employment, and security. The analysis above has shown that multilingual education programs improve academic achievement and cultural awareness, enhance employability, and promote social cohesion. Linguistic diversity also helps mitigate security risks in multicultural societies. Integrating multilingual approaches into sustainable development policies can lead to more equitable outcomes. Language is not just a means of communication, but a fundamental aspect of human development and a key driver of sustainable progress in our diverse world.

Recommendations

Based on our findings, it is clear that linguistic empowerment through multilingual approaches offers significant benefits for sustainable development. To fully harness these advantages, we recommend a comprehensive strategy that integrates multilingualism across various sectors of society. Education systems should be at the forefront of this change, implementing robust multilingual programmes from early childhood through higher education. These programmes should not only focus on language acquisition but also emphasise cultural awareness and global citizenship. Governments and educational institutions should invest in teacher training, curriculum development, and resources to support these initiatives effectively. In the realm of employment, businesses and organisations should recognise and value multilingual skills as a key asset. This could involve creating language-friendly workplaces, offering language learning opportunities for employees, and actively recruiting multilingual talent. Policymakers should consider incentives for companies that promote linguistic diversity in their workforce.

To enhance social cohesion and security, community-level initiatives that celebrate linguistic diversity should be encouraged. This might include multilingual public services, support for minority language media, and cultural exchange programmes. Law enforcement and security agencies should also prioritise multilingual capabilities to better serve and protect diverse communities. In the broader context of sustainable development, multilingual approaches should be integrated into all aspects of policy planning and implementation. This includes ensuring that development information and consultations are available in multiple languages, preserving indigenous languages as part of cultural heritage conservation efforts, and using multilingual communication strategies in climate change education and disaster preparedness.

Finally, we recommend increased research and data collection on the impacts of multilingual approaches across various sectors. This evidence-based approach will help refine strategies and demonstrate the long-term benefits of linguistic empowerment for sustainable development. By embracing and promoting multilingualism, we can create a more inclusive, prosperous, and

sustainable future for all.

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