

ABSTRACT

Research Topic: **Language Competence in Multilingual Contexts: The Case of Burundi**

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Burundi is a language community whose political history has nurtured a system of multilingualism in education. Studies on language competence among multilingual speakers in Burundi hardly identify the root cause of limited competence in the production of the target languages acquired by the speakers at a later stage. The study, *Language Competence in Multilingual Contexts: The Case of Burundi*, investigated the fundamental causes of limited competence in the acquisition and production of multiple languages among educated multilingual speakers in Burundi. This was achieved through examining the impact of the multilingual education system of Burundi on developing language competence, describing the nature and form of the target language produced by the selected multilingual speakers in Burundi, and analysing the linguistic occurrences that illustrate the speakers' levels of language competence. Data were analysed according to the tenets of the Competition Model. The major findings of the study indicate that language competence among the multilingual speakers in Burundi is affected by the multilingual education designs that Burundi has used over time, the grammar of other languages that the speakers have acquired earlier, and cognates between the languages, for instance, French and English, that are used by the speakers. The study recommends a need to design a systematic multilingual education system that takes into account similarities and differences between languages and the degree to which the languages in contact can influence each other during language learning and use.