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SPECIAL THEME

LANGUAGE POLITICS AND THE POLITICS OF LANGUAGE (IN EDUCATION)

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Editorial

Kenneth King

It is particularly fitting that this issue on 'Language Politics and the Politics of Language (in Education)' should be ready in time for a meeting in Mali, West Africa which is concerned with applying 'Critical Perspectives to Schooling, Gender and Skills Development'. Language clearly is a critical issue, not just in Sub-Saharan Africa, but in many other regions of the world.

This is one of the first occasions that there has been a NORRAG meeting held in a language other than English, and it is also very appropriate that this is taking place in collaboration with one of our sister networks, the Education Research Network for West and Central Africa (ERNWACA), since it draws its members from both Francophone and Anglophone Africa, and from countries, including Mali, where the debate about language in education at different levels is vibrant.

There will be a hard-copy edition of NN34 available for the Seminar of September 13-15, but it is hoped to put the final version of NN34 on line shortly after the seminar. It will be possible to include, we hope, several additional articles by that point, and perhaps carry a first reaction to some of these twenty, very lively and indeed provocative pieces that make up this issue. Thanks to Barbara Trudell, we are also carrying, once again, a listing of some of the upcoming conferences relevant to this language issue. This used to be a regular feature of *NORRAG NEWS* before we became mainly web-based.

We should also remind our Francophone readers that NN has for almost 15 years had a French language edition, *La Lettre de Norrag*; but for this particular conference, we are hoping to bring out a special issue, as we did last year in NN32 for the East African meeting on Critical Perspectives. This will of course depend on the papers submitted, but it is also our intention to provide a French edition of this meeting. And in 2005, it is planned that there will be a similar meeting in Latin America, where, again, there will be a Spanish version of the seminar papers.

For new readers of NN, you will be interested to learn that there will also be available, in the next very short while, a CD ROM which will carry all the existing issues of *NORRAG NEWS* along with much else that has been produced by NORRAG over the last several years. This will allow you to search for topics and issues across the last almost 20 years of NORRAG's existence, and to do so off-line. Please consult the home-page of NORRAG at www.norrag.org to check on the availability of this CD ROM.

Membership Directory. Don't forget that there is now available a directory, easily available on the web-site. It is downloadable in PDF, and provides a fascinating insight into the range of our readership (and some of their professional interests) in so many different countries – including a large number that never had any NORRAG member when we relied on the distribution of hard copies.

We continue to be aware, as a very small organisation, with a rich resource on its web-site, that it is through personal contact, exchange and recommendation that new members come on board. This is why we ran a NORRAG meeting with Professor Nobuhide Sawamura in JICA, in Tokyo, this February, and another in Stockholm with our President, Ingemar Gustafsson, also in February.

We are intending to do something similar in New Delhi, with Prof. Tilak, this October. And apart from the meeting in Latin America planned for 2005, we shall also be present in the BOLESWANA meeting in Namibia during July 2005. And NORRAG has, as usual, planned to be identified with a particular symposium in the Oxford Conference in September 2005.

Finally, two notes about developments in NORRAG. First, we should acknowledge that Barbara Trudell who has been acting as NORRAG Assistant for Development is going back at the end of this year to continue her professional work in Kenya. We hope that she will continue to be closely associated with NORRAG, just as she has been over the last 12 months. In a very substantial sense, she has jointly edited this present issue of *NORRAG NEWS*. Second, we should congratulate Michel Carton, who has been the co-ordinator of NORRAG for many years, in being appointed to the Directorship of the Graduate Institute for Development Studies in Geneva.

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Taking a stand on language

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In the 1960s, I was one of tens of thousands of volunteers who went out to schools in many different countries, as Peace Corps, VSO and through other organisations, to help the huge expansion of secondary education. I don't recall being surprised that all the subjects in the secondary schools were taught in English, in Ethiopia, except for the Amharic language. After all, I had just done a post-graduate qualification in teaching English as a foreign language!

As a young history lecturer in the University of Nairobi, in the late 1960s or early 1970s, I can still vividly remember attending a regular lecture by Professor Colin Leys in the politics department. It was on a topic I wanted to know more about; – so I sat at the back of the large undergraduate class – and was making some of my own notes on the lecture – when I realised I could read quite easily the notes of two students sitting in front. I can still remember thinking how little of the complexity of what Colin Leys was saying had been captured by the very short notes of the students in front of me. Yet they had done all their six years of secondary education in the medium of English.

At about the same time, I had met the famous old early political figure in Kenya, Harry Thuku, and we agreed to do a book about his life. The book was essentially an edited version of his many, many conversations with me. The book was in English, and was translated into Swahili. I don't remember any thought at all being given to putting the book into Kikuyu, Harry Thuku's own language.

Unlike the majority of those writing in this issue of *NORRAG NEWS*, whose professional work has focused on language and linguistics, or who have at least authored books and articles on language, I have written just one short article for a CAS conference on *Language in Education in Africa* (1986) which I helped to organise.

But as an historian of education in Africa, I knew of the language recommendations of the great Commissions such as the Phelps-Stokes in the early 1920s (or Le Zoute in 1926): – that the vernacular should be used for the first 3-4 years of elementary or primary schooling; then, in certain situations, a *lingua franca* of African origin in the middle grades of primary schooling; finally the language of the European nation in the upper standards (or primary schools). I don't recall wondering what was the origin of this recommendation about 3-4 years of use of the mother tongue, but the reality of several countries – at least in Anglophone Africa - was that success in the examinations that led from lower primary to middle, and then to upper primary also meant a shift in the medium of instruction.

The idea that success & failure in school examinations is also a language marker can still be the case today. In Tanzania, for example, success in the end-of-primary exams can mean leaving the world of Swahili medium behind, and entering the world of all subjects being taught in English. The language transition point differs from country to country, and in some countries, there is no transition at all since the mother tongue is not used anywhere in school as a medium of instruction.

These long-standing links between exam success & failure and the use of different languages have almost certainly contributed to the low educational status of mother tongues in many countries – especially in Africa. I say low **educational** status – but not outside the schools. In the markets and shops, in the homes and social areas, including in many churches, mother tongues are alive and vigorous, and they monopolise most language use. Probably also in school playgrounds!

But this use is primarily oral. Unlike the small towns of South and East Asia where advertisements and signs in non-European languages are found all over the shops, bazaars, and other commercial buildings, my impression of small towns in Sub-Saharan Africa is that there is very little written use of the mother tongue, apart from what may happen in the first 3 years of primary education.

We have therefore a startling paradox in many parts of Africa, - that there are populations of individual mother tongue speakers much larger than many European nations, and yet these mother tongues play little part in what may be called the formal sector of the economy – except, sometimes, in lower primary education.

Many Africans are genuinely surprised to learn that their professional colleagues and acquaintances from such countries as Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and Holland did not have their secondary and higher education entirely in English-medium settings; and yet they speak perfectly good English.

The other arena worth bearing in mind, since *NORRAG NEWS* has a continuous interest in the links of education and aid policy, is what may have been the aid connections to language policy. Historically, there have been huge changes in the aid priorities of many agencies. The promotion of the English and French languages, for example, was at one point a key element in some bilateral aid policies, and was accompanied by schemes to support many expatriate personnel in schools, teacher colleges and in universities, as well as in ministries of education, as advisors. This now may seem light years away from the currently favoured aid modalities of sector-wide approaches, direct budget support and the pursuit of the millennium development goals.

But it is surprising how little attention has been paid in the series of World Bank education policy papers, since 1971, to the issue of language. And this is especially the case when it is recalled how much interest there has been by the Bank in what makes a difference to school quality and school effectiveness. Thus, there is Bank research which shows that textbooks have a consistently positive effect on student achievement; but there seems very little research which looks at the potentially crucial issue of the language of the textbooks, or the impact of language on achievement.

It was precisely this kind of research objective – on the impact for later achievement of studying in the mother tongue for the six years of primary schooling – that lay behind the Yoruba project, supported by the Ford Foundation, so many years ago. One wonders what was the impact of that research within the Nigerian policy

context, or more widely. The danger of course with long term research projects such as this is that the personnel and priorities in the funding bodies have changed by the time the research is available.

The research challenge is not restricted to Sub-Saharan Africa; what Brian Harlech-Jones throws down at the end of his article (in this issue of NN), is also referring to the language situation in South Asia:

‘The advocates of "mother tongue instruction" in developing countries will continue to be frustrated until they can show that it has economic and financial benefits both for individuals and for national welfare – something that they have singularly failed to do up until now.’

It will be interesting to see how NN readers respond to this challenge. Other evidence in this issue of NN34 would suggest that whatever the research shows, there will also need to be strong national political and financial commitment, as well as powerful commitment at the local and community level if there is ever to be education in local languages at all levels of formal education.

With the dramatic liberalisation and diversification of higher education in many countries, including in Sub-Saharan Africa, will it be possible to attend a university and study in Hausa, Yoruba or Ibo, which are huge language communities, just as it has been possible for years, in India, to study in Gujarati, Tamil, or Bengali? Will it even be possible to conceive of studying in Kikuyu, Luo or Acoli? We had hoped to carry an article by Ngugi wa Thion’go on this last question; and by the time this issue goes on the web, we may have such a piece.

My own – non-professional - guess is that as long as the mother tongue debate is about the number of years it can be defended in particular ‘minority’ primary schools, and as long as local languages can’t be found in regular secondary schools and university courses – both as media of instruction and as serious subjects for study – including in the best schools and universities – so long will it be difficult for parents and children to take what they will assume is an educational risk. Such future Yoruba, Hausa or Kikuyu language environments will also have to be able to show that their students end up speaking as good English as those who have tried to study in English medium throughout secondary school.

In this connection it would be interesting to know more about the health in universities of what used to be called Departments of African Languages (and Cultures). Again, we had hoped to carry a short piece on that, and may still do so in the web-edition of NN34.

While we await further evidence – from readers - about this most long-running of debates about education, we leave you here the challenge of Okot p’Bitek, one of my former colleagues, along with Ngugi, in the University of Nairobi:

My husband
Has read at Makerere University.
He has read deeply and widely.
But if you ask him a question

He says
You are insulting him
.....
Even if he tried
To answer my questions
I would not understand
What he was saying
Because the language he speaks
Is different from mine
So that even if he
Spoke to me in Acoli
I would still need an interpreter.

My husband says
Some of the answers
Cannot be given in Acoli
Which is a primitive language
And is not rich enough
To express his deep wisdom.
He says the Acoli language
Has very few words
It is not like the white man's language
Which is rich and very beautiful
A language fitted for discussing deep thoughts.

(*Song of Lawino*, East African Publishing House, Nairobi, 1966)

DEFINING 'MAJORITY' AND 'MINORITY' LANGUAGES

Language rights and the construction of the minority language

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Minority language rights (MLR) are the linguistic, and wider social and political rights attributable to speakers of minority languages, usually, but not exclusively, within the context of nation-states. Given their close association with the wider discourse of human rights, they are also regularly described by some commentators as 'linguistic human rights'.

A principal concern of MLR advocates has to do with the reasons why certain languages, and their speakers, come to be 'minoritized' in the first place. Advocates of MLR argue that the establishment of majority/minority language hierarchies is neither a natural process nor primarily even a linguistic one. Rather, it is a historically, socially and politically *constructed* process, and one that is deeply imbued in wider (unequal) power relations.

There are two specific points at issue here. The first concerns what actually distinguishes a majority language from a minority language or a dialect. This distinction is not a straightforwardly linguistic one. For example, we cannot always distinguish easily between a language and a dialect on linguistic grounds, since some languages are mutually intelligible, such as Danish, Swedish and Norwegian, while some dialects of the same language are not. Similarly, the majority/minority status ascribed to particular language varieties may well change over time, depending on wider social and political events. Thus, Norwegian was regarded as a dialect of Danish until 1814, when it was part of the Danish Empire, and only attained the status of a 'language' on Norwegian independence in 1905. A contemporary example can be seen in the former Yugoslavia, where separate Serbian and Croatian language varieties have (re)emerged in the 1990s to replace Serbo-Croat, itself the artificial 50 year language product of the Yugoslav Communist Federation under Tito. Context, or place, also plays a significant part here. For example, Spanish is regarded as a majority language in Spain and many Latin American states but a minority language in the USA.

What this demonstrates is that languages are 'created' out of the politics of state-making, not the other way around. This highlights, in turn, the second key point at issue here: the central and ongoing influence of nation-state organization in the establishment and maintenance of majority/minority language hierarchies. Modern nation-states, with their origins in the nationalism of the last few centuries, are organized on the principle of cultural and linguistic homogeneity, itself a consequence of the nationalist idea of nation-state congruence (that a nation, or national group, should be represented by a state). Following from this, nation-states have been primarily concerned with the replacement over time of the wide variety of language varieties

spoken within a nation-state's borders with one 'common' national language (sometimes, albeit rarely, a number of national languages). This process, itself an intrinsic part of a wider policy of assimilation, usually involves the *legitimation* and *institutionalization* of the chosen national language. Legitimation is understood to mean here the formal recognition accorded to a particular language by the nation-state. Institutionalization refers to the process by which this language comes to be accepted, or 'taken for granted' in a wide range of social, cultural and linguistic domains or contexts, both formal and informal. Both elements achieve a central requirement of the modern nation-state – that all its citizens adopt a common language and culture for use in the civic or public realm. At the same time, the chosen 'national' language – invariably that of the dominant ethnic or national group – comes to be associated with modernity and progress, while so-called minority languages, along with their speakers, become associated with tradition and obsolescence.

Proponents of MLR argue that the emphasis on cultural and linguistic homogeneity within nation-states, and the attendant hierarchizing of languages, is neither inevitable nor inviolate – particularly given the historical recency of nation-states, and the related, often arbitrary and contrived, processes by which particular languages have been accorded 'national' or 'minority' status respectively. These arguments about the historical and geopolitical situatedness of national languages also apply at the supranational level, particularly in relation to the burgeoning reach and influence of English as the current world language, or *lingua mundi*. MLR proponents argue that the hegemonic influence of English, though clearly aided by the processes of globalization, has longer historical and geopolitical antecedents. First, there was the initial pre-eminence of Britain and the British Empire in establishing English as a key language of trade across the globe. Second, there has been the subsequent socio-political and socio-economic dominance of the USA, along with its current pre-eminent position in the areas of science, technology, media and academia. Recent geopolitical events such as the collapse of the former Soviet Union, and much of communist Central and Eastern Europe along with it, have further bolstered the reach and influence of English.

As with the construction of national languages, the current ascendancy of English is also invariably linked with modernity and modernization, and the associated benefits which accrue to those who speak it. The result, MLR proponents argue, is to *position* other languages as having less 'value' and 'use' and by extension, and more problematically, to delimit and delegitimize the social, cultural and linguistic capital ascribed to 'non-English speakers' – the phrase itself reflecting the normative ascendancy of English.

MLR proponents point out that the promotion of national languages and/or English is, because of the social and political processes outlined above, almost always couched in terms of 'language replacement' – that one should/must learn these languages *at the expense of* one's first language. Consequently, the promotion of cultural and linguistic homogeneity at the collective/public level has come to be associated with, and expressed by, individual monolingualism. This amounts to a form of linguistic social Darwinism and also helps to explain why language shift/loss/decline has become so prominent. In response, MLR proponents argue that the clear importance of learning or acquiring majority languages does not, indeed *should* not, preclude individuals from continuing to speak other languages, particularly their first language, if they so choose.

Indigenous or immigrant minorities? Who is at greater risk?

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There is a nested hierarchy of linguistic human rights, both internally in various states and globally, and both on paper (in constitutions and human rights instruments) and, especially, in practice.

Internally, **linguistic majority** populations often have all those language rights that can reasonably be called linguistic human rights: the right to use their own language and have the counterparts also do it, in administration, courts, education at all levels, media, etc., both orally and in writing. This is most often true in countries which have a definite powerful linguistic majority and one or several linguistic minorities.

Autochthonous or **national linguistic minorities** normally have fewer linguistic rights than the majorities, and many have no rights at all. In extreme cases even the existence of linguistic minorities is denied, in practice or in laws or both. France, Greece and Turkey are all examples of this denial. Those few national linguistic minorities who have most linguistic human rights are either former or present power minorities (Swedish-speakers in Finland, English-speakers in South Africa, French-speakers in Quebec, Canada). There are some recent international or regional human rights instruments which grant some rights to *minority languages* (the European Charter on Regional or Minority Languages), *minority groups* (Council of Europe's Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities) or *minority individuals* (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities). They are full of modifications, reservations, claw-backs, especially in articles about language rights in education, even if they contain some positive rights too. The instruments mentioned can be found through the website of the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights, Geneva, www.unhchr.ch. Speakers of dialects, and immigrant minorities are implicitly or explicitly excluded from these instruments.

But these instruments could be applied to **indigenous peoples** (see the International Labour Organisation's Convention Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries, No. 169, and the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, PFII, www.un.org/esa/socdev/pfii/). They should in theory have minimally the same rights as minorities have, even if they strictly speaking are not minorities. One of the main differences between minorities and indigenous peoples in international law is that it is only *peoples* who have the right to self-determination; minorities do not in

theory have this right. Indigenous peoples have, though, in practice in most countries fewer language (and other) rights than minorities. Some notable exceptions are the Saami, especially in Norway and Finland, less so in Sweden and Russia, the Maori in Aotearoa/New Zealand, and Hawaiians in Hawai'i.

Users of *sign languages* have in all countries fewer language rights than users of *all* spoken languages. Sign languages are mentioned in constitutions or similar documents and have some at least symbolic protection in a dozen countries (the Congo was the first country to mention them in the Constitution, Finland was the second). From 2005 New Zealand Sign language will most probably be an official language, on a par with English and Maori.

As one of the aftermaths of the linguistic imperialism which was and is part of traditional and new forms of colonialism, most autochthonous languages in former colonies, regardless of their demographic status, have a position which is similar to that of minority languages. The "decolonizing of the mind" that Ngugi wa Thion'go has long advocated is still incomplete. Transnational and British, North American, French, etc. corporate interests, combined with the perceived interests of the old-empire-educated domestic elites in former colonies, reproduce through media and education the neocolonisation of the mind and the unequal division of labour between languages that is its concomitant. The results show in the glaring violations of the basic linguistic human rights of ordinary people in all these countries. What we have is the old colonial languages functioning as majorized minority languages, instead of being "reduced to equality", in Neville Alexander's memorable phrase. The minorized majority languages in the Baltic countries Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania also still need the type of legal protection that secure majority languages normally do not need, and this will continue until the Russian-speakers leave their present majorized minority status and become a secure linguistic minority with those proper linguistic human rights guarantees that these countries already grant to them.

Who is at greater risk? The optimistic prognosis is that at least half of today's spoken languages (those which are today no longer transmitted to younger generations) will be extinct by the end of the century; more pessimistic but still perfectly realistic estimates say that 90-95% of them may then be close to extinction. Fewer than 300 spoken languages have over a million users, and the median language in the world has probably some 5-6,000 speakers. Since a large majority of these seriously endangered languages are indigenous (in ILO's and PFI's sense), and since 83-84% of the world's languages are endemic (exist in one country only), it is clear that indigenous languages *as languages* are much more threatened than languages of immigrant minorities. Immigrant languages would most likely still be spoken in the countries of origin of the immigrants even if they cease to be spoken in the new country. In most cases, speakers do not leave their languages voluntarily, for instrumental reasons and for their own good; it is a question of genocide, according to the definitions of genocide in the UN International Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (E793, 1948), Articles II(e): 'forcibly transferring children of the group to another group'; and II(b): 'causing serious bodily *or mental* harm to members of the group'; (emphasis added). Killing these languages poses a threat to the whole humankind, for multiple reasons. One of the less known ones is the relationship (correlational and most probably also causal) between biodiversity and linguistic diversity. Much of the knowledge about how to use ecosystems sustainably is encoded in small indigenous

languages in the world's megabiodiversity areas. It disappears with the killing of the languages, eventually destroying possibilities for (at least human) life on the planet. (See Skutnabb-Kangas, Maffi & Harmon - UNESCO booklet at http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php@URL_ID=16059&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html or download it from Terralingua's website www.terralingua.org).

But for a child starting school, it makes no difference whether the child is indigenous or immigrant. Being forced to accept instruction through the medium of a language that is not the child's native language, in a submersion programme, through the medium of a dominant language, is subtractive and may deplace or replace the child's own language. Using Nobel Prize laureate Amartya Sen's conceptualisation of poverty as "capability deprivation" (which makes the loci of poverty, and of intervention, economic, social, psychological and educational), implies, according to Ajit Mohanty, that in changing the conditions of poverty, expansion of human capabilities is a more basic objective of development than enhancing direct economic growth. Here, education is perhaps the most crucial input. The high levels of cognitive functioning that can be achieved in mother tongue medium education, but mostly not in dominant-language-medium education, guarantee the best possibility of enhancing children's "human capabilities", rather than curtailing them and depriving children of the choices and freedom that are, according to Sen and others, associated with the necessary capabilities. This is equally important for indigenous and national and immigrated minority children.

For more, see my 2000 book: **Linguistic Genocide in Education - or worldwide diversity and human rights?** 818 pages; Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum; details on my home page.

O-O-O-O

Endangered languages: There's nothing benign about benign neglect

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Despite the appearance of a number of books aimed at making the general public aware of the threats facing many language communities (Nettle and Romaine 2000), I suspect Joshua Fishman (1994: 60) is unfortunately right when he says that "very few people (including most of their own speakers) care about the impending demise of small languages". Here I examine some of the assumptions underlying the notion of what has

been called 'benign neglect' in relation to endangered languages. These assumptions articulate different conceptions about the value of linguistic diversity, and advocates of benign neglect include not only many popular commentators, but also some linguists.

One argument rests on the view that we should accept changes in language use as 'normal'. Extinction is a fact of life. Journalist David Berreby writes in the *New York Times* (2003): "Every day, English, Spanish, Russian and French, along with almost all other living languages are being altered by speakers to suit changing times.... Language evolution is taking place every day; why interfere with it?" He attempts to 'naturalize change' by failing to distinguish change in general from language shift and death. In doing so, he obscures the sense of loss that accompanies the process when change takes the form of language shift.

Another variant of this argument is rooted in the ideology and rhetoric of free market capitalism, in which it is argued that a free, competitive market in any activity should produce an optimal distribution of that activity for all concerned. Language death comes about because people make a free choice to shift to another language. As people are rational beings, who may reasonably be expected to know where their self-interest lies, we, as outside observers, cannot condemn such choices; nor should we intervene in the linguistic market. The decline of some languages is just a side-effect of countless individual choices, and thus is no more or no less morally significant than a change in the price of fish. Kenan Malik (2000), for instance, claims that the reason why most languages die, is "not because they are suppressed, but because native speakers yearn for a better life. Speaking a language such as English, French or Spanish, and discarding traditional habits, can open up new worlds and is often a ticket to modernity."

Although some of these critics acknowledge that the rapid decrease in the number of languages over the past few centuries is connected with European colonization of the world and Western economic expansion, they tend to downplay the power imbalances underlying the material, political and economic domination of most of the world's small language communities. This imbalance has allowed a few metropolitan groups a virtual stranglehold upon global resources and global power. Glossing over undeniable disparities in power underlying the history of language shift allows them to ignore the fact that in many cases, language death occurred not because of an increase in the available choices, but because of a decrease in choice brought about by the exercise of undemocratic power. Such power is almost always wielded by denying access to resources from which communities make their living. Languages can only exist where there is a community to speak and transmit them. A community of people can exist only where there is a viable environment for them to live in, and a means of making a living. Where communities cannot thrive, their languages are in danger. When languages lose their speakers, they die.

The idea that linguistic diversity should be preserved is not a sentimental clinging-on to some idealized past as critics suggest, but part of the promotion of sustainable, appropriate, empowering development. When we lose sight of people and the communities that sustain languages, it becomes easy to argue as a number of critics have that there is no reason to preserve languages 'for their own sake' (Buruma 2001).

Still another argument underpinning the benign neglect position can be paraphrased crudely with the slogan: Keep politics out of science. Berreby (2003) states bluntly, "the study of languages is a scientific enterprise, the effort to preserve them is

not. It is a political question". Similarly, phonetician Peter Ladefoged (1992:809) says that we must be "wary" of arguments for preserving languages "based on political considerations". Linguists should behave with "professional detachment" and "lay out the facts concerning a given linguistic situation." Berreby writes that "the elucidation of language in all its complexity is an enthralling scientific enterprise. But 'saving endangered languages' is not a part of it." Berreby thus wonders "where science ends and politics begins." Posing the question in this way presupposes that science exists in a social vacuum. Unfortunately, there is no politically neutral lens through which one can view what Ladefoged calls "the facts". It is an indisputable fact that Eyak may disappear very soon when its remaining speaker, Marie Smith Jones, dies, but this fact is viewed quite differently by Malik than it is by others such as myself. The arguments in favor of doing something to reverse language death are ultimately about preserving peoples, cultures and habitats.

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O-O-O-O

Media of instruction in African education: The continuing paradox of dependency

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One of the great anomalies of post-colonial (sub-Saharan) Africa is the continuing dependence on languages of former colonizers as media of instruction in African education. Except in a few isolated cases, the question that once preoccupied the British colonial administrators and missionaries as to which language was most suited to learning in early childhood education has virtually disappeared in current African debates among policy makers. African governments have introduced languages of European origin in schools at an earlier phase in the educational pyramid than the European colonizers themselves did. The question that confronts us, then, is why there has been this almost total triumph of the “Euro-language Only” ideology in African education – even at the exclusion of some of the major trans-ethnic languages of the continent.

One possible explanation to this paradox may have to do with comparative linguistic nationalism in Africa. We define linguistic nationalism as that version of nationalism that is concerned about the value of its own language, seeks to defend it against other languages, and encourages its use and enrichment (Williams 1994). In this regard, Mazrui and Tidy have suggested that “there is less linguistic nationalism generally in Africa than has been observed in places like Malaysia, India and Bangladesh” (1984: 299).

One of the factors underlying this relative difference in degree of linguistic nationalism can be attributed to the distinction between oral tradition and the written. The overwhelming majority of sub-Saharan African languages belonged to the oral tradition until the late 19th and early 20th centuries. There is no ancient written literature outside Ethiopia and Islamized city-states of East and West Africa (see Gerard 1981). Without a substantial written tradition, perhaps, linguistic nationalism is slow to emerge, although there are exceptions, such as the linguistic nationalism of the Somaali based mainly on the oral tradition.

The African situation contrasts sharply with that of India, for example. The main Indian languages have a long written tradition, with ancient poets and many philosophical treatises (Singh & Manoharam 1993). Works of literature, written when most of Europe was still in the Dark Ages and maintained and transmitted over the generations by priests and scholars, are invaluable in promoting linguistic pride among the speakers of the language. These help to deepen the propensity for linguistic nationalism.

But the written tradition can include one additional element – sacred literature. Because most African languages were unwritten until relatively recently, those oral languages do not have sacred scripture. Sacred scripture itself provides additional fertilizer for linguistic nationalism. Linguistic nationalism among Arabic speaking people,

for example, has been greatly influenced by the Holy Book, the Qur'an, as well as the great Arab poets of the past (Mazrui & Mazrui 1998: 5-6).

All these are, of course, massive generalizations with a lot of exceptions. Some Ethiopians were literate long before the written word was common currency among Anglo-Saxons in the British Isles. Large sections of Tanzanian population today have shown strong nationalistic attachment to the Swahili language as an additional language (Blommaert 1999). So strong has been their linguistic nationalism, in fact, that translated into government policy it has led some observers of the Tanzanian scene to express the fear that it may put many "smaller" Tanzanian languages under threat of extinction (Mkacha 1994).

When all is said and done, however, it is still true that except in a few cases, sub-Saharan Africans are rarely strong linguistic nationalists. As a result, they are seldom resentful of the hegemony of Euro-languages and tend to demonstrate little resistance to the massive dependence on these languages in their societies at large and in the educational systems in particular. And it is partly through these European languages as media of instruction in African education that structures of intellectual dependency are reproduced and consolidated and of economic dependency reinforced.

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O-O-O-O

When is a minority not a minority? Education in large African languages

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Minority languages are highly politically contingent entities peculiar to nation states. They are brought into being through a particular type of modernist political paradigm that recognizes linguistic and cultural diversity in a framework of nation-state multiculturalism as a way of managing social heterogeneity and the problems of inequitable access to resources many times endemic to such heterogeneity. Central to this paradigm is a conception of political agency in terms of a notion of identity, and an emphasis on linkages between group identity and a particular language. Furthermore, the economic and political disadvantage specific to speakers of 'minority' languages is conceptualized as differential access to a liberal notion of a public sphere separate from the arena of market economy.

One fundamental prerequisite for a viable and productive concept of minority language is the existence of a legal/constitutional framing in terms of linguistic human rights in relation to which minority language claims can be officially formulated, recognized or contested. Another is the availability of means through which varieties can be consecrated as *bona fide* languages with authentic communities of speakers. Techniques of status and corpus planning such as normalization, standardization, orthography development, dictionary development, as well as the production of text books in a variety, transform marginal or invisible language practices into generally acknowledged, legitimate, independent and fully-fledged languages.

Postapartheid South Africa provides a paradigm case of the political productivity of the notion of minority languages within an affirmative system of nation-state multiculturalism. Its new constitution has gone further than many in promoting linguistic human rights to speakers of minority languages through the consolidation of statutory bodies such as the Pan South African Language Board (even though these rights remain exclusively tied to languages indigenous to South Africa only). Debates on language status regularly reach beyond the bounds of the academic or official community, and there is a widespread awareness of the political implications of linguistic minority status for issues of redistribution and equity. The Khoesan are a case in point: their claims to traditional lands hinge largely on the official and popular recognition of historically authentic and legitimate linguistic identity.

However, a political strategy of bare recognition of linguistic minorities as a solution to problems that emanate from linguistic diversity in the first place without other relevant political reform may exacerbate the very conditions it seeks to redress. There are many groupings in today's South Africa which, for historical reasons, have not been recognized as minority languages and that therefore denied the scarce resources in

the field of education, interpretation services, support to language boards etc. that the State makes publicly available to those minorities it *does* acknowledge. Linguistic *invisibilization* is found in the case of the marginalized speakers of Khoé and San languages in the Northern Cape, for example, who have traditionally had to conceive of themselves as speakers of Afrikaans - a politico-historical legacy of linguistic identity that has been transported into the new South Africa. Furthermore, arbitrary and limiting conceptions of language may lead to an enforcement of cultural identities that do not reflect the perceptions of local speakers. The Northern Ndebele are a case in point; although this grouping was once a recognized (minority) language under apartheid—albeit a language without territory—in postapartheid South Africa it has been further reduced to a dialect or variety of Southern Ndebele. In both cases, traditional ethnolinguistic structures and mythologies constituted through colonialism and apartheid reproduce traditional power hierarchies so that those languages furthest from centers of power are not recognized as autonomous systems in their own right.

Most importantly, however, is that the political strategies of multiculturalism presuppose a politics of language of a particular type. This is one where textured and stratified diversity at the local level is refigured on the public arena in terms of minority and majority languages competing over scarce resources. Minority languages become the political tools by means of which governments address remediation at the level of the nation-state. The contingent and politically specific nature of minority languages becomes clear when alternative possibilities for the pursuance of a more equitable politics of recognition and redistribution are considered that go beyond multicultural affirmation of minority status *per se*.

Firstly, one motivation for entertaining the idea of minority language is as a means to mediate between the pull of assimilation on official linguistic markets and the push of minority strivings for recognition. However, the fact that all civil society expression must take place on a single Habermasian public arena tends to exacerbate tensions between competing groups rather than resolve them. Many speakers complain of the loss of local voice—or its misrepresentation—when local linguistic resources are embedded in the symbolic economies of the official public sphere. There is clearly a need to acknowledge competing arenas to the official that may be constructed around distinct orders of linguistic and communicative indexicality; on such arenas, local voices may equal ‘the ‘subaltern counterpublics’ described by Fraser (1989), hosting resistant and alternative expressions. Multiple public arenas in this sense can comprise a form of local response to the exclusionary and assimilatory nature of civil society by providing “important spaces both for withdrawal from civil society and also for engagement” (Stychin, 2001: 288). One concrete example of this is the community based mother-tongue program developed by GTZ in Ghana, where multiple agents such as Lufthansa, Nestlé and local publishing houses are attempting to produce language services in parallel spheres of civil society that have not officially been provided—or even approved—by the government. This has the advantage that recognition of voices from subalternity such as women, children and people living with AIDS are heard, thereby also expanding the parameters of local democracy and participation. In other words, the notion of minority language loses some of its appeal when the issues it could address are better dealt with in existing multiple and hierarchically layered and contested public spheres for routine management of conflicts of interest.

Secondly, the idea of multiple spheres with more fluid boundaries is in line with the postliberal rejection of a single unitary subject or identity. Rather than understanding political agency in terms of identity, as is the case with a liberal notion of citizenship, a postliberal stance on citizenship highlights the advantage of a politics of *affinity* based on transient *identifications*, a broad coalition, exploring commonalities in and of action, where the use of avenues of commonality may also enhance respect for diversity (Mouffe, 1993). These identifications and alliances may comprise movements that cross cut issues of language, *per se* - although ever relevant to language - and may exert a strong democratic pressure on official markets. The Weyeyi of Botswana, for example, have formed the Kamanakkao Association which addresses the sociocultural needs of the Weyeyi and the cultivation of their language, Shiyeyi, by purposively engaging with a broad spectrum of political issues that serve to unite many linguistic constituencies behind a common rallying cause. One important strategy inaugurated by the association has been to challenge the constitutionality of the Chieftenship and Tribal Territory Acts, a challenge that will have 'far reaching implications for the future of minority language and cultures in Botswana' (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2000: 227).

These two examples show how a *polycentric* solution to social equity, where mutually reinforcing institutions that combine autonomy at local levels (subaltern publics) with national - state - coordination at other levels (a transformative politics of affinity) carries implications for the deconstruction of the notion of minority language. Furthermore, this suggests that the main problem confronting education in large African languages is in reality 'one of social structure' (Robinson, 1996: 41), and that mother tongue education needs to be part of a general emancipatory social context, where affirmations of diversity in the form of local knowledge structures, systems of democratic governance and systems of language might find their appropriate sociopolitical place in a regional and national context. A notion of *linguistic citizenship* (Stroud, 2001) where language is conceived as a site of struggle over contesting meanings and representations of language and social life may serve as a conceptual rallying point in this endeavor.

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LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION SUB-SECTORS

Language in adult basic education and in higher education

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In Africa as elsewhere, it has been noticed that local languages are sometimes used in adult basic education (adult literacy) but that local languages are rarely used in higher education. Why, it is asked, cannot local languages be used in higher education, especially in circumstances where the use of one of the major international languages (French, English, Spanish etc) frequently puts young students at a disadvantage? If adults and children learn more securely and faster when they use one of their basic languages, why is it that students in colleges and universities are required to learn in a language which is not their own and moreover one in which they are not always proficient?

The first thing to say is that the two situations are quite different, so that the analogy does not hold for a moment. But that answer does not remove the question: what language(s) should be used in adult basic education and what language(s) should be used in higher education?

As soon as the issue is posed like this, then it becomes clear that the answer is tied up with issues of power. For who decides the answer to these questions? On what basis is the decision made? Is it simply a pragmatic matter, dependent on instrumental considerations such as the lack of textbooks in varied languages or the difficulty of teaching a diverse group of students coming from many different language backgrounds and with varying facility in an international language? Does it reflect issues about the 'community of practice' which forms the university or college (i.e. the staff recruited have been selected on the basis of their proficiency in the standard language as much as for their academic specialism)? What is the aim of higher education - is it to make all the students as like the lecturer or professor as possible or to encourage each of them to be independent lifelong problem-solvers?

Part of the problem is that the issue is normally seen from a Western monolingual position. It is assumed that the question to decide is what language (singular) should be used in education. But the norm throughout the world is multi-lingualism: we monolingualists are the rarity! Yet we presume to set the agenda and try to dictate the answers. Surely in multi-lingual contexts, all education should be multi-lingual?

Language for adult literacy

The debate about which language should be used for adult literacy has been conducted from the mono-lingual position for many years. The issue is not simple. In

situations where many different languages are being used for everyday communication, many different policies have been adopted. For one thing, some languages have no written texts; they may not even have been codified. But even if they have been scripted, it is often argued that there is little in the way of appropriate texts for the adult literacy learners to use.

Asking the providers: Different languages are endowed with different power. What literacies exist in local languages are often felt by the (national) providers to be too vernacular to be real 'education'. As a former Minister of Education in Antigua told us when discussing this issue, "We cannot provide literacy in creole for it is not a real language. After all, I speak creole to my servant but English here in the office". In such cases, one answer is to develop new texts in the local languages (in this case, kweyol or patois), to develop a new culture based on a written literature of stories and poetry. In West Africa, some donors felt the urge to promote local languages by writing down in a dominant literacy form the traditional stories passed on and adapted through many generations by oral communication, and to use these for literacy learning. But the decision-makers in both of these cases have been non-governmental agencies, moved by their desire to challenge the hegemony of the dominant culture as promoted by government and formal education.

When the government is involved, there are other issues. For one thing, most governments seek to diminish differences of culture within their national borders in the search for national identity and communal harmony. It is felt that a common language will help with nation building. Secondly, most governments see the purpose of encouraging their populations to learn literacy as being to receive the government's messages. It is true that increasingly, national governments are allowing and in some cases encouraging broadcasting agencies to use local languages for part of their air time; and a few are promoting local indigenous languages in order to prevent them being lost. But on the whole, governments use a limited number of national languages when dealing with adults learning literacy skills. They produce most of their texts in a small range of languages. Literacy for such providers is something special, something to be controlled. It dictates what can be read and how it can be read; it directs what can be written and in what form. And it ignores the more informal literacies or the religious literacies which already exist, passing these off (if they are recognised at all) as being of little interest or value.

And there are practical issues involved. For example, compiling, printing and distributing literacy learning materials in a limited number of nationally recognised languages is easier than preparing texts in many different languages. And then there are the literacy instructors (facilitators) whose language as well as their teaching skills and experience are limited. Indeed, some (perhaps many) are being asked to teach literacy in a standardised language when they are more proficient in the local language.

Asking the literacy learners: When however we ask the literacy learners what language they wish to learn literacy in, we get a confused babble of sound. Some say the local language; some say one of the national languages; some (it seems to be an increasing number) ask for one of the international languages, especially English.

One of the arguments against agreeing to provide literacy in a non-local language is that there is a confusion here between learning a language and learning literacy in a language which is already known. When adults ask to learn literacy in English (or some

other international language), they are really asking to learn *both* the language *and* literacy in that language. But (it is argued) learning literacy in a language which has already been mastered is quite different from learning a new language and literacy at the same time, and that may be too much for most adult literacy learners.

This is a powerful argument; but since one of the basic tenets of adult learning is that adults will learn quickly and effectively what they really want to learn, it may well be that some adults can cope with learning both a language and literacy skills in that language at the same time. And in any case, many of those who ask for the standardised language literacy already know something of the language they desire.

And that same adult education principle - that adults are voluntary learners and learn what they want when they want and for as long as they want - provides one of the keys to the disparity of answers given when participants are asked in what language they wish to learn their literacy skills. Here we come up against the varied motivations for learning literacy. (I am not talking here about motivations for attending literacy classes; these are often different from motivations to learn literacy skills, such as meeting with others to discuss common interests, gaining information from outside agencies, developing economic-related skills for sustainable livelihoods, gaining access to credit or other resources - none of which need literacy skills). But the range of motivations for learning literacy skills are wide, and the different purposes lead to different answers in relation to language.

I have elsewhere (Rogers 2004) divided such motivations into four main groups.

- a) Some see a **symbolic** purpose in literacy; they wish to join the literate class. The identity they have been encouraged to build for themselves includes a major element of 'being illiterate', and they wish to break free from this. It is a matter of moving from the margins to the core of society, of exclusion and inclusion, of being empowered. It is an issue of recreating their self-identity. It may only stretch in some cases as far as being able to sign their names - that will give them the new confidence that they are no longer among the 'illiterate'. But most will seek to be able to demonstrate that they are able to cope with others in some of the acknowledged literacy practices which society demands of a 'literate' person. So for them, *the language they wish to learn is that of the core, one of the languages of power.*
- b) Some see in literacy an **opportunity** for advancement. This is a kind of status issue as with the former group, but there is a more instrumental element in it. These literacy learners need to demonstrate their literacy skills to obtain a driving licence, to gain promotion, to obtain a loan etc. Like the first group, they have few plans actually to **use** their literacy skills. So for them, *the language of literacy may be less important*, provided they can demonstrate their competence adequately to obtain the rewards they seek.
- c) Some seek a much more **instrumental** purpose in literacy learning. They wish to read certain texts, to write certain texts - letters, accounts, or work-related, cultural, religious or political texts etc. For them, the issue of language is apparently straightforward - they wish to learn *the language related to the literacy practices* they wish to engage in.

At first glance, this is relatively simple. It will be the language(s) in which newspapers are published and magazines are issued, the language(s) which government and commercial agencies use, and so on. But a careful study of existing texts within any community shows a much more complicated situation. Medicines and cigarette packets, wrappings for many prepacked goods use many different languages, symbols and means of communication. One language is transliterated into another script. Texts are frequently in multiple languages: in South Africa, one project with a group of literacy learners who felt the need to write and send letters used two languages for learning literacy at the same time, the local language for the letter itself and English for the address.

- d) Finally, there are some adults (it would seem relatively few and these much younger adults) who wish to learn literacy as a **basic skill** to enable them to participate in further forms of schooling, to advance, to obtain qualifications. So for them the language issue is again relatively simple - they feel the need for *the language of schooling*.

All of which results in a variety of understandings and a variety of answers to the question, which language(s) shall we use for adults learning literacy? Unfortunately, literacy learners are too rarely asked and even less frequently allowed to make the decision despite the rhetoric that adult learning programmes are not (or should not be) curriculum-led but ought to meet the immediate needs and demands of the individual groups of literacy learners - unlike formal education.

Higher education

Which brings us back to higher education. Clearly many students, coming out of an expanding and therefore over-stretched and inadequately resourced secondary school system in many countries are grossly disadvantaged by the requirement to be proficient in an international language; so why cannot local languages be used for higher education? The spread of distance and open learning methodologies has also raised the issue to a fever pitch.

Others will be able to provide more cogent reasons than I can (e.g. the fact that formal higher education is curriculum-led; e.g. the lack of textbooks in local languages; e.g. the induction of higher education students into the international world of scholarship, not just through the world-wide web but through international literature in book and journal form; e.g. the role model nature of the relationship between student and academic staff of the higher education institution, etc) for refusing to adapt course material into a variety of local languages. But, as with adult literacy, we may be able to gain some guidance towards an answer by asking how the knowledge and skills learned through higher education will be used *after* the learning process. In what language(s) will the practice of law, architecture, medicine, teaching, governance, engineering etc be undertaken? What language(s) will post-student careers be conducted?

If this has any validity, it should perhaps raise the issue that language(s) per se should be an element in every higher education curriculum; that the ability to express oneself in the appropriate form, both orally and in writing, in all the required languages of the context should be as much a skill acquired during higher education as the ability to read texts, to write essays, to design what has to be designed, to solve whatever

problems need to be resolved in order to complete the course satisfactorily. Academic literacies have been attracting a lot of attention recently; perhaps instead of studying such literacy practices, higher education institutions might seek ways to help students (and staff) to engage in these more effectively.

And if higher education remains - for whatever reasons - wedded to one or other international or standardised language, what is wrong with bridging courses?

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O-O-O-O

Reflections on language, literacy and NFE

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Today, we have the capacity, the resources to eradicate the poverty striking more than two third of the 6.3 billion people living in the world. Today, we have the knowledge, the technology the know-how and the resources to develop and use all the close to 6,000 languages of the world. In the first case the question is why is it not done and how can this be tolerated unless this situation is thought to be acceptable or necessary. In the second case while some are recommending promoting all languages, others are questioning its necessity, yet others are strictly rejecting and opposing the promotion of local languages.

Do you want the interest of your kids or the promotion of your languages and cultures? This is how bluntly and provocatively the issue is sometimes raised. Although the technology, knowledge and resources are at hands, there are two irreducible fighting camps facing each other on this question. It is argued by some that investing in small 'unproductive' languages is a waste of time and resources. Others assert that a deliberate destruction of languages is organized within a strategy of mental manipulation, imposing monolingualism as a norm whereas multilingualism is the normality.

The first group claims that it is neither necessary nor desirable to promote local languages especially the languages of ethnic minority groups. The second insists that it is not only a right but a necessity to promote education of all types in the languages

used by the people. Both camps have identified and/or engineered evidence to support their stands. How are these issues dealt within non-formal settings and in adult education? Are their noticeable differences with policies and approaches in formal systems? Where holistic and integrated policies exist and a lifelong learning process is advocated, there is no marked difference established between formal and non-formal systems when it comes to the language of instruction even in case of multiplicity of languages. The languages policy is designed to cater for situations and meet learning needs and demands in both formal and non-formal systems. It addresses school and out-of-school contexts.

The contribution of language to education or how education is reinforcing the power of the elite, the dominant group or the main stream is the central issue. In the name of unity, of cohesion (national and social) and of efficiency a selection is operated and choices made that favor certain languages at the expenses of others. These trends are reinforced by a second layer of distinction established between formal and non-formal provision, between formal schooling and adult learning.

In adult education and non-formal education (NFE), learner characteristics are key and learner-centred approaches are advocated more and more. In the name of these principles a tolerance and openness to local languages is observed. In fact, this is used as another distinction or mark of difference. Accepting the use of local language will make it difficult to establish equivalency and will prevent the recognition of learning acquired through local languages in adult education and NFE approaches while closing the schools and more prestigious formal offers, thus creating additional barriers and reinforcing the discrimination these modalities are subjected to.

The direct imposition of an education system or a particular learning modality in a foreign language on an indigenous, traditional culture dramatically undermines both the existing social organization and modes of thought. Proposed change must respect existing forms of social organization, local knowledge, and local language, and build on rather than replace them.

Colonialism had a more complex impact on the colonized cultures. In some cases, such as the Philippines, Africa, and Central America, existing indigenous scripts were summarily replaced by Roman scripts, rendering significant parts of the population illiterate in the new script. At the same time the imposed scripts brought with them bureaucratic structures including organization of knowledge, economy, and law which, while instrumental to nation building, were often detrimental to indigenous culture. In other regions such as sub-Saharan Africa there was no previous literate tradition, the colonial language and colonial bureaucratic structures tended to be propagated, for reasons of monopolizing power, but in the name of unity or laudable goals to broker among competing local languages and ethnic groups.

The domination and imposition of discriminatory education practices is not created only by contact with a foreign, colonial language. Even within national boundaries, within sub-national entities and local communities themselves, similar problems occur. In all these complex linguistic ecologies, simple literacy acquisition, as well as more comprehensive and advanced education and training require people to overcome and domesticate the existing layers of social practice and sometimes require members of these communities to learn multiple languages and literacies.

Learning to be literate and learning to acquire knowledge, skills and abilities in a second, international language often at the expense of an indigenous vernacular language is one of the high stakes involved in building a learning society in dense multilingual settings. On the opposite side, others insist that local, indigenous languages are relevant and sustainable by themselves and that it is inappropriate, damaging, and pretentious to assume automatically that every person in the world needs access to an international language in order to be able to be economically productive, socially relevant and to become an inclusive and reflective citizen.

Often real conflict is not between two scientific languages, two objective approaches but between multilingualism and monolingualism in education and literacy. What is required is recognition of multilayered communication in different languages analogous to the multi-code handling of a specific language for different social, cultural, and occupational purposes.

The most positive and constructive policy recommendation within such a perspective is based on principles of inclusivity and integration, valuing both the identity formation provided by local languages and at the same time participation in mainstream education practices. These are the alternatives to separation and ghettoization. This implies creating an environment in which the learner knows and reads his or her own text, and writes about his or her own experience as well as those of others, thus allowing people to recognize their own mother tongue as a language of identity, thought, and instruction. Such an approach offers an alternative to the new common barriers that block cultural and linguistic continuity, and that increasingly push minorities into a separate, artificial existence. If literacy and education should transcend local language, it should at the same time start with and in local languages.

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Why some Africans assume that higher education cannot be dealt with in a local language

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Language is the symbol of the identity of a people, apart from its primary role as a medium of communication, transmission of culture and of socialization. The

importance of a language is measured not so much by its linguistic root or the richness of its vocabulary but more by the number of people who speak, write, read and use it.

Thus the importance of Chinese is measured by the numerical strength of its close to 2 billion users. In the same vein, the English Language gets its reputation, not only from its broad base of users in the Commonwealth (with 1.2 billion alone in India), but also because of the fact that English is the language of science, technology and commerce.

German, Japanese, Russian, Arabic and other languages have strong scientific and technological implications for world trade but the restrictions imposed by geography and demographic variables seem to restrict their importance at the international level.

I am not a language expert, so I cannot dwell further on this analysis. Rather, I would like to move on to address the case of the unsuitability of an African language in higher education.

Africa is a linguistic and cultural quilt. A not insignificant number of conflicts on the continent can be traced to language, and to a considerable extent, religion. If African languages could promote higher education development in Africa, the continent's, "Big Brother", Nigeria, would have been its first victor with its large concentrations of Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo. And if riches in African languages were a development engine, Cameroon, which prides itself as "Africa in miniature" with 270 languages and dialects would have been a development giant. But this is not the case for the following reasons:

1. The most universally shared values across nations and across cultures are development, happiness, freedom and self-fulfillment;
2. The existential angst that comes with being wealthy and famous is most easily cultivated through education and the mastery of an international language as evidenced by the success of the well-known dotcomers (Beijing Review, 2001:ii);
3. The prominent European Languages (English, French, Spanish, German etc) dominate international science, technology, commerce, trade and technology;
4. Globalisation, which is tearing down geographical boundaries, neutralizing economic and cultural identities, feeds on the power, science and technology (including internet and international communication) which themselves are nourished by a thorough mastery of the English Language. Yet the survival of nations in today's world depends on the nation's English language capability and its capacity in science and technology.

Higher Education is the medium for developing all of the above capabilities, for generating and developing knowledge and the development of a national identity. Unfortunately, many African languages do not have the same strong and solid base as the dominant European languages for the development of science and technology. Instead, they tend to encourage a value system that reinforces collective-community values rather than the individualistic-mercantile-power driven ethos of science, technology, globalisation and competitiveness.

The growing importance of “outsourcing” as a high job creator and multiplier in developing countries will not be possible if the host countries did not master the English language, science and technology. Bill Gates, the world’s richest man, and Mr. Azim, India’s wealthiest man, owe their fame to a thorough mastery of English and exploitation of the opportunities offered by IT. It will take Africa a million years to get to those heights with an African language.

Therefore, local languages may be used to build national identity, patriotism, a sense of belonging and enhance the educational and cultural system of a nation. This would provide the springboard for the internalization of the dominant international values so indispensable in the Technology Age for growth, survival and sustainability.

Such a pragmatic approach is necessary for overcoming poverty (Nji, 2004), through high quality institutional developments (World Bank, 1998), the development and sharing of knowledge for sustainable development (Wieczorek-Zeul, 2000), through solid market economies (Kohler, 1998; Kappel, 1998).

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Research and Policy on Language in Education in Africa

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The last century saw a stream of reports from Africa all advocating a central role for African languages in primary education. The twenty first century gives every

indication that the stream will continue to flow. And yet despite rhetoric and resolutions, the dominance of ex-colonial languages persists through out the continent (Tanzania being among the notable exceptions). The arguments in favour of exoglossic languages – unity and development - are well known, together the choice of the state education system, especially the primary school, as the instrument that would facilitate this unification.

In the decades after independence, however, it has become notorious that while the use of English (and other exoglossic languages, which will from this point be subsumed by “English”) in education may have masked tension between language groups, it has contributed to division between those who have adequate access to English, and those who do not. Far from being a source of unity, the use of exoglossic languages in education has contributed to national disunity throughout the continent, with rural students particularly, and especially rural girls, being disadvantaged. Likewise, the hopes that English would lead to economic development in Africa, have, with few exceptions, also failed to materialise. Of course, blame cannot be laid exclusively at the door of the English-dominated education system. Problems in accumulating economic capital are severe in Africa, while the dearth of social capital (in short, institutions and individuals committed to the welfare of their fellows) is a significant factor in inhibiting development. Despite such weaknesses, however, it is almost universally accepted that human capital is a crucially necessary condition for development and that this depends on effective education.

The weight of evidence suggests - unsurprisingly – that effective education, in terms of adequate literacy and numeracy skills, are more easily acquired in a language with which learners are familiar (Bamgbose, 1991; Eisemon et al. 1989; Williams, 1996). Conversely using an unfamiliar language detracts from academic achievement (Nkamba & Kanyika, 1998; Machingaidze et al., 1998). In short, it is abundantly clear that education in a language that few learners, and not all teachers, have mastery of, detracts from quality, and compounds the other problems of economically impoverished contexts. Apart from mastery of basic literacy, however, education must also imply the cognitive engagement of the students with what is being taught. Unfortunately for many African primary schoolchildren, formal education amounts to an incomprehensible daily routine of choral repetition and copying from the blackboard. The ubiquitous rhetoric of “child centred education” is vacuous where the child’s language – the very tool which allows one to “centre” on the child - is set aside; the concern with “access to schooling” is likewise misguided when the schooling to be accessed is without meaning.

On the above-mentioned motivations for the language education policies in Africa, and their deleterious results, there is little disagreement. The remedies however, are not at all apparent, although the broad pathways are clear: it would seem that in primary schools there is a need either for more reliance on local languages, or for better teaching and learning of English. A rational combination of both remedies offers the most realistic way forward: more reliance on local languages is essential. Critics claim this would result in an unwieldy number of languages being used, but language demography suggests that dominant local languages are emerging as local *linguae francae*. The number of such “languages of internal communication” is manageable, and indeed education could serve to disseminate and standardise them, thus assisting seemingly inevitable sociolinguistic developments.

There are faint indications that more attention is being given to local languages: in Zambia, for example, it is reported that initial literacy for the first two years is being taught in one of the seven “officially recognised” local languages as a result of DFID-funded research. However, lack of political will in the implementation of pro-local language policies remains widespread throughout Africa from Nigeria, to Kenya, to South Africa. In Rwanda, it would seem priority is being given to English and French, rather than the population’s common language, Kinyarwanda, while Malawi is said to be considering reducing the role of the widely-spoken national language, ChiChewa, as a medium of instruction at primary level in favour of English.

While those in English-speaking donor agencies concerned with education may deplore the dominance of English as a medium of instruction, especially at primary level, they tend, in public pronouncements, to respect the national government’s decision. A further factor in this reticence may be that much donor education work is dominated by educationists with a background in policy and planning, rather than language.

As regards amelioration in teaching English, many have claimed that knowing some English is an indispensable part of modern education. But granting such a claim is a far cry from advocating that English be used as a medium of instruction throughout the education system. We know from many European and Asian countries that good standards of English may be obtained through effectively teaching it as a subject; furthermore tests have revealed no difference between Malawian primary school children who had four years of English as a subject, and Zambian children who had four years of English as a medium of instruction (Williams, 1998), suggesting that in practice nothing may be gained through using English as a medium.

While it would be rash to generalise, I would suggest that effective teaching of English as a subject in African primary school contexts is a project which merits renewed attention, and which, properly addressed, might assuage the fears of parents who worry lest their children fail to master this potential passport to a white-collar job. Effective teaching of English as a subject would also prepare the minority of students who progress to secondary school for English as medium of instruction. However, one cannot overemphasise that such English teaching would have to be “effective”: much research (e.g. Chick, 1992; Luckett, 1994) suggests that inadequate English at the point of transition from local language to English as a medium of instruction is a massive obstacle to students’ subsequent education.

However, it remains the case that even if there are difficulties at transition points, the policy of restricting English to the role of subject would do less damage to primary school children than using it as a medium of instruction, for students lacking proficiency in it are disadvantaged right across the curriculum and throughout their primary education, while their weakness in English, irrespective of their other talents, effectively excludes them from post-primary education.

Beyond question, the goal of appropriate language policies for effective education is worth pursuing, and while it does not behove outsiders to be too glib in their pronouncements, it is obvious to insiders and outsiders that current policies of over-reliance on exoglossic languages are failing individuals, their communities and their countries in Africa. At the very least, those who wish to improve education in Africa should take cognisance of research based on present classroom realities, and ask

themselves not what is happening, but what is not happening in these classrooms, and why.

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LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION: THE AGENCY POSITION

Education in a multicultural world: UNESCO's position

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Education in many countries of the world takes place in multilingual contexts. Most plurilingual societies have developed an *ethos* which balances and respects the use of different languages in daily life. From the perspective of these societies and of the language communities themselves, multilingualism is more a way of life than a problem to be solved. The challenge is for education systems to adapt to these complex realities and provide a quality education which takes into consideration learners' needs, while balancing these at the same time with social, cultural and political demands. While uniform solutions for plural societies may be both administratively and managerially simpler, they disregard the risks involved both in terms of learning achievement and loss of linguistic and cultural diversity.

The status and role of languages internationally have been the subject of numerous declarations, recommendations and agreements. Some of these are particularly relevant to the discussion on language and education. The discussion on language may be placed within a framework of United Nations agreements and standard-setting instruments, as well as mandates of UNESCO's mission at international level, and declarations and recommendations emanating from inter-governmental conferences as well. Thus there is broad international agreement on the issue of language and its importance in the education system.

Certain basic guiding principles have been common to all these documents, agreements and recommendations produced through the years of UNESCO's mandate for action in this field. These have led us to produce a set of guidelines which represent the organisation's current approach to language and education in the twenty-first century, and which should serve to state the position of the international community in its various member states. These guidelines are entirely based on a review of previous declarations and recommendations and represent the diversity of thinking on this complex and challenging issue. The guidelines are summed up in three basic principles:

- UNESCO supports *mother tongue instruction* as a means of improving education quality by building upon the knowledge and experience of the learners and teachers.
- UNESCO supports *bilingual and/or multilingual education* at all levels of education as a means of promoting both social and gender equality and as a key element of linguistically diverse societies.

- UNESCO supports language as an essential component of *inter-cultural education* in order to encourage understanding between different population groups and ensure respect for fundamental rights.

The complete text of this UNESCO position paper may be found online, at <http://www.unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001297/129728e.pdf>.

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Language policy for successful multilingual education: What does it take?

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Most of the world agrees that “Education for All” is a good and necessary goal. The question is, can education be for “all” when it is packaged in a language that some learners neither speak nor understand? This is the situation faced by many ethnic minority children as they enter formal education systems throughout the world. In spite of scattered efforts to improve educational opportunities for all learners, language and education policies and/or practices remain heavily stacked in favor of students from majority societies who speak majority languages.

Some governments expressly forbid the use of minority languages in the formal education system. Others simply ignore their presence, or call them dialects, and claim that majority language education is appropriate for everyone. With the increasing awareness of the educational rights of ethnic minority peoples, a more common problem now is the mismatch between language and education policies and practices; that is, policies allow for the use of minority languages in school but provide no support for, and even hinder, successful implementation of multilingual education (MLE) programs. Below I describe several of the more common of these mismatch problems and suggest actions that would enhance congruence between policy and practice.

Problem 1: MLE policy in place but no support for implementation. The assumption in this case is that, if minority communities want to use their languages in the classroom, they should be willing to develop their own curriculum, produce their own materials, train their own teachers, monitor and evaluate their own programs, provide their own funding and, at the appropriate time, ensure that their learners can merge successfully into the majority language system. Given that ethnic minority communities are usually among the most socioeconomically marginalized and poorly educated sectors of the population, this expectation is unrealistic, at best.

Suggested action: Successful MLE programs require support from a variety of agencies—government departments, universities and research institutes, international and local NGOs, donor organizations, local schools and the minority communities themselves. This kind of multi-agency collaboration is an important feature of programs that have been sustained over time in diverse settings. In Papua New Guinea, for example, over 300 of the country's 800-plus languages have been incorporated into the formal education system, supported by local, national and international agencies.

Problem 2: MLE policy in place but no provision for local input in developing curriculum. The need to develop curriculum appropriate to diverse languages and cultural settings is often cited as the reason why MLE “can't be done.” The common solution is to translate the majority language curriculum into selected minority languages or simply to give minority teachers the regular curriculum and tell them to translate it themselves. While learners may understand the language used in their lessons, the content remains mostly alien to them. As one learner put it, “I feel lost in my own forest.”

Suggested action: The strength of strong MLE programs is that they build on the knowledge and experience that learners bring to the classroom. Lessons relate to people, places and activities that are culturally near to the learners, especially in early grades. Curriculum development, therefore, should be a collaborative effort between the center and the local communities. Centrally produced attainment targets ensure that students who begin their education in a variety of languages are at roughly the same point when they move into mainstream classes. A centrally produced but flexible curriculum framework helps local teachers organize their instructional plans but gives them freedom to insert local knowledge and culturally familiar content into the lessons. Centrally supported monitoring and evaluation that values input from local MLE teachers provides information for strengthening the curriculum and builds confidence at the local level.

Problem 3: MLE policy in place but too little time allowed in the learners' first language. Many education planners and policy-makers, as well as parents, still perceive minority languages as impediments to successful acquisition of the majority language. The “logic” of “time-on-task” persists in spite of extensive research documenting the benefits of building a strong foundation in the learners' first language while also acquiring, and learning in, a second language (see, for example, Thomas & Collier, 1997, 2002). That misconception leads to an emphasis on moving learners out of their first language (L1) as quickly as possible and into the majority language. The result is that many children fail to acquire academic competence in either language.

Suggested action: Those committed to and knowledgeable about MLE need to raise awareness among policy makers, education officials and parents about the purposes and benefits of strong (extended) MLE programs. This can be done by helping them understand the process by which children acquire academic competence in a second language; disseminating the results of credible research studies of MLE programs elsewhere; and implementing longitudinal research studies of programs in the South so that the impact of well-planned programs can be established beyond Europe and North America.

Problem 4: MLE policy in place but few L1 speakers with teacher qualifications. In an educational catch-22, while effective L1 teachers are a key to successful MLE programs, the poor quality of education in ethnic minority communities has resulted in a

dearth of L1 speakers with the professional qualifications required for teaching in the formal education system.

Suggested action: Practice has shown that L1 speakers who are not professionally trained but have achieved a certain level of education (ideally, at least Grade 10) can be equipped as effective teachers for the minority language component of MLE classes provided they have access to easy-to-use instructional materials with content that is familiar and relevant to their own and their learners' lives; are provided with regular in-service training to complement thorough pre-service training and practice; and receive regular and supportive supervision. In many cases, these paraprofessional L1 teachers are able to implement interactive learning activities better than their professional counterparts because they do not have to unlearn the pedagogical traditions, instilled in many teacher training institutions, that oppose learner-centered instruction.

In summary, to develop successful multilingual education programs it takes enlightened policies, innovative practices and collaboration among multiples stakeholders at local, national and international level. Fortunately, collaboration is what many ethnic minority communities do best. The critical question is thus: How will the majority community respond?

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Why does Japan/JICA not become involved with language policy in international cooperation?

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Japan has rarely discussed language policy in the context of its development assistance. One of the reasons might be that the country does not like to touch and intervene in such a sensitive political matter. This is particularly because Japan has bitter legacy of forcing the people of some Asian countries to learn to speak the Japanese language during the colonial period. Japan is still criticized for such colonial acts. Consequently, Japanese assistance deliberately did not extend to primary-level education such as Grade 1-3 where the language issue is more crucial. Instead, Japan increasingly started providing assistance to secondary science education in developing countries in the 1990s, because it was considered that science education is politically and culturally “neutral”. The other interpretation could be that there is no Japanese experience of language issues which are relevant to developing countries and therefore there was no way of providing technical cooperation.

Although Japan is not interested in the politics of language instruction, many Japanese who have been involved in the projects in African countries have realized the difficulty of learning science and mathematics in English, which is not the mother tongue. In this regard, Japan may have an advantage over English-speaking countries when they provide assistance in science education, since the Japanese language is linguistically quite different from European languages and the Japanese can more easily understand the difficulty of learning science for African pupils. Some of the Japanese science educationalists, who have been working in Kenya, find that the ways Kenyan pupils understand and conceptualize scientific ideas are unique and different from those in the countries where the medium of instruction is identical with the mother tongue.

The Japanese are not trying to promote either the first or the second language as a medium of instruction, but are attempting to explore more child-centered and child-friendly teaching based on such a reality; for many pupils the medium of instruction is different from their mother tongue. Generally, Japan does not like to become involved with political matters such as a language issue and tends to take a pragmatic approach; on the other hand, many other countries may prefer to question or discuss political issues and like to have an impact on policy development. In addition, the reason why Japan cannot be critical about using English as a medium of instruction may be partly explained by the fact that the Japanese government is now serious about enhancing English competency among the Japanese pupils in this era of internationalization.

Language, EFA and the MDGs: What's the connection?

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Both the Education for All (EFA) movement and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) aim to increase political momentum towards improvements in the quality of life and in access to education. In education and in broader development respectively, they constitute frameworks for international cooperation. In education, two further initiatives are relevant: the UN Literacy Decade (UNLD, 2003-2012) and the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD, 2005-2014). All these give special emphasis to vulnerable and marginalised groups and promote communication, effective learning, quality, participation and access, dialogue, grassroots perspectives. For multilingual situations, the need for appropriate, multilingual policies, with a place for the local language, is almost self-evident. How is that expressed?

- The EFA *Dakar Framework for Action*¹ identifies language as a barrier to access to schooling, and the use of the local language as a key component of learning quality and relevance. It recommends bilingual education for ethnic minorities and respect of their linguistic identities. These references are scattered throughout the text – giving no indication of the systemic implications of multilingual approaches.
- The MDGs² as such do not mention language issues. However, the draft Interim Report of the Millennium Project Task Force on Primary Education notes that the ethno-linguistic diversity of minority and indigenous groups is a barrier to primary education and adult literacy that must be addressed.
- The UNLD³ gives stronger emphasis to language issues – as part of literacy policy formulation, programme design, capacity-building and research, in the context of enhancing relevance and community participation.
- The DESD⁴ highlights language as an important aspect of cultural diversity, an expression of local knowledge and a factor in relevant and effective learning. The

¹¹ http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/ed_for_all/dakfram_eng.shtml

² <http://www.undp.org/mdg/abcs.html>

³ http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=12013&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

⁴ http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=27234&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

implication is that sustainable development implies full respect for local contexts and communication patterns.

- UNESCO's clear statement of three principles of multilingual education⁵, with their strong endorsement of use of local languages, has yet to find its way into international fora. In the international community, UNESCO is the only agency able to advocate vigorously for such a position, and it should do so.

What does this add up to? The closer the debate gets to political agendas and concerted action the less languages appear to figure in the plans: so language is hardly mentioned in the debates around the implementation of EFA (EFA Working Group⁶, EFA High-Level Group⁷) and has no profile as a priority in funding initiatives, for example, in the indicative framework of the Fast Track Initiative⁸. In other words, the thinkers and dreamers are free to highlight the importance of the issue, the educationalists, including UNESCO, regularly argue for the justification of using local languages from a pedagogical and a rights point of view as well as for relevance and quality, but these are given merely passing assent by policy-makers, planners and funders.

Issues of language, while acknowledged on paper as important, are not therefore thought through with respect to how international initiatives may be realised. Arguments are often accepted in principle, but the implications for ways of doing education and development are not elaborated, perhaps because they are so far-reaching. For example, consistent attempts to use local languages within a multilingual approach in education and development communication would mean, among other things, rethinking teacher training and deployment, new curricula, restructuring governance, validation of local knowledge and knowledge-makers, officials and change agents learning new languages well, genuine two-way communication... and of course a shift in the balance of power.

The irony is that the over-arching goals of participatory development and quality education require these kinds of changes, but language issues are not taken seriously in spite of clear reasons on the ground why they should be. Excuses are made about there being too many languages or it being too expensive to develop them, even though there are situations and methods which show ways forward.

Thus the daily use of languages by ordinary people, and particularly by the poor, is considered a minor issue of implementation, and perhaps one that will go away if we wait long enough. Instead of recognising and working with the important connections between language, development and education, implied in these international initiatives, a concern for short-term results and macro-level outcomes relegates the use of local languages, in practice if not in rhetoric, to the realm of the desirable but not possible. It is no wonder that international initiatives have such little popular relevance or ownership.

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⁵ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001297/129728e.pdf>

⁶ http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/global_co/working_group/index.shtml

⁷ http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/global_co/policy_group/index.shtml

⁸ <http://www1.worldbank.org/education/efaiti/>

The politics of language in the assessment of literacies

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In multilingual environments, language and literacies are intertwined – literacy practices need to be examined in the context of the language in which they are taking place. Assessing literacy skills through large-scale international surveys has been routinely carried out in the one or two ‘dominant’ languages in many countries, including in the ‘South’, producing a single figure that is used to make comparisons between countries. For the purposes of international comparison such a figure tends to miss out those, as is common in ‘developing’ countries, who speak multiple languages and may be literate in other ‘minority’ languages or varieties than the dominant one, or engage in different literacy practices than those included in the measurement scales – an exclusion that has the effect of labelling them as ‘illiterate’.

The 2003 Uppingham Seminar sought to discuss the assessment of literacy skills in multilingual environments. It brought together academic researchers, donors including the World Bank and DFID, and practitioners, from two contrasting approaches to assessment, which ascribe different importance to issues such as language in literacy assessment. Firstly, the large scale, quantitative approach that has dominated international policy, characterising literacy as decontextualised, individual skills; and secondly, ethnographic approaches, commonly used by proponents of the social, multiple view of literacies (New Literacies Studies). Ethnographic approaches combined with New Literacies Studies have shown that quantitative approaches to literacy assessment, in the dominant language of a country only, cannot be regarded as neutral, apolitical measurement tools, or the results adequately presented as a single figure for international comparison, since this involves a particular construction of what it is to be ‘literate’ - in certain languages only.

Some efforts have been made to address the limitations of the quantitative measurement approach in multilingual environments in, for example, the current UNESCO’s Institute of Statistics (UIS) Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP) – such as asking for background information about the language(s) spoken. However, the basic framework implying comparability across countries is left intact. Furthermore, it was argued that the lack of inclusion of multiple and minority languages in assessment methodologies is a result of resistance to diversity by institutions rather than simply a methodological problem.

The consensus of the seminar was that the use of ethnographic approaches can improve the quality and meaning of literacy assessment in multilingual environments –

through separate studies offering insights into how to value and assess different literacy practices in various, including 'minority', languages across varied social, ethnic and language groups; through offering a more rigorous grounding for terms and categories used in measurement; and by providing information on the context and meaning of local literacy practices in the country in question, most of which is missing in much large-scale assessment data. As a result of this seminar, a working group on the multilingual aspects of literacy assessment and practices was set up, which it is hoped will influence assessment practices at the large-scale such as in LAMP, as well as at a local level.

The Uppingham Seminars are organised by Professor Alan Rogers (UEA) with a steering group that includes Brian Street (Kings College, London) and Anna Robinson Pant (UEA). The full report is available on:

http://www.uppinghamseminars.org/report_2003.htm.

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COUNTRY CASE STUDIES

Multilingual education in Peru: Pitfalls and successes

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Apart from some isolated actions throughout the time of colonisation and independence since the early 19th century, official multilingual education or as it is called today in Peru bilingual intercultural education started in 1972. Bilingual education in this sense refers to a system of education which tries to teach the Indian population of the country how to read and write in their mother tongue and subsequently in the official national language Spanish. In 1972 the revolutionary military government of Peru under the President Juan Velasco Alvarado (1968 – 1976) published its “National Politics of Bilingual Education” and started to realize it.

Since then there have been some ups and downs culminating in a new attempt of revival of efforts in benefit of the bilingual education by the document of the “Politics of Bilingual Intercultural Education” of 1989 and only recently since the beginning of the new democratic government of President Toledo in July 2001, there have been some new initiatives and political directives to guarantee the right of education in the mother tongue for the Indian population of the country, which already had been established in several State Constitutions of the past.

On the whole, however, it can be said, that neither the educational reforms as such nor the attempts to introduce the bilingual education so far have changed the poor reality of the classrooms in the country. Proof of this is the poor performance of Peruvian pupils and particularly those in the schools of bilingual intercultural education in the national and international performance tests which have been organized during the past years.

The Indian population of Peru composes about 30-40% of the whole population, that are between 8 and 11 million people. The large majority of those belong to the different Quechuan groups of the Andean Highlands, descendants of the old Inca culture which has been overcome by the Spanish “conquistadores”. About 1 million belong to the Aymara, which are living, too, in the Highlands (around Puno) and preceded the Incas. About 300 000 Indians belong to about 40 different peoples who live in the Amazonian Region.

For all of them there are no reliable figures about their participation in the school system. It can be estimated, however, that not more than 10% of the Indian children whose mother tongue is Quechua, Aymara or any other Indian language, visit schools which do teach them at least partly in their mother tongue. These schools, however, are badly equipped and do not have teachers with a sufficient training for their work in spite

of some endeavours to organize a special programme of further training for them during the last years.

Although something has been done for the production of textbooks in local languages there is no real lobby for the necessity of children learning how to read and write in a language they understand. The big majority of the parents want their children to learn Spanish only, without understanding the linguistic and pedagogical implications and problems of such a procedure for their young children.

In the early 1970s – together with the big educational reform of that time - started the Peruvian German Project of Bilingual Education in Puno (*PEEB-PUNO*). It delivered a heavy basic work in linguistics of Quechua and Aymara and on that basis an intensive development of textbooks in all subjects of primary education. Some of these textbooks can be found in schools of the region even today, although there has never been a systematic distribution of these books within the whole system. At the end of the past century, again, the Ministry of Education developed new textbooks – with the assistance of the European Community - for all subjects with the exception of Spanish as second language. In the Amazonian Region since 1988 the “Programme of Bilingual Teachers of the Peruvian Amazonas” (*FORMADIAP*) was installed together with the Pedagogical Institute of Loreto in Iquitos, which trained teachers for some of the Amazonian people in the rural areas. Following some endeavours in the early 1990s, since 1999 started a new programme of the German Assistance for the training of teachers in five Pedagogical Institutes (out of a total of some 300 in the whole country). Some smaller programmes in different regions by different organizations could also be mentioned.

Why is the quality of bilingual intercultural education in the country (as in others in Latin America) so bad? Why are so many children still deprived of their right to an education in their mother tongue – in spite of the fact that international conventions, e.g. of ILO, UNICEF and UNESCO as well as regional proclamations of the Ministers of Education, have confirmed it particularly within the last two decades?

According to a recent publication of two renowned experts of intercultural education in Peru, including the actual Director of the newly re-established National Direction of Intercultural Bilingual Education of the Ministry of Education, there are mainly two reasons for this:

The Andean societies are still very much divided. The Indian population is highly marginalized. Consequently the bilingual intercultural education for the Indians is organized as a special system for the Indians and not as a means to integrate them into the society.

The system is conceived from above, from the Ministry, and more or less imposed on very different situations. The Indian people, however, live in very different conditions, which imply different educational solutions according to their circumstances.

Intercultural bilingual education for the Indian population, furthermore, exists in a vicious circle: Because of their weak results these programs neither get sufficient public support nor even sufficient support by the populations concerned. Because of this weak support they have not been able to clearly prove their advantage over the existing system.

Finally, the problem of an adequate educational system for the Indian population which gives them equal rights and chances in society, can only be solved within the context of a general socio-economic and cultural reform of the whole society. Looking at the actual situation of real power in those societies like Peru and others, particularly in the Andean Region, we are far away from this. This not only means that inequality will go on prevailing in a continent, which, normally people think, is already highly developed and realizing the international commitments, but also that these international goals of development (e.g. the Millennium Goals of Universal Primary Education of quality for all to be reached by 2015) will not be realized. Under these conditions the right of education for all still in Peru remains a dream or, as it has been said in the Declaration of Lima at the 5th Latin American Congress of Intercultural Bilingual Education of August 2002, more a promise than a reality.

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O-O-O-O

Talking past each other

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In summer, the Northern Areas of Pakistan are beautiful. Fed by glacial water, the fields of wheat and corn stand tall, flowers and fruit abound, the light is clear, the snow glistens on the high peaks, and lush Alpine meadows are cusped amidst precipitous slopes. However, there is a darker side to the Northern Areas. The region is one of the most impoverished in the country. Most families struggle to get by in the summer time, let alone in the freezing and bleak winter, when they have to live on stored foodstuffs and huddle together for warmth. The population growth rate is high, with five or six children to a family, or more, quite common. In many districts, formal health care is rudimentary or non-existent. In some parts of the region, the strictest purdah is observed and female literacy is zero, while the overall literacy rate is low. In addition, relations between religious groups are strained. Tensions between Sunnis and Shias are increasing, mirroring developments elsewhere in the Muslim world. Recently, the main town of the region, Gilgit, was under curfew for ten days, after Shias protesting against the religious contents of school textbooks took up their rifles and fought running battles with the police and the army, who represent an overwhelmingly Sunni government and nation.

What does all of the above have to do with language policies and practices in education? The answer is: A lot. By way of making the connections, let me review major developments in language in formal education in the Northern Areas during the last decade. Firstly, a recent survey that my colleagues and I conducted found that from 1992 to 2003 the number of 'English-medium private schools' in the Northern Areas grew from almost zero to more than three hundred, now accommodating about sixteen per cent of all children at school in the region. (Figures are approximate because we only surveyed part of the field.) With a further twelve per cent of children attending the schools run by the Aga Khan Educational Services, Pakistan which have been phasing in English-medium in response to parental demands, that makes about twenty-eight per cent of students who are attending schools with a large measure of English-medium instruction.

Advocates of 'mother tongue instruction' will claim that this rising trend makes little sense from a strictly pedagogical perspective – and they would have a well-founded case. Although English is an 'official language' in Pakistan, it has a very small presence in the Northern Areas, where a number of ethno-linguistic groups speak vernaculars such

as Burushaski, Shina, Balti, Khowar, and Wakhi. Some of these languages do not have written forms and none of them are used as mediums of instruction. As with the rest of Pakistan, the dominant lingua franca in the Northern Areas is Urdu, which is the medium of instruction for the great majority of school children, i.e. those attending government schools.

Larson (1981: 15-23) claims that those who advocate 'mother tongue instruction' mainly do so for linguistic, pedagogical, and psychological reasons. One of their major arguments is that effective learning requires solid foundations in reading, numeracy, and concept-formation, which are best attained through the medium of the so-called 'mother tongue' or of a widely used language. Amongst other arguments, advocates of this position also point to the need to forge a close link between the home and the classroom. On the other hand, those who propose that prestige languages (such as Urdu and English in Pakistan) should dominate as mediums of instruction usually advance reasons that are rooted in socio-economic, political, and financial perspectives (ibid.).

In Pakistan, competence in English (together with Urdu) is necessary for recruitment to, and/or advancement within the civil services, the armed forces, many commercial and media enterprises, most NGOs, and higher education. In our survey of English-medium private schools, we asked parents to indicate the occupations that they favoured for their children. The most favoured occupations were doctor/medical specialist, government official, and military officer, while medium preference was given to office manager/administrator in private enterprise, college or university faculty member, teacher, businessman, and lawyer/attorney. Most of these schools are low-priced, even by the low-income standards of the Northern Areas – they are certainly not elite schools – and our survey suggested that many of the parents are in occupations that are less prestigious than those that they desire for their children. In other words, they foster upwardly mobile aspirations for their children.

The place of English in their conceptual scheme is indicated by the fact that our parent-respondents agreed overwhelmingly that they wanted their children to have good command of English because (in ranked order of approval):

- It is needed for recruitment to the civil service and armed forces.
- It is an important factor for people to live and work in other countries.
- It is needed for entrance to universities.
- It will allow young people wider employment opportunities elsewhere.
- It is needed for study in other countries.
- It is needed for employment in commercial companies.
- It allows people to travel internationally.

Taken together with similar findings elsewhere in the survey, it was clear that these parents regard competence in English as an essential plank in the scaffolding of their career ambitions for their children. However, the scaffolding also includes more than just competence in English; it comprises broader features of educational quality, as shown by the fact that the parent-respondents agreed almost unanimously with propositions that their children's schools provided good quality education, had teachers

who were committed to their tasks, had good relations with the parents, and developed hard-working students who produced good examination results. By large but smaller margins, they also agreed with similar propositions, such as that their schools promoted good discipline amongst students and teachers, had good relations with their communities, and enhanced their students' future employment possibilities.

The parents' ambitions entail a large measure of 'escapism'- escape from the limitations of the parents' own socio-economic positions, escape from the Northern Areas, and even escape from Pakistan. It is escape from the harsh constraints, discomforts, and frugalities of the lives of most people in the Northern Areas. Of course, it entails not only 'escape from' but also 'escape to' – to higher incomes, better security, improved medical care, greater comfort, and more choice. Rightly or wrongly, these parents believe that their children's competence in English is a vital element in their aspirations and plans.

This is a familiar mindset in many parts of the world, one that is deplored by those linguists, sociolinguists, and educationists who base their advocacy of 'mother tongue instruction' on the factors that were identified by Larson - linguistic, pedagogical, and psychological perspectives – together with concern for cultural integrity. However, worthy as these arguments and concerns are, they will not make progress against the immutable fact that many parents consider that 'mother tongue instruction' retards the future economic and financial prospects of their children or, at least, does not advance their chances. The message is that the two parties – the specialists and the parents - are talking past each other, each having different sets of goals that are driven by different interests

The advocates of 'mother tongue instruction' in developing countries will continue to be frustrated until they can show that it has economic and financial benefits both for individuals and for national welfare – something that they have singularly failed to do up until now.

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O-O-O-O

A positive policy environment? Nice, but not enough!

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The international policy environment for using African languages in formal education is more positive than ever. The need for learning to take place in the languages actually spoken by school children is voiced over and over, at gatherings of government ministers and academic conferences alike. In its newest position paper, UNESCO has done a stellar job of laying out the argument for multilingual education (see Linda King, this volume; UNESCO 2003).

Yet are children in Africa actually getting this kind of education now? Are the local languages being used effectively and consistently for learning in school? Sadly, the answer here is "not in most places." As Komarek (1997) has pointed out, just as many African nations are backing away from the use of children's mother tongues as are taking it up. Experimental programmes in bilingual or trilingual education are being tried, and then abandoned before they even have a chance.

This fact makes the PROPELCA⁹ programme of the Republic of Cameroon unusual. In the past 25 years, this programme has grown from an experimental initiative of the University of Yaoundé in four languages of Cameroon, to a generalised national model of mother-tongue education that serves over 34,000 children in 30 Cameroonian languages (NACALCO 2001).

What can the PROPELCA experience reveal about how positive rhetoric at national and international levels can be reflected in actual outcomes in local schools? Certainly a supportive national policy environment is a necessity. Few Cameroonian schools, whether public or private, are willing to embrace language policies locally which have no backing nationally. But the PROPELCA programme shows that formulation of national policy is not enough; implementation of that policy has to be thorough and serious. This calls for two additional components to the process.

1) *Locally based personnel who are committed to seeing national policy turned into effective programmes.* A locally based support system for mother-tongue use in schools is crucial (see Malone, this volume). Teachers have to be recruited and trained. Materials for use in the local languages must be prepared. Parents and communities must be sensitised to the value of using local languages in their own schools, with their own children. Yet none of this can be done from a distance; it all requires people with local credibility and facility in the local language.

⁹ The Operational Research Project for the Teaching of Cameroonian Languages.

Not only so, but if such educational innovation is ever to go beyond the experimental stage, the local community has to believe in its efficacy for their children. There are many very good reasons for teachers in Africa to include local languages in their repertoire of languages of instruction: better learning, a more positive learning environment, and stronger school-community ties to name a few. Yet top-down mandates regarding the use of African languages in formal education have never worked in Africa, and are even less likely to be accepted in this age of increasing reverence for European languages (especially English). The formal inclusion of African languages in the African academic curriculum must be a local decision, not just a national decision.

In a number of Cameroonian language communities, local language development committees are assuming this role of local change agent in the process of getting the mother tongue into formal schooling. Composed of authors, teachers, academics and community leaders who believe in the potential for mother-tongue use in schools, these language committees are able to gauge and work with the local environment in a way no outsider can do.

2) *Sources of financial and material support that are committed for the long term.* The development of minority languages to the point where they are used in schools requires support from non-local agencies. In Cameroon, that support has come from entities such as the University of Yaoundé, national government bodies, UNICEF, CIDA, SIL International, and a Cameroonian NGO called NACALCO.¹⁰ Local communities may be able to contribute some material support, but not enough to launch and maintain a programme of local language education. Indeed, Cameroonian parents who need to be convinced that local-language education will not harm their children's educational prospects are not likely to support it from the start with their hard-earned cash.

However, the unfortunate tendency of donor agencies to think in terms of a few years, not a decade or two, has left many a promising experimental programme of bilingual education high and dry after the initial funding package runs out. PROPELCA continues to struggle with this phenomenon, certainly. The results of mother-tongue education programmes take time to become evident, and gaining the backing of the community for such a programme can take even longer.

The PROPELCA experience shows that effective insertion of the local language into the curriculum takes much more than a permissive national policy environment. Committed partners at the local, national and international levels have cooperated to develop PROPELCA to where it is today, and their work is not done yet. Long-term partnerships at all three levels are essential to the continuity of programmes promoting the use of African languages in formal education.

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¹⁰ National Association of Cameroonian Language Committees; in French, ANACLAC.

Language and science education in Tanzania

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I have recently spent many hours helping a Tanzanian friend with his biology 'O' level studies. The help I gave consisted almost entirely of translating his notes from English into Kiswahili. Sometimes I struggled to understand the notes because, although they had been copied down neatly, my friend's lack of comprehension rendered them nonsensical. I asked my friend if his teacher ever uses Kiswahili in his lessons to explain things. He replied: "*Hapana! Huyu ni mwalimu mzuri, anatomia kingereza tu!*" ("No! He's a good teacher, he only uses English!")

Many Tanzanian educators would agree that one of the largest obstacles students face in learning science in secondary schools is that they do not understand the language that it is taught in. Whilst primary education is in Kiswahili, secondary is in English, a language that most students and many teachers find hard to understand and to express themselves in. Teachers and students alike have little use for or exposure to English outside of the classroom. However, among teachers, students and parents there is an almost unanimous agreement that English should remain as the language of instruction.

A common argument given in favour of the current policy is that English gives a student access to study abroad, a goal aspired to by many but attained by only a handful. Some also doubt whether Kiswahili has the vocabulary necessary to explain technical concepts. Use of an English medium also gives access to a wide range of texts printed overseas and it is argued that Tanzania does not have the capacity to produce its own Kiswahili science books.

On the first page of Kyauka's *Misingi ya Sayansi*,¹¹ first published in 1980, one of the distinguishing features of plants is given as "*Ina rangi ya chanikiwiti (umbijani) ya kusharabu nisharti za mwanga kwa kutengeneza chakula katika chembeumbijani*" (They have a green pigment (chlorophyll) to absorb light energy to make food in the chloroplasts). The book goes on to cover basic classification, physiology, physics and chemistry. The existence of this book, and others like it, brings into question the arguments that Kiswahili cannot be used to describe technical concepts. English itself lacks some technical terms and scientific language has borrowed heavily from Latin,

¹¹ Kyauka, Pelagi S. (1980) *Misingi ya Sayansi* Tanzania Publishing House Ltd, Dar es Salaam

Greek and other languages. The book also demonstrates that the capability to produce Kiswahili science books in Tanzania has existed for decades.

Admittedly, results in science at primary school are no better than those at secondary level even though instruction is given in Kiswahili. Furthermore, results in Kiswahili at secondary school are no better than English results. The problem of low quality learning is not confined to English medium classes. In the opinion of language researcher Oliver Stegen¹², the problems of learning start with the first year of primary schools where children do not understand what they are being taught in Kiswahili, which for the many is not the language of the home. He argues that students miss out on the vital foundations of education because they are not taught in their mother tongue. Another problem at the primary level is that the teachers received their education at English medium secondary schools so may have not understood much of what was being taught.

Changing secondary education to Kiswahili alone is unlikely to dramatically improve the learning of science and mathematics but the use of a foreign language has undoubtedly contributed to the 'foreignness' of science and the culture of accepting learning without understanding that prevails in many classrooms. Given public opinion and the forces of globalisation, a change to Kiswahili medium in secondary schools seems an ever-diminishing possibility. One can only speculate on how education would have been in Tanzania if Nyerere had carried through his bold aim for building a nation with a national African language throughout its education system.

O-O-O-O

A brief report: Mother-tongue education and language development in Nigeria

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The Six-Year Primary Project (SYPP) was an experimental project to teach primary school children using their mother tongue (Yoruba) as the medium of instruction throughout the six years of primary school. The project lasted 8 years (1970-1978). A

¹² Personal communication 16/08/04. Oliver Stegen is researching the Kilangi language of Kondo region with the Summer Institute of Linguistics

book based on it with the title *Education in Mother Tongue* (Fafunwa, Sokoya, & Macauley 1985) carries a full description of the project and its findings.

This was a challenge to the existing language policy of Government that primary school children should be taught in the medium of their mother tongue or the language of the immediate environment in the first three years and in English in the last three years. Evaluation showed that children taught in their mother tongue for the six years did not suffer any deficiency in learning in English in later years at secondary school. In addition, the project children made definite affective gains in terms of adjustment and attitude to schooling.

Impact:

- There was no impact on Government language policy in primary school which has remained unchanged till today.
- However the books produced in Yoruba by the project have been adopted for use in primary schools in the Yoruba states of Oyo, Ogun, Lagos, Ondo, Ekiti and Osun.
- In addition, there has been increased government effort to develop the orthographies of other Nigerian Languages. The Nigerian Language center as of 1993 had produced orthographies in 30 Nigerian Languages. The number is small considering that there are about 400 languages in Nigeria. However 13 of them account for about 85% of the Nigerian population and the 30 account for 90%. Work is still going on.
- Production of textbooks is not proceeding as rapidly. The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) has produced primers and text books for the three major languages Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo but not text books in other subjects in these languages.

O-O-O-O

Ghana 2002 – The unbearable lightness of learning

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Ghana, February 2002. For the last couple of years with the mandate and support of the Ghanaian Government, the donor agencies have been busy implementing a long-standing language policy prescribing mother tongue education (MTE) in the first three years of schooling: Danish-supported Shepherd Schools in the north of the country; a private initiative around Bole; UNICEF's Childscope project in the Afram Plains; the German Technical Cooperation in the many teacher-training colleges throughout the

country; the World Bank by financing the mass printing and distribution of textbooks and teacher guides in two major languages covering about 70% of the Ghanaian population.

A few months later: The first annual coordination meeting between the Minister of Education of the newly elected government and the national and international stakeholders in Education. Amongst the many documents distributed to the participants one bears the innocent title "Textbook policy and other related issues". Hidden between a lot of texts on the new textbook policy the document all of a sudden declares that from now on the medium of instruction has changed to English only and that textbooks have to be written exclusively in that same language.

That starts what others have long called "the war of languages", the war for education for all or only for an elite, the war against more than 50% of illiteracy. National academia organises press conferences and a symposium, and goes on air to inform the public about the issue. A roundtable of GaDangme speaking citizens publishes its fears on a whole newspaper page. Two reports, one of them commissioned by the President himself independently point out the crucial importance of MTE for the first three years of primary education. In a letter to the Minister of Education the Representation of the European Union stresses the negative consequences of the new language policy on the educational outcome and by consequence on the fight against poverty.

The highlights of the war are three parliamentary debates on the issue and a written reply from the Minister of Education to the EU. In this letter he succeeds in admitting the educational supremacy of MTE and in rejecting it at the same time. The war of languages is officially ended by the Government in May 2003. The respective cabinet decision reduces Ghanaian languages to a subject, makes English the exclusive medium of instruction and introduces French as a foreign language from the first year of schooling.

Except for the European Union and the German Embassy all other members of the international donor community refuse to openly oppose this decision. Apparently unaffected they keep working on the Fast Track Initiative (FTI) to mobilise still more funds for Ghanaian education.

Has the report of these facts more than anecdotal value? This admirably open national debate about the fourth radical change of language policy in the educational history of Ghana highlights the key factors and vectors which determine the fate of education not only in Ghana but in a number of other African countries. Here are the main lessons:

The message has got through. The message about the efficiency of MTE spread through so many symposium, publications, and successful pilot projects in the last 20 years seems to have definitively reached the African political class. The lack of information as an explanation for decisions against MTE is now what it has probably always been –politically correct.

Scientific evidence is not the most important factor when the efficiency of education is at stake. In spite of the evidence and in spite of its recognition at the political level research results are politically not decisive.

The reason is to be found in the conservative attitude of the African power elite. The mastery of the former colonial language is still considered as the condition and the pathway to know-ledge, wealth and power. The democratisation of education through MTE which characterises periods of nationalist politics threatens this power base and is therefore more than unwelcome.

The dilemma of the international donor community. In the educational sector no member of the donor community has any justification for its existence and the expenditure of considerable amounts of public money other than supporting governments in their effort to bring about Education for All as a key component in the fight against poverty. It is clearly a dilemma when a government forces the donor community to choose between the respect for national sovereignty and the interests of the target group. In the case of Ghana as in similar cases before, the donor community is swift to trade the children against the government as its real target group. This undermining of the very meaning of their mission does not seem to bother anybody.

These recent and well documented events in Ghana bring to the forefront the forces which affect the way in which MTE/Education for All develops, stagnates or even regresses in Africa, South of the Sahara. It is these same forces which lead researchers and implementers alike to reaffirm their commitment to their target group and to look for new strategies.

O-O-O-O

The Language policy debate in Ghana: Where has it gone wrong?

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The most far reaching education reforms in Ghana which began in 1987 touched on almost every aspect of education in the country with the exception of the language policy on education. This is quite understandable. The language policy had until recently stipulated that for the first three years of primary school, children should be instructed in the mother tongue, and this had always been accepted as sensible policy on the grounds of strong research evidence suggesting that children who start formal learning in the mother tongue before later switching to a foreign language, become better achievers in later years of learning. Thus, it came as a very big surprise when the current Ghanaian government suddenly announced a change to English as the medium of instruction from primary 1, without initiating any review process. Understandably,

this announcement has been greeted with anger, disbelief and as a betrayal of commitment to sound educational policy for promoting quality basic education by some of Ghana's international development partners.

The government's action, I believe, is a mixed blessing. What it has done is to create the forum to revisit the arguments and face up to the difficult challenge of introducing a viable language policy for many post colonial governments. Even as the debate on motives for the policy change rages on, what we have been missing are discussions about why after independence in 1957, pragmatic measures were not pursued to deepen interest in the study of Ghanaian languages beyond lower secondary. It is a fact that very few students study a Ghanaian language in secondary school and fewer still at university. Right from colonial times there was very little commitment, and dare I say, sufficient belief that indigenous Ghanaian languages would add value to national development beyond the primary level. Those who aspired to greater heights in modern politics, society and in the professions rarely factored the local language as critical to their aspirations.

I believe the issue about the language policy should not be contested on the strength of research evidence alone. Rather, we need to draw attention to the fact that the earlier policy did not go far enough to promote interest in learning Ghanaian languages. Early curriculum planners failed to lay the appropriate foundations for Ghanaian languages to flourish and become cultural tools with great influence on the thought patterns, creativity, cultural norms and aspirations of people. This has resulted in the gradual decline in interest and under-valuing of local languages. Although some early Ghanaian educated nationalists recognized the importance of the local language in building strong national identity, indeed many of them were local language scholars who developed the orthography and lexicography of many Ghanaian languages, they lacked the vision, and perhaps the courage to argue for a policy that would promote its development and use right up to higher levels of the education system (see, Quist 2003). So today, we find it is still proving extremely difficult to introduce Ghanaian languages as compulsory subjects at secondary school level.

Those against making the study of Ghanaian languages compulsory see insurmountable challenges – how do we decide which languages to invest for development and will this not bring cultural and tribal tensions? What about the costs, especially considering overstretched education budgets with emphasis on meeting EFA goals? What are the implications for teacher training and teacher deployment? Will some small language groups be disadvantaged? Such questions only highlight the enormity of the task facing any government intending to make Ghanaian languages the cornerstone of its education policy.

The efforts by the German development agency in Ghana (GTZ) to provide science and mathematics textbooks written in key local languages for primary and junior secondary seemed a good boost to the earlier policy. But this remains insufficient because of a history of failures to encourage deep commitment to local language development and use in general education, especially beyond junior secondary. What seems missing are Education policies that clearly show long term commitment to a vision and plan for strengthening local languages development and use throughout the education system. To the best of my knowledge, no government in Ghana has had the political will to make this kind of commitment. The debate, in my view, must go beyond

the merits of local language usage for the first three years of primary education, to address the wider role of local languages in national development. One of the immediate actions from such a policy should be the vigorous development of literature to teach these languages and set standards of achievement that are comparable to the standards set for English Language proficiency. It will take a government with rare political will to go this far. Besides, where are the examples to follow?

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Indigenous culture and language in the curriculum: What the research says about South Africa

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Currently concluded research in South Africa (1) paints a paradoxical picture with regard to the relationships between indigenous culture, language education and measures to raise the quality of education.

In terms of rhetoric it is clear that the South Africa government, in their revised Curriculum (DoE, 2002) accord high priority to various quality issues such as communication and participation in school, commitment and competence among educators, the ability to read, write, count and think, ... critical and creative thinking, and a freeing of the potentials of both girls and boys to learn in a safe environment. (DoE, 2002, 7).

However, our research evidence from the resource-poor urban townships and rural communities of Western and Eastern Cape paints a far more troubling and complex picture.

In summary, our findings suggest that:

* **Historically**, the low quality of education during apartheid with a very limited/restricted curriculum and with Afrikaans as the compulsory language in effect means that the present-day parents have been denied the necessary tools to function constructively in a supportive and motivational role for their children. The effect this has had on quality in schools (Stephens, 2003) is indisputable, not the least because Curriculum 2005 and the Outcomes Based Education approach presuppose a close co-operation between the school and the parents to improve the schools.

* **Politically**, the post-apartheid situation in the townships of Cape Town has led to a migration of children to former model 'C' white schools in downtown Cape Town, with adverse consequences for the quality of the township schools.

* **Educationally**, if quality is indeed a matter of making learning more relevant, more efficient, more creative and inclusive, and on equal financial terms it is clear that we are seeing this challenge played out on an unlevel playing field. Besides the resourcefulness of the affluent schools, children from home environments in which the 'modern' and 'Western' values predominate e.g. are well resourced, where English is spoken, and where they have time and security to concentrate upon their studies, are clearly in a stronger 'value-added' situation than their peers from the poorer communities. Thus, while a fundamental transformation and redistribution of resources within the South African society is needed if quality education is to reach the now disadvantaged, the road to equal opportunities in schools is both thorny and not easily addressed (Bredlid, 2003).

* **Equally attention needs to be given** - in rhetoric and in practice - to the cultural issues that determine and impact upon the curriculum from language of instruction, the role of the home languages, and the place of indigenous knowledge in a clearly modernist curriculum. An over-riding factor seems to be the educational 'bridge' that takes the child from home to school.

If, children are making border crossings from home to school it seems important to understand the values that underpin those two contexts. While our evidence from both rural and urban areas of Western and Eastern Cape shows that it is possible to characterise the home as an environment shaped by traditional values, the school environment is a predominantly modern one where the rights of the individual child and equality between boys and girls are stressed, and where significance is attached to learning in an independent manner and largely in a foreign tongue.

For a minority of children such border crossings will be familiar and easy, for others from under-resourced and more traditional backgrounds, the journey will be fraught with difficulty.

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FINAL WORDS: LOOKING BACK – LOOKING FORWARD

Africa and the Spanish language: Cultural strangers, continental neighbours

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In geographical location, Spain is the nearest European power to Africa. One can almost swim from North Africa to the Spanish mainland.

In view of this proximity, why did Spain build such a tiny empire in Africa and such a huge empire in the Americas: Africa was colonized by Great Britain, France Belgium, Portugal, Italy, and-in a special sense – the Dutch through Afrikaner's. Before World War I Africa was also colonized by Germany.

None of these countries – not even Portugal – was geographically nearer to Africa than Spain. And yet all of them built much more substantial African empires than Spain. In the final analysis, Spain's African possessions were limited to Spanish Guinea and Western Sahara. Why this paradox of Spain's physical nearness to Africa combined with her imperial distance from Africa?

Considering that Spain is so geographically near to Africa, the Spanish language should have been much more widespread in Africa than it is. And yet there are by far more speakers of English, French, Portuguese and Afrikaans in Africa than there are speakers of the Spanish language. There are probably more speakers of Italian in the Horn of Africa and Libya as well. Speakers of German in Southern Africa may equal speakers of Spanish in North Africa. Why is the Spanish language so marginal on the African continent when Spain is so geographically close to Africa?

Among the relevant factors is that Africa's economic potential was grossly underestimated before the nineteenth century. European appetites were aroused more by the potentialities of the Americas. When Spain built its immense empire in the Americas, Africa was important more for the Western slave-trade than for European colonization. Spain was more mesmerized by the lure of gold in the Americas than gold and diamonds in Africa. There was a European scramble for the Americas long before there was a European scramble for Africa.

By the time European powers were indeed scrambling for Africa, Spain was imperial-weary. Spain had lost the will to colonize on a grand scale.

Yet another factor concerns Spain's experience in having been ruled by Africans in the past rather than the other way round. This was the period of history when much of Spain was under the dominion of North Africans – the so-called Moors. For centuries Spain was a victim of African colonialism rather than a villainous colonizer of Africa. This reduced Spain's appetite for African colonies in subsequent centuries.

In the nineteenth century Spain was licking its wounds as it lost one rebellious American colony after another. Imperial defeats in the Americas resulted in great preoccupation with internal domestic issues within Spain. While much of the rest of Europe was scrambling for Africa after the Berlin conference of 1884-85, Spain was suffering from imperial exhaustion and domestic preoccupation.

Of all European languages, the Spanish language has been influenced the most by North African Islam and the Arabic language. And yet of all the major European languages Spanish has had very limited impact on Africa and its culture.

Whether inadvertently or by design, history made Spain a good neighbor to Africa. In modern times Spain was only minimally imperialistic towards Africa. Spain was imperially extravagant in the Americas but imperially restrained towards Africa.

But culturally there has been a cost for Spanish cultural influence. The European language closest to Africa historically is far less important for the African heritage than are more distant European tongues. The history of the Third World as a whole would have been drastically different if the Spanish language had developed into a major cultural bond between Africa and Latin America. For example, had Nigeria been Spanish-speaking instead of Anglophone, its relationship with Mexico, Argentina and Chile could have transformed the whole political economy of North-South relations.

In imperial terms, Spain was a good neighbor to Africa. In cultural terms, the influence of the Spanish language paid a price for that good neighborliness. Was Spain's moral restraint as an imperial power worth the cultural losses of the Spanish language? Spanish would have been more of a global language if it had spread more widely in Africa. But in order to spread its language in Africa, Spain would have had to unleash conquistadors on its Black neighbours to the South. With or without a Papal Bull dividing the world, Providence decided otherwise.

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No easy answers

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What a range of opinion. Komarek decries English-language education policy in Ghana. Harlech-Jones argues against minority language use in Pakistani education. Alamin Mazrui and Skutnabb-Kangas remind us of the colonial dependencies that form the backdrop for language choices in formal education in the developing world. Language choice is a technical curriculum issue (Rogers), and language choice is a deeply political issue (May). Language policy is necessary but not sufficient (Malone). Donor agencies are helpful (Trudell) and they are neglectful (Robinson). Experienced scholars and policy

makers hold a plethora of perspectives on the question of language in education. Why is this?

The fact is that language policy in formal education is as ideologically and socially invested as it is in any other setting. Perhaps more so, actually, given the political nature of curriculum choices as well as that of language choices. As Ricento (2000:2) points out, simplistic formulations of the relationship between language status and individuals (or groups, or nation states) are untenable. Language policies are always socially situated and they are continually evolving. Not only so, but Ricento argues - as does Rogers in this volume - that the use of colonial languages in education is not inherently repressive per se. Nor do policies favouring linguistic pluralism always have the goal of promoting social and economic equality (Harlech-Jones 1990). One cannot consistently line up a particular policy with a particular political stance.

There are at least three reasons behind the variety of sometimes-conflicting perspectives on language policy in education seen in this volume. One is that language uses exist along a spectrum, not as a set of black-and-white categories. In a bilingual social environment, so common in the world today, binary patterns of "only L1" or "only L2" use are rare. Indeed, Linda King (this volume) reminds us that for millions, multilingualism is a way of life rather than a problem to be solved. The sociolinguistic and political choices that inform these language behaviours are complex.

A second reason is related to the first: the historical and social environments in which language decisions are made are not only extremely important, but they also differ significantly from country to country. The history and current societal uses of local languages in countries of sub-Saharan Africa (Ali Mazrui, Komarek) are very different to those of Pakistan (Harlech-Jones), or East Asia (Sawamura), or Latin America (Kuper). The resulting language proficiencies and language attitudes are just as varied.

A third reason is that language is profoundly attached to issues of cultural and community identity. Language choices - both institutional and individual - reflect deeply held values regarding identity and prestige. Language policies, then, often represent social and political realities beyond the specific linguistic issues involved (Stroud 1999: 343). Add to this the fact that formal education itself is heavily invested with expectations and political agendas, and it is easy to understand the plurality of strongly held beliefs regarding the appropriateness of one or another particular language choice.

Still, it seems fairly clear that multilingualism in education is an option - and indeed, the only reasonable option in many cases. A multilingual education strategy doesn't have to be detrimental to the minority language; developing any one language for use in schools does not have to mean the abandonment of others used in the society. However, it is crucial to recognise that a balanced use of multiple languages in educational settings will **NOT** happen on its own. As Romaine (this volume) makes clear, the "benign neglect" of minority languages results in their loss altogether. Intentional language planning is required to support the use of minority languages in education, if the goal of truly multilingual education is ever to be met.

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SOME UPCOMING CONFERENCES RELATED TO LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION

- Imagining Multilingual Schools: International Symposium on Language and Education. 30 Sept - 2 Oct 2004; Columbia University, NY, USA. Website: <http://www.tc.columbia.edu/ceoi/languagesymposium.html>.
- Foundation for Endangered Languages 8th Conference: On the Margins of Nations: Endangered Languages and Linguistics Rights. 10-13 Oct 2004; Barcelona, Spain. Website: <http://www.iecat.net/recerca/centreslabs/8FELConference/8FELConference.htm>.
- Languages and Cultures Across the Curriculum: A Post-9/11 Imperative. 23 Oct 2004; Binghamton University, NY, USA. Website: <http://www.continuinged.binghamton.edu/lacxc/>
- Boston University Conference on Language Development. 5-7 Nov 2004; Boston, Massachusetts, USA. Conference website: <http://www.bu.edu/linguistics/APPLIED/BUCLD>.
- 5th Annual Conference of the International Association for Languages and Intercultural Communication: Politics, Plurilingualism and Linguistic Identity. 11-14 Nov 2004; Dublin City University, Republic of Ireland. Conference website: <http://www.ialic.arts.gla.ac.uk>.
- 2nd International Conference for Languages, Linguistics and the Real World. Sponsored by the Faculty of Language and Linguistics, University of Malaya. 7-9 Dec 2004, Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia.
- The Reading Association of Uganda (RAU) National Conference: Propagating Literacy at the Grassroots. 18-19 Jan 2005; Kampala, Uganda.
- 5th International Symposium on Bilingualism. 20-23 March 2005, Barcelona, Spain. Conference website: <http://www.eventszone.net/isb5/eng>.

2005 Conference of the International Society for Language Studies. 18-20 April 2005; Montréal, Canada. Conference session strands include education and pedagogy. Conference web site: <http://www.isls-inc.org>

International Conference on Minority Languages: Minority Languages in Post-2004 Europe: Problems and Challenges. 1-2 July 2005; Trieste, Italy.

14th World Conference of Applied Linguistics. Sponsored by the American Association for Applied Linguistics. 24-29 July 2005; Madison, Wisconsin, USA.

4th Pan-African Reading for All Conference: Literacy for Sustainable Development. 22-26 August 2005; Ezulwini, Swaziland. Conference website: http://www.reading.org/advocacy/pan_african.html

UKFIET Oxford International Conference on Education and Development 2005: Learning and Livelihood. Will include a symposium on language, learning and identity. 13-15 Sept 2005; Oxford, UK. Website: <http://www.cfbt/oxfordconference>

World Indigenous People's Conference - Education (WIPCE). 25 Nov-1 Dec 2005; Hamilton, Aotearoa New Zealand.

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27 – 28 April 2005

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College of Humanities and Social Science

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL STUDIES

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LECTURESHIP IN AFRICAN STUDIES

We seek to appoint an outstanding researcher and teacher to this permanent post to be held in the Centre of African Studies in the School of Social and Political Studies. Applicants will be expected to have completed, or be very close to completing, a relevant doctoral degree, and to have demonstrable achievements in research, publication, and teaching. It is intended to appoint to this job a scholar with a background in the social sciences who has a strong commitment to approaching the study and teaching of Africa in an inter-disciplinary manner. Candidates will work on Africa South of the Sahara, whether Anglophone, Francophone, or Lusophone.

The persons appointed will be expected to engage actively in research, teaching, and administration, and to play a full part in the collegial life of the Centre of African Studies and the School of Social and Political Studies.

The salary will be in the Lecturer AT2A/B range (£23,643 - £27,116p.a. or £27,989 - £35,883p.a.) and the appointment will be made from 1st January 2005 or as soon as possible thereafter.

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In 1963 the Centre of African Studies was founded at the University of Edinburgh. It was one of the African Studies Centres in the UK founded on the recommendation of the Hayter Commission. It is the only academic unit in Scotland dedicated to the study of Africa.

In line with its founding charter, the Centre prides itself on its long history of promoting inter-disciplinary research and teaching. The Centre also seeks to relate African Studies to the wider community, through links with NGOs and major educational and cultural organisations in Africa and Scotland.

The Centre's students are drawn from a wide variety of disciplinary backgrounds, many of whom have worked in Africa. In recent years, students have come to the Centre from all across Europe, North America, Africa & Japan. Over an 9 year period, the Centre has been awarded 28 masters or 13 awards from the ESRC, as well as 15 x 13 or 3 year PhD awards in the ESRC's open competition. The Centre raises funds for a scholarship to finance at least one taught Masters student from Africa each year.

Since 1963 the Centre has held an annual inter-disciplinary conference, bringing together scholars from Africa, Europe, Japan and North America. All of the Conference proceedings have been published. The Centre has also published 100 occasional papers on a variety of themes. In the past two years, graduate students at the Centre have also organised highly successful research workshops.

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THE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL STUDIES

The School of Social and Political Studies is part of the College of the Humanities and Social Science. The School embraces the former Departments of Social Anthropology, Sociology, Politics, Social Policy, and Social Work, the Science Studies Unit, the Research Centre in Social Sciences, the Institute of Governance, the ESRC Centre for Social and Economic Research on Innovation in Genomics (INNOGEN), and the Centres for African Studies, Canadian Studies, and South Asian Studies. The Head of School is Professor Lorraine Waterhouse.

The School of Social and Political Studies has an active research culture. All of the School's Units of Assessment received 4 or 5 ratings in the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise. A key objective in the School's establishment was to facilitate dialogue and collaboration amongst its members in both research and teaching. There are many current areas of cross-disciplinary research activity, including work on nationalism and politics, development, gender, families and relationships, genomics, South Asian, Islamic and Middle Eastern, and African studies. Research students are part of the flourishing Graduate School of Social and Political Studies, which capitalises on research synergies across the School and coordinates research training for graduate students. The School has also established a single Undergraduate Teaching Office, providing support services for staff and students, and has introduced two interdisciplinary courses on Social and Political Theory and Social Enquiry.

More information about the School can be found on its web site at www.sps.ed.ac.uk

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Research

The appointee will be required to be fully active in research including making applications for research grants and publishing in top-rated journals. The appointee will be expected to work across disciplinary boundaries and to forge interdisciplinary links. Applications from any background in the social sciences would be welcome, and in particular from one of the disciplines of the School of Social and Political Studies.

Teaching

The appointee will be expected to convene core courses offered within the Centre of African Studies and may also be expected to offer courses in the Centre or elsewhere in the School related to his or her research interests. The appointee will also be required to be involved in the supervision of postgraduates.

Administration

The appointee is likely to be required to assist the Director in the day-to-day running of the Centre and may be expected to carry out other administrative responsibly within the School.

Website of the Centre: www.cas.ed.ac.uk

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Please complete and return the application form together with six copies of your letter of application and CV, including the names and addresses (preferably including email) of three referees, to: Mrs Patsy Hodgson, Head of School's Secretary, Social and Political Studies, University of Edinburgh, Adam Ferguson Building, George Square, Edinburgh EH8 9LL, by the closing date of 28 September 2004. Please complete the equal opportunities form and return in the separate prepaid envelope. We cannot guarantee to consider late applications.

For those who wish to apply on-line, please follow the on-line application procedure at www.jobs.ed.ac.uk

Please quote reference no: 3002697

It is expected that the presentations will be held on Thursday 4 November and the interviews on Friday 5 November. Informal enquiries are welcome, and should be made to Professor Kenneth King, Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh, 21 George Square, EH8 9LL (tel 0131 650 3879 ; email Kenneth.King@ed.ac.uk).

Footnote

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