Language and Social Cohesion in the Developing World

Edited by Hywel Coleman

The Ninth International Language and Development Conference was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in 2011, with the theme Language and Social Cohesion. It was jointly funded by GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, formerly GTZ, the German development organisation of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Development) and the British Council. It was hosted and co-organised by the Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration and the Ministry of Education.

Language and Social Cohesion in the Developing World brings together fifteen of the most important papers presented at the conference. The book is organised in four parts:

• Social Cohesion, Language and Human Rights
• Languages as Connectors or Dividers
• Education and Social Cohesion in Multilingual Contexts
• Languages, Education and Social Cohesion in Sri Lanka.

The nineteen authors discuss the role of language in weakening and strengthening social cohesion in many parts of the world, including India, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Rwanda, Tanzania and Timor-Leste. Six chapters deal with the specific case of the host country, Sri Lanka. An introductory chapter relates the discussions which appear here to previous work on social cohesion and identifies eleven important lessons which can be drawn from these studies.

This volume makes a significant contribution to the burgeoning field of Language and Development. It will be of particular interest to policy makers, development specialists, educationists, linguists and language educators.

Language & Development
CONFERENCE SERIES

Language and social cohesion in the developing world

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Languages, education and social cohesion in Sri Lanka

The Language and Development Conferences

All the conference publications can be accessed at www.langdevconferences. org. Additionally, those published by the British Council can be accessed at www.teachingenglish.org.uk/publications.

1993 1st Language & Development Conference, Bangkok, Thailand
Theme: 'Issues in Language & Development'
Kenny, B. & Savage, W. (eds). 1997. *Language and Development: Teachers in a Changing World*. London: Longman.

1995 2nd Language & Development Conference, Bali, Indonesia
Theme: 'Language & Communication in Development: Stakeholders' Perspectives'
Crooks, T. and Crewes, G. (eds). 1995. *Language and Development*. Denpasar: Indonesia Australia Language Foundation.
Crooks, T. (ed.). 1996. *ESP in Southeast Asia*. Denpasar: Indonesia Australia Language Foundation.

1997 3rd Language & Development Conference, Langkawi, Malaysia
Theme: 'Access, Empowerment, Opportunity'
Abdullah, A., Crocker, T. et al. (eds). 1998. *Language in Development: Access, Empowerment, Opportunity*. Kuala Lumpur: National Institute of Public Administration (INTAN).

1999 4th Language & Development Conference, Hanoi, Vietnam
Theme: 'Partnership & Interaction in Language & Development'
Shaw, J., Lubelska, D. & Noullet, M. (eds). 2000. *Partnership and Interaction*. Bangkok: Asian Institute of Technology.

2001 5th Language & Development Conference, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
Theme: 'Defining the Role of Language in Development'
Lo Bianco, J. (ed.). 2002. *Voices from Phnom Penh: Development and Language: Global Influences and Local Effects*. Melbourne: Language Australia.

2003 6th Language & Development Conference, Tashkent, Uzbekistan
Theme: 'Linguistic Challenges to National Development & International Cooperation'
Coleman, H., Gulyamova, J. & Thomas, A. (eds). 2005. *National Development, Education and Language in Central Asia and Beyond*. Tashkent: British Council Uzbekistan.

2005 7th Language & Development Conference, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Theme: 'Language & Development'
Coleman, H. (ed.). 2007. *Language and Development: Africa and Beyond*. Addis Ababa: British Council Ethiopia.

2009 8th Language & Development Conference, Dhaka, Bangladesh
Theme: 'Language & Development: Sociocultural Issues and Challenges'
Savage, W. (ed.). 2015. *Language and Development: Sociocultural Issues and Challenges*. Published online by the Trustees of the Language & Development Conferences.

2011 9th Language & Development Conference, Colombo, Sri Lanka
Theme: 'Language and Social Cohesion'
Coleman, H. (ed.). 2015. *Language and Social Cohesion in the Developing World*. Colombo: British Council and GIZ.

2013 10th Language & Development Conference, Cape Town, South Africa
Theme: 'Opportunity, Equity and Identity Beyond 2015'
McIlwraith, H. (ed.). 2014. *The Cape Town Language and Development Conference: Looking beyond 2015*. London: British Council.

Foreword

The Language and Development Conference is held every two years. It explores aspects of the roles that world, national, second and minority languages play in economic, social and cultural development. As a conference series, it provides a forum for discussing language reform and change management and contributes to the professional development of the people involved. The conference was first held in Thailand in 1993 and since then it has taken place in Indonesia (1995), Malaysia (1997), Vietnam (1999), Cambodia (2001), Uzbekistan (2003), Ethiopia (2005) and Bangladesh (2009).

The 9th International Language and Development Conference was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, from 17th to 19th October 2011 with 120 participants. It was jointly funded by GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, formerly GTZ, the German development organisation of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Development) and the British Council. It was hosted and co-organised by the Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration and the Ministry of Education. The conference theme was Language and Social Cohesion and contributors came from Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Timor Leste, Philippines, Rwanda, Djibouti, Cameroon, Tanzania, Sweden, UAE, UK and Canada.

'Language and Social Cohesion' was chosen as the theme because of the role language played in Sri Lanka's long ethnic conflict and in its conflict resolution. At the time of the conference, GIZ had been implementing two key projects which used language as a link for social cohesion: the Education for Social Cohesion project, which brought Sinhala- and Tamil-medium teachers and students together, and the Performance Improvement Project for Development Actors in the North and East, which brought nearly 5,000 Tamil- and Sinhala-speaking government staff and community leaders together through its Skills Through English for Public Servants Programme (STEPS). The British Council had been working in Sri Lanka for over 60 years on fostering understanding and facilitating dialogue through its work in

English, the arts, education and society, and for seven years had been implementing the STEPS programme for GIZ.

Keynote speakers pursued the themes of language as obstacle or facilitator for social cohesion, language and social stability, language rights of individuals and communities, language and identity, resolving conflict between dominant and non-dominant languages in children's education, and language policy implementation in Sri Lanka. Parallel sessions were organised in seven strands: connectors or dividers? language, governance and social inclusion; non-dominant languages and multi-lingual education; bi-lingual and tri-lingual policies in Sri Lanka and India; teacher education in language policy; language and socio-economic development; Sri Lankan languages, varieties and identity; and affective factors: language, arts, attitudes and emotions. Social cohesion was also addressed in the programme through performance art, which included theatre, dance and photography.

GIZ and the British Council would particularly like to thank Malkanthi Wickramasinghe, Secretary, Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration, her team, and the conference coordination committee, for all the work they did in making this conference such a success.

Psyche Kennett, Team Leader, GIZ Performance Improvement Project
Paul Hilder, Deputy Director British Council Sri Lanka
Conference organisers

Language and social cohesion: An introduction and lessons learnt

Hywel Coleman

Opening

The Ninth International Language and Development Conference, held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, between 17th and 19th October 2011, took as its main theme 'Language and Social Cohesion'.

The internal concept note prepared by the conference's joint organisers[1] stated that 'The aim of the conference is to bring together professionals working in development where language plays a key role for social cohesion.' It was hoped that the conference would give opportunities for Sri Lankan government and civil society partners 'to share experience in the use of Sinhala and Tamil, and English as a link language, in good governance, socio-economic development and peace building.' But it was also planned that the conference would attract 'project and programme implementers, influencers, researchers and educationists' from a broad geographical spread across Asia and Africa and that these people would 'bring with them a wider perspective to the discussion' about language and social cohesion.

Why was this theme selected? As several of the contributors to this volume remind us, it is only relatively recently that Sri Lanka has emerged from thirty years of military conflict. Many observers identify the passing of the Official Languages Act of 1956 – often referred to as the 'Sinhala Only Bill' – as the trigger for the hostilities which ensued. The issue of language and social cohesion is therefore very apposite for the Sri Lankan context. But – as other contributors also remind us – Sri Lanka is by no means the only state to have experienced severe social disruption associated with language policy. On a more positive note, Sri Lanka has engaged in an array of activities aimed at healing the wounds of conflict; the Language and Development Conference provided an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of these efforts.

This introductory chapter discusses briefly how the concept of social cohesion has been understood by scholars and practitioners in various fields and how our own contributors conceptualise it. It then describes each of the fifteen chapters and shows how they fall into four broad strands. The

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introduction concludes with a summary of the lessons that can be learnt from the fifteen contributions, in this way fulfilling one of the principles of the Language and Development Conferences, that each conference 'should build towards a collective outcome.'

Understanding social cohesion

There is little agreement among scholars as to the meaning of social cohesion. Speaking from the perspective of sociology, Friedkin complains that 'the literature on social cohesion has become increasingly confused as the number of investigators who research it has increased' (2004, 409). He attempts to clear up this 'theoretical confusion' by suggesting that social cohesion is essentially a matter of how individuals relate to the groups in which they find themselves. What needs to be investigated, Friedkin suggests, are 'individuals' membership *attitudes*'(what they feel about the group) and 'individuals' membership *behaviours*' (e.g. what they do to maintain or sever their group membership). This is an interesting distinction, but the framework seems rather limited if we wish to look not only at individuals but also at language groups within national entities. Although this is not stated explicitly it seems that Friedkin is primarily interested in social cohesion in the context of industrial and post-industrial economies in North America and Europe. He makes no mention of language, incidentally.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) – perhaps not surprisingly – adopts a largely economic view of social cohesion. It suggests that fiscal policy is the most powerful tool that can be employed for improving social cohesion:

> Greater fiscal space opens a window of opportunity for development and stronger social cohesion in developing countries. (OECD 2011, 20)[2]

Other areas where steps can be taken, according to OECD, include employment and social protection, education, gender, migration and civic participation. Again, language is not mentioned at all, although it is of course implied in several of its recommendations (especially education).

Many people working to ease the plight of migrants and refugees do, though, recognise the importance of language skills in social cohesion. The following examples come from Catalonia and Wales respectively:

> The Department of Education has drawn up a broadly based plan as part of the approach to immigration so that we may promote and consolidate the Catalan language as the mainstay of a multilingual and intercultural education policy in order to achieve greater social cohesion. (Comenius Network, no date)[3]

> The Refugee Inclusion Strategy sets out the Welsh Assembly Government's vision of refugee inclusion in Wales … The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to realising the following objectives:
> - Language: refugees and asylum seekers have the opportunity to develop their English and Welsh language skills.

- Communication: good communication exists between refugee/asylum seeking communities and their receiving communities, service providers and government.
- Information: refugees/asylum seekers are able to access relevant information easily.

Refugees and asylum seekers bring a rich diversity of languages to Wales. To participate fully in Welsh society, however, refugees and asylum seekers also need English or Welsh language skills. (Welsh Assembly Government 2008)

But even in this field there is still a tendency to ignore the importance of language. A briefing note on immigration, diversity and social cohesion, produced by the University of Oxford's Migrant Observatory (Demireva 2011), for instance, also completely ignores language issues.

Within the field of language planning, the relationship between language and social cohesion (or its absence) is also well recognised. Lo Bianco observes:

> [There is a] close but complex relationship between language and literacy diversity and education with the opportunities for social, citizenship and economic advancement that societies make available. As a result language questions are often implicated in conflict, tension and struggle within societies … [A] cause of intra-national tension is often related to ethnicity differences when these are represented by language differences, exacerbated when such differences are not negotiated, discussed and planned in a systematic and skilled way. (Lo Bianco 2013, 6)

Three contributors to this collection propose their own understandings or definitions of social cohesion:

- Social cohesion has 'the sense of reducing inequalities and exclusion while at the same time strengthening social relations.' (de Varennes, Chapter 2)
- Social cohesion 'is seen here as the glue that holds all members of a society together. It is derived at least in part from a society which is working towards reducing disparities and inequalities.' (Hernandez and Malderez, Chapter 4)
- 'Social cohesion … is understood, firstly, as positive interaction (exchanges and networks between individuals and communities) and, secondly, as social inclusion (integration of people into civil society).' (Legère and Rosendal, Chapter 6)

Meanwhile, many contributors provide formulations of the relationships that they perceive between language and social cohesion:

- 'Human interaction requires communication and language provides the means of communication. Hence the link between identity, language and social cohesion becomes evident.' (Chandrahasan, Chapter 1)
- 'Education is important for social cohesion and language is essential for education: both education and language can be used to divide or unite societies.' (Pinnock, Chapter 3)

- Sri Lanka has experienced 'an immensely destructive military conflict that had much to do with a crisis of identity linked … to language.' (Sasanka Perera, Chapter 5)
- 'Language has been used for social cohesion as well as confrontation.' (Rahman, Chapter 7)
- Timor-Leste intends 'to set an example of good educational practice [i.e. mother-tongue-based multilingual education] in the service of equitable development, social cohesion and national pride.' (Sword Gusmao, Chapter 8)
- 'Respect and promotion of minority languages will promote tolerance in a society where extremism and intolerance are spreading.' (Rehman and Sagar, Chapter 9)
- 'Multilingual education … policy is transformative and has the potential to contribute to social development: it bridges the gap between community and school and recognises the identity, epistemology and voices of local communities.' (Phyak, Chapter 10)
- 'Literacy in the mother tongue … is sustainable as learners and communities see and experience the benefit it brings to their lives.' (Laviña-Gumba, Chapter 11)
- 'The teaching and learning of 2NL [the Second National Language] are … crucial to Sri Lanka's national integration and cohesion.' (Marie Perera, Chapter 12)
- A language policy 'ought to be able to promote ethnic harmony, social cohesion and overall socio-economic development.' (Balakrishnar and Thanaraj, Chapter 13)
- '… languages do not exist as mere languages. Instead, they reveal affiliations to certain class and socio-ethnic groups that choose to include and exclude elements.' (Ibrahim, Chapter 15)

The contributors to this volume, then, recognise the importance of language in social cohesion, whether as a factor that strengthens social harmony or as an element in marginalisation, discrimination and social tension.

Four strands and fifteen chapters

The fifteen conference presentations which are included in this volume fall into four strands:

- Social cohesion, language and human rights
- Languages as connectors or dividers
- Education and social cohesion in multilingual contexts
- Languages, education and social cohesion in Sri Lanka.

The first strand, Social Cohesion, Language and Human Rights, consists of four wide ranging chapters. They set the scene for the context-specific case studies which appear in later strands.

In the first chapter, 'Monolingualism, bilingualism and multilingualism: The human rights perspective', Dr Nirmala Chandrahasan opens the discussion by tracing the development of international law on human rights from the beginnings in the eighteenth century, through various treaties which followed the First and Second World Wars, to the regional and international conventions of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. By considering the cases of the UK, Spain, Canada, Finland, Sri Lanka, Switzerland and India, she demonstrates that international human rights law has been instrumental in establishing standards for linguistic rights. Chandrahasan, who teaches in the Faculty of Law in the University of Colombo, concludes that countries with discriminatory language policies tend to experience severe civil unrest; in contrast, countries which recognise human rights and adhere to internationally agreed language policies achieve greater social cohesion.

Chandrahasan's observation concerning countries with discriminatory language policies is picked up and developed further in Chapter 2 ('Language rights and social cohesion: A balance for inclusion and stability') by Fernand de Varennes, one of the most eminent international legal experts on language rights. After examining the experiences of Pakistan-Bangladesh, Tibet and the German-speaking minority in Italy, de Varennes draws three conclusions about how social cohesion can be helped through strengthening language rights. Firstly, governments must provide for a language minority to use its language so that it can share proportionally in economic, social and employment opportunities. Secondly, it is not sufficient simply to draw up legislation that ensures language rights; these rights must be implemented in a practical day-to-day manner. Thirdly, matters should be arranged to ensure that the composition of the civil service reflects the main groups in society. In summary, experience shows that 'proportionality for social inclusion' is the key to ensuring social cohesion.

In Chapter 3, 'Multilingual education: From "why" to "how"', Helen Pinnock (a specialist in education and language who was previously senior education adviser for Save the Children in London) provides a very clear exposition of the arguments in favour of using children's home language as the medium of instruction in the early years of education. One of these arguments is that, in cases where children speak a non-dominant language and are denied the opportunity to learn through the medium of that language, the injustices which are experienced give rise to conflict and social fragility. In other words, mother-tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) is not only beneficial for the individual but is also a fundamental element in the achievement of social cohesion.

Chapter 4, 'One stone, two birds: Stories to enhance both social cohesion and transformative learning' by Gary Hernandez and Angi Malderez (a son and mother team unique in the annals of the Language and Development Conferences), falls into two distinct sections. In the first section, the authors present us with an extremely useful overview of the concept of social cohesion. They argue that social cohesion is playing an increasingly important

role in thinking about development and also in its practice, for example in post-conflict and peacebuilding contexts. They also note that there are marked similarities between the literatures on social cohesion and group dynamics. In the second part of the chapter the authors posit that procedures that have been shown to be successful in the development of positive group dynamics may be of value in situations where it is important to improve social cohesion. In particular, Hernandez (an international development consultant) and Malderez (well known for her work in language teacher trainer development) suggest that shared metaphorical stories can be employed to enhance social cohesion and to support transformative learning.

The second strand examines the scope that language has for being both a connector and a divider. Three chapters explore this issue, taking Sri Lanka, East Africa and mainland South Asia as the contexts for their discussions. All three adopt an historical (or partly historical) approach.

In Chapter 5, 'Reflections on issues of language in Sri Lanka: Power, exclusion and inclusion', Sasanka Perera (Professor of Sociology at South Asian University in New Delhi) traces in great detail how official language policy in Sri Lanka has developed from the 1940s to the present day. One of his major findings is that the country now has an enlightened Official Language Policy granting equal status to Sinhala, Tamil and English, with a barrage of associated directives for implementation. However, in practice many provisions are 'consistently violated' because of a lack of political will. In consequence, people are being 'deprived of their fundamental rights.' If they are unable to use their own language when seeking treatment in their local hospital, making a report to the local police station or asking for information at the office of their local authority they experience 'frustration and lack of trust towards the state.' Perera concludes with the stark warning that if 'we do not learn from our history … from our mistakes … we will be the architects of our own future destruction.'

Karsten Legère (Emeritus Professor of African Languages at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden) and Tove Rosendal (a researcher on African languages at the same university) in Chapter 6, 'National languages, English and social cohesion in East Africa' find that in both Rwanda and Tanzania the national languages – Rwanda and Swahili respectively – are strong and make important contributions to social cohesion. But in both countries political leaders and others have tended to undervalue the national languages in favour of English. In consequence social divisions are being created and 'social cohesion is being weakened.'

In Chapter 7, Tariq Rahman, Distinguished National Professor and Professor Emeritus at the National Institute of Pakistan Studies, adopts an innovative approach in his discussion of 'Language, social cohesion and confrontation: The case of the historiography of Urdu.' Scholars have long debated where the Urdu language originated from and how it relates to Hindi. Rahman demonstrates that the arguments adopted by these scholars reflect and at the same time contribute to political and religious differences: the debate shifts 'from linguistic identity to nationalistic identity, from cohesion

to confrontation.' He concludes with a plea, that scholars of language should 'confront and reinterpret narratives of confrontation in a spirit of truthfulness and understanding.'

The third strand consists of four case studies of education and social cohesion in multilingual contexts. These are all set in Asia: Timor-Leste, Pakistan, Nepal and the Philippines.

Kirsty Sword Gusmão, the wife of Timor-Leste's Prime Minister, Xanana Gusmão, adopts an unusually informal and highly appealing approach in her contribution, 'Timor-Leste: Language and identity in Southeast Asia's newest nation' (Chapter 8). As Founder and Chair of the Alola Foundation, which is dedicated to addressing the needs of the women and children of Timor-Leste, Sword Gusmão is well placed to present a language profile of her country. She describes how, since independence, Portuguese has been introduced as the medium of instruction, even though it is not the mother tongue of the vast majority of children. In consequence, children's learning has been severely 'compromised'. Meanwhile, attempts to raise awareness of the value of mother-tongue-based multilingual education have encountered hostility in some quarters (particularly in Parliament), where MTB-MLE is perceived to be 'nonsense' and a threat to social cohesion.

In Chapter 9, 'The effectiveness of English language learning in multilingual schools in Pakistan', Khawaja A. Rehman and Muhammad Zaman Sagar look at the impact of small scale efforts to use the mother tongue as the medium of education in four different language communities. These programmes meet resistance from policymakers and, at first, from parents. Nevertheless, the authors, both of whom work for the Forum for Language Initiatives in Islamabad, provide convincing evidence that a grounding in MTB-MLE gives children a head start in English, Urdu and mathematics, compared to those who are taught in a conventional way. Moreover, MTB-MLE strengthens social cohesion at two levels. Firstly, at the individual level, children who have experienced MTB MLE in their early years are more likely to stay in school and complete their education; this enables them to integrate into their own community and play active and useful roles. Secondly, Rehman and Sagar note that the MTB-MLE programmes help the development of social cohesion between different language communities as they organise joint events and learn from each others' experience.

Similar conclusions are reached in Chapter 10 by Prem Phyak, who writes on 'Multilingual education, social transformation and development in Nepal.' Phyak, who teaches at Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu, focuses on an MTB-MLE programme provided for one very small marginalised community. Community members were involved in the design of the programme and the preparation of reading materials. As a result, parents have lost their shyness about coming to the school; people see that their language is being preserved and developed; children 'learn happily' and have warm relationships with their teachers. But the scheme faces challenges, particularly in the form of a growing demand from parents that their children should be taught English or even that they should be taught through the medium of English. Phyak interprets this

as evidence that neoliberal economic and political influences pose a threat to Nepal's efforts to create a multilingual, cohesive and just society.

Unlike Chapters 8, 9 and 10, which are concerned with school education, Chapter 11 focuses on adult literacy programmes. The author is Leslie Laviña-Gumba, an activist with the Translators' Association of the Philippines (TAP). Her chapter, 'Mother-tongue-based literacy, a tool for indigenous people's empowerment: The Western Subanon and Binukid/Higaonon experience', briefly describes the mother-tongue-based adult literacy work which TAP has been carrying out with two minority language groups on the island of Mindanao. An evaluation of these programmes identified numerous benefits for individual participants and for the language groups as a whole. Laviña-Gumba concludes, therefore, that literacy in the mother tongue is transformative, empowering and development-oriented. Not only that, but having themselves experienced the benefits of literacy in their first languages parents are now demanding MTB-MLE programmes for their children as well.

The final strand brings together four chapters that discuss issues concerning languages, education and social cohesion in Sri Lanka. Chapter 5 has already discussed the Sri Lankan context from the point of view of legislation on language, but in this final strand the focus is on the specific roles that Tamil, Sinhala and English are expected to play in the country.

In Chapter 12, Marie Perera, Professor in Humanities Education at the University of Colombo, discusses efforts to encourage the learning of the 'Second National Language' (2NL). There is a requirement that in schools all speakers of Sinhala should learn Tamil and that all speakers of Tamil should learn Sinhala, in the expectation that this will lead to easier communication between the two main ethnic groups and in turn that social cohesion will be strengthened. A similar regulation applies in teacher education colleges. In her chapter, 'Building bridges: National integration through the teaching of the Second National Language', Perera shows that, although these enlightened rules are in place, the reality is often very different. Some improvements have occurred in recent years, but there are still significant weaknesses in the system. Perera recommends that a comprehensive nation-wide review of the programme should be carried out, followed by fundamental revision of the 2NL curriculum. Unless these steps are taken, she fears that the 'building of bridges' required for the achievement of social cohesion will not be possible.

A very different aspect of language in education is discussed by Jayageetha Balakrishnar (senior teacher at Valvai Girls' College) and Thaiyamuthu Thanaraj (Professor of Education in the Open University of Sri Lanka) in their contribution 'Instruction in the English medium: A Sri Lankan case study' (Chapter 13). The authors show how attitudes to using English as the medium of instruction have fluctuated repeatedly between the 1940s and the present day. In each case, policy change has been 'based mostly on ethno-nationalism and political expediency' and each change in practice has been carried out 'without adequate planning and preparation.' They document the detrimental effects of these unprincipled and unplanned changes on children and on the development of education in Sri Lanka in general.

Staying with English, we move next to a discussion by Michael Meyler, who is a long term resident of Sri Lanka, a teacher of colloquial Sinhala and Tamil and a researcher of Sri Lankan English. In Chapter 14, Meyler asks whether 'Sri Lankan English' [is] 'An appropriate model for the teaching of English in Sri Lanka?' His question arises from a proposal, emanating from the Sri Lankan Government in 2009, that Sri Lankan English or 'English Our Way' should become the model for English language learning and teaching in the education system. The proposal attracted widespread attention but it soon encountered resistance from various groups in society and it now appears to have been shelved. Meyler's argument is that the proposal still has some value but that there needs to be consensus on what exactly 'Sri Lankan English' is.

The final chapter in the collection, 'The role of the standard variety in defining sub-varieties: A study based on teaching English and Tamil' is by Rukshaan Ibrahim from the University of Peradeniya. Ibrahim also looks at the 'English Our Way' initiative and compares it with attempts to identify a 'standard Sri Lankan Tamil'. These initiatives were intended to free Sri Lankans from the dominance of inappropriate external language varieties (British English and Indian Tamil respectively). However, both schemes are questionable because the state's involvement in standardising languages – ostensibly to overcome the country's linguistic problems – inevitably 're-creates hegemony' and potentially gives rise to new problems.

Lessons learnt

Eleven important lessons can be drawn from this volume. As the experience of Sri Lanka itself demonstrates, ignoring these lessons may have extremely serious consequences.

1. Multiple interpretations of the concept of 'social cohesion' exist. Social cohesion is a core element in approaches which, following Sen (1999), see development as 'freedom'. (Chapters 4, 10)
2. Social cohesion works at two levels. It concerns the relationship between the individual and his or her community. It also concerns relationships between groups in the wider society. (Chapters 6, 9, 11)
3. The freedom to use, become literate in and be educated in one's own language is a core human right. (Chapters 1, 2, 5)
4. Discriminatory language policies give rise to civil unrest. Policies which recognise language rights contribute to social cohesion. (Chapters 1, 2, 3, 5)
5. Legislation that recognises language rights does not, by itself, guarantee that language rights will actually be enjoyed by minorities. Practice frequently differs from what the law requires, either because the legislation has been badly planned or because there is no political will to bring about change. New policies therefore require careful planning before being formalised. Legislation, once passed, must be followed up by concrete action. (Chapters 2, 5, 12, 13)

6. Public discussion and writing about language in society often reflects and contributes to political, religious and ideological differences. Those who speak and write about language should do so responsibly, making sure that everything they do and say contributes to social harmony. (Chapters 7, 14, 15)
7. Parents and politicians alike are often too easily convinced of the value of using former colonial languages as the medium of instruction, whereas in fact these policies can lead to social division and weakening of social cohesion. (Chapters 6, 8, 10, 13, 15)
8. Mother-tongue-based multilingual education, especially in the early years, provides the best foundation for children's cognitive, linguistic and social development. (Chapters 3, 6, 8, 9, 10)
9. Mother-tongue-based adult literacy programmes strengthen individuals' participation in society and social cohesion of the community as a whole. (Chapter 11)
10. Practitioners aiming to strengthen social cohesion can learn from the lessons offered by the field of group dynamics. (Chapter 4)
11. Overall, stakeholders – from politicians to parents – require information about language in society and language in education which is accurate and which is presented to them dispassionately. Educating stakeholders and changing their perceptions is a slow, frustrating and painstaking task.

Notes

1   Sri Lankan Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration, Sri Lankan Ministry of Education, British Council and GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammen-arbeit, German Body for International Collaboration).
2   OECD's approach is severely criticised by Oxfam (Green 2012).
3   But see Dooly and Unamuno (2009) for a discussion of how socially constructed notions of 'language', 'social cohesion' and 'diversity' in the migrant language programme in Catalonia create tensions.

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Social cohesion, language and human rights

1

Monolingualism, bilingualism and multilingualism: The human rights perspective

Nirmala Chandrahasan

Identity – whether on an individual, social or institutional scale – is something we are constantly building and negotiating throughout our lives, through our interaction with others. Human interaction requires communication and language provides the means of communication. Hence the link between identity, language and social cohesion becomes evident.

However, some identities – notably ethnicity and caste – are imposed. Language defines ethnicity; for example, Sinhalese or Tamil language speakers identify themselves as Sinhalese or Tamil respectively. But individuals can also manipulate a flexible system of identities based on the use of a common language or adherence to a common religion. Hence we can have multiple identities.

Political and legal structures have grown around language communities and so tribal units and states have evolved. Within these entities, language has been used to forge homogeneity or promote language hierarchies by more dominant groups. Historically, conquerors and invading tribes have tried to impose their hegemony over subject people by suppressing their language, as it was realised that language carries with it the history and culture of a people and in it is encoded the identity of a people. An early example is Britain, where invaders from the mainland of Europe pushed the languages of the Celtic-speaking people to the fringes of the island and made English the dominant language. Similarly, during the Colonial era, the English, French, Spanish and Portuguese languages were at the top of the hierarchy in the colonial empires. It was also thought that homogeneity was a requirement for the development of nation states.

Today it is recognised that the melting pot concept is not viable in multi-ethnic states and recognition has to be given to the separate identity of minorities. This is best safeguarded through linguistic rights. The concept of linguistic rights has been developed within international law and encompasses educational and cultural rights. Linguistic rights are the human and civil rights concerning the individual and the collective right to choose the

language or languages of communication in the private or public domain. Linguistic rights can be based on the territoriality principle or the principle of personality. Switzerland is an example of a country which implements the territoriality principle whereas Canada is an example of a state which recognises the personality principle.

These developments in legal thinking can be traced to the concept of Human Rights which was advanced by eighteenth century writers such as Thomas Paine, John Stuart Mill and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. These theories emphasised the inherent dignity and worth of the human person and gave rise to the ideals of the American and French Revolutions as set out in, respectively, the Declaration of Independence of 1776[1] and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of 1789.[2] By extension of the concept, the identity of linguistic minorities came to be regarded as something that needed to be protected, just as individual rights had come to be protected under the law.

Official recognition of these rights came after the First World War (1914–1918) in the 'Minorities Treaties'. The new states which had been created by the disintegration of three great empires – the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Ottoman Empire and Tsarist Russia – were required under specific treaties to guarantee equal rights to the minorities within their populations; special provisions were made for primary education in the minority languages and use of the minority languages in the courts and official records.

With the Universal Declaration of Human Rights passed by the General Assembly of the United Nations Organisation in 1948,[3] we see the start of a new era where human rights norms are part of general international law. This Declaration is now regarded as forming part of customary international law and its provisions have been incorporated into the fundamental rights provisions of the constitutions of most countries, including India and Sri Lanka. Subsequently other conventions and international treaties, under the auspices of the United Nations, have been promulgated, including, most notably, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) of 1966[4] and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights[5] of the same year.

Article 27 of the ICCPR sets out specifically the right of ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities within states to enjoy their own culture, practise their own religion and to use their own language. Another significant international instrument is the Declaration of the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities of 1992.[6] This Declaration builds upon Article 27 of the ICCPR and imposes obligations on states to take measures to promote and protect the identity of minorities. The Declaration focuses on language rights, education rights and the right to a certain degree of control over development activities within the area where the Minority lives.

Other conventions are concerned with specific rights of minorities. These include the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) Convention against Discrimination in Education of 1960,[7] the

UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions of 2005[8] and the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989.[9] There are also regional treaties, such as the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights of 1981,[10] the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages of 1992[11] and the European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of 1995.[12] It will be seen that some of these conventions deal specifically with the subjects of education and cultural diversity. Language is important in the maintenance of cultural identity while education in the minority language is the mode of transmission of identity and language between generations. These subjects have to do with the human rights of communities and hence are the subject of international conventions and treaties.

We will now consider to what extent these international norms are being applied or are impacting on the language policies of different states, including monolingual, bilingual and multilingual nations.

The United Kingdom may be taken as an example of a monolingual country as English is spoken by all the inhabitants and it is the language of administration. But even here in recent times an awareness of the need to protect and nurture the ancient regional languages is evident. In Wales the Welsh Language Act of 1993[13] and the Government of Wales Act of 1998[14] were passed to protect and give recognition to the Welsh language. Then in 2012 the National Assembly for Wales (Official Languages) Act[15] was passed with the aim of further encouraging the use of the Welsh language. Today English and Welsh have equal status in Wales. In Scotland, meanwhile, the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act[16] was passed in 2005; this is the first piece of legislation to give formal recognition to the Scottish Gaelic language. The Act seeks to secure Gaelic as an official language of Scotland, commanding equal respect with English. It is interesting to recall that in 1616, an Act of the Privy Council ruled that Gaelic should be 'abolishit and removit' from the land.[17]

In some states discriminatory policies which did not give recognition to minority languages have led to separatist movements and insurgencies. In Spain during the Franco era the Basque language was prohibited and this led to the ETA (*Euskadi Ta Askatasuna*, Basque Homeland and Freedom) movement in Spain. Today, while the official language of the nation is Spanish, the Spanish Constitution of 1978[18] permits autonomous communities to grant co-official language status to the other languages of the country. The Basque Autonomous Region has therefore given such status to the Basque language. In Turkey, however, under the indivisibility principle set out in the Preamble to the Constitution of 1982,[19] Turkish is the only official language. The minority Kurdish language is not given any official recognition and is not taught in government schools, although private courses in the language may be offered.

Turning to bilingual states, Canada may be cited as a good example. Between 1963 and 1969, the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Bi-culturalism[20] investigated this matter. Its final report rejected the idea of creating two unilingual regions in the country; this proposal would have

made French the primary language of Quebec, while the rest of the country would have used English as its primary language. Instead, the Commission recommended a bilingual strategy that would promote both languages across the country. As a result, the Official Languages Act of 1969, amended in 1988,[21] makes both English and French the official languages, so that federal institutions are required to provide services in both languages. Under the Official Languages in Education programme, started in 1970, bilingualism in education is provided for. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms – incorporated in the Constitution Act of 1982[22] – also enshrines language rights. This policy has largely contained the demand for separation of Quebec, advocated by the separatist parties in Quebec.

Finland is another example of a bilingual state. The Constitution provides Finnish and Swedish as the national languages of the country. Services have to be provided in both languages and the rights of both citizens promoted on an identical basis.[23] The Åland Islands is an autonomous region of Finland which is entirely Swedish speaking and is administered in that language. The Åland Islands was one of the first examples of internal self-determination; this was granted by the Autonomy Act of 1920 (revised in 1951 and 1993).[24] Self-determination has led to demands for secession from Finland and amalgamation with Sweden to be dropped.

Sri Lanka is a bilingual country but in 1956 the 'Sinhala Only' Act (Sri Lanka Consolidated Acts 1956) made Sinhalese the only official language. The Tamil minority which had been asking for parity of status for both languages agitated in Parliament and through the non-violent Satyagraha or non-cooperation movement. When there was no response from the government to the demands of Tamil speakers, calls for separation were made and an insurgent movement began. In 1987 the Government of India brokered the Indo-Lanka Accord,[25] which recognised that 'each ethnic group [in Sri Lanka] has a distinct cultural and linguistic identity which has to be carefully nurtured.' Subsequently changes were made to the Constitution of Sri Lanka:[26] Tamil was also made an official language, and both Sinhalese and Tamil were declared to be national languages.

Under Article 22 of the Constitution, the language of administration is Sinhalese in Sinhalese-speaking provinces and Tamil in Tamil-speaking provinces. In those areas where there is a substantial proportion of minority language speakers, administration is to be in both languages.

Furthermore, Article 22(2) provides that in both administrative areas, citizens should be able to communicate with and transact official business with the government in either language. The Constitution provides for education through the medium of either language and examinations to public services and judicial services are to be held in both languages. But despite the Constitutional provisions, implementation has been poor and Tamil-speaking persons have continued to be disadvantaged in their dealings with the government. Today, after the restoration of peace following upon the end of the armed conflict in the country, it is recognised that the process of reconciliation between the communities requires a better implementation of

the Constitutional provisions which reflect the international law norms on linguistic rights. This realisation has led to the setting up of a special ministry to deal with this issue, namely the Ministry of National Languages and Social Cohesion. The relationship between language rights and social cohesion in a country is aptly reflected in the title of this Ministry.

Looking now at multilingual states, the Swiss Confederation – or Switzerland – is a notable example. The country is a federal state with four national languages: German is spoken by 59.0 per cent of the population, French by 18.9 per cent, Italian by 6.0 per cent and Romansch by 0.4 per cent. Other languages are spoken by 15.7 per cent of the population (Lewis et al. 2014). German, French and Italian are official languages while Romansch has semi-official status, as it cannot be used in official dealings with the Federal administration. The Confederation is obliged to provide financial support to the cantons (the constituent units of the Confederation) to cover the costs of working in multiple languages.

India is one of the largest democracies in the world and it has a very large number of languages. One recent estimate suggests that there are 446 languages (Lewis et al. 2014), whereas according to the 1971 Census there were 1,652 languages (Meganathan 2011, 59). The Constitution recognises 22 national languages whilst, in 2002, 75 different languages were being taught (as first, second or third languages) in India's schools (Meganathan 2011:75). Hindi is the official language of the Indian Union and English is also used for official purposes. Under the Constitution each of the 35 states can adopt its own official language or languages for administrative purposes within its state. Communications between the states and central government are in Hindi or English. (The southern states tend to prefer English.) Article 350 of the Constitution also provides that primary education should be provided to children of minority groups in their own languages.[27] Thus, through the adoption of a federal system which permits each of the states in the Union to develop its own language policy, this large and multilingual country has maintained its unity within diversity.

Having reviewed the language policies of different states – monolingual, bilingual and multilingual – we can see that international human rights law has played an important role in setting standards for linguistic rights and the protection of the identity of linguistic minority groups. It has provided the normative framework for development of democratic practices and multicultural policies in states.

It can also be seen that discriminatory language policies have led to separatist movements and insurgencies within states whereas, in contrast, recognition of human rights and international norms in language policies has brought about greater social cohesion and helped to build national unity. Hence a shift is called for, away from policies of exclusion to those of inclusion in nation building, in line with the international law norms and conventions. Such policies would best contain ethnolinguistic conflicts in states and lead to greater peace and stability.

Notes

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2

Language rights and social cohesion: A balance for inclusion and stability

Fernand de Varennes

> One of the greatest problems facing the world today is the growing number of persons who are excluded from meaningful participation in the economic, social, political and cultural life of their communities. Such a society is neither efficient nor safe. (UNESCO 2003)

Introduction

Ensuring social cohesion, in the sense of reducing inequalities and exclusion while at the same time strengthening social relations, is both a challenge and a vision for Sri Lanka as well as for many other parts of the world. It is, however, a challenge which is feasible if one keeps in mind the lessons, both good and bad, that have been learnt in this regard in other countries. While Sri Lanka in many respects is quite different from the case studies referred to in this chapter, it actually faces challenges which are similar to those which had to be addressed in other countries.

This chapter considers three essential points concerning how language rights and preferences may help social cohesion. While no single approach fits all situations, there may still be processes for determining the right balance to ensure inclusion and stability in a manner which is appropriate in very different countries and circumstances.

To do this, it will be necessary to understand first of all why language is so important in terms of social inclusion, then to consider how language policies, such as having only one official language in a country, can actually be a source of exclusion and instability, and finally to explain how an appropriate, proportional application of language and other rights can help to facilitate the inclusion of minorities in the wider society to the extent that they can flourish as never before. It is with these elements in mind that the following sections will attempt to begin the ambitious search for the right balance for an inclusive society, especially in the area of language.

Finding the right language balance for social inclusion

> While nothing in international law affects the actual choice of a state's official language or languages (or choice of an official religion for that matter) ... this does not mean states can use official languages – or legislate against the use of other languages – in complete disregard of international law, and in particular in breach of human rights which may impact on language matters. (de Varennes 2012a, 23)

A State can be inclusive through its language policies or, in effect, it can increase inequalities and contribute to the exclusion of part of its population through language preferences which in areas such as education and employment – particularly in the civil service – may exclude or disadvantage many individuals. The premise for such a broad statement needs to be elucidated, for in a number of respects it contradicts some widely held presuppositions, such as the fairly common assumption that, by imposing a single official language upon the entire population of a state, a government can ensure a fair deal for all.

From the outset, it needs to be emphasised that language choices and policies can be central determinants in terms of opportunities and access. State language policies and preferences can at times be disastrous because they can result in social exclusion of large segments of the population of a country. Language preferences by state authorities can thus determine whether a minority is included or excluded from political, social and economic power by requiring fluency in a particular employment or political position. The minority group may even be denied the opportunity to vote or to be elected because of the existence of such language preferences. Linguistic barriers like these are often a leading factor in the occurrence of social conflicts in many countries. In such circumstances, it should be emphasised that it is not language differences – or religious differences in some other contexts – which cause conflicts; rather, it is the exclusion or disadvantaging of large groups of individuals by governments through their language preferences and policies. These issues give rise to situations of tension and even conflict.

It is therefore arguable that, in many cases of ethnic strife where a minority or indigenous people is pitched against the power of the state, the deep-laid sources of these conflicts can be linked in the early periods to practices which excluded these segments of society from employment, education and other opportunities. These conflicts can today be easily recognised as at least potentially involving violations of rights in relation to language, as now understood in international law and, in particular, the prohibition of discrimination.

As the following case studies will demonstrate, this hypothesis can be substantiated very clearly in different parts of the world.

Case studies in inclusion, exclusion and linguistic (im)balance

> The unequal distribution of power between languages is a recipe for permanent language insecurity, or outright language oppression, for a large part of the world's population. (Universala Esperanto-Asocio 1996)

Three case studies are examined here, from Pakistan, Bangladesh and the German-speaking population of the region of Bolzano/Bozen in Italy.

Pakistan: Exclusion through language

> [T]he state is more than a passive register of citizen preferences, and in policy deliberation state leadership and initiative are critical. … Here we encounter another paradox: the state is the arbiter and broker of cultural difference, yet the state is unlikely to be wholly neutral in ethnic terms. In the distribution of power within their structures, states inevitably reflect the dominant groups within civil society (by class and interest, as well as ethnic derivation). As noted earlier, many states invest their national personality with the cultural attributes of the leading ethnic community. Even in countries with predominantly civic forms of nationalism, such as the United States, the argument that different communal segments (racial in this instance) were neutrally treated would be impossible to sustain historically. States are thus asked – figuratively speaking – to leap out of their own skins, to transcend their own cultural nature. Notwithstanding the intrinsic difficulties of this task, and the improbabilities of complete success, we contend that the larger requirements of statecraft – the imperative necessities of stability and comity within the polity – make partial realisation possible. (Young 1994)

The state of Pakistan after independence in 1947 was a country split into two separate regions, east and west, on opposite sides of India (Figure 1). There was of course much more than just physical distances separating the two:
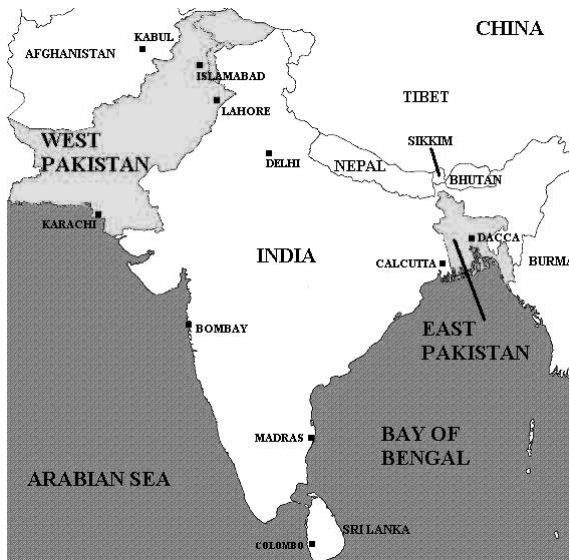

Figure 1: Pakistan, 1947-1971: East and West
Source: www.mtholyoke.edu/~khan23n/classweb/worldpolitics116/Templates2/
LiberationWar.html

there were more importantly major linguistic and cultural differences, the most significant one being that while the vast majority of the East Pakistan population spoke Bengali – in the vicinity of 90 per cent – the West Pakistan population spoke mainly Urdu, Pashtu, Punjabi and Sindhi.

Even though East Pakistan probably contained slightly more than half of the country's population, *de facto* the state was administered and ruled from West Pakistan. The army, police and civil service[1] – all branches of the state – tended to be dominated after independence by West Pakistanis. It did not take long after the creation of the new state in 1947 for frustrations to simmer into unrest, with serious trouble finally erupting in 1951–1952 when the Pakistani Government announced that 'Urdu and only Urdu' would soon become the national and official language of Pakistan (Table 1).

Table 1: Language mobilisation and movement towards secession in East Pakistan: A timeline

Year	Events
1951	Urdu becomes only national/official language
1952	Students protesting against language policy killed by Pakistani army; Bangla Language Movement becomes prominent in nationalist mobilisation
1971	Bengali political party wins almost all seats in East Pakistan; results 'denied' by Pakistani President
1971–72	Riots in East Pakistan, followed by rampage by Pakistani army. War results in perhaps one million victims, the intervention of India and eventually the creation of Bangladesh

It is at times assumed that such a choice of a single, even exclusive state language is highly desirable for the sake of national unity, creating – so it is believed – a citizenship sharing a common national identity. However, if one sets aside what could be described as an ideological stance and considers what such a choice actually represented in concrete terms for individuals in the particular circumstances of Pakistan after independence, this so-called desirable unifying linguistic choice had quite a contradictory impact.

Instead of instilling a sense of 'national unity through one official language', the announcement that only Urdu was to be used as the country's official language was perceived to have extraordinary consequences for the population of East Pakistan. Since the vast majority of the Bengali population were not fluent in Urdu, the use of Urdu as the one official language for the whole country meant in effect the virtual exclusion of almost all of the population of East Pakistan from many areas of employment and positions of power. Thus, given the demographic circumstances of a country such as Pakistan at the time, the main consequence of having only Urdu as an official language was exclusion and disunity: the almost complete exclusion of a very large segment of the population through an official language policy completely inappropriate for the eastern half of that country, as most observers would now admit with hindsight.

For the more than 90 per cent of the population in East Pakistan who spoke Bengali, this single official language ideology meant not only that they were to be disadvantaged: they were to all intents and purposes completely removed from various fields of the country's polity and denied access to many of its benefits and opportunities. The official language announcement was the source of East Pakistan's first massive demonstrations – the *hartals* – against the government in Dhaka and it produced some of the critical symbols for the movement which led towards that region's eventual independence.

A key symbol of the movement towards an independent Bangladesh, and eventually of that country's national identity, involves language and an incident which occurred on 21st February 1952. Twelve young demonstrators, who were protesting against the government's language policies for socially excluding most of the population of East Pakistan, were killed by the Pakistani army and police near the then Dhaka Medical College. While the demonstrations and riots did not initially call for the creation of a separate Bangladeshi state, these killings propelled the formation of the Bengali Language Movement which would eventually take up a leading role in this direction.

The drive towards separatism was not a foregone conclusion: the government of Pakistan did make a few gestures in providing for the use of Bengali by state authorities in some limited areas, but these language rights were never implemented completely or adequately. As a result, the period between 1951 and 1971 saw an increasing festering of resentment and growing anger at the fact that Bengalis, despite being more than half of the national population, continued to be excluded and vastly under-represented in the civil service and the military, as well as in gaining access to state funding and other economic help. This resentment – in combination with other factors led to increasing demands for autonomy and, eventually, to a civil war and the independence of today's Bangladesh in 1971 (following intervention from India).

The importance of the language issue for the national mythology of the new country – even its very *raison d'être* – cannot be overemphasised: the victims of the events of 21st February 1952 and the Bengali language itself became national symbols. The initial demands of those involved in those first demonstrations and *hartals* for language rights – demands against the social exclusion associated with having Urdu as the only official language of Pakistan – became the main demands of the Bengali Language Movement, which eventually propelled East Pakistan into becoming an independent Bangladesh. It is mainly for this reason that language to this day remains so central to Bangladeshi national identity and national symbols.

Thus the Shaheed Minar, the Martyrs' Monument (Figure 2), near where the twelve young demonstrators were killed on the 21st February, is today a national monument to both the birth of the language movement that would lead to the formation of the country and the sacrifice of those who gave up their lives for the language rights of and better opportunities for all Bengalis. The recognition of the centrality of language in the country's national identity does not stop there, however: the 21st February is also celebrated

Figure 2: The Shaheed Minar: Monument to the Language Martyrs of Bangladesh
Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Shaheed_minar_Roehl.jpg

in Bangladesh as Language Movement Day, perhaps its most important national holiday. Furthermore, one of the highest civilian awards from the Government of Bangladesh, the Ekushey Padak, was established in memory of the sacrifices of the language movement of 1952 and is awarded to those who have made outstanding contributions in the fields of literature, fine arts, education, journalism, poverty alleviation and so on.

There is another side to this story which is not so well known. It was this significance of language which led Bangladesh to propose to UNESCO and the United Nations to adopt the 21st February as International Mother Language Day.[2] Bangladeshi groups have also been instrumental in erecting other 'language monuments' in an increasing number of countries around the world. So every year, the international community celebrates on 21st February a day which started as a demand for language rights to ensure the social inclusion of a vast proportion of the population of Bangladesh in terms of access to jobs and greater opportunities in the economy, education and government.

Tibet: Language and exclusion on the roof of the world

At enim opera data est, ut imperiosa ciuitas non solum iugum, uerum etiam linguam suam domitis gentibus per pacem societatis inponeret. ... Verum est; sed hoc quam

multis et quam grandibus bellis, quanta strage hominum, quanta effusione humani sanguinis comparatum est? (Augustine of Hippo)[3] (But the imperial city has endeavoured to impose on subject nations not only her yoke, but her language, as a bond of peace…. This is true; but how many great wars, how much slaughter and bloodshed, have provided this unity?)

While the events in Pakistan might seem far removed since they go back to a period more than 40 years ago, similar – if not identical – language practices are currently being put into practice in Tibet,[4] or more accurately the part of Tibet known as the Tibetan Autonomous Region or TAR.

Tibet has experienced high levels of development in recent years, through the efforts of the Chinese Government. However, to all intents and purposes, the social exclusion of Tibetans has increased rather than diminished. This is partly because of increased language exclusion in employment and education, even though the Tibetan language is one of TAR's official languages. The status of 'official language' in TAR, though, is mainly symbolic and in practice is not implemented, in the sense that there is no right to obtain services in the Tibetan language in most of the state offices in the region. As a result, there is little, if any, official use of the Tibetan language – and certainly nowhere to the same degree as Putonghua (Mandarin) – and therefore there are few employment opportunities associated with the language. (See Table 2.)

Table 2: Increased exclusion and marginalisation of Tibetans through language

• About 80 per cent of Tibetans are not fluent in Putonghua (Mandarin)
• Almost all Government and other jobs require fluency in Putonghua
• Almost no jobs require Tibetan (even if this is supposed to be the first official language)
• Result: Tibetans are increasingly excluded from Government and most other employment
• Example: Out of 100 government positions available in October 2006, 98 went to Han Chinese and only two to Tibetans

It is not an exaggeration to say that in Tibet ethnic tensions in recent years have increased, not diminished. The Dalai Lama has described developments there as cultural genocide, not only because of restrictions on the Buddhist religion but also – and perhaps mainly – because of issues relating to language rights and their connection with social inclusion or exclusion.[5]

It is becoming clear that the Tibetan language itself is increasingly threatened and displaced through the impact of the language preferences and policies of the government of China. According to the official Chinese 2010 census data, ethnic Tibetans constitute 91 per cent of the population and ethnic Chinese around eight per cent.[6] These statistics may not be reliable for a number of reasons, but they show that, officially, ethnic Chinese are supposed to be only a tiny proportion of the population whereas more than 90 per cent of TAR's almost three million people speak some form of Tibetan. However, even by 2003 the small number of Han Chinese made up more than half of

total cadres employed in civil service positions. For their part, despite being more than 90 per cent of the population, the proportion of ethnic Tibetans in the same category of civil service employment dropped from over 70 per cent to less than 50 per cent in just five years between 1997 and 2003.[7]

In other words, despite Tibetans being an absolute majority in the Tibetan Autonomous Region and despite this region nominally representing a form of territorial autonomy with Tibetan as the first official language for authorities there, the Tibetan language is actually not used by the authorities. Consequently, knowledge of Tibetan as a language of employment or opportunity is currently not accepted by state authorities: Putonghua is used increasingly and almost exclusively as the working language of public administration – and hence employment – for civil service employees. The result of Tibetan almost never being used in government offices is that Han Chinese rather than Tibetans are employed out of all proportion to their relative size in the region's population. For their part, Tibetans find themselves excluded from many jobs where only knowledge of Putonghua is required, to a degree that is also completely disproportionate to their numbers in the population.

The photograph in Figure 3 shows another development parallel to the official government policies in support of Putonghua to the detriment of the Tibetan language and its speakers. The denial of language rights results in social exclusion not only in the public sector but also in private areas of the economy, which are often dominated by Han Chinese through government contracts or contacts. Private (Chinese) employers in locations such as Lhasa often openly indicate they will only hire other ethnic Chinese: they will put up signs indicating either that Tibetans need not apply or – as in this case – that a Han Chinese will be paid 50 yuan whereas an ethnic Tibetan will receive only 30 yuan (60 per cent of the Han Chinese wage). It is significant that the sign is written only in Chinese.
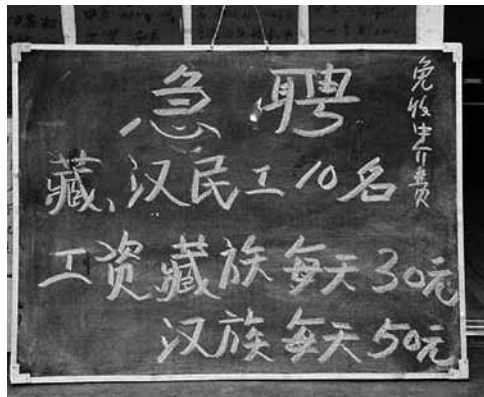
Figure 3: Chinese preferred – and paid more – in Tibet[8]
Source: www.savetibet.org/evidence-of-overt-chinese-discrimination-against-tibetans-in-the-job-market-photos/

Not to put too fine a point on the matter, government authorities in TAR hire proportionally very few civil servants who speak Tibetan because the government in effect refuses to implement the law that should make Tibetan the region's first official language. The degree of political and social exclusion is extraordinary (despite the facts that some Tibetans do work in the civil service, are hired in private businesses and occupy positions in the Chinese Communist Party).

Thus, exclusion is partly, if not entirely, due to the exclusive use of the Chinese language in several domains, as we have seen, even though this is contrary to the language laws of the country. The exclusion of Tibetans even from the capital's Party Committee, which in effect administers the city of Lhasa, shows this to be getting worse (Table 3). While Tibetans should still theoretically be a majority in Lhasa, their influence in the city's main political institution has plummeted; whereas in 1986 Tibetans made up 81 per cent of the members of the Party Committee in Lhasa by 2006 their numbers had dwindled to just 27 per cent.

Table 3: Tibetan representation in Communist Party Committee in Lhasa

Dates	Members N	Of whom Tibetan N	Tibetans as % of total
1977–86	65	32	49
1986–87	31	25	81
2006	30	8	27

Since a majority of Tibetans are not as fluent in Putonghua as are most ethnic Chinese, they therefore find themselves left out of any employment and economic and educational opportunities: Chinese thus becomes a language of social exclusion for the Tibetans in their own land.

The German-speaking minority of Italy: From social exclusion to inclusion

> And from His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variety of your languages and colours; surely in this are signs for the learned.[9]

Conversely, a government language approach which broadly speaking reflects the actual population composition of a region can be inclusive in terms of employment and opportunities. There are many parts of the world where this is the case, including India, Canada and Switzerland (as Chandrahasan has shown in Chapter 1 of this book). Perhaps even more instructive, however, is to take the example of one country which would not immediately spring to mind in terms of language issues: Italy. As surprising as it may sound, the large German-speaking minority in the region known as Bolzano/Bozen in northern Italy (Figure 4) did for a period experience a situation of social exclusion.

Figure 4: Location of the Bolzano/Bozen region
Source: www.coolingtown.at/

A violent separatist movement – the *Befreiungsausschuss Südtirol* (Committee for the Liberation of South Tyrol) – emerged in this part of Italy in the 1960s. It embarked on a campaign which destroyed public buildings and monuments and also murdered 15 Italian policemen and soldiers. One of the main reasons for this violent separatist movement in the middle of democratic Europe was the claim that the German-speaking minority was excluded from employment and other opportunities by the language policies of the Italian government. In the Bolzano/Bozen region, the German-speaking minority constituted more than 62 per cent of the population but they occupied only about 15 per cent of the jobs in the civil service in the 1960s.

Table 4: 2001 Allocation of public employment positions in Bolzano/Bozen[10]

Public positions	Italian speakers	German speakers	Ladin speakers
10	3	7	0
100	27	69	4
1000	265	691	44

By the late 1960s, negotiations between the governments of Austria and Italy – also indirectly involving representatives of the German-speaking minority – led to the recognition of a number of language rights. The minorities were granted the minority a higher degree of autonomy and financial support. Perhaps more importantly, a quota system was adopted to ensure that government departments in the region used both the German and Italian languages to a high degree, with the result that public employment
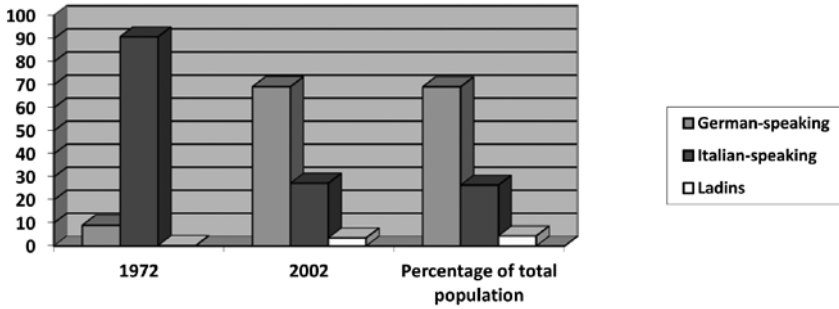
Figure 5: Languages spoken by civil servants in Bolzano/Bozen, 1972-2002 (%)[12]

opportunities are allocated in strict proportion to the percentage in the population of the German minority, the Italian community and a small local minority known as the Ladin, as shown in Table 4.[11]

Today in South Tyrol, there is no separatist movement, the region is very successful economically and the German-speaking minority is fully comfortable and fully a part of Italian society. Even more importantly, the implementation of their language rights within the framework of an autonomy arrangement and quota system has guaranteed the proportional inclusion of this minority in Italy's social, political and economic opportunities. Indeed, Figure 5 shows rather clearly, the various measures that ensured a proportionate use of the German minority language in civil service employment had a striking impact on the representation of members of this minority in employment: in essence, from their virtual exclusion prior to 1972, despite being over 60 per cent of the population of the region, they now have an equitable and proportionate presence today.

Language exclusion or inclusion: Some lessons

> Does not the sun shine equally for the whole world? Do we not all equally breathe the air? Do you not feel shame at authorising only three languages and condemning other people to blindness and deafness? Tell me, do you think that God is helpless and cannot bestow equality, or that he is envious and will not give it?[13]

In many parts of the world the main languages within a country are used by state authorities in a roughly proportional manner through language rights or devolved forms of autonomy: the result is to create more tangible and effective opportunities for minorities – as well as their inclusion – in areas such as employment. Whenever a minority language is a language of employment in the civil service, this almost invariably increases the proportion of minorities benefiting from such opportunities. The simple reason for this is that members of the majority seldom bother to acquire fluency in a minority language.

Thus, instead of being under-represented – sometimes grossly so, as the situations in Pakistan, China and, for a period, Italy showed – minorities are more likely to find themselves included in the state apparatus fairly to a degree that reflects broadly speaking their relative population size. To put it bluntly by using again the example of what occurred in Pakistan, making Urdu the exclusive official language of government – and not providing for the use of Bengali to any significant degree in the civil service – meant in practice that Bengalis were largely excluded and would not be hired in government in anything close to their proportion of the population. Today, under evolving international human rights law, this could arguably be seen as discrimination on the ground of language.

While such an understanding of what constitutes discrimination in the field of the use of a language by public authorities is still evolving in inter-national law,[14] the need for reasonable language preferences by a government in terms of language use by state authorities would suggest that there must be some kind of 'linguistic proportionality.' When there is a sufficiently large number of individuals from a linguistic group involved, there is a right for them to have their language used to an appropriate degree in the institutions and activities of the state, including in employment and education, to truly reflect in an inclusive way their relative size within the civil service workforce, amongst others.

Conclusion

> For it was not the languages which were the causes of men's uniting for evil objects, but the emulation and rivalry of their souls in wrong-doing.[15]

This small number of cases and contexts confirms that in the presence of a large linguistic community, the most effective way for a government to ensure their inclusion in society is to provide for the use of their language so that they can share proportionally in economic, social and employment oppor-tunities. There is also the implication, especially in the case of a language spoken by a substantial proportion of the population, that the speakers of that language have rights that are protected, respected and implemented to ensure they are treated in a way that reflects the reality on the ground in a balanced, proportionate and inclusive way.

Having legislation which recognises the right to use the main languages of a country may be an important and necessary step in this direction, but it is not always a sufficient one. As the example in Tibet shows, unless a law is implemented and a particular language is actually used in practice – and indi-viduals hired on the basis of their fluency in this official language of work and service in the institutions of the state – such measures will not result in a pro-portionate representation of a minority in terms of employment, education and participation in society in general.

On a more positive note, as the case of the German-speaking minority in Italy shows, the civil service can largely mirror a country's main population

groups in terms of employment. As it and other successful examples of social inclusion around the world show, this approach of proportionality for social inclusion is not only often practised successfully, it is also what is proposed internationally by those documents which identify the approaches and standards that should be followed in terms of language rights and the rights of minorities and indigenous peoples.

While the terminology, the approach and the precise methods may vary, none of these suggest that all languages should be treated identically: that would be unworkable and impossible. All, on the contrary, would seem to agree however that a practical implementation should be based on proportionality or to a degree that suits a particular language and the nature of the services or rights involved.

In a sense, the linguistic reality in Sri Lanka was recognised as far back as 600 years ago in the 1411 trilingual inscription of Chinese Admiral Zheng He which – in a proportionate way – reflected the country's linguistic and religious reality. The inscription is written in Chinese, Tamil and Persian, the latter being the main administrative language of the Mughal Empire which culturally had great influence on the Singhalese parts of the island.[16]

The Government of Sri Lanka faces a different social, political and linguistic landscape today, but in recent years it has also been taking steps in the direction of proportionality in matters of the use of language, though in truth more and continuous efforts are needed to reach a balance in language choices and preferences that is fair and reasonable and can contribute to a truly inclusive – and harmonious – Sri Lankan society.

Notes

1 For example, although Bengalis constituted more than 50 per cent of the country's population, officers of Bengali origin made up only five per cent of Pakistan's military forces by 1965. Reliable data are difficult to access for this period other than for the military. For further statistics, see Musarrat & Azhar (2012).

2 International Mother Language Day was first proclaimed by UNESCO on 17th November 1999 and it was recognised by the United Nations General Assembly in Resolution A/RES/61/266 of 16th May 2007 when 2008 was decreed as the first International Year of Languages.

3 Augustine of Hippo. Circa 410. *De Civitate Dei, Liber XIX, c.VII* (The City of God, Book XIX, chapter VII).

4 For a more detailed discussion of the language issues in Tibet, see de Varennes (2012b).

5 See 'Cultural genocide taking place in Tibet, says Dalai Lama', *Hindustan Times*, 19th November 2010. Available online at www.hindustantimes.com/India-news/Himachal-Pradesh/Cultural-genocide-taking-place-in-Tibet-says-Dalai-Lama/Article1-628496.aspx.

6 www.stats.gov.cn/english/statisticaldata/censusdata/

7 de Varennes (2012b, 19–23)

8 The sign reads: 'Urgent need (no commission fees) / We want 10 workers from Tibetans and Han Chinese / The daily wage is: 30 *kuai* RMB for Tibetans / 50 *kuai* for Han Chinese' (translated by Dr Ning Yi, University of Leeds). *Kuai* is the colloquial term for *yuan*.

9 *The Qur'an*, Surat ar Room 30, 22.

10 Jobs in the public service are allocated on the basis of a system called ethnic proportion. Every ten years, after the results of the general population census have been announced,

public service positions are allocated in rough proportion to the number of people who have indicated being Ladin-, German- or Italian-speaking. See de Varennes (2012a, 18).

11 The modern basis of the current autonomy arrangement is the outcome of a long series of negotiations over different periods. Known as the 1969 'Package', it contains 'some 137 measures … as well as an 18-stage Operational Calendar for the Package's implementation.' For a detailed description of the history and content of the autonomy arrangement from which the above is taken, see Alcock (2001).

12 The data for Figure 5 are extracted from Benvenuto (2007, 19).

13 Saying attributed to Saint Constantine (Saint Cyril, 827–869) in *The Life of Constantine* by Clement of Ohrid (c.840–916), reprinted in Kantor (1983).

14 *J.G.A. Diergaardt (late Captain of the Rehoboth Baster Community) et al. v. Namibia*, Communication No. 760/1997, U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/69/D/760/1997 (2000) and *Kevin Gumne and Others v. République du Cameroun*, Communication 266/2003, African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, done in Banjul, The Gambia at the 45th Ordinary Session, 13th–27th May 2009.

15 Philo of Alexandria or Philo Judaeus, c. BC 20 – AD 50. (1854, 3).

16 A picture of the stone can be seen at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Gall_Trilingual_Inscription.jpg.

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3

Multilingual education: From 'why' to 'how'

Helen Pinnock

Introduction

Multilingual societies increasingly need to balance the political, economic and pedagogical issues around language, so that all children can be given a good education and contribute to the growth and stability of their nation. There is strong evidence that the best way for children to learn is in their first language or mother tongue, with good quality second language teaching of national or international languages. Where children who speak a non-dominant language are denied such multilingual learning opportunities, the educational and social inequities created are associated with conflict, fragility and delays to economic growth. Language requires a central place in education policy, planning and practice. Many school systems need updating to apply the evidence on how children learn languages. However, making all the changes needed can seem like a daunting task. Recent investigations by Save the Children[1] and other organisations into scaling up mother tongue based multilingual education have captured insights into how basic education systems can be developed to use language more effectively for children's learning.[2] This chapter shares key findings from this work and offers suggestions for how educators can promote a better balance between linguistic and cultural identities, national development and educational inclusion.

Education is important for social cohesion and language is essential for education: both education and language can be used to divide or unite societies. I discuss here firstly how poorly designed or badly implemented language policy can worsen the divisions in societies which fuel conflict and then how this can be avoided. I will argue that unless the evidence on how children learn language is applied in conflict affected countries, policy aimed at strengthening language, education and cohesion will fail. There are increasingly successful attempts in many countries to get language policy and practice right, particularly in relation to education. However, failures of making and implementing policy are continuing in countries where there are very high risks associated with failing to deliver an effective and evidence-based language policy.

Language policy failure in conflict affected countries

When children do not understand the school language[3] they are excluded from education. This is the situation in which an estimated 220 million children worldwide find themselves (Dutcher 2004). Children who are worst affected are those who speak one language at home with their families but come to school to find an unfamiliar language being used. These children are usually rural and often from poor areas. These are the children that I would like to focus on.

Lack of education in familiar languages, combined with conflict or fragility, indicates major risks to stability and growth. Being excluded from educational success because you are in a group who does not speak the language of school worsens the divisions between your group and the groups who do speak that language. This fuels fractionalisation – essentially, the gaps between different groups in a society (Pinnock 2009). Highly fractionalised societies have far greater chances of being in conflict or returning to conflict; provision of services like education can either worsen or reduce fractionalisation (Alesina et al. 2003).

From another perspective, it is important to remember that using only an official language for teaching fails to teach that language effectively to the people who did not grow up speaking it. Poor learning results from many countries confirm this picture (Pinnock 2009). Failed second language teaching stops people building economic growth for their country and instead favours elites who have spoken the preferred national or international language all their lives.

We need a specific method for using language in children's education, because schools are not easy places to learn a new language. The biggest myth about language in teaching is that children will pick up a language if it is used for teaching or reading. This is not true unless children use that language in everyday interactions. This is why English medium private schools for the wealthy can appear to be successful – because from their earliest years those children have had hours of in depth access to English, in ways that allow them to build meaning from context, starting with conversations with parents and moving to books, TV and the Internet.

Schools are not easy places to learn a language if children do not use it in daily life, because young children build new language gradually through interactions with tangible contexts. If you take your child to the market, they will learn the language you are using there because they can see what is happening when things are being bought and sold. This does not happen in school, where the context is often removed, particularly when teachers use rote learning methods or read from the textbook. School is often only a few hours out of a child's day, so it does not offer enough language for children to really build up a strong familiarity with a second language.

In this situation, removed from a context which enables them to decode unfamiliar language easily, young children are at a particular disadvantage. Until they have acquired a foundation of concepts through their first language ('the language in which they think') and have developed more abstract

thinking and decoding skills (roughly around age 12), many children find it extremely difficult to build second language competence through exposure only at school.

If teaching or literacy are in unfamiliar language without strong, evidence-based teaching methods being used, most children will not get the support they need develop their first language to the level required for learning efficiently. Also, few will acquire enough second language to cope with academic subjects, so they will not pass exams. When they get to upper primary, the level of abstraction and vocabulary is too much for the scraps of second language that the children will have 'picked up' from their teacher.

With this in mind, it is clear that policy about language needs to specify the methods for how language should be acquired in school. Unfortunately, in many countries language policy has simply stated which language should be used for teaching, without stating how to use it.

Shaping language policy to avoid failure

To avoid these problems, policy should be built around a few key educational principles which have been drawn from the large amount of evidence on how children learn unfamiliar language. These include the following:

- Cognitive/linguistic development in the first language is the key predictor of success in other languages (Cummins 2000). This means that children need support in school to develop their first language extremely well.
- It takes around seven years of learning a second language to cope with an upper primary science lesson taught in that language (Cummins 2000, Heugh 2005).
- Introducing teaching of a second language early is useful; but it must be built on concepts already well understood in the language with which children have been familiar from birth.

For children who speak one language at home and are expected to become competent in an unfamiliar language through school alone, mother tongue based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) is effective.[4] MTB-MLE strengthens first and second language acquisition throughout basic education: it makes language a central and strategic element of learner centred teaching.

For children with little everyday access to official languages – especially with few supports to survive the education process in contexts where they also experience poverty, hunger, living a long way from school, or poor health – MTB-MLE is essential to transform their learning outcomes. The cost of repetition and poor performance from inappropriate school language is higher than the cost of adopting MTB-MLE. The evidence base for this is very large and I would urge you to look at the many studies of MTB-MLE in Asia (SEAMEO 2009, Save the Children 2009).

Therefore, the ideal language policy should promote MTB-MLE for the whole of basic education, in places where children face these language barriers. Part of the reason why MTB-MLE has not been taken up in more countries

is a misunderstanding that schools need to choose between mother tongue education and second language education. In countries where children need to use local, national and international languages, education in fact needs to be *multilingual*. This means using the language a child already understands for teaching and gradually introducing second or third languages in a communicative way. This can be done from an early age, as long as it continues for the whole of basic education without abrupt changes.

So, what shape should language policy take? First, policy should explicitly state that it supports both teaching in children's first language and second language acquisition throughout basic education. Policy should not confuse target languages with languages of instruction. The language of instruction is a means for helping children learn. A target language, which may be the official language of a nation or a language deemed important for trade, is one of the skill sets which children should gain by the end of their education.

Language policy must also be based on aspirations for national identity and recognition of current reality, as Barbara Trudell (2011) has pointed out recently. Whether language policy is stated or unstated, it will exist. National political and educational leaders should be open about the aspirations and intentions around language use which exist in society. For example, having a mother tongue education policy on its own will not work where people see English as a means to getting a good livelihood and building the future of the nation. In these contexts, offering good access to English as either a taught subject or part of a multilingual teaching approach will be vital. Again, policy should make it clear that people do not have to choose between first and second languages and that both are essential for second-language success.

It takes many years to gain strength in a language which you have not grown up with. There is often not time within basic education for children who have not learned the official language from birth to become good enough at it for higher education or employment purposes. Therefore policy should commit to building children's language acquisition skills in school and offer lifelong learning opportunities for second languages. Policy should prevent rapid shifts in the language of teaching and should recognise that moving away from mother tongue teaching in the first few years of school will have very negative effects on learning outcomes (Heugh 2005).

Time will be needed for an education system to move from a failed approach to language to one which uses a mother tongue based multilingual approach: policy should be explicit about this as well. Policy should articulate a long term commitment to move along a 'continuum of good practice' (Webley 2006) to an improved situation, rather than attempting to achieve unrealistically ambitious short term goals.

Implementing better language policy

What should educators do if they want to see a good language policy implemented well? Many school systems need updating to apply the evidence on how children learn languages. However, making all the changes needed can

seem like a daunting task. Recent investigations by Save the Children and others into scaling up mother tongue based multilingual education have captured insights into how basic education systems can be developed to use language well.

New policy should be rolled out bit by bit, starting with areas where language learning barriers are highest, such as poor rural areas where children have very little exposure to the official language and little access to television and newspapers and where education outcomes are low.

Language policy is often sensitive; we have found that it requires 'marketing' to people who may be worried that their interests are not being served. It will be important to expect resistance and backlash and to make changes in areas which are easier to work on in the short term. In the meantime, implementation teams should focus on opening up opportunities and reducing resistance in more challenging areas. Allocating both central and local leadership and resources will demonstrate that this policy has strong support. To convince senior decision makers of the need for improvements, making sure that they can visit schools to see examples of good practice will be useful.

Using aspirational terms is important. For example, bilingual teaching for minority ethnic students in Vietnam has been termed 'Vietnamese through the mother tongue' because it is of such importance that minority children speak Vietnamese. Similarly, it would be useful to encourage private schools to become 'English focus' schools that deliver English skills using up to date methods, rather than teaching in 'English medium', which is outdated and often will not work.

Children's real language environments should be identified, so that teaching can be attempted in the languages which children are actually familiar with. Asking, 'What main language does the community speak?' is not necessarily the same as, 'What language is used by young children as they grow up?' Record children's first languages in early grade reading assessments: how many are learning to read in a second language? If early reading results are poor in areas where children are not learning in their first language, this information should be used to decide if a multilingual teaching and literacy approach is needed. Then programme teams should produce data against this baseline every year, to see whether progress is being made.

Efforts should be made to work towards testing and assessment of learning outcomes in local languages for most subjects. Where tests must take place in a second language, there should be coordination with testing authorities to make sure that the vocabulary of second-language tests correlates with vocabulary taught in schools. Afitska and Clegg (2009) found that in Tanzania, English-medium secondary school exams used vocabulary far more advanced than that taught in schools. Consequently, many students were so confused by the language of the test questions that they could not respond, even though the children were found to know the correct answers when they were tested with simpler English vocabulary.

Primary school teacher training and management should be altered, so that teachers are supported to promote both first and second language

development in children as a central part of the teacher's role. Shifting the teacher allocation system so that posts are allocated according to teachers' skills in the local languages which children speak will be important. Teachers should be given incentives for staying in rural areas where they either speak the local language or have learned it well enough to use in teaching. Flexible ways into teaching should be promoted for local language speakers who have been unable to qualify as teachers because of the language of teaching. Bilingual teaching assistant roles are one example of this.

More research is needed on how rural teachers can work in classes where children speak three or four local languages, but it is a useful principle that teachers should work in the language most familiar to the largest number of children. If nothing else can be done in the short term, teachers should receive clear guidance to encourage children to speak in their first language at school. This will help children's language development and thus their capacity to learn.

Targets within the curriculum will probably need to be modified. Ideally, second language competency targets should be set for the end of each stage of education, not the beginning. We should know how much we want all children to know (for example, English) by the end of lower secondary school, but we should be much more flexible at the beginning of primary school: some children will need to start more slowly as they build up their mother tongue and learn just a few words of the new language. Abstract topics, such as mathematics, should be prioritised to be taught in children's first language as soon as possible, as they are extremely difficult for children to decode in a second language.

Text production will be needed in local languages which may not have been written down yet, or because there have not been enough materials in local languages to help children to read and learn. Consider using materials from neighbouring areas or previous periods, to save costs. Promote local production and approval of local language script and texts, using bodies such as language committees formed of representatives of a local language group. Keep materials in draft for a while for testing and revision and make sure that language committees and local communities get to review and approve new representations of their language. This is vital for ensuring that communities who may not have had much trust in government or the education system are enabled to see that a new approach is aimed at meeting their priorities. Better targeted production of second language texts will also be needed for children who are starting from a very low level of confidence in that language and who have no other exposure to it.

International support

Donors and technical agencies who support education in conflict-affected multilingual countries must promote knowledge on children's language acquisition, as language in education is such a core part of building a cohesive society. Tenders or contracts for education programmes in disadvantaged

areas should request competency in mother tongue based multilingual education. Funding is particularly needed to support frontloading of transition costs for multilingual school systems within education sector plans – not just pilot projects.

Realistically graded, high quality materials relevant to children's lives are needed in international and local languages. Government and donor staff involved in textbook tendering should scrutinise bids and materials on this basis and should hold international publishers to account for better practice. Better performance from the English language education publishing industry is vital in producing materials targeted at children who have no international language in their daily lives. Much more support is needed to stimulate publishing in local languages.

The international English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching community can help by promoting practice which applies the evidence on teaching English to rural children who use local language at home. In the past, many training approaches for ESL teachers have been based more on adult learning approaches for urban immigrants.

Conclusion

These changes and more are being made in countries like Guatemala and the Philippines, leading to huge savings in the cost of getting children successfully through basic education (Pinnock 2009). But not enough international effort is going into supporting multilingual teaching. The evidence is now so strong on the risks of not acting on children's language acquisition in multilingual, conflict-affected countries, that governments and international organisations and companies should expect to be held accountable for failure to act on the evidence.

To conclude, multilingual countries with social divisions have a clear choice between two policy options. One is to promote dominant languages such as English or the national language, so that only those with strong mother tongue development through everyday access to second language are likely to succeed in education. The second option is to build equitable, learner-centred first and second language development through schools. Lack of clear policy and delivery is likely to leave countries with the first situation, with all the risks to national unity which that entails. Experience in the second area is increasing every day.

Notes

1 Save the Children is the world's leading child rights non-governmental organisation. It works in 120 countries.
2 Save the Children's education teams were asked how children who were not able to cope with unfamiliar school language could be supported. This led to a major programme and advocacy initiative on language.
3 School language here means the language officially used for the majority of teaching or testing.

4   For an explanation of the term 'mother tongue based', see Bang and Kosonen (2011), where the authors explain that 'mother tongue' means the language which the child uses most often in daily life.

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4

One stone, two birds: Stories to enhance both social cohesion and transformative learning[1]

Gary Hernandez and Angi Malderez

Introduction

This chapter presents an academic argument, drawing on definitions of social cohesion (SC), group dynamics theory and understandings of transformative learning, for the use of metaphorical stories in interventions aimed at enhancing SC. It is written in a context of calls for the need to focus on the details of SC intervention (King et al. 2010).

The chapter starts with a brief exploration of the context and background, discussing SC and its role in development. After a closer look at definitions of SC, connections with theories of group dynamics are made. One of the main manifestations of group cohesion – shared stories – is then proposed as a possible powerful micro-strategy in interventions aimed at broader SC. The chapter then proposes an additional value added ('bird two'[2]) of metaphorical stories – transformative learning – before outlining possible programme conditions in which the strategy might be most effective. Finally, we briefly mention the role of language and languages in the use of this strategy.

Context and background

Whilst definitions of SC are discussed in more depth in the following section, it is seen here as the manifestation of the glue that holds all members of a society together. It is derived at least in part from a society which is working towards reducing disparities and inequalities. SC can be further divided into *interpersonal* cohesion, defined as 'relating to attitudes and behaviours of different groupings of individuals within a community'(King et al. 2010,6), and *intergroup* cohesion, defined as 'referring to attitudes and behaviours of individuals across key cleavages in society' (King et al. 2010, 6).

SC and its role in development have been of increasing interest to the major development banks and national development agencies since – and perhaps due to – the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development (United Nations 1995). A further indication of the increased attention currently being

paid to SC is the World Bank's establishment in 1997 of a Social Development Department (King et al. 2010).

There are three broad theoretical and practical areas in which SC is linked with development:

- Firstly, SC is an important factor in the achievement of sustained economic growth: SC determines institutional quality which in turn determines economic growth (Easterly et al. 2006).
- Secondly, SC has an important role in post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding programmes. This is evidenced in a recent working paper from the Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding (Paffenholz 2009) which suggests that, after general service delivery (the delivery of basic public services, such as health and education), SC initiatives are, quantitatively, the most common civil society peacebuilding initiative.
- Thirdly, there is a need for SC as an end in itself. This third strand incorporates ideas associated with Sen's (1999) 'capability approach' and human development.

Sen's approach centres on the various things people value doing or being (functionings) and their ability to achieve those functionings (capability). For Sen, capability equals freedom. Seeing development as 'a process of expanding the real freedom that people enjoy' (Sen 1999, 3) as the primary end and principle means, Sen's ideas contrast with a more neoliberal idea of development which views gross national product and/or personal incomes as the 'ends'. In Sen's approach, feeling part of society and/or the ability to participate in society is termed a complex functioning and it therefore follows that the elements of SC which are discussed below also represent possible complex functionings

It could be argued that SC will play a greater role in development thinking and practice in the future. There are two main reasons why this might be so: development paradigm change and the effects of increased economic growth.

First, Harvey (2010) suggests that new models of development arise as a result of financial crises. (For example, neoliberalism emerged due to the crisis of the 1970s.) Jenson (2010, 1) argues that current concerns with SC 'come at a time of "after neoliberalism" , when social policy is being rethought.' In the era of structural adjustment in the 1980s and 1990s concerns centred around getting economic policies right. Today, however, we may be entering an era when concerns are being rebalanced to include getting social policy right.

Secondly, the very fact of increased economic growth in developing countries may itself increase the need for SC activities. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has highlighted how, with high rates of economic growth in Asia, there have also been increases in inequalities (ADB 2007). Inequalities have risen both in relative and absolute terms and relate not only to income but also to education, health and land. The 2006 World Development Report (World Bank 2005) as well as ADB (2007) argue that high levels of

inequality can be deleterious to future growth and development. Further, ADB shows how inequalities and poverty can lead to conflict. Citing Nepal as an example, ADB reports two separate studies which suggest that, during the recent Maoist insurgency, there was a causal link between high levels of social and economic inequality and those districts that were most adversely affected by the conflict (ADB 2007).

The above highlights the important link between SC and development and the likelihood that SC will be of increasing importance in development projects and programmes in the future. It is therefore necessary to establish and describe the main characteristics of projects and programmes which have been successful in fostering SC.

On the other hand, despite there being no agreed indicators of SC and the inherent difficulties in measuring impact that that brings (Jenson 2010, King et al. 2010), some studies have questioned the effectiveness of SC activities (King et al. 2010, Paffenholz 2009). King et al. (2010) even suggests that some current activities are having a negative effect on intergroup SC. The current situation has led to calls for further research, with King et al. (2010) arguing for as much focus on intervention detail as possible. This chapter therefore focuses on intervention detail, the 'how' as opposed to the 'what' (which often seems to be given priority, at least in written accounts).

Defining social cohesion

In the absence of one recognised key definition, clarifying SC is complex. The complexity is in part further compounded due to SC being one of a trilogy of 'social' terms (all of which are variously defined): SC, social inclusion and social capital. All three 'social terms', it has been suggested, are used in discussions of the goal, as stated by the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, of fostering 'societies that are stable, safe, just and tolerant, and respect diversity, equality of opportunity and participation of all people' (Jeannotte 2008, 1). The close interlinking of these 'social' terms perhaps explains why the term 'social cohesion' is used interchangeably with and in place of other such terms by large multilateral development organisations such as the World Bank (King et al. 2010). Jenson (2010) even suggests that SC is a quasi-concept which can be and has been defined as social capital or social inclusion.

It is with an appreciation of the above complexity in distinguishing and defining SC that this chapter draws on four definitions, or extracts from them, which seem to encompass salient elements found in an even wider range of definitions:

1. SC is an 'affective bond between citizens.' (Chi[kin & Ngqulunga 2008, 61, cited in King et al. 2010)
2. SC is manifested by 'local patterns of cooperation.' (Fearon et al. 2009, 287, cited in King et al. 2010)
3. 'Social cohesion is based on the willingness of individuals to cooperate and

work together at all levels of society to achieve collective goals.' (Jeannotte et al. 2002, 3)

4. SC refers to the processes of 'building shared values and communities of interpretation, reducing disparities in wealth and income and generally enabling people to have a sense that they are engaged in common enterprise, facing shared challenges, and that they are members of the same community.' (Maxwell 1996,13, cited in Easterly et al. 2006)

Notable features in these definitions include the possibility of there being both visible and invisible (affective) manifestations of SC (definitions 1 and 2), the need for shared goals (definition 3) and the need for equity (definition 4).

Links with group dynamics and education

One aspect of these definitions of SC which is particularly striking is their similarity with definitions of 'group cohesion' in the group dynamics literature (see, for example, Cartwright & Zander 1968, Forsyth 2010). Insights from studies of group dynamics have long been used in education to inform practice. In view of this and the challenges of finding and using effective interventions to promote SC, as discussed above, this chapter suggests that a closer look at group dynamics and its associated educational practices might reveal possible strategies for use in development interventions.

There is much in the group dynamics literature – for instance, regarding the types and causes of intra- and inter-group conflicts as well as strategies for resolving such conflicts (see Forsyth 2010, for example) – which may be relevant to the general endeavour of promoting SC. However, insights which are particularly relevant to the present discussion include the following:

- Groups can be said to go through various stages of group life starting with a group forming stage, passing through a 'middle' phase (which itself can include further often recurring sub-stages) to, where appropriate, a group ending stage (Forsyth 2006, Schmuck & Schmuck 1975, Tuckman 1965). A teacher managing the forming stage of a new learning group will need to provide opportunities for all members to get to know each other, to develop and agree norms and ways of working and to establish agreed shared goals. At a macro level, very generally speaking, these would surely also be the overarching aims of any programme which is endeavouring to develop SC.

- In the group dynamics literature, 'shared stories' are often cited as a manifestation of the achievement of group cohesion (Cartwright 1968, Dornyei & Murphy 2003, Hadfield 1992). While these can be stories generated by group members about their shared experiences within the group, they can also be stories heard or known by all group members which give rise to a particular shared way of talking, often in metaphorical short-hand – just as our 'two birds, one stone' title assumes that a reader knows the full saying and its metaphorical meaning. Thus, using (being aware of, telling,

listening to) stories in SC interventions may be a micro-strategy worth considering.

Metaphorical stories have an additional advantage in education, as the story below begins to explain:

> *Naked Truth and the Parable*
>
> Naked Truth walked down the street one day.
> People turned their eyes away.
> Parable arrived, draped in decoration.
> People greeted Parable with celebration.
> Naked Truth sat alone, sad and unattired.
> 'Why are you so miserable?' Parable inquired.
> Naked Truth replied, 'I'm not welcome anymore.
> No one wants to see me, they chase me from the door.'
> 'It's hard to look at Naked Truth,' Parable explained.
> 'Let me dress you up a bit. Your welcome will be gained.'
> Parable dressed Naked Truth in story's fine attire,
> With metaphor, poignant prose and plots to inspire.
> With laughter and tears and adventure to unveil,
> Together they went forth to spin a tale.
> People opened their doors and served them their best,
> Naked Truth dressed in story was a welcome guest.
> (Forest 1996)

Yet stories are not simply useful for the entertainment they provide, nor for the metaphorical cloak which can soften the blow of unpalatable 'truths', however valuable these attributes are. Stories-as-metaphors also have the power to facilitate transformative learning: the kind of learning that makes a difference to what people *do*, not just, for example, to what they say or write (Mezirow 1991). Arguably, development initiatives aim to promote positive change, and, given that all learning is change of a sort, there is a sense in which this will inevitably require transformative learning for many if not all members of a society. When opportunities for some potentially transformative learning to occur are planned, as in education (and also in development programmes), they will need to be of the kind that touch the heart and not just the head (Malderez & Wedell 2007). SC also requires the involvement of the heart, as the use of terms such as 'values' or 'affective bonds' in the definitions above demonstrates. Development initiatives for SC, therefore, need to provide similar conditions.

The potential of metaphorical stories to provide conditions in which transformative learning might occur is outlined in the following brief summary argument (drawing on the work of Claxton 1997 and others):

- Prior affectively charged experiences directly and easily inform present actions. In other words, human beings are far more likely to act in the moment on the basis of what they have experienced (first-hand or learnt

by osmosis, as it were, via the actions of others around them) than they are on what they might rationally argue or say they think or believe.

- The learning taken from experience is wordless, often taken for granted and more or less conscious.
- Only when people are in a position where this experiential learning becomes conscious, are they able to decide whether what they learnt experientially continues to serve them well in the current situation.
- Conditions in which insights from past experiential learning can emerge into consciousness include fun, leisure and (crucially for this chapter) metaphor.

As Lakoff and Johnson note, metaphors are powerful:

> … new metaphors have the power to create new reality … this can happen when we start to comprehend our experience in terms of metaphor, and it becomes a deeper reality when we begin to act in terms of it … If a new metaphor enters the conceptual system that we base our action on, it will alter that conceptual system and the perceptions and actions that the system gives rise to. (Lakoff & Johnson 2003, 145)

As with any power tools, metaphorical stories need skilful handling. By 'handling' we mean both story-using or exploiting and story-telling.[3] In this paragraph we focus on the former. In face to face group situations, it may be enough simply for a carefully selected story to be told.[4] For example, simply telling the story could be the strategy to use when the group has members from different sections of a society which lacks SC and when the story is a powerful one with a clear – even challenging – message.[5] It may also be appropriate for a group-work task to be set after the story-telling, such as 'agree on a list of messages you take from this story' from which a whole group list of messages can then be derived and displayed. This could be appropriate when the listeners are accustomed to being and working together, although in the same broad context as above. Again, it may be appropriate to stop there, leaving group members to ponder the messages derived. Alternatively, the story-teller or group leader or teacher, or a group member, may want to make explicit connections between one or more of the 'messages' and a specific topic under consideration in the programme.[6] Finally, it may or may not be appropriate to add a 'so what in our context?' question for discussion. Decisions about which of the above, or other, story-exploitation strategies to use will often need to be made on the day in response to clues derived from careful noticing of participant reactions and informed interpretation of these. This is why we say the use of metaphorical stories needs skilful handling.

As to the role of language and languages in this argument, it is clear that story-telling is a language mediated activity. It is an activity which, as well as requiring skilled and sensitive *users*, as discussed above, requires skilled story-*tellers*. Story-tellers use body-language and props, as well as their expressive use of language, to engage the audience fully and affectively in the event. The power of this strategy lies in its ability to touch those affective parts of

human beings that are, as it were, language-free, as outlined above. The issue of which (world) language is used to tell the story may, therefore, seem irrelevant. However, if engaging the audience fully and affectively is the goal, it seems logical that the language which has the strongest affective bonds for the listeners is likely to be the most effective for such story-telling. It follows that stories told in a listener's first language are likely to have the most affective impact. In a group situation, decisions will need to be made about the (world) language in which the story is told if all members of the audience are to be as fully engaged as possible. Sometimes, for practical reasons, the story will need to be told in a different language from the first language of some or all of the participants. In such cases, and especially where the retelling of the story beyond the initial listening group is desired, opportunities will need to be provided for translation and re-telling in local languages where possible.

Easterly (2006, 116) states that a 'nation-state that has developed a common language among its citizens is more cohesive than one that is linguistically fragmented.' Imposing a common language (when that is understood to mean a world language) clearly violates linguistic rights – a factor likely to lead to an increased potential for *disunity* rather than the reverse. What is proposed here is that a sharing of metaphors and their meanings, whatever world language they are expressed in, creates a kind of shared 'language' that can promote SC.

Parallel learning programme design

If conversations about shared stories are to be had across all sectors of a society – something which would be required for intergroup cohesion – they need to be used with and/or available to all members of all linguistic communities in the society. One way of addressing this need is to consider the channels for story-telling available (e.g. radio), and the language(s) in which the stories are to be told. Another would be to ensure that the stories are used within the context of an appropriate transformative learning programme. Such a programme could usefully work with a different view of the classic top-down hierarchical system. An alternative to this top-down view (which has led to, for example, ineffective 'cascade' programme designs) would be to target all layers of a metaphorical 'onion' of context (where the outer layers are seen as enveloping and defining the context for those in the inner layers). It would provide multiple occasions for the more powerful outer layers to consider the extent to which their policies and actions are in fact creating the optimum conditions for those in the 'next layer in' to contribute to the development effort and learn more, including about the effects of their own efforts with regard to others: a parallel learning design (see Wedell & Malderez 2013).

Conclusion

This chapter was developed in the context of the search for effective intervention to promote SC and in response to calls for an increased focus on

intervention detail (King et al. 2010). The detail in focus here was the use and potential usefulness of metaphorical stories. In exploring this one detail, further relevant and important detail – such as the need for skilled implementers – is revealed.

The chapter has proposed that shared (metaphorical) stories have the ability both to enhance social cohesion and to support transformative learning. Firstly, stories can be used within individual SC intervention activities where the focus is predominantly on interpersonal cohesion. Secondly, when the focus is on intergroup cohesion, stories can be used within a parallel learning programme. Finally, given the likely increasing importance of SC, there is a case to be made for mainstreaming SC (much as gender issues have now been mainstreamed) within any development programme, even where SC is not a specific goal or output. Using metaphorical stories would be one way of achieving mainstreaming.

Notes

1 Our thanks go to Hywel Coleman for his support throughout this writing process from his initial encouragement to present a paper at the Language & Development Conference to his careful editing which has resulted in a much improved chapter.
2 For readers who might not be familiar with the saying 'to hit two birds with one stone', this is used to mean 'to achieve two aims with one action,' It is similar to the Uzbek saying *bir o'q bilan ikki quyonni urish* (to kill two hares with one arrow) and the Indonesian expression *sambil menyelam minum air* (to drink water while diving).
3 The story-user is someone who, through the selection of a particular story or the provision of additional tasks after a story is told, has specific aims in mind. The story-user may or may not be the story-teller.
4 Anonymous (n.d.), Ashliman (1996–2013), Beck Haines (2001–2007), Forest (1996) and Owen (2001) are good sources for such metaphorical stories.
5 A version of 'Blind Men and the Elephant' (Owen 2001) is an example in this context.
6 All stories used would be selected for their perceived relevance to the programme aims.

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Languages as connectors or dividers

5

Reflections on issues of language in Sri Lanka: Power, exclusion and inclusion[1]

Sasanka Perera

Introduction

Language is never a simple issue of communication; in contemporary social and political practice everywhere, language goes much beyond its basic utilitarian purposes. In this sense, Sri Lanka is no exception. Sri Lanka has ended an immensely destructive military conflict that had much to do with a crisis of identity linked as much to language as to ethnicity and contested notions of binary-nationalisms and competitive interpretations of history. In this context, this is a crucial time to seriously consider the politico-developmental position of language in imagining the future of the country.

This chapter focuses on the historical development of the politics of language in Sri Lanka and explores the dynamics of the specific political process that has emerged out of privileging and de-privileging language use in the country. This necessarily has to focus on the policy discourse that has enhanced language regulation and legislation in Sri Lanka as well as political impediments that have retarded the comprehensive implementation of the provisions of these legislative provisions and regulatory frameworks. For me, heading for the future and imagining the future after a catastrophic and very painful recent past and without the hindsight of the larger history that has moulded our collective personality is a recipe for future instability. It endlessly disturbs me that often we as a people seem very reluctant to learn from our own history.

The chapter falls into four main sections. It begins with a survey of the politics of language in Sri Lanka from the period shortly before independence until the mid-1980s. Next, it briefly describes the Official Languages Policy (OLP) of 1987. This is followed by a detailed examination of how the OLP has been implemented, with a focus on a stream of government circulars and other official announcements intended to support the policy. The last main section consists of a report on field work which was carried out in 2010 aimed at investigating how the policy is working in practice. This is followed by a short conclusion.

Politics of language in Sri Lanka from before independence to the mid-1980s

As part of the wave of cultural revivalism that swept the country during the final stages of British Colonialism and the immediate post-independence period, a process of Sinhalisation of the state and its services became manifest:

> The nation was conceptualised in exclusively Sinhala Buddhist terms and it effectively excluded minorities from the project of nation-building. In terms of the dominant strands of Sinhala nationalism, the Sinhala language and the Buddhist religion necessarily had to occupy the pre-eminent position in society, as the glory of ancient Sinhala civilisation could be revitalised only through such means. (Perera 2008, 4)

Language dynamics due to the politicisation of language provided the most powerful manifestation of the Sinhala-Tamil conflict and managed to occupy the centre-stage of Sri Lankan politics during this period. Language became an exclusive marker of ethnicity, particularly in the case of the two dominant groups in the country, the Sinhalas and the Tamils. The politics of ethnicity and language as experienced today have even been imposed on the past, thereby rendering the past itself a casualty of contemporary politics.

Both Tamil and Sinhala politicians espoused the idea of *swabasha* (native languages) during the colonial period in order to achieve primacy of place for Sinhala and Tamil as the local languages. As Perera points out, 'demands for *swabasha* rights were overtly articulated as a protest against the privileges enjoyed by the English educated elite, privileges not open to the masses educated in the local languages' (Perera 2008, 2). The formal process to introduce *swabasha* was initiated in 1944, when J.R.Jayawardena moved a resolution in Parliament to declare 'Sinhalese the Official Language of Ceylon within a reasonable number of years' (Kearney 1967, 63 quoted in Perera 2008). Immediately, an amendment was proposed by V.Nallaiah, a Tamil state councillor, to provide Official Language status to both Sinhala and Tamil. This was seconded by R.S.S.Gunawardena, a Sinhala state councillor, and the resolution in this form was approved by 27 to two in the Sinhala-dominated legislature, a sign of the absence of ethnic overtones in the issue of official languages at that time (Kearney 1967, 63; Kasynathan & Somasundaram 1981, 55; Perera 1991; Perera 2008, 3). The resolution specified that Sinhala and Tamil would become the languages of instruction in schools, examinations for public services and legislative proceedings. Here, then, is the first instance of official recognition of the right of the people to use their own languages when being served by the state in official matters. In 1945, S.W.R.D.Bandaranaike suggested that a select committee should be appointed under the chairmanship of J.R.Jayawardena to advise the government on how changes were to be implemented in achieving the above. In 1946, the committee submitted its report strongly favouring the establishment of local languages as Official Languages replacing English while recommending that the transition should take place over a period of ten years (Government of Ceylon 1946, 12).

The United National Party (UNP) policy of gradual transition ran into a number of problems. In 1951, an Official Languages Commission (OLC) was established to determine the procedures to be followed in the language replacement process. However even by late 1953 – in which year Prime Minister Dudley Senanayake re-asserted the UNP's commitment to gradual change – the Commission had failed to make recommendations.

S.W.R.D.Bandaranaike left the UNP in 1954, citing as his reason the government's inaction in implementing the new official language policies, and launched a concerted attack on the party, claiming to see 'no difficulty in the way of the early adoption of our languages' (Kearney 1967, 65). Soon after his resignation, Bandaranaike founded the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and began mobilising forces supporting the *swabasha* movement within Sinhala society to form a broad-based coalition to wrest political power from the UNP in the upcoming general election (Perera 1991). However, the language issue had still not become a divisive ethnic issue even at this stage, as exemplified by the SLFP manifesto which claimed that 'it is most essential that Sinhalese and Tamil be adopted as Official Languages immediately so that the people of this country may cease to be aliens in their own land …' (quoted by Kearney 1967, 65).

The historical developments that resulted in the establishment of Sinhala as the official language in Sri Lanka in 1956, its repercussions, the subsequent actions taken to remedy the situation through the Tamil Language (Special Provisions) Act of 1958 and the 13th and 16th Amendments to the Sri Lankan Constitution through which Tamil was also decreed an Official Language of the State (state language), providing the legal basis for parity between Sinhala and Tamil languages, have been documented by several writers and have been discussed by many scholars either in their own right or in relation to their implications for other socio-political developments in the country. Kearney (1967), Muthiah and Wanasinghe (2005), Perera (1991, 2009) and Skandakumar (2008) are some of the works in which these developments are documented and discussed.

Despite these signs of accommodation and tolerance, soon after its electoral victory in 1956 the SLFP government passed the Official Languages Act (Sri Lanka Consolidated Acts 1956), popularly known as the Sinhala Only Bill, declaring Sinhala as the Official Language of the country. The passing of the Bill made language a permanent and thus irreconcilable and contested domain in the Sri Lankan inter-ethnic conflict. Moreover, the non-violent protests organised by Tamil leaders to question the provisions of the Sinhala Only Bill ushered in the first wide scale anti-Tamil violence in the century.

In 1966, ten years later, the use of Tamil as the language of administration in Northern and Eastern provinces was begun after the implementation of the provisions of the Tamil Language (Special Provisions) Act (Sri Lanka Consolidated Acts 1958), mostly due to pressure from Tamil political parties. From this time until the mid 1980s, the issue of language remained a contentious political issue, not only as a specific right in the general discourse

of minority politics but also with regard to access to education and state sector employment. Nevertheless, during this time no significant or tangible progress was made on the language front.

The Official Languages Policy

In 1987, through the 13th Amendment to the Sri Lankan Constitution, Tamil was also decreed to be an Official Language of the state and the legal basis for parity between Sinhala and Tamil languages was clearly established by law. As Section 18 (4) of the Constitution states, 'Parliament shall by law provide for the implementation of the provisions of this Chapter' (Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka 1987). In addition, both languages were also defined as 'national languages' while recognising English as the 'link language. ' Currently, all provisions linked to language and language-related matters are covered by Chapter IV of the Constitution.

Further to this, Section 20 of the 16th Amendment to the Constitution provides that a member of Parliament, Provincial Council or local authority is entitled to 'perform his duties and discharge his functions' in either of the national languages (Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka 1987). Section 16 of the 16th Amendment also makes Sinhala the language of administration in the seven provinces in the south and gives Tamil the same position in the Northern and Eastern Provinces.

The Constitution also states that an administrative division in any part of the Island in which there are substantial numbers of both Sinhala- and Tamil-speaking people shall use both languages for record keeping and administration. Moreover, the President has directed that both the Sinhala and Tamil languages are to be used as the languages of administration in the 29 Divisional Secretariat Divisions.

In addition, Section 23 of the 16th Amendment provides that the languages of legislation will be Sinhala and Tamil while a translation of these legislative enactments and laws must be available in English. Further, Section 24 of the same Amendment provides that the languages of the courts in the country will be Sinhala and Tamil, allowing for justice to be available in the languages commonly spoken by the people. Section 25 of the Constitution declares that 'the State shall provide adequate facilities for the use of the languages provided for in this Chapter' (Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka 1987).

Summarising the issues outlined above, particularly in relation to the constitutional provisions governing language related matters, Perera (2008, 6) points out:

> Chapter IV of the Constitution, and the 13th and 16th Amendments in particular, formally recognise the earlier mistakes of language politics dictated by the cultural hegemony of Sinhala nationalism, and provide for extensive and legally binding solutions. In effect, Chapter IV provides for the equitable use of Sinhala and Tamil in all areas of social and political activity. In that sense, the Constitution is both a historical text of mistakes and also their correction, and a point of departure

for the implementation of the Language Policy that has been so exhaustively articulated. The issue is no longer with the Constitution, but with its practical implementation.

From the time of independence, the need has been to establish the local languages in a position of power as they emerged within the overall process of establishing the independence of the state. The place occupied by Tamil at the initial stage and the subsequent 'correction' of such a status must also be understood in this context. Having now addressed this need to establish official status for Tamil, the government's preoccupation becomes one of ensuring that this status is actually implemented.

Implementation of the Official Languages Policy

Apart from the constitutional amendments, the other official measures taken to ensure that the Official Language Policy (OLP) is implemented (as stipulated in the amendment to the Constitution of 1978) have also been discussed by several scholars in their analyses. Collure (2008), Skandakumar (2008) and Perera (2008) discuss the implications of various circulars and directives issued by different regimes in attempts to implement the OLP within the country. Perera (2008:9) points out:

> The constitutional changes were serious and these circulars indicate the various attempts made over the years to implement the provisions of the Constitution. They also point to the failure of the Official Languages Policy at the level of practice due to sheer lack of capacity, mechanisms and skills and [failure to recognise] such lapses. The narratives emerging from these circulars suggest that the government's interest was the speedy implementation of the Language Policy rather than first establishing a long term and robust framework for its implementation.

In 1991, the MPAPCHA issued a circular with the title 'Implementation of the Official Languages Law – Trilingualisation of Forms' (MPAPCHA 1991); this was addressed to Secretaries of Ministries, Secretaries to Governors, Heads of Departments, Divisional Secretaries, Mayors, Chairmen of local government bodies and Government Agents and made the following directive:

> It was decided that forms of all government institutions should be made available in the three languages, Sinhala, Tamil and English printed in the same paper. All old forms not satisfying these criteria should be withdrawn. Secretaries of all Ministries and Provincial Councils should be responsible for implementing this decision.

This was a conscious attempt to implement some of the most basic language rights that affect people in routine circumstances. The same circular referred to eight other previous circulars and letters issued by the Ministry as well as the Commissioner of Official Languages that dealt with implementation issues of the OLP. In 1992, the same Ministry issued another circular under the title 'Preparation of Infrastructure for the Implementation of the Official

Languages Law' (MPAPCHA 1992a). This document stated that the government's objective was to implement the language legislation as laid down by the Constitution and urged heads of government agencies to recognise and address these issues. Most importantly, the circular requested Secretaries of Ministries to investigate and report any lapses in implementing the OLP in departments and institutions under them. Among the six issues identified in the circular were the following:

- government agencies lack staff who possess the required language skills; as a result, members of the public experience hardships and consequently lose faith in the ability of government offices to help them,
- the programme to teach additional Official Languages to government officers is still incomplete, but this cannot be used as an excuse for delaying the implementation of the OLP,
- every head of department must have at least one officer who can communicate with ethnic minorities in the local area using the minorities' own languages,
- every head of department must supply institutions under their control with equipment such as language specific typewriters and train individuals to use this equipment.

A circular that endeavoured to overcome obstacles to the implementation of the OLP was issued in 1996 (MPAPCHA 1996). It emphasised, first, the need to respond in the same language to all letters received in Tamil. It also stated that translation fees had been increased to Rs 200 under Public Administration Circular Number 13/92 (MPAPCHA 1992b) – further increased under Public Administration Circular Number 12/2003 (MPAPCHA 2003) – and that the Official Languages Department had agreed to the use of language advisors based at Divisional Secretariat (DS) offices to support government institutions in translating and even handwritten letters when typewriters are not available. It urged institutions to report all as yet unreported needs for typists so that the Director, Joint Services could look into the filling of such vacancies.

In 1998 the Ministry of Public Administration, Home Affairs and Plantation Industries (MPAHAPI) issued another circular under the heading 'Delegation of Responsibility for Implementing the Official Languages Policy' (MPAHAPI 1998). Restating the rights of the people to be served in their own language as provided by the Constitution, the Circular goes on to define the roles and functions of the Department of Official Languages (DOL) and the Official Languages Commission (OLC). Point 5 of the Circular recognised that lapses had arisen in the implementation of the Language Policy due to 'dearth of qualified staff, and the lack of institutional machinery' (MPAHAPI 1998). It further suggests the setting up of separate units and the appointment of Chief Official Language Implementation Officers and Official Language Implementation Officers and delineates the duties and responsibilities of the officers 'in order to implement the legal requirements' of the OLP 'in a satisfactory manner' (MPAHAPI 1998).

On 30th June 1998, President Chandrika Kumaratunge, writing to her Cabinet of Ministers, also made a clear statement regarding concerns over the failure of implementing the OLP:

> Several instances of failure on the part of Government Institutions to comply with Constitutional provisions relating to Official Languages have been brought to my notice. These are serious omissions as they cause immense inconvenience and hardship to members of the public who are not conversant with Sinhala. Besides, it also amounts to a violation of the law. I dread to think of the plight of citizens who receive letters in a language which they do not understand. This is tantamount to denial of that citizen's fundamental right. (Office of the President of Sri Lanka, 30th June 1997)

In the context of her concerns outlined above, the President went on to issue a series of six instructions to be implemented within a period of two months:

- All regulations, legal provisions and information must be made available in all three languages;
- All printed forms must be made available in all three languages. Where an institution has a large stock of forms already printed, it may print a reasonable number afresh in the Tamil language only, to be attached to the Sinhala/English version;
- All letters received from members of the public must be replied to in the language in which they are written. Where there is a difficulty in doing this, at least a translation in English should be attached to the Sinhala version;
- All name boards of public institutions and other instructions or directives meant for the public should be displayed in all three languages;
- Action should be taken immediately to fill all vacancies in the posts of Sinhala–Tamil translators and the Tamil typists service. Institutions that do not have their own cadre of translators can make use of suitably qualified people on a contractual basis; and,
- Every institution should identify one officer who has responsibility for implementing the provisions of the law relating to language (Office of the President of Sri Lanka, 30th June 1997).

While the letter reiterates points made earlier and emphasises the serious implications of the identified lapses, it also reveals that the government had not appreciated how little capacity there was to implement even the most basic measures outlined above.

Another series of Public Administration Circulars in 2003 and 2010 (MPAPCHA 2003, 2010) made significant revisions to the fees payable for translation, interpretation and typing services procured from external sources where they are not available within government institutions. The second of these circulars simplifies the calculation of costs for simultaneous translations and increases the fee for technical, legal or scientific translations to Rs 400 per page, while other documents are to be charged at Rs 300 per page.

Two very significant Public Administration Circulars were issued to all Secretaries of Ministries, Secretaries to Governors and Heads of Departments in 2007 regarding the implementation of the OLP and, specifically, the

incentive scheme for government officers who acquire the required level of proficiency in the second official language. The first of these, Circular 03/2007 (MPAPCHA 2007a), detailed the particular government service within which second language proficiency was to be required, grouped government officers into three categories according to the level of second language proficiency expected of them and detailed the incentives to be received once they obtained such proficiency. The circular also stated that while syllabi and training programmes are conducted by DOL, the cost of training will be borne by the government. Meanwhile Circular 07/2007 (MPAPCHA 2007b) reiterates, qualifies and clarifies some of the points made by the earlier circular and emphasises the need for all public servants to acquire the stipulated level of language proficiency within five years of being appointed.

Another circular in late 2009 (MPAPCHA 2009) required all Secretaries of Ministries, Chief Secretaries of Provincial Councils, Heads of Departments, Heads of Local Government Authorities and Secretaries of Provincial Public Service Commissions to ensure that two categories of officer – Chief Official Languages Implementation Officer and Official Languages Implementation Officer – were appointed within the existing hierarchy of officers to ensure the effective implementation of the OLP. Their respective duties and responsibilities were detailed in the circular as well.

What emerges then is a situation in which the legal provisions for the fulfilment of language rights have been established without the necessary structural and resource provisions being made for such a fulfilment. According to state regulations, the government must implement the language policy as a crucial part of fulfilling its role. The historical evolution of the politics surrounding language and its official use in the country warrant a high priority to be afforded to its implementation. However, successive governments have not been able to ensure an appropriate outcome. The repeated issuance of circulars concerning the implementation of the OLP and the complaints entertained by the OLC (of which there have been 89 since 2005) point to the fact that the regulations have not been implemented satisfactorily. The failures to take action have been due to financial, infrastructural and intellectual restrictions as well as a lack of political will. Nevertheless, the existence of an enabling legal and policy environment itself needs to be understood as a positive development upon which future implementation strategies may be built.

To its credit, the OLC endeavoured to identify problems relating to the implementation of the OLP and subsequently – in 2005, 2006 and 2010 – issued recommendations to address these issues.

The 2005 recommendations highlighted the fact that only 8.32 per cent of public officials spoke Tamil in a country in which 26 per cent of the population is Tamil speaking:

> The facilities for communicating with the central government in obtaining its services in Tamil are minimal. This situation amounts to a violation of constitutional rights of the Tamil speaking citizens of the country. Apart from the indignities they are made to suffer, they are put into innumerable inconveniences in transacting business with the government. The provincial administrations

including that of the North East miserably fail in serving citizens inhabiting those areas who are not proficient in the language of the administration of the respective province in their own language which has Official Language status (Official Languages Commission 2005, 4).

The recommendations estimated that 38 per cent of government officers needed to be competent in Tamil in order to provide efficient services to the Tamil speaking population of the country.

The 2006 recommendations proposed the establishment of a 'National Translations Centre' modelled on the Translations Bureau of Canada as a means to pool all available resources in the country and bring it under the OLD (Official Languages Commission n.d., 2). The recommendations also proposed that a language resources survey should be carried out to determine the status and distribution of bilingual resources across the country (Official Languages Commission 2005, 4).

The 2010 recommendations lamented the 'inadequate attention' paid by the relevant officials to the recommendations made in previous years (Official Languages Commission 2010, 3). However, the 2010 document also reported that there had been a significant revision of the ineffective training programmes in Tamil as a Second Language for public sector employees (Official Languages Commission 2010, 4). Another significant development recorded by the 2010 report was the publication of the Public Administration Circulars Numbers 03 and 07 of 2007 (MPAPCHA 2007a, 2007b) which – as noted above – provided incentive systems for public officials who gain proficiency in the second language. These circulars also clarified the role of the OLD in developing the content of language courses, setting examinations and assessing trainees. However, the 2010 report stressed that until these Circulars were effectively implemented, there would be no improvement in the situation.

The 2010 recommendations also detailed the obstacles preventing the effective implementation of the OLP. Among these was the inability of successive governments over a period of two decades to take the steps necessary to put the OLP into practice, the failure to recruit sufficient numbers of Tamil speaking officers to the public sector and infrastructure gaps in providing training in the second official language (Official Languages Commission 2010, 26–32).

The observations and recommendations of the OLC (a government-appointed body) make it very clear, then, that the language policy that has evolved over time as well as its state of implementation on the ground have been well understood by successive governments. Unfortunately, however, the prevailing situation remains quite bleak at the ground level.

The language situation on the ground: Three case studies

This section assesses the situation on the ground with particular regard to how far the policy is understood, how far the OLP has been implemented and to what extent facilities are available for people to receive services in

either Sinhala or Tamil. This is done by reporting on field research carried out in Vavuniya (1st December 2010), Jaffna (2nd–3rd December 2010) and Kandy (7th December 2010). These areas were selected because they possess the following characteristics:

- Vavuniya is a Tamil-speaking majority area with a significant Sinhala-speaking presence in Vavuniya South, in addition to military and police personnel;
- Jaffna is a Tamil-speaking majority area with no significant Sinhala-speaking presence, except for military and police personnel;
- Kandy is a Sinhala-speaking majority area with a significant Tamil-speaking minority presence.

In each location interviews were carried out in several different government bodies.

Case Study 1: Vavuniya

The field work in Vavuniya was conducted in the Vavuniya South Divisional Secretariat (DS), the Vavuniya DS, the Vavuniya Police Force and the Vavuniya Hospital.

The Vavuniya South DS was established primarily to serve the Sinhala ethnic population in the Sothern part of Vavuniya. However, the office also serves Tamil-speaking citizens within its area. As such, all name boards and sign posts in the office are trilingual in Sinhala, Tamil and English. The Divisional Secretary[2] at the time the field work was carried out was fluently trilingual orally but he admitted that his office did not have a formally trained translator. This delayed some work as the Divisional Secretary had to depend on informal networks within the office to get translations of official documents which reach him in Tamil (mostly letters originating from within the district). Most daily correspondence with national level state organisations was conducted in Sinhala, however.

The Secretary was of the opinion that bilingual and English language training should be made compulsory for all employees who deal directly with the public. He also pointed out that senior officers (like himself) needed flexible leave arrangements in order to attend comprehensive language training classes, particularly in Colombo. If classes were organised by OLD or the National Institute of Language Education & Training (NILET) at the regional level, Vavuniya South DS office could physically host the training and ensure that its employees participated. However, he noted that language training should not simply be a voluntary matter; it should be directly linked to salary increments and promotion for all categories of employees. The time and effort expended should be rewarded in a way that is beneficial for individuals.

In comparison with Vavuniya South, the DS for Vavuniya is a larger operation which caters mostly to a Tamil-speaking population but also to sizeable numbers of Sinhala speakers. All name and sign boards are trilingual.

However, issues of language have deep rooted consequences here as well. While circulars as a rule are published in all three languages (sometimes in two), a great majority of routine communication from government agencies continues to be only in Sinhala. This includes communications from the Ministry of Public Administration, the Ministry of Heath, the Pensions Department, the Samurdhi Authority[3], the Widows' and Orphans' Fund and the Ministry of Economic Development (in fact the latter Ministry's letterhead is only in Sinhala). A cursory survey of the daily in-tray of mail for the DS for 1st December 2010 indicated that the majority of the mail was in Sinhala with a few regional letters in Tamil. Almost none of the Sinhala language letters were accompanied by Tamil or English translations.

This state of affairs poses a series of problems which seem to crop up regularly in other central and local government bodies in the north, suggesting that there is a consistent pattern and a deeper malaise. That is, despite the constitutional and legal right of the people to receive information and services from central and local government agencies in their own languages, this is not happening on a routine basis. This is more serious when it comes to central government agencies, as the evidence indicates local government bodies primarily communicate with the public and with regional agencies in the dominant local language, which, in the cases of Vavuniya and Jaffna, of course, is Tamil. However, in the Vavuniya DS's office a large majority of state level correspondence is in Sinhala and this leads immediately to a number of problems: delays due to the inability to understand the content of letters, the consequent emergence of an inbuilt system of inefficiency, the consistent violation of the OLP without reprimand and the consistent violation of people's right to receive services and information from the state in their own language. While four graduate translators are based in the Vavuniya DS's office, none of them are actually capable of doing translations due to serious lapses in their languages skills and lack of training in translation; this points to another failed political decision of an earlier era. As such, the DS has to depend on the serves of a retired government servant to get all routine letters translated so that he can comprehend and then act upon them.

The Vavuniya Police Force is in a similar situation with regard to the language which it uses to provide services to the public. Vavuniya is a Tamil Majority area and as such the ability to serve the people in Tamil, particularly in law and order matters, is crucial. However, in a police force of about 300 officers and constables, only about seven are competent in Tamil. The police authorities acknowledge that, with the end of active war, the numbers of people coming to police stations in the region have increased considerably. They also acknowledge that the ability to serve the people in their own language needs to be vastly improved. At present all complaints are recorded only in Sinhala; a Tamil-speaking person can relate his or her compliant in Tamil and, if one of the handful of police officers competent in Tamil is available, the narrative is translated into Sinhala which is then recorded. None of the Tamil-speaking officers are trained translators and so the possibility of errors and inaccuracies seeping into the recorded statements is significant.

At the moment, rather than not recording statements or providing services, the police are attempting to manage with what they have by using informal mechanisms and methods when ideally the system should have been in place. The police are keen to be offered Tamil language training courses in Vavuniya itself at times that they could attend, preferably in the evening. Attendance they think should be made compulsory. This same state of affairs seems to be applicable to the court system where evidence is presented by officers in Sinhala in Tamil-speaking courts, where the accuracy of translations is sometimes in doubt; again this leads to worries about the nature of justice.

The Vavuniya Hospital, like all other agencies in the area, serves a Tamil majority but also Sinhala-speaking citizens (mostly from Southern Vavuniya and police and military officers). The doctors and support staff interviewed were very clear that bilingual training as well as English language training were crucial for them in delivering medical services as well as for their career advancement. Four months before the interviews took place, an English language course – conducted by a teacher from Colombo – and Tamil and Sinhala language courses – conducted free of charge by locally based individuals – had been instituted through the intervention of the Medical Superintendent. There appeared to be enormous support and enthusiasm for this programme, going by the numbers taking part and the commitment shown by some of the key individuals involved in organising these sessions; they were seen to be spending considerable time not only in organising the classes but also in designing evaluation systems, examination papers and so on. This is a striking example of a situation where a handful of committed individuals is trying to do something informally which, under the prevailing law, is actually the duty of the state. Clearly, the hospital is an institution which deserves concerted support from agencies such as OLD or NILET to carry out more formal tailor-made training courses. The hospital authorities were willing to find the time for their employees to attend classes as well as to provide the physical infrastructure needs.

Case Study 2: Jaffna

In Jaffna, the field work looked at the situation in the Jaffna Hospital, the Jaffna Municipal Council, the Jaffna Police Force, the *Pradeshiya Sabha* (the Divisional Council, the lowest level of local government) in the town of Kopay and the University of Jaffna.

Structurally, the situation in Jaffna is quite similar to Vavuniya, suggesting that in similar ethno-cultural conditions the Official Languages Policy is not being implemented seriously. As in Vavuniya, the Jaffna Hospital also received most of its instructions and correspondence from state agencies in Sinhala in a situation where it did not have formal mechanisms to translate these documents. It became apparent that Ministry of Health is one of the most consistent violators of the official languages law. The great majority of correspondence from this Ministry – letters of appointment, salary increments, disciplinary inquiries and so on – comes in Sinhala. In one case, an employee's

legitimate application for promotion was delayed for over a year because his Birth Certificate was in Tamil; the problem was rectified only after a Sinhala translation was obtained. This case shows that crucial documents cannot be readily comprehended by hospital staff; this contributes to a system of in-efficiency and dependence on informal structures for translation services.

The field visit revealed that medical and support staff are of the view that learning Sinhala is of significant importance to them now so that they can deal with the increasing numbers of Sinhala-speaking patients (traders, service personnel, pilgrims) as well as in dealing with officials in Colombo and with official correspondence. They believe that they could save consider-able amounts of time if – at least – letters could be sent in English or with accompanying English translations. A recent request to the Ministry of Heath to provide an official translator has not been granted. At the moment, the hospital relies on informal help as well as the services of a retired translator to get more complicated letters and documents translated.

The situation described above is highlighted by a letter of 20th October 2010 received by the hospital from NILET (a body under the Ministry of Official Languages and Social Integration). The letter described a programme for improving second language competencies and bilingualising state services – but it was written only in Sinhala. In this instance, the hospital authorities had to have the letter translated into English before they could comprehend its contents and respond to it. Cases like this lead to delays; when delays occur reminders are received which are also only in Sinhala. In this way, delay becomes institutionalised and no permanent remedies are introduced.

Jaffna Municipal Council faces similar situations when it comes to cor-respondence. The Council caters mostly to a Tamil speaking majority and, as such, all forms that are used locally are in Tamil. However, southern traders and business people are now making their presence felt throughout the north – and in Jaffna in particular – and so these forms also need to be available in Sinhala or in English. The Municipal Commissioner is seeking ways to obtain translations though translations services, although these services are not readily available in the city.

The police in Jaffna face the same constraints as the police in Vavuniya. From a force of about 600 officers and constables only about seven are competent in Tamil, yet they are serving a Tamil majority population. This is particularly urgent when it comes to writing and reading, since this has an impact on the accuracy of statements taken from members of the public. As in Vavuniya, officers have to take procedural detours to manage with what is available and they depend on informal systems since the formal structures are not functioning. This occurs at a time when increasing numbers of people are seeking police intervention in settling issues ranging from domestic disturb-ances to disputes over land ownership. On the other hand, it was observed that, compared to the early 1990s, present day soldiers and policemen at the street level are able to engage in conversation in Tamil with the local popula-tion to a significant extent. This is particularly the case with individuals who had served in the north for an extended period of time. The police authorities

recognise that formal Tamil and English language training is required; they believe that it should be compulsory for all officers and that, ideally, it should be conducted in the evenings.

The *Pradeshiya Sabha* of the town of Kopay serves a Tamil majority population. All signs are in Tamil and only one local government officer is conversant in Sinhala. Much of the correspondence carried out by the Council is in Tamil as it deals principally with local agencies. However, the Council expressed a keenness to study Sinhala as it was believed that this would help career advancement, even if it would not immediately contribute to the delivery of better public services in the locality.

The lack of language expertise and translation services which the survey revealed in a number of agencies in Jaffna indicates that formal language instruction – provided by OLD, NILET or other organisations – is urgently needed. Bearing in mind the fact that the University of Jaffna has high standing in the community, consideration needs to be given to strengthening the university's language training facilities. This could include the following:

- Strengthening the newly designed translation studies course at the undergraduate level;
- Strengthening the English Language Teaching Centre (ELTC) so that it can offer extension services beyond the university;
- Strengthening the Sinhala language training capacity of the Department of Linguistics and English by recruiting at least two new members of staff;
- Strengthening the capacity of the Department of Tamil so that it can offer its services to organisations such as the armed forces and the police.

From these descriptions of the situations on the ground in Vavuniya and Jaffna we can conclude that, although the legal and constitutional framework for the implementation of the OLP exists, this policy has been consistently violated, depriving people of their fundamental rights. With regard to the specific issue of official correspondence being only in Sinhala, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Public Administration, the Department of Pensions, the Samurdhi Authority and the Widows and Orphans Fund are mentioned most frequently. This situation gives rise to frustration and lack of trust towards the state, but people seem to be reluctant to take legal remedies for fear of retribution.

Case Study 3: Kandy

The third case study, in Kandy, visited the Kandy Divisional Secretariat, the Kandy Municipality, Kandy General Hospital and its Welfare Service, the *Pradeshiya Sabha* of the hill town of Akurana and the Kandy Police Force.

Though a multiethnic region, the Kandy DS is not in a position to offer full-fledged services in Tamil as it does in Sinhala. However, the office does have the services of two translators competent in Tamil–Sinhala and English–Sinhala which allows letters to be written in Tamil and English if there is a need. In addition, the former Ministry of Estate Infrastructure Development

appointed a group of people identified as Communication Facilitators for the purpose of helping Tamil-speaking individuals from the estate sector to access the services they need from officials such as the *Grama Sevaka* (GS).[4] These individuals based in the GS are now attached to the Ministry of Economic Development. However, it did not appear that the services of the Tamil–Sinhala translator were utilised to the maximum. Similarly, even the Communication Facilitators were of the view that most people from the estate sector who seek services today already had basic Sinhala language skills and so their help was needed only if forms have to be filled in.

The issue here is how members of the public have adapted to gaps in the implementation of the OLP. Because the policy does not function as expected, many people who interact with the DS – whether in writing or face to face – use Sinhala even if their mother tongue is Tamil. This happens because they pick up Sinhala themselves or they use intermediaries, who help them to compose letters or accompany them to the DS as unofficial interpreters. In effect, therefore, most people who come to the DS have already acquired Sinhala language skills or have found other means to use the language and so manage to access the services they require. But this occurs in a manner very different to what was expected from the OLP.

The investigation in Kandy confirmed that if civil servants were more proficient in Tamil they would be better able to serve the Tamil-speaking community. However, it was noted that the course in basic Tamil was not a success: potential participants were not motivated to take part and there were problems with the teaching approach and the syllabus. It was also noted that there had been abuses of duty leave relating to the Tamil language classes: people were granted paid leave in order to attend the classes but they did not in fact do so. There was a need for the classes to be better coordinated, organised and monitored and that classes should be linked directly to job performance. This effectively would mean that success in learning Tamil should be rewarded, for example through promotion and salary increments.

The situation is much the same in the Kandy Municipality where again the majority of officers are Sinhala speakers: only about six out of 24 officers were Tamil speakers. However, as was found in the DS, many Tamil-speaking members of the public are able to communicate in Sinhala or they use intermediaries. In some situations, when language does become an issue, officers depend on the informal help of their Tamil-speaking colleagues or even Tamil-speaking support staff such as manual workers. Again, what is evident is the emergence of informal systems of dealing with issues of language in a context where the official language policy has not been realised at the ground level.

Kandy Municipality organised twice weekly spoken Tamil classes for a group of 30 to 40 of its staff and others, using funds from the DS. But initial enthusiasm decreased as the classes continued. Even those officers who wanted to attend advanced Tamil classes found that obtaining leave was a hurdle, particularly for senior officers. Many were not granted extended leave to attend language courses in Colombo or elsewhere, because senior personnel are rarely allowed to be away from their posts for long periods.

The situation is quite similar in the Kandy General Hospital. Between 20 and 30 per cent of patients are from Tamil language backgrounds, whereas only about five per cent of the medical staff spoke Tamil. The nursing staff included no Tamil speakers and about two per cent of other support staff could speak the language. Clearly, the hospital could not offer complete healthcare services through the medium of Tamil; the hospital's Deputy Director acknowledged that this was the case. However, just as we saw in the Divisional Secretariat and the Municipality, many Tamil-speaking patients managed to communicate in Sinhala. Also, the hospital staff had learnt to use informal means of communication and some had a smattering of Tamil acquired through the Health Ministry Efficiency Bar examinations (which were generally considered to be ineffective).

The hospital's Welfare Service was conducting a Tamil class for clerical staff and nurses. However, it was observed that those participating in the classes were doing so merely to fulfil basic employment or promotion requirements rather than because they wanted to learn the language so that they could serve their patients better.

The *Pradeshiya Sabha* of the town of Akurana serves an area with a significant Tamil-speaking population, most of whom are Muslims. The majority of local representatives on the *Pradeshiya Sabha*, including its chairman, are Tamil-speaking. Nevertheless, almost the entire staff of the *Pradeshiya Sabha* office are Sinhala speakers and the working language of the office is Sinhala. There are only two Tamil speakers among the 79 employees: one comes from a Tamil-speaking background while the Administrative Assistant also speaks Tamil (not due to training but because of an accident of history as she was displaced from Trincomalee – where she had picked up the language – because of the war). Nevertheless, it was acknowledged that Tamil language skills among the staff would lead to the provision of better services. It was also claimed that officers would be interested in attending language classes.

The general consensus in the office was that most Tamil speakers who came to the office for various reasons could present their case in Sinhala and the services they needed could be provided without disruption. All the forms in the office are in Sinhala and – despite a majority of representatives being from Tamil-speaking backgrounds – no demands have been received for these forms to be made available in Tamil or for other services to be provided in Tamil. If someone cannot converse in Sinhala, they come to the office accompanied by someone who can. Alternatively, the office itself finds someone who can interpret for them. As in Kandy, informal systems are becoming institutionalised in a context where the official languages legislation has not been put into practice with any degree of seriousness. It was also interesting to discover that nobody in the Pradeshiya Sabha office had an understanding of the specific requirements of the OLP.

This case represents a trend seen in other areas as well; that is, the propensity shown by members of some ethnic groups, like the Muslims,[5] to improve their Sinhala language skills in the long run. This is particularly visible in Tamil language enclaves (such as Akurana) which are surrounded by

Sinhala-speaking areas. In this kind of situation, the observation that 'officers would be interested in attending language classes' may be rhetorical as it is apparent that work can already be carried out in Sinhala.

From about one thousand officers and constables in the Kandy Police Force, only about 50 could communicate in Tamil. These included some Sinhala-speaking officers who had picked up the language while on operational duty in the north-east. The need to be conversant in Tamil was readily accepted by the officers and they acknowledged that they were not yet able to offer full police services in Tamil. Although they serve a large Tamil-speaking minority, particularly from the estate sector, the police officers have to record all statements in Sinhala. As we observed elsewhere, if an individual is unable to speak in Sinhala, he or she will have to be accompanied by an intermediary who has adequate language proficiency or one of the officers conversant in Tamil helps to translate the statement into Sinhala. Ultimately what is recorded and becomes official is the Sinhala version.

As in the other contexts in Kandy, the general view held by the police was that they were able to offer their services to Tamil-speaking people since most of the Tamil speakers were also conversant in Sinhala. The informal arrangements that had emerged were therefore considered to be adequate for dealing with routine issues. The fact that the provisions of the official language legislation could not be fully implemented did not emerge as an issue in the discussion.

Nevertheless, officers stated that they would be very keen to learn Tamil. The police force already possesses the infrastructure needed for language classes; if such classes could be organised it would be possible to make them mandatory for all police officers. The Kandy police force also has in its ranks a senior officer trained in the teaching of Tamil who has a passion for teaching the language. However, his experience indicated that it was difficult for him to teach formal classes because he also has regular police duties to perform. Similarly, the members of his classes are also unable to attend regularly because of their other responsibilities. This person's suggestion, then, was that he as teacher and his students should be released from their normal duties for some time so that they can complete the language programme without interruption.

Conclusion: Paths beyond

The state of affairs identified in the three field visits described above poses a series of problems which seem to crop up regularly in other central and local government bodies in the north and elsewhere in the country. There are indications, therefore, of a consistent pattern and a deeper malaise. Despite the constitutional and legal right of the people to receive information and services from central and local government agencies in their own language, this does not happen on a routine basis. As these examples have shown, despite the existence of an ideal legal and constitutional framework for the implementation of the OLP, the policy is consistently violated. While this has

led to a situation of frustration and lack of trust towards the state, people also seem reluctant to take legal remedies to rectify the situation – even though such procedures are available – because they fear reprisals. Consistent failures to put the policy into practice have created a perception that the present situation is inevitable. Interestingly, the OLC – which has the authority to investigate violations of the OLP – receives very few complaints. This may be because 'a person whose language rights have been violated may be more interested in getting his job done rather than making complaints' (Collure 2008, 44).

Institutionalisation of informal language practices has occurred. These include the use of Tamil-speaking intermediaries in Sinhala-majority areas. This reality, quite evident in our fieldwork, has also been recognised by the OLC:

> The OLC has found that where services in Tamil are not available, certain members of the public who are not proficient in Sinhala get their letters written in Sinhala by third parties (often paying a fee) and go to offices with persons who could help them with interpretation. (Collure 2008, 44)

At the same time, it is clear that there is a general interest in learning both Sinhala and Tamil among civil servants. However, this enthusiasm needs to be supported by improved leave conditions, more formal and robust training programmes and the creation of incentives (financial and career enhancement) for those who take their language learning seriously.

It is in this context that we come, finally, to a proposal to ban the Tamil version of the national anthem, even though it is entrenched by the Constitution. The Minister of Housing, quite loudly and without wisdom, called the Tamil version of the national anthem 'a joke', while the proposal received considerable support from some of the top leaders of our political spectrum, based on spectacularly false information and assumptions.[6] Naturally, if the direct translation of the original is a 'joke' then so must be the original. But our national anthem in Sinhala, Tamil or any other language is a fine and exemplary text that defies divisiveness in all its forms and upholds the value of a collective identity. The fact that the proposed ban was not carried through is another matter. It is extremely unfortunate that such an unenlightened political debate emerged in the first place, barely one and a half years after the conclusion of an immensely destructive war and while our collective sorrow over the losses in war was still quite painful. The proposal came at a time when 'reconciliation' had become a ubiquitous term in the local political discourse. Perhaps that word has lost its meaning in the same way that our post-independence language policies have lost their direction. It is in this context that I would like to reiterate a point I made at the very outset. That is, if we do not learn from our history, from our collective past, from our mistakes and from our strengths, we will be the architects of our own future destruction, just as we have been of our recent past.

I would like to conclude my reflections with a few not so well known words from one of the greatest political leaders of our time, Nelson Mandela: 'If you

talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in *his* language, that goes to his heart.'[7] It is my hope that our political leaders will somehow find the wisdom to be guided by this simple logic. I also wish that wisdom would come to govern our politics in general and our politics of language in particular.

Notes

1 This chapter consists of sections of a report compiled for the Ministry of Official Languages and Social Integration of the Government of Sri Lanka titled 'Proposal for Bilingual Competency Development Programme of Public Sector Employees' (February 2011) funded by UNDP. I would like to thank the Ministry for granting permission for relevant sections of the report to be reproduced here.
2 Also known as 'Government Agent' (GA).
3 This Authority, under the Ministry of Economic Development, administers the National Poverty Alleviation Programme.
4 *Grama Sevaka* literally means 'servant of the villagers', and is a local level government servant.
5 In Sri Lanka, Muslims are considered to be an ethnic as well as a religious category. This is reflected, for example, in the way that census results are reported.
6 These include, for example, the claim that national anthems all over the world are only ever in one language and that that language is always the language of the majority. One often quoted example is the national anthem of India, which was claimed to be in Hindi when in fact it is in Bengali (a regional language). More information on this controversy can be found at http://groundviews.org/2010/12/16/is-the-tamil-version-of-our-national-anthem-a-joke.
7 This quotation is widely attributed to Mandela (for example at www.bbc.co.uk/languages/guide/languages.shtml), but it is unclear where and when he uttered (or wrote) it.

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6

National languages, English and social cohesion in East Africa

Karsten Legère and Tove Rosendal

Introduction

This chapter reviews and discusses the role and use of national languages and English in East Africa from the point of view of social cohesion. Two countries – Rwanda and Tanzania – are selected for two reasons:

- In both countries, strong national languages are spoken; these constitute an important element in social cohesion.
- In both countries, the political leadership and/or other stakeholders have biased attitudes towards their national languages and, particularly in the recent past, have pushed ahead with promoting the use of English because of the global role of this language, regardless of its weak social basis.

Social cohesion in this chapter is understood, firstly, as positive inter-action (exchanges and networks between individuals and communities) and, secondly, as social inclusion (integration of people into civil society). These imply a sense of shared experiences and identities.

Some East African countries are multilingual (Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda) whilst others are home to just one national language (Burundi, whose national language is Rundi, and Rwanda, whose national language is Rwanda, autonym Ikinyarwanda). Swahili is the national language of Tanzania as well as, to a lesser extent, of Kenya. In Uganda, the Ganda language (autonym Luganda) enjoys a wide distribution and is even used as a lingua franca in parts of the country.

English holds a prominent position in East Africa. This language was imposed by British colonisers who ruled in Kenya and Uganda as well as in Zanzibar. Tanganyika, which was a German colony from 1884 to 1918, was later administered as a mandate by Great Britain on behalf of the League of Nations and then from 1945 to 1961 as a Trusteeship country of the United Nations. Accordingly, when Tanzania came into existence in April 1964 as the result of the unification of Tanganyika and Zanzibar, English was maintained as the official language.[1] In Rwanda, the importance of English grew

tremendously after the 1994 genocide, when the political elite returned from exile in neighbouring Uganda where they had been exposed to English as the country's official language. Little is known about English in Burundi, where it seems hardly to be spoken.

At the regional level, for example in the East African Community, English is enshrined in official documents such as the Treaty of Establishment (East African Community 2007) and it frequently serves as the lingua franca among member states. Currently, in three East African countries English is the co-official language alongside Swahili (Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda) whilst in Rwanda English is the co-official language along with French and Rwanda. In Burundi English enjoys no particular legal status, the official languages being Rundi and French.

The discussion which follows focuses first on Rwanda and then on Tanzania.

Rwanda: national language as a factor in social cohesion

The language situation in Rwanda is explored here in two ways, first by examining language policy and then by considering the role of the Rwanda language as a factor in social cohesion.

Language situation and language policy

Rwanda, with an estimated population of 12 million in 2013 (CIA 2013a), differs from most sub-Saharan countries in that it has just one language, Ikinyarwanda, henceforth called Rwanda, that has a nation-wide distribution. It is the mother tongue of 99.4 per cent of the population, according to the 2002 census (Republic of Rwanda 2005a, 38). Rwanda is the first language (L1) of nearly all Rwandans as well as being the national language of the country.

The few L1 speakers of languages other than Rwanda are multilingual, as they also speak and understand the national language. The same applies to speakers of the exogenous language Swahili. The 2002 census reported that three per cent of the population (236,624 persons) spoke Swahili as a second language (L2) (Republic of Rwanda 2005a, 38).

Swahili, introduced in Rwanda during the era of the German Protectorate, was reported in earlier studies to be the L1 of *une frange de la population* (a fringe of the population) (Nyirindekwe 1999, 24). These are mostly Muslim families or people of foreign origin living in the Swahili quarters of urban areas (Nyirindekwe 1999, 319). In addition, the 2002 census stated that 3.9 per cent of the population spoke French (as L1 and L2) and a further 1.9 per cent spoke English as L2 (Republic of Rwanda 2005a, 38).

Comparing the 1991 and 2002 census statistics, the use of English increased, even though the number of speakers was still low. Code-switching (as described by Myers-Scotton 2002) between Rwanda and French or English is frequent and, for example, has been observed in parliamentary debates (see Rosendal 2011).

At independence in 1962, the young Rwandan state chose to keep French, which had been used as the official language by the then Belgian administration under UN trusteeship. As one of only a few independent nations in Africa, the Rwandan government also empowered its national language. Thus Article 5 of the 1962 Constitution of the Rwandan Republic stated that the national language was Rwanda, and that the official languages were Rwanda and French (quoted in Nyirindekwe 1999, 14).

In the aftermath of the Hutu-Tutsi conflict in 1994, English was introduced as a third official language, in addition to Rwanda and French, and incorporated into the Constitution of 2003 (Article 5 of Title I). Since 1994, the government has also moved away from its historic French ties, through its 2008 application for membership and later inclusion in the (British) Commonwealth and the East African Community. This change in political orientation is reflected in a recent sudden change in language policy. On 8th October 2008, the Cabinet resolved as follows:

> As a part of enhancing Rwanda's role within the East African Community in particular, and at international level in general, Cabinet requested:
> - The Minister of Education to put in place an intensive programme for using English in all public and Government sponsored primary and secondary schools and higher learning institutions;
> - The Minister of Public Service and Labour to put in place a programme to help Government employees at all levels learn English, starting with Top Ranking Officials. (Republic of Rwanda 2008, Section 11)

The new policy was to be implemented in the education sector by January 2009. This was carried out with extreme difficulty, as most teachers were products of an education system that employed French as the medium of instruction and learning. However, by the end of March 2011 another policy change was announced in the media. According to Mathias Harebamungu, State Minister for Primary and Secondary Education, the Rwandan government decided during a cabinet meeting that Rwanda would again become the medium of instruction (MoI) in lower primary (P1–P3), with English being the language-of-instruction from P4 'in order to encourage learning' (Mugisha 2011).

The undemocratic policy decision of 2008 regarding language is counterproductive to social cohesion. The language of communication within all domains in Rwanda is clearly the national language Rwanda. This language has been and is still the ideal choice if the aim is a civil society, as it gives all Rwandans regardless of their ethnic origin a sense of shared experience and shared identity. The use of the national language likewise offers fairness in access to opportunities – which the educational system today does not. The education system in Rwanda is an elitist system which is not based on the national language. Only 2.6 per cent of the population complete secondary school and just 0.5 per cent have tertiary education (Republic of Rwanda 2005b, 25). Thus, the education system which so far has produced a very

Table 1: Language proficiency in primary and secondary schools

School level*	Language	Poor readers %	Dependent readers %	Independent readers %	Total %
P4	Rwanda	12.26	15.71	72.03	100
	English	99.23	0.77	0.00	100
	French	96.55	3.45	0.00	100
P6	Rwanda	1.54	5.02	93.44	100
	English	96.91	2.32	0.77	100
	French	47.49	31.27	21.24	100
S4	Rwanda	0.44	4.36	95.20	100
	English	52.40	27.95	19.65	100
	French	20.09	31.00	48.91	100
S6	Rwanda	0.00	2.87	97.13	100
	English	53.58	20.10	26.32	100
	French	12.92	28.71	58.37	100

* P = primary, S = secondary

small French-speaking elite social group in future will be creating an English-speaking equivalent.

As there is no natural environment for learning and speaking English in the Rwandan community, the language must be learnt at school. Earlier results have shown poor competences in the foreign languages French and English. A survey of proficiency in French, English and Rwanda of students and teachers, conducted in the Rwandan education system in 2003–2004 by Ntakirutimana (2005, 4–6), clearly demonstrates this (Table 1). Students who showed very limited understanding of the texts specified by the curriculum for their year (scoring 49 per cent or under) were classified as *Poor readers*. *Dependent readers* are those who understood the texts with some help (scoring between 50 and 65 per cent) while *Independent readers* are those who understood the texts without any help (between 66 and 100 per cent). It can be concluded that levels of competence in Rwanda are very high, while the ability to read in the other official languages is low (and especially low in English) among both primary and secondary school students.

Rwanda as a factor in social cohesion: Examples from selected domains

The use of both these languages of European origin in Rwandan society is limited. This becomes apparent when we examine which languages are employed in various major domains, particularly the media.

It is obvious that, despite their official recognition, French and English are not employed in proportion to their legal status, not even as means of communication within official domains. According to the 2008 cabinet decision, cited above, English has been stipulated as the language of administration, something which has not been assigned to the other co-official languages. A study of institutionalised language use (how languages are used within state

Table 2: State-owned newspapers and periodicals in Rwanda*

Newspaper/ Periodical	Language	Year established	Periodicity	Circulation	Publisher
Imvaho Nshya	Rwanda	1959	Weekly	12,000	ORINFOR
Ingabo Magazine	Rwanda	1995	Fortnightly	3,000	Ministry of Defence
La nouvelle relève	French	1973	Weekly	1,200	ORINFOR

* Based on information obtained from the Minister of Information, Dr Laurent Nkusi, on 26th January 2006, and the *Haut Conseil de la Presse* (an institution under the Ministry of Information) in Kigali on 21st February 2006.

Table 3: Trends in language use at Radio Rwanda*

Year	Rwanda %	French %	English %	Swahili %	Total %
1989	67.9	19.2	0.0	12.9	100
1999	61.6	19.2	10.3	8.9	100

*Source: Ntakirutimana 2002

Table 4: Time allocation of languages, Radio Rwanda, 2006*

Time allocation	Rwanda	French	English	Swahili	Total
Minutes/week	2,160	390	315	300	3,165
Percentage	68.2	12.3	10.0	9.5	100

* Source: Rosendal 2011

institutions and departments), during the years 2005–2009, clearly showed that French and English are used only marginally in both written and oral communication (Rosendal 2011). The tendency is that the less formal the function, the less these official languages are utilised.

In state-owned and state-controlled newspapers and in state radio broadcasting the national language Rwanda is dominant. Tables 2–4 are based on data collected during fieldwork in 2005–2009 (see Rosendal 2011). They illustrate very clearly that Rwanda is more widely used than both French and English.

English was not used in radio transmissions before 1994. However, as Table 3 shows, between 1989 and 1999, the time allocated for English in the broadcasts of Radio Rwanda expanded from zero to more than ten per cent, at the expense of Rwanda (down six per cent) and Swahili (down four per cent). This rapid growth in the use of English took place before the cabinet decision of 2008. Thus the trend is that – despite English having been promoted over a long period – still the most frequently used language for radio transmissions is the national language, Rwanda, which reaches every Rwandan. A follow-up study of Radio Rwanda's time allocations for different languages in 2006 (Rosendal 2011), shown in Table 4, confirmed this trend.

Table 5: Private newspapers and periodicals in Rwanda*

Newspaper/Periodical	Language	Year established	Periodicity	Circulation
Objectif	R F E S	2005	Monthly	–
Ibanga	R F E	2005	Bimonthly	1,000
Isimbi	R F E	2006	Weekly	–
Umurabyo	R F E	2005	Bimonthly	–
Itwararike	R F E	2005	Bimonthly	–
Rugari	R F	2005	Monthly	–
Rushyashya	R F	1997	Monthly	1,500
Education forum/ Bite mu burezi	R E	2005	Monthly	1,000
Hobe	R (F) (E) **	1954	Monthly	135,000
Kinyamateka	R (F) (E)	1933	Bimonthly	8,000
Football Imanzi	R	2005	–	–
Gasabo	R	2001	Bimonthly	1,000
Igenzi	R	2005	Bimonthly	1,500
Imbarutso	R	2001	Monthly	–
Umurinzi	R	2005	Bimonthly	1,000
La voie de Radio Maria Rwanda	R	2004	–	–
Rwanda Champion	R	2004	Weekly	4,000
Ubumwe	R	2005	Bimonthly	3,000
Umuco	R	2002	Bimonthly	3,000
Umurage/Heritage	R	2002	Bimonthly	–
Umuseso	R	2000	Weekly	5,000
Umwezi	R	2004	Bimonthly	2,500
Urubuga rw'Abagore	R	1999	Monthly	8,000
Urumuli	R	2005	Weekly	1,000
DEVT	F	2005	Bimonthly	1,000
Grands lacs hebdo	F	–	Weekly	–
Les points focaux	F	2001	Monthly	–
Focus	E	2006	Weekly	–
Rwanda Newsline	E	1999	Weekly	3,000
The New Times	E	1995	Four times a week	5,000
The Rwanda Weekly Review	E	2005	Weekly	1,000

* Based on the same sources as Table 2 above.

** Parentheses indicate marginal use of French and English.

– No information available

Even in the private media, Rwanda is preferred as the medium of communication. Table 5 provides an overview of the languages used in 31 privately owned newspapers and periodicals in 2006. Fourteen were monolingual in Rwanda (R). Rwanda was also used in combination with the other official languages and Swahili (S) in ten publications. Three newspapers/periodicals were monolingual in French (F) and four were monolingual in English (E).

As Tables 2–5 clearly demonstrate, Rwanda has a well established role in these domains. These findings reflect trends in Rwandan society as a whole. To introduce new roles and functions for English, which seems to be an ongoing process, does not make sense, as Rwanda is clearly established as the medium of communication that reaches all Rwandans.

English can never replace Rwanda in the lives of ordinary citizens, who are blessed with a unifying mother tongue which is both an efficient medium of communication and a vital component of Rwandan identity. In this capacity Rwanda can serve as a tool for consolidating social cohesion. Yet, under the present policy, English will continue to be the language of power that is spoken by those few who enjoy superior intellectual, social or economic status and power. Politicians who have obtained skills in the language abroad must clearly be included in this category.

There is no reason for widely using English in any domains, except for international relations and communication with the outside world and foreigners. To impose English in functions and domains where there is no need is clearly part of the 'elite closure' process (Myers-Scotton 1993).

English and Swahili in Tanzania

The discussion of the language situation in Tanzania begins by looking at how Swahili has been promoted and, at the same time, what official attitudes towards English have been. Next, the medium of instruction issue is considered.

The promotion of Swahili and official attitudes towards English

Tanzania, with an estimated population of 48 million in 2013 (CIA 2013b), provides another case study for examining the issue of language and social cohesion. This East African country is known for its ethnic heterogeneity that is reflected in a multitude of languages. Thus, the *Ethnologue* summary of the languages of the world claims:

> The number of individual languages listed for Tanzania is 129. Of these, 126 are living and 3 are extinct. (Lewis et al. 2014)

Meanwhile the *Languages of Tanzania* (LoT) project speaks in its atlas of 150 languages (MLT 2009, 2).

Neither of these sources is completely reliable regarding the numbers of speakers of individual languages. Both publications also tend to list glossonyms that cover languages as well as dialects belonging to a dialect continuum.

Nonetheless, linguistic diversity remains a fact to be taken into account, since all the language phylae established by Greenberg (1963) are found in Tanzania, with the majority of languages belonging to the Bantu family of the Niger-Congo phylum. There are also some Afro-Asiatic (Cushitic branch), Nilo-Saharan (Nilotic branch) and Khoisan[2] languages. Swahili (autonym *Kiswahili*), which is the mother tongue of Zanzibar and Pemba as well as among mainland coastal people, is the supra-ethnic means of communication or lingua franca. It is spoken as a second language by approximately 95 per cent of the adult population. Children, especially in monolingual upcountry rural areas, tend to learn Swahili only in school. No actual estimate for the current extent of English competence is available, but we can hazard a guess that about five per cent of Tanzanians speak it competently as a second language.

Colonial domination first by Germany and later by Britain made the linguistic situation in what is now Tanzania more complex by imposing a high status foreign language (FL): firstly German and then, from 1918, English. The FL was used (often prescribed) in important formal domains and in particular in official contexts such as the legislative, executive and judicial. The FL was also used in education (for example in 'middle school', equivalent to the higher grades of primary school), in the media and elsewhere. The long term policy of the British administration was the creation of 'a civilised East Africa based upon British ideas, British language, British culture, and British institutions ...' as bluntly articulated by the Secretary for Native Affairs of the Tanganyika Territory (Great Britain Colonial Office 1931, 460). Similar statements by other British officials regarding the role of English in general and in specific domains, especially in education, are numerous.[3]

Needless to say, these views were wishful thinking and ultimately highly unrealistic, for the facilities available for learning English were minimal. As a result, only a small group of Tanganyikans (mainly the sons of traditional rulers) became competent in this language. Otherwise, prior to independence in 1961, English played an insignificant role as a lingua franca in Tanganyika. In fact, its use by non-native speakers was restricted mainly to written documents that needed the approval of the foreign administration, such as statutes of political parties, ethnic associations or cooperatives, reports, pamphlets and election manifestos.

Swahili was accepted at the provincial and district levels for contacts between the foreign rulers and African subjects. Nevertheless, given the unique role of Swahili as the medium of communication among Tanganyikans across ethnic boundaries – and especially its country-wide use during the independence struggle – attempts to discredit this language were made by the British. Examples include:

> Swahili [is] the language of the slave trade. (quoted by Abedi 1963, 14)

and, from the then Governor of the colony, Sir Edward Twining:

> Swahili … *is not suitable for the intricacies of legal documents*. (Tanganyika, Legislative Council 1954/1955, 288. Our emphasis.)

From 1961 onwards the government of the young state (that in 1962 changed its status from a Commonwealth realm to a republic) selectively addressed the inherited linguistic situation by actively promoting the language of *Uhuru* (Independence), that is to say Swahili.[4] This language has gradually been introduced as the (co-)official language by a number of significant decisions, steps and measures. In this respect, President Nyerere's Republic speech in Swahili in Parliament in December 1962 set an example for the subsequent massive use of Swahili by MPs and others in other domains. It should be borne in mind that shortly after the January 1964 revolution Zanzibar's Revolutionary government also proclaimed Swahili as the official language of the People's Republic. Thus, when Tanganyika and Zanzibar created the United Republic of Tanzania on 26th April 1964, the position of Swahili was further consolidated.

From the 1960s, Mainland language policy and implementation had a clear focus on Swahili. This was embedded in the emerging *Ujamaa* policy with a pro-socialist orientation, which propagated an egalitarian society.[5] These ideas were laid out in the 1967 Arusha Declaration (TANU 1967) and other documents. Swahili was identified as being instrumental to the (expected) dialogue between the political leadership and the overwhelming majority of the Tanzanian population (especially the target groups of peasants and workers) who had no command of English. In this respect, Swahili was seen as an important instrument of nation-building and thereby of social cohesion, or, as President Nyerere wrote, '*katika kuliunganisha Taifa letu changa*' (in unifying our young nation) (Nyerere 1971,1).

Simultaneously, policy documents directed government officials, civil servants and parastatal institutions to prioritise Swahili in oral and written communication country-wide. For example, the Second Vice-President Rashidi Kawawa issued a directive in January 1967 that urged Ministers, Deputy Ministers, Permanent Secretaries and Regional as well as District Commissioners:

> … *wawe mfano mwema katika kutumia lugha ya Kiswahili* (…to be a good example of using the Swahili language) (quoted in Mkuchika 2010)

The emphasis on Swahili was reiterated in documents such as staff circulars (for example Tanzania 1970, 1974), the 1997 Cultural Policy document *Sera ya Utamaduni* (Tanzania 1997), as well as statements by Vice-President Shein on 18th February 2010 and by the Minister of Information, Culture and Sports (Mkuchika 2010), to list only a few instances.

While promoting the use of Swahili in the country and supporting its corpus development, Tanzanian officials also paid – at least verbally – due attention to the role of English. In fact the official status of English was unchanged from the pre-independence dispensation. The 1967 Kawawa directive pointed out:

> … *si nia yetu kupuuza mafunzo ya Kiingereza. Kiingereza ni lugha ya dunia …*
> *ingekuwa jambo la kijinga sana kupunguza mkazo wetu wa kufundisha na kusema*

Kiingereza safi ... (… it is not our intention to downgrade English teaching. English is a world language ... it would be very stupid to shift away from our focus of teaching and speaking proper English ...). (quoted in Mkuchika 2010)[6]

In November 1984 Nyerere had this to say about English:

Kiingereza ni Kiswahili cha Dunia. Ni makosa kukiachia Kiingereza kikafa. Kukiachia ni ujinga, siyo uzalendo. (English is the Swahili of the world. It is a mistake to let English die. To give it up is foolishness, not patriotism.) (Rutayisingwa 1984, 1)

During the *Ujamaa* period – that came to an end in the late 1980s – there was a tendency to discredit the use of English in public institutions by civil servants. In those years, speaking English was occasionally branded as *kasumba*, a 'colonial hangover', while heritage languages (African languages other than Swahili) were associated with *ukabila*, 'tribalism'.[7]

Since the 1990s, when the multiparty system was introduced, the image and prestige of English have grown stronger and stronger, both in rhetoric and in practice. In this respect, some influential parts of Tanzanian society have been arguing for a greater share for English in public, in education, in the media and so on. In fact, some changes in support of English have taken place. This is evidenced in the urban linguistic landscape, where, for example, in Dar es Salaam, billboards, posters, office and shop signs in English are now much more commonly seen than twenty years previously. In public institutions non-English speaking Tanzanians are unable to fill in forms because they are made available in English only. Websites of government and parastatal institutions that are important for the Tanzanian population as a whole (such as the Prime Minister's office and the Tanzanian Electricity Company TANESCO) are written only in English, as if Swahili did not exist.

Another aspect of the role of English is the attitude to code-switching shown by some Tanzanians. One journalist's view of this attitude is critical:

Today, nobody wants to speak plain Kiswahili. To appear 'like them' or to appear 'educated' most of us today prefer to mix English and Kiswahili in our speech and communication, and this is across the board! What is worse, nobody in the national leadership considers this disposition as a serious misnomer demanding immediate and prompt rectification. (Makwaya wa Kuhenga 2009, 9)

Further examples of the speech behaviour of influential Tanzanians, extracted from the transcripts of a 2007–2008 Parliamentary Commission (the so-called Mwakyembe Commission) are given in Legère (2010). See also Mkude (2005, 11).

Further, the current President of Tanzania, Jakaya Kikwete, has been criticised for speaking English at state functions where the audience does not understand the language:

… our Head of State – the symbol of our nationhood – prefers English to address his own people rather than his own and his people's mother tongue, Kiswahili. (Makwaya wa Kuhenga 2009)

The journalist comes to the conclusion:

The Anglo-American influence on our cultural autonomy has been too intense, especially in the last two decades of neo-Liberalism. (Makwaya wa Kuhenga 2009)

In the early 1990s, with the pro-socialist and egalitarian orientation gone and the multi-party system now supporting neo-liberal positions, the focus on language policy issues became diluted. Protagonists of English started to discredit Swahili, including the then Minister of Education, Joseph Mungai. In 2001, Mungai said that Swahili was '... not yet sufficiently developed' (quoted in Yahya-Othman 2001, 81). The same minister was in the forefront of actively promoting English through a variety of initiatives, especially among school and university students.

The medium of instruction issue and language competence

A crucial issue that has always been high on the political and educational agendas is the use of English in education. The latter's position as the medium of instruction (MoI) in the then middle schools (i.e. after grade 4) and as a subject prior to 1961 was changed insofar as the Tanzanian education authorities made Swahili the MoI for the (originally eight and later on) seven year primary schools. Similarly, for many years English was taught in Tanzania Mainland as a subject from grade 3 onwards, but in the 1990s English was introduced in this capacity in grade 1. English has been the MoI in secondary schools[8] and most tertiary institutions (with some exceptions, such as Teacher Training Colleges and the then Kivukoni/CCM College). The subject *Kiswahili* was always taught through the medium of Swahili in secondary schools and at the University of Dar es Salaam and other tertiary institutions.[9] The present situation in Tanzania Mainland is summarised in Table 6.

Table 6: Languages used as media of instruction and taught as subjects, Tanzania Mainland (current situation)

Educational level	Medium	Subject
Primary, grades 1–7	Swahili	English and Swahili
Secondary	English	English and Swahili
Teacher training	Swahili/English	Swahili/English
University	English (Swahili)	–

There have been several attempts to change the MoI. For example, in 1969 as part of Tanzania's Five-Year Plan in education, the substitution of English by Swahili in secondary schools was announced but it was not implemented. Again, in 1982, the Presidential Education Commission headed by Jackson Makweta recommended that Swahili should be gradually introduced as the MoI, replacing English, up to University level. It was suggested that this process should be completed by 1991. After 1991 English would no

longer be used as the MoI at any level of education, although it would still be taught as an important subject. However, the recommendations of the Commission were not endorsed by Government. Insiders assert that this was due to the 1984 British Council mission which visited Tanzania to study the role of English in the country. The mission's report came to the conclusion that English was becoming a foreign language (Criper & Dodd 1984).[10] It was found that '... less than twenty per cent of university students were at a level where they would find it easy to read even the simpler books required for their academic studies' (quoted in Rugemalira 2005, 78). As a consequence, massive support for English in Tanzania by British institutions – especially the then Overseas Development Administration (ODA)[11] – was made available to stop the further erosion of English competence. In addition, Makweta as the then Minister of Education was forced to go against the Commission's recommendations by putting emphasis on improving the standards of English in schools.[12]

The 1995 Education and Training Policy Act stipulated that 'The establishment, ownership and management of primary schools shall be liberalised' (quoted in Rugemalira 2005, 58). As a result, the creation of private English medium primary schools (EMPS) was authorised by the government. Given the desolate situation in most state-run primary schools, for well-to-do parents a properly functioning private primary school where children will obviously be better taken care of than in overcrowded municipal schools or understaffed rural schools is a viable alternative. This is seen as a way of compensating for the incompetence of the education authorities in providing quality education and decent school facilities. It is no wonder that EMPS were and still are mushrooming in urban areas. Whether English medium teaching really takes place in these schools in an efficient way is still an open question; in a number of these private schools the answer is probably negative.

In reality, the EMPS constitute only a tiny minority of the total number of schools in the country. However, in view of the strong position of English worldwide and its image in Tanzania as a potential bread-and-butter language, growing pressure is put on education officials to make English the medium of instruction at least in selected urban public primary schools where so far teaching and learning have taken place in the national language.[13] The media also report discussions of proposals to introduce English as the MoI in primary schools throughout the country.

In 1997 the Cultural Policy document again pointed out the importance of Swahili as the medium of instruction at all levels of formal education:

> *Mpango maalumu wa kuiwezesha elimu na mafunzo katika ngazi zote kutolewa katika lugha ya Kiswahili utaandaliwa na kutekelezwa.* (A special plan which facilitates instruction in Swahili at all levels of education and training will be prepared and implemented.) (Tanzania 1997, 19)

To date no change in the MoI sphere has take place. The consequences are manifold, but the main problem is that the low English command of those who have undergone schooling in government schools persists.

The following research results and observations shed light on the situation of English in schools and at the university:

- In primary schools half of Standard 7 pupils were still unable to do the Standard 2 English test[14] (Hoogeveen & Andre 2011, 24).
- In secondary schools, as reported by the Arusha-based Institute of Youth Progress and Involvement, 34 per cent of the students can read an English paragraph of a (primary) standard 2 textbook, 23 per cent can answer related questions, while 21 per cent do not even understand the question.[15]
- At the University of Dar es Salaam[16] undergraduate students' English competence is rated low by lecturers and our own personal observations.[17] Students' experience difficulties in grasping the subject matter of lectures and seminars taught in English. Further, students' examination papers are problematic and difficult to mark because of the lack of adequate English skills. In comparison, at the Department of Kiswahili (now the Institute for Swahili Studies), students perform well in courses taught in Swahili and in examinations set in Swahili.

It is obvious that English as a Second Language cannot be properly taught in primary schools. This is common knowledge that is also demonstrated in the survey results such as those quoted above. The poor foundation affects learning and studies in secondary and tertiary institutions, where English is supposed to be the MoI. Accordingly, the command of English – even by those who have been exposed to the language for many years in the education system or elsewhere – leaves much to be desired

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to discuss tendencies as well as the current status and use of selected languages in Rwanda and Tanzania in general and with regard to social cohesion. It has been demonstrated that in both countries the national languages (Rwanda in Rwanda and Swahili in Tanzania) have a strong social basis, Rwanda being spoken as the mother tongue of all Rwandans and Swahili being the first language of most Tanzanians. It goes without saying that both languages support social cohesion.

In the Republic of Rwanda, Rwanda is the national language *per se* used by everyone, from Members of Parliament to traders in markets, thus facilitating social cohesion. As the national language is used all over the country, there is no need for English or French or any other language to replace Rwanda at the national level or to prevent its use in certain domains. From this point of view, efforts to maintain languages inherited from previous dispensations or to enhance the position of a foreign language (as in the case of English in Rwanda) with the aim of undermining the status of the national language are deplorable. However, the role of the national language in social cohesion in Rwanda should not be overestimated. The 1994 genocide is a case in point, where people speaking the same language killed each other. Thus, a common

language may be supportive to social cohesion, but in certain contexts other factors may be much stronger.

In the case of Tanzania, since independence this East African country has attempted to strike a balance between the promotion of Swahili as the national and co-official language and the maintenance of English. The latter language played a role in some domains where until quite recently the overwhelming majority of the Tanzanian population had not been or were only marginally affected. What has been problematic in this respect is the rejection by officials of Swahilising secondary education, because falling standards in education result inter alia from the low English competence of learners in secondary schools.

In Tanzania it is clear that the use of English in public is expanding in a spontaneous and uncontrolled manner. Earlier directives which pledged an appropriate use of Swahili are ignored in a way that discriminates against the masses, since they do not know English. It is just a tiny group of those who are sufficiently proficient in English that benefit from this trend. The implication is that social cohesion is being weakened. The result is a growing elite closure, as Myers-Scotton (1993) put it. An earlier tendency towards elite closure could be contained for as long as the *Ujamaa* ideology, arguing for an egalitarian society, was upheld, but as we have seen, this ideology was given up some twenty years ago and replaced by a mixture of neo-liberal ideas and practices. For the overwhelming majority of the Tanzanian population, however, Swahili is an important element in social cohesion. This role has been acknowledged by the political leadership time and again. Most Tanzanians, including substantial factions of the political and intellectual elite, are proud of their national language, whose unifying role is appreciated. This is even reflected in the 2013 draft of a new constitution, where for the first time in history, Swahili is stipulated as the official language of the United Republic. Whether this step – if supported by the Tanzanian Parliament – really consolidates the position of the national language is still an open question. In any case, a bilingual perspective, where both Swahili (as a symbol of national identity and social cohesion) and English (driven by international market forces, globalisation and high prestige) are key players, seems to be a benchmark for the future.

Notes

1   In January 1964, Swahili was stipulated to be the official language of the short-lived People's Republic of Zanzibar and Pemba, which became part of the United Republic of Tanzania in April 1964. The position of Swahili – even on the Mainland – was consolidated following these developments. English acquired official status in Zanzibar after unification. The role of history is discussed in detail later in this chapter.
2   Specifically Hadza and Sandawe.
3   For some representative quotations see Legère (1981).
4   This was summarised by the then Tanzanian President Nyerere (1971, ii) as follows: *Lugha hii ya watu wote ilikuwa na thamani kubwa sana katika juhudi za kupigania uhuru …* (This lingua franca [i.e. Swahili] was of great value in the struggle for independence …).

5 *Ujamaa*, from the Swahili word for 'extended family' or 'familyhood', is an African form of socialism, which emphasises social economic and political equality, the abolition of discrimination, the 'villagising' (collectivising) of production, the fostering of national self-reliance, the provision of free and compulsory education for all and the development of national cohesion, especially through the use of Swahili. For a detailed discussion of Tanzania's *Ujamaa* policy, see Bromber (1993).

6 Compare this statement with the words of Nyerere in a 1974 interview with the *Times Educational Supplement*: 'Our ambition is to become bilingual in Swahili and English. We have no ambition to cut out English. In the primary schools Swahili is a medium of education and English is taught as a subject. In the secondary schools English is the medium of education, but Swahili continues to be taught as a subject. Certainly at the University level English is going to continue as a language of education for a long time. Tanzanians would be very foolish to reject English.' (Kihore 1976, 49–50)

7 With regard to African languages, it took until 1997 to overcome this discriminatory overtone in Tanzanian language policy. (Tanzania 1997, 17–18)

8 On paper, common practice in most secondary schools has been a short introduction of the subject matter in English and subsequently a detailed description in Swahili, ultimately supplemented by winding up the lesson content again in English.

9 The subject *Uraia* – 'civics' – which was formerly taught in Swahili is now taught in English.

10 Indeed, some years later *Sera ya Utamaduni* (Tanzania 1997, 19) called English a foreign language.

11 Now the Department for International Development (DFID).

12 For an overview of the English and Swahili MoI debate at that time see JLLE (1989).

13 See, for instance, Issa (2011).

14 Particularly astonishing with respect to the inefficiency of the primary school system is the finding that 'Children in Tanzania performed worst even in the Kiswahili test, a language which children in Tanzania are more exposed to than children in Kenya' (Hoogeveen & Andrew 2011, 24).

15 The survey covered secondary schools in selected districts country-wide. The results just confirm what has been known for many years: the quality of English teaching is poor. Many learners, in particular those who come from rural schools, cannot properly follow classes that would be given in English (hence the widespread use of Swahili in secondary school teaching where even the teachers' command of English is inappropriate.

16 There are more than two dozen universities in Tanzania, but it can be taken for granted that the linguistic situation observed at the University of Dar es Salaam is similar to that in other tertiary institutions. Indeed, the situation in other institutions may be even worse because the selection process allocates students with good secondary school results mainly to Dar es Salaam. Students with weaker qualifications have to study elsewhere.

17 It was very interesting to note on 14th December 2011, when the decision about disciplinary measures against leaders of a student strike at the University of Dar es Salaam was displayed on the news board, that student readers queued in front of the Swahili texts while the adjacent English text was completely ignored.

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7

Language, social cohesion and confrontation: The case of the historiography of Urdu[1]

Tariq Rahman

Introduction

Historiography is the study of the way that history is written: the interpretation of events, the omissions, the emphases, the use of sources and, above all, the analysis offered by the historian. This chapter is about the way the history of Urdu is written or, to use a fashionable term, 'constructed'. The gist of my argument is that the historiography of Urdu serves the political functions of strengthening Hindu and Muslim as well as Indian and Pakistani identities by claiming that Urdu belongs to the geographical areas now comprising the two countries. Moreover, though to a lesser extent, there have been various claims that Urdu is descended from languages now spoken in India and Pakistan. The construction of the linguistic history of Urdu as well as Hindi excludes and includes texts and varieties of the common ancestor of Urdu and Hindi in ways which are imbued with concerns of communal and nationalistic identities.

Language has been used for social cohesion as well as confrontation. In this chapter the case of the historiography of Urdu is presented in relation to the construction of Hindu and Muslim identities in British India. Here theories of the origin of Urdu are examined with a view to understanding how they led to social confrontation, contributing eventually to the division of the subcontinent.

The theories relate to two questions: where was Urdu born? and what language(s) did it descend from? The first question is geographical; the second genealogical. And both are addressed in the historiography of the language – ideologically, politically and, sometimes, emotionally and polemically. This chapter does not attempt to provide the correct answers to these questions. Rather, it aims to study the major theories about them so as to determine in what ways historiography is related to ideology – especially those aspects of it which contribute to the politics of identity among the speakers of Urdu and Hindi in South Asia. Some of these questions are treated in a book entitled *Literature and Nationalist Ideology* which provides, among other things, a

framework for examining the relationship between Indian nationalism(s) and literary and linguistic histories (Harder 2010).

As questions of place of birth and parentage lead to perceptions of belonging or ownership we shall take into account the historiography of possession. Specifically, is Urdu a joint product of the interaction between Muslims and Hindus and is it, therefore, a shared possession? Or is it the possession and monopoly of the Muslims of a certain area of the sub-continent? Or all Muslims? The answers to these questions are, of course, deeply political in significance. That is why the purely linguistic answers to questions of origin are insufficient for our purposes. More relevant are the ideological forces and inspiration behind these answers.

To begin, then, the theories themselves are easy to summarise – as they have been by Ayub Sabir (1993) to a degree – but our purposes require us to analyse them in terms of the ideological orientation or, if that is difficult to determine, the group-identity of the linguistic historians who are most prominently associated with them.

The most obvious classifications of theories regarding geographical and the genealogical questions are (a) theories of Indian origin, (b) theories of Pakistani origin and (c) theories regarding a non-Sanskrit origin of Urdu. These are discussed in the following three sections respectively. The evidence provided by these three approaches is then examined in a section on narratives of ownership. The chapter ends with a brief conclusion and discussion of wider implications.

Theories of Indian origin of Urdu

The most common theories, and ones which contemporary scholars agree with, state that

> … the speech of the areas around Delhi, known as *Khari Boli* [*Kárī bolī*], was adopted by the Afghans, Persians, and Turks as a common language of interaction with the local population. In time, it developed a variety called Urdu. (Kachru 2008, 82)

There are variant forms of the theory, such as the assertion by Muhammad Hussain Azad (d. 1910) in *Āb-ē-Hayāt* that 'everybody knows this much, that our language Urdu is born out of Braj Bhasha and that Braj Bhasha is a purely Indian language' (Azad 19th century, 10). But, on the whole, Western Hindi is the most likely candidate for the parent of both modern Urdu and Hindi.

In this context the views of Suniti Kumar Chatterji are instructive. In his book on the development of Bengali he says:

> Hindōstāni is in its origin based on the Western Hindi dialects spoken in and around Delhi, dialects which were strongly influenced by the contiguous Panjābī and Rājisthānī; and as the speech of the capital, it gradually came to be adopted by the Turki-, Persian- and Pastō-speaking nobility of the Moslem court. (Chatterji 1926, 11–12)

In his other book on *Indo-Aryan and Hindi* he explains this history in detail in several chapters (Chatterji 1942, 150–188). Among other things he conjectures that groups of Punjabi Muslims moved from their homeland in the West from 1206 onwards (the date of the establishment of the Turkish Sultanate in Delhi) to Delhi and their language influenced the language already prevalent here (Chatterji 1942, 187–188). George Grierson, of the *Linguistic Survey of India* fame, gave the following answers to both questions about the origins of Urdu-Hindi:

> The dialect of Western Hindī spoken in Western Rohilkhand, in the Upper Gangetic Doab, and in the Panjab district of Ambala is what I call Vernacular Hindōstānī, that is to say, it is the form of speech on which literary Hindōstānī that took its rise in Delhi is based. (Grierson 1916)

Examples can be multiplied but it is pointless to make a list of authors agreeing with each other. What is more interesting is that historians of Urdu emphasise the role of the Muslim heritage languages almost to the exclusion of the Indian element. Let us now turn to the views of two of these scholars of Urdu: Jamil Jalibi and Hafiz Mahmud Shirani, on the subject of the historiography of the language.

Jalibi believes that Urdu has a distinctive Muslim character. He does not deny the Indic base of Urdu but he calls the Islamisation of literary themes and the Persianisation of the language as improvements. In *Tārīkh-ē-Adab-ē-Urdū* (1975), he says:

> *Ibtidā mē is nē-Gujrāt mē bhī aōr shimāl ō Dakan mē bhī-Khālis Hindavī asrāt kō qubūl kiā-lēkin jab āgē baṛhnē kā rāstā nazar na ā rahā hō aōr takhlīqī zahen apnē izhār mē rukāwat maēhsūs kar rahā hō tō zāhir haē kē vō us taraf baṛhē gā jis taraf usē rāstā nazar ā rahā hō.* (Jalibi 1975, 193) (In the beginning both in Gujrat and the Deccan it [Urdu] accepted pure Hindvi effects but when the way for advancement is not visible and the creative mind finds impediments in its expression, then it is obvious it would advance towards that side on which it sees the way.)

He says this Persianisation of Urdu was a natural act (*fitrī amal*) and that any other course of action was impossible. In his view the poetry of the poets of Bijapur is alien for us in contrast to those of Golcanda because of the Persianisation of the latter. Thus the poetry of Nusrati is not known and that of Vali is. As proof he offers the words of a poet called Shafiq who wrote his *Chamanistān-ē-Shu'arā* in 1761 in which he said about Nusrati '*alfāzish batāur Dakhniā bar Zubānahā girā mī āed*' (His words are felt to be heavy on the tongue like those of the Deccanites).

Let us now take up the views of Hafiz Mahmud Shirani. Shirani tells us that up to the 17th century, Hindi rhythm was used. However, after Quli Qutab Shah (AH 988–1020 / AD 1580–1611/1612) there is evidence of Persian influence:

> *fi zamānanā is taehrīk kī mukhālfat mē bāz halqō sē āvāz buland huī haē aōr is kō ghaēr mulkī aōr nā'āqbat andēshānā kahā gayā haē-lēkin hamārā khiāl haē kē buzurgō kī yē jiddat pasandī jahā tak kē is kē natāej dēkhē jātē haē-nehāet mufīd aōr sūdmand*

sābit huī haē. (Shirani 1930, 1931; 1965, 200) (In these days there is opposition from some circles to this trend [Persianisation]. It is attacked as being foreign and short sighted. But we think that our elders in their search for novelty were right as the results we see are greatly useful and profitable.)

Moreover, Shirani presents the thesis that Urdu should have 'Muslim emotions'. He feels that the language called Urdu is distinctive and separate from other languages because it has (a) *Musalmānī Jazbāt ō K̲h̲iālāt* i.e. the emotions and ideas of Muslims, (b) *Arabī ō Fārsī alfāz* i.e. diction from Arabic and Persian and (c) its grammatical rules follow a certain order (Shirani 1930, 1931; 1965, 174). The last point, however, is not explained. Moreover, Shirani has left out one point – that the script should be Perso-Arabic. All the examples he provides in his book are in this script.

The same is also true of Jalibi, mentioned earlier, though he is one of the few historians who has mentioned Nam Dev (1270–1350), Kabir (1399–1518) and Guru Nanak (1469–1538). Abdul Jamil Khan mentions all of these writers, as well as Hem Chandra (c. 12th century), Chand Bardai (c. 1190s) and a few others (Khan 2006, 159–164). Nevertheless these two historians do not do justice to writings in the Devanagari script: Jalibi devotes only nine pages (out of 711) to them while Khan spares just two pages for them.

Abdul Haq (1870–1961), called Baba-i-Urdu (the Father of Urdu), does not even mention anything written by a Hindu in the Devanagari script in a book entitled *Qadim Urdū* [Old Urdu] (Haq 1961). Muhammad Sadiq's *A History of Urdū Literature* (1964) does not mention anyone but Muslims and writings in the Perso-Arabic script whilst Ali Jawad Zaidi, though writing in post-partition India, mentions Kabir in less than a page (Zaidi 1993, 31–32). Even Hindu historians, when writing the history of Urdu, ignore writings in the Devanagari script. For instance, in the paradigmatic work of Ram Babu Saksena, *A History of Urdū Literature*, Kabir and Tulsi Das (1550–1624) get only passing mentions in one line (Saksena 1927, 11).

In short, while historians of Urdu admit to the Indic base of Urdu they do not include this base in the canon of Urdu. And this is not simply because of lack of space. Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, one of the foremost contemporary scholars of Urdu, in his book on the initial age of Urdu (*Urdū kā Ibtidāi Zamānā*), points out that the language which later came to be known as 'Khari Boli' existed at the time of Muslim arrival in India and that the Muslims acted as 'chemical agents' in order to make it an established language (Faruqi 1999, 36). But he gives no attention to the literature in the Devanagari script before the creation of modern Persianised Urdu and Sanskritised Hindi in the nineteenth century. And this despite the fact that he points out that Azad's *Āb-ē-Hayāt* ignores the contribution of Hindus to Urdu literature (Faruqi 1999, 43–44). Yet, it is not merely a question of the inclusion of poets writing in the Perso-Arabic script which Azad ignores. The point being made here is the ideology which goes into the construction of the history of Urdu. Azad had to imagine a mother for Urdu which is 'simple, sweet, natural, and entirely Indian' (Pritchett & Faruqi 2001, 12). The British were defining the cultural world of their Indian colony and for them simplicity and naturalness

were at a premium. These were to be found in English and in Braj Bhasha which formed the 'storage trunks' of Urdu. According to Pritchett and Faruqi, Azad's views show 'the widespread defensive reaction of the colonised to the colonial critique' (Pritchett & Faruqi 2001, 17). In short, Azad's literary and linguistic ideologies had to perform a balancing act: finding Indian ancestry for Urdu but also Muslim ownership; finding British literary criteria but also preserving indigenous ideals.

But there is an ideology at work in the construction of the history of Hindi also. For instance, the historians of Urdu ignore the contribution of Muslims to a common literature. As an example, Acharya Ramchandra Shukla's *Hindī Sahityā kā Itihās* (1929) even ignores the canonical poets of Urdu. Hans Harder, writing on the ideological uses of literary historiography, comments on this as follows:

> In a way, the long-standing issue of the relationship between Hindi and Urdu also belongs to this complex [phenomenon], leading to the linguistically unwarranted, but politically successful and by now almost unquestioned decision on Ramchandra Shukla's and apparently some of his predecessor's [sic] part, to include rather 'deviant' varieties, in relation to modern standard Khari Boli Hindi, such as Braj and Avadhi, in the history of Hindi literature, but to mostly exclude the linguistically closer, if not identical, Urdu from the repertoire. (Harder 2010, 18)

Since Shukla's book was used as a textbook in colleges, it had tremendous influence on the perceptions of students over several generations. That is why, describing it as a paradigmatic text, Krishna Kumar claims that it 'contributed to the crystallisation of the educated Hindi speaker's identity' (Kumar 1991, 131). Like the historians of Urdu, they too seek Hindi's birthplace. And, of course, it is in 'Hindustan'. Rahul Sankrityana mentions 'all the languages which emerged after the eighth century AD in "Suba Hindustan"' (quoted by Rai 2001, 12). Others point to the fluidity of the unstandardised languages of the period, such as the kind the Nath Panthi Sadhus used to speak during the tenth and eleventh centuries. This language was called *pachmēlā* – five in one – which we now call Brajbhasha, Khari Boli, Avadhi, Bhojpuri and Bundeli (Jindal 1955, 9) – and, indeed, it went beyond these five to include Punjabi and Rajasthani dialects.

But the mention of Gorakh Nath Panthis brings us to another ideological imperative – but a completely necessary one – which inspired the historians of Hindi. This was the search for an indigenous parent going back to pre-Islamic times. This was found by Pitambar Datta Barthwal who, in 1942, compiled the 11th century *Gorakh Bānī* (Utterances of Gorakhnath). Another milestone of this kind is Hazari Prasad Dwivedi's *Nāth Siddhō kī Bāniā* (1957). This literature is the centrepiece of works like Amrit Rai's *A House Divided* (1984) and Gian Chand Jain's *Ēk Bhasha: Dō Likhāvat, Dō Adab* (2005), which are considered to be attacks on the tradition of Urdu historiography. The quest for a link with the pre-Islamic tradition initiated by Rahul Sankrityana had already taken Hindi back to pre-Islamic times when he, in collaboration with Jayaswal, discovered Siddha literature (Jindal 1955, 5–6). The Siddhas are said to have

'mixed the standard forms of Western Apabhramas with the current forms of the adjacent western districts' (Jindal 1955, 5). The samples of Siddha poetry transliterated into Hindi by Rahul Sankrityana have words which are not fully intelligible but yield meaning with some effort. For instance the first line of Sarhapa (Nālanda), *'gurū ban amyā ras'* in the Siddha language is transliterated in Hindi as *'gurū kē vachan amiyā ras'* (the words of the teacher are like the sweet nectar of mangoes).

Most academic histories, however, caution us against accepting the Panthi language as being authentically of the 10th century or even the 12th century as claimed. McGregor, for instance, asserts that it 'can hardly predate the mid-14th century in its present linguistic form' (McGregor 1984, 22). Shardadvi Vedalankar – does not include deeds of gifts and inscriptions among prose writings – claims that there are no manuscripts of Hindi prose 'produced between the 10th and 12th centuries AD' (Vedalankar 1969, 3), but some, like Vijendra Snatak, admit that, while some of these early manuscripts are of doubtful provenance, others are authentic (Snatak 1999, 30).

With this genealogy established in ideologically motivated writings, the historiography of Hindi appropriated the vast literature in all the varieties which together add up to Greater Hindi. However, when Khari Boli came to be accepted as *the* language which was the base for Hindi, the other varieties – including the poetic Braj Bhasha – were excluded from the Hindi canon. Ayodhya Prasad Khattri, in his *Kharī Bōlī ka Padyā*, in his desire to monopolise Khari Boli as the desiderated parent for Hindi, agreed that 'Urdu is but another form of Hindi' (quoted by Rai 2001, 86). Chandradhar Sharma Guleri, the author of *Purānī Hindi*, also says that Urdu is the same as Hindi and that Modern Hindi was created by replacing Perso-Arabic diction with Sanskritic words (quoted by Rai 2001, 14).

But this relationship with Urdu promoted the urge to invent difference, not to acknowledge or promote closeness. Thus, diction was Sanskritised, the preferred idiom diverged from that of Modern Urdu (i.e. the Urdu constructed in the late 18th century) and the pronunciation of some sounds and words was different from that of native Urdu-speakers. As for literature in the Perso-Arabic script, either it was accepted as being 'Hindi' – as in the case of Amir Khusrau's work – if it was of sufficient antiquity and symbolic value, or it was played down, marginalised and ignored.

In short, questions of the origin of Urdu, which are also questions of the origin of Hindi, bring us close and then take us apart as the same geographical location and genealogy are, nevertheless, wrenched apart by the uses to which the historiography of both languages lends itself. But now let us see what happens when the geography and the genealogy are different. When, for example, they are located in present-day Pakistan.

Theories of Pakistani origin of Urdu

The theories of Pakistani origin claim that Urdu was born in the areas now in Pakistan as a result of Perso-Arabicisation of the languages spoken here.

The pioneer of such theories was Hafiz Mahmud Shirani, some of whose works and views have been mentioned before. Normally a painstaking and careful researcher of Urdu and Persian, Shirani turned his attention from Persian to Urdu when Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1872–1953), then Principal of Islamia College, asked him to write something on the origins and age of Urdu. As Shirani was a lecturer in this college between 1921 and 1928, his initial endeavours were published during these years. Almost the whole corpus of his writings on linguistic history – for that is how his work would be classified now – addresses these questions directly or indirectly. Of course, while working on these issues he encounters other areas of interest out of which many of his literary and other works are born, but basically these are the mainsprings of his enormous output.

Shirani's magnum opus is *Punjāb Mē Urdū* (1928). The central thesis of this work is that Urdu was created in the Punjab and the Muslims took it with them to Delhi when they spread from the Western part of India eastwards. A variant of this thesis is that it was the Multani variety of Punjabi (Siraiki as it is called now) which was the basis of Urdu (Mughal 1990, 11–20). A corollary of this hypothesis is that Punjabi/Siraiki and Urdu are very similar even now – Shirani claims that the two languages share a large part of the basic vocabulary and that words used in 'Old Urdu' (Shirani's term) are still used in Punjabi (Shirani 1928, 130–131). However, there are certain distinctive features (morphological – *kā*, *kī* – and others) which separate Urdu from Braj Bhasha as well as Punjabi/Siraiki (which he calls Multani).

Among other things, Shirani points to the presence of words still used in Punjabi in 'Old Urdu' (especially Dakhni) as well as such words in modern Urdu. In the latter case they have no separate meaning but are used as idiomatic usages to supplement and strengthen the meaning. Examples are as follows:

- *Din dehāṛē*: The word *din* means day in Urdu. *Dehāṛē* means day in Punjabi even now. In Urdu the latter word is not used in isolation but is used in this idiomatic phrase.
- *Māngā Tāngā*: *Māngā* is 'to take as a loan' or 'to beg' in Urdu. *Tāngā* means the same in Punjabi but has no meaning on its own in modern Urdu (Shirani 1928, 126–129).
- Similarly the possessive marker *kā*, *kī* in Urdu is *dā* and *dī* in Punjabi nowadays; however, there are several place names in the Punjab which end in *kē* and *kā*, such as Muridkē and Sadhukē.

From this evidence Shirani concludes that Urdu is a 'developed' – his term – form of Punjabi. An alternative hypothesis, which Shirani does not even consider, is that Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi, Siraiki, Hindko and so on could simply be descendants of a language spread over the huge area from Peshawar to Benares. That the varieties of such a language would have some vocabulary in common but would also grow and change along different lines is only natural. But Shirani's book is not really a thesis from beginning to end because he also makes it a history of the writers of varieties of 'Old Urdu'. This has

only an indirect relationship with the nominal main theme of his book but it takes up most of the space (Shirani 1928, 180–486).

On the whole, Shirani – whose research on the ancient names, origin and usage of Urdu is so impressive – is on a weak footing in this book. His mistakes and false reasoning have been demonstrated, notably by Masood Husain Khan, who argues that Shirani ignores the differences between Dakani and Punjabi as well as other evidence which suggests that Urdu has descended from Khari Boli rather than from Punjabi (Khan 1966, 156–180). Shaukat Sabzwari uses similar arguments to refute Shirani's claims (Sabzwari n.d., 66–112) and to assert that the Aphrahamsa of the Delhi and Meerut Doab region (Madhiya Desh) of the 11th century is the ancestor of Urdu (Sabzwari n.d., 101).

Why were the weaknesses of his reasoning not evident to Shirani himself? After all, he was normally a careful researcher. The reason can only be conjectured. In my view Shirani was not only a pioneer of certain trends in Urdu's linguistic history, but also a pioneer of Muslim nationalism in South Asia. He lived at the time of the rise of Muslim nationalism which, as we know, was expressed through the symbols of Islam and Urdu. He witnessed the Urdu-Hindi controversy and was as much concerned with claiming Urdu as part of the Muslim heritage in India as were Abdul Haq or other Muslim nationalists. This ideological imperative closed his mind to other hypotheses about the birth of Urdu. His emotional and ideological interests were best served if he associated Urdu with the Muslims, particularly those of the Punjab, a major Muslim-majority province of India and one where he had spent almost all his adult life. It is because of this that modern Pakistani nationalists have appropriated Shirani's work – witness Fateh Mohammad Malik's foreword to its publication, which refers to a pre-partition controversy about making Punjabi rather than Urdu the medium of instruction in the Punjab, and is entitled 'Urdu is the mother-tongue of the Punjab' (Malik 2006).

A theory similar to that of Shirani was also advanced by Graham Bailey, a British man of letters. He too claimed that Urdu began in Lahore after the Ghaznavide conquest in 1027. Like Shirani he too conjectured that it moved to Delhi about 166 years later where it was 'overlaid by old Khari' which was 'not very different from old Punjabi'. It also kept absorbing words from Persian and Arabic and so Urdu was born (Bailey 1932, 7).

In 1933 another theory claiming the birth of Urdu in the areas where the Muslims arrived first was propounded. The man who advocated it was Syed Sulaiman Nadvi (1884–1953), whose stature as a scholar and a leader of the Muslims of North India is well known. Nadvi argued that the first place of the arrival of the Muslims was Sindh and, therefore, it was this place which could be the birth place of Urdu. The ancestor in this case would be Sindhi (Nadvi 1939, 31–35).

Unfortunately, Nadvi did not explain why Sindhi remained so distinct from Urdu. And also how was it that Urdu actually assimilated more Persian than Arabic words. And, indeed, the Arabic words which did enter Urdu came via Persian. Even more to the point is the fact that the Arabs came into contact

with Dravidian languages in the Malabar. Though this did bring Arabic words into these languages, it did not create anything like Urdu. The Sindhi hypothesis is much weaker than that of Punjabi on the grounds that there is no similarity between the fragments of old Sindhi and those of Hindi-Urdu now available to us. There are, however, similarities between some forms of Hindi-Urdu – such as Dakhni – and Punjabi. However, there are many more similarities with the varieties of Hindi found in India. In any case, if Punjabi is also accepted as a variety of Greater Hindi – a hypothetical language spread out from the plains of Peshawar to the end of Bihar – the similarities can be explained.

Other theories claim Hindko, Gujri and Pahari – all mutually intelligible varieties of what may be called 'Greater Punjabi' – as the ancestor of Urdu. All the arguments advanced in order to bring the candidature of Punjabi as the ancestor of Urdu apply with equal force here. But the point is not whether some words – such as *rājā* (ruler), *putrā* (son), *ātma* (soul), *likhia* (wrote) – found in a Kharoshthi[2] tablet in the Hindko-speaking area make Hindko the ancestor of Hindi-Urdu as Ghaznavi (2003, 130–131) argues. Such words are found in Nath Panthi literature also. The point is to analyse why such finds, which can be used to support the candidature of many languages in many parts of the subcontinent, are used to support any one particular language.

Theories of non-Sanskritic origin

While all the theories we have considered so far trace Urdu back to Sanskritic roots (the Indic branch of the Indo-Aryan language family) there are a few attempts at discarding this genealogy altogether. There is, for instance, Ain ul Haq Faridkoti who traces Urdu back to the Munda and Dravidian languages spoken in the subcontinent before the Aryan incursions. More precisely, it is a descendant of the ancient language of the Indus valley and its immediate ancestor is Punjabi. Later in the book the author uses the adjective 'Pakistani' for colonies from the Indus valley in Central Asia (Faridkoti 1972, 264–266). In short, the author disconnects Urdu from both the Gangetic valley and the Sanskrit language and appropriates it for the areas now called Pakistan.

Another book with somewhat similar arguments from archaeology and linguistics is Rashid Akhtar Nadvi's (1913–1992) book entitled *Pakistān Kā Qadīm Rasmul Khat aōr Zubān* (1995). The main argument is that the Aryans started using the language of Mohenjo Daro and even Sanskrit was born out of this mixture. This Sindhi ancestor of Urdu, he says, was the real queen (which ruled from Peshawar to Bihar) and not Sanskrit (which lived a life of concealment like a mistress in the cells of Pandits) (Nadvi 1995, 303). In this way, like Faridkoti, Nadvi too appropriates Urdu for Pakistan

Yet another book on these lines is Abdul Jamil Khan's *The Politics of Language Urdū/Hindi: An Artificial Divide* (2006). Here too the main argument is that 'two foreign languages Munda and Dravidian' laid the foundations of Urdu (Khan 2006, 108). However, the author does not reserve Urdu for Pakistan. Despite his search for Urdu's 'African heritage' and

'Mesopotamian roots' he argues that not only Urdu but all Indian languages descend from these common roots. Moreover, his major focus is that Hindi and Urdu are the same language. However, part of his argument is that the further 'evolution of old Urdu involves infusion of Arabic and Persian from the oldest source, Mesopotamia' (Khan 2006, 132). In other words, he provides a continuous line of influence from Iraq – a Muslim country – on Urdu rather than locate it in India. Of course the Arabic, Persian and Turkish element in Urdu is acknowledged by all scholars, but taking it back to the very root of the language while discounting the centrality of an Indic base language and Sanskrit, dilutes the Indian identity of the language. He does the same for the scripts, arguing that the Nagari-Hindi script, like the Perso-Arabic one, is 'rooted in the West Asian and Phoenician-Aramaic system' (Khan 2006, 361).

Narratives of ownership

Whatever the scholarly status of these theories, what is more significant is the use to which they are put as far as our analysis of historiography is concerned. We have seen that there are two narratives about the ownership of Urdu. First, that it is the common language of the Hindus and Muslims of north India; the fruit of centuries of coexistence which was mostly peaceful and, hence a cultural product of the Jumna-Gangetic civilisation (Ganga-Jamna *Taēhzīb*). And second, that it is a Muslim language, a Muslim cultural preserve and, therefore, just as alien to the Hindus as Hindi is to the Muslims.

For the British, there was always a Muslim Hindustani and a Hindu one. They did not sometimes mention the *kaesth*[3] class of Hindus or other urban people who used and owned Urdu. As Christopher King argues, it took a long time for the equation Urdu = Muslim + Hindu to change to Urdu = Muslim and Hindi = Hindu. Indeed, even 'throughout the history of the Hindi movement before independence the equation Hindi = Hindu was never true' because rural people kept using regional standards (such as Kaithi[4]) and some Hindus remained 'wedded to Urdu' (King 1994, 177).

Each one of the major theories outlined above has political implications: the Indian origin theory gives the ownership of Urdu to India; the Pakistani origin ones to Pakistan; and the theories dismissing Sanskrit as the mother of most Indian languages or locating the ancestor of Urdu in present-day Pakistan detach Urdu from India. They also substitute a non-Indian ancestry for Urdu in place of an Indian one. But more importantly, these narratives of ownership are politically significant when they come from Muslim intellectuals and leaders. In this context let us first take the works of Abdul Haq who wrote grammars, dictionaries and other works on Urdu.

In all these works Haq's style is historical rather than linguistic. Basically his focal point is vocabulary. It is with reference to this, rather than phonology or syntax, that he supports his major theses which are that (1) Urdu is an ancient language which developed in Gujrat and Deccan earlier than it did in north India where it was born (Haq 1961) and (2) Persian influenced the languages of North India, mainly the ancestor of Urdu but also other

languages such as Marhatti (Haq 1933), and is, therefore, now a natural part of the linguistic heritage of north India.

These theses had political implications during the period leading up to the partition of India. These were, after all, the Urdu-Hindi controversy days and Abdul Haq wished to promote the idea that Urdu was the common heritage language of the Muslim and Hindu civilisations of India. Therefore, he argued, that Urdu – which could be called Hindustani – should be promoted in all the domains of power in India. The other candidate for this role was modern or Sanskritised Hindi which Abdul Haq opposed as an artificially constructed and partly incomprehensible language (AIR 1939, 31).

After partition Abdul Haq migrated to Pakistan where he reversed his earlier position of calling Urdu the joint heritage of Hindus and Muslims. Now he emphasised the Muslim ownership of Urdu. Indeed, he said:

> *Urdū zubān hī Pākistān kī binā kā bā 'as huī- yē zubān hamārī zindagī kā juz aōr tāēhzīb ō qaōmiat kī buniyād haē.* (Haq n.d., 20) (The Urdu language is the basis for the creation of Pakistan. This language is the element of our life and the basis of our civilisation and nationality.)

He also said that it was Urdu which had disseminated the propaganda of the Muslim League so that it had reached 'in every street and every house' (Haq n.d., B).

Syed Sulaiman Nadvi was another intellectual who took the same position as Abdul Haq before the partition. He began by arguing that Urdu is not the language of any particular nation (*qaōm*) and that it had 'no special association with the Muslims' (*Musalmānō kē sāth kōi khās khusūsiat nahī*) (Nadvi 1939, 6). Then he came to his most important recommendation – that the name 'Urdu', which was only one hundred and fifty years old, should be abandoned in favour of Hindustani (Nadvi 1939, 74). But, while giving such conciliatory suggestions, Nadvi also says that, whenever there are Muslims in the whole 'length and breadth of India', they speak and understand Urdu no matter their mother tongue may be (Nadvi 1939, 67).

In 1950, however, Nadvi came to live in Pakistan, though probably for private reasons, where he took an active role in Islamising the constitution and supporting Pakistani nationalism, of which Urdu was an important symbolic component. Indeed, he opposed the major challenge to Urdu from Bengali when he declared in the Third Historical Conference in February 1953 in Dhaka that Bengali was saturated with Hindu influences and needed to be Islamised (Abdullah 1976, 35; Nadvi, M 1986, 582). This was a far cry from his acceptance of the Hindu linguistic heritage of Urdu-Hindi for which he was famous in his pre-partition days (Siddiqui 1986, 131–169).

It is this strategic use of competing narratives about the ownership of Urdu which Gian Chand Jain finds so infuriating (Jain 2005, 265–269). But it could also be interpreted as the adoption of an extremist position after efforts at conciliation and accommodation have failed. This is exactly what happened in the political field, after all, as Ayesha Jalal (1985) and Jaswant Singh (2009) have brought out.

Since partition, political imperatives have continued to influence the scholars' choice of narratives of ownership. In Pakistan Urdu is celebrated as a language of Muslims and its ownership is not shared with the Hindus. From children's textbooks to scholarly works it is called the national language of Pakistan – though this is contested by ethnic nationalists (Rahman 1996) – and the most important part of Pakistan's Islamic heritage. However, here Urdu is in the service of the ideology of nationalism as, indeed, is Islam itself.

One example of this use of linguistic history is the recent five volume publication of the National Language Authority (NLA) in Islamabad. Each volume is dedicated to a region of Pakistan which celebrates Urdu as a Pakistani language. The pattern followed in each volume is to give pride of place to articles arguing that Urdu was born in that region: Sindh, Punjab, North-West Frontier Province (NWFP, since 2010 known as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and Baluchistan, followed by writings on its use, especially by creative writers (Malik *et al.* 2006a, b, c, d, e). In Volume 5 on Kashmir, however, the emphasis is on the use of Urdu in the former princely state which still remains disputed between Pakistan and India. Here too the 'Gujri' language of the Gujar tribe, some of whom live in parts of the former state, is celebrated as the mother of Urdu and 'Pahari', another language of this area, is compared with Urdu (Karnahi 2007).

This nationalistic claim over Urdu is nothing new. Jamil Jalibi, who has been referred to earlier, dedicates a chapter to Urdu in the areas of Pakistan in his two-volume *Tārīkh-ē-Adab-ē-Urdū* (1975, 593–712). And one author, at the time of writing a colonel in the Pakistan Army, clearly states that the theories that Urdu was born in the regions now in Pakistan is a source of joy because these are the areas which are witnessing its youth. Moreover, he also expresses gratification that Urdu was born in military cantonments and that his purpose – spreading the use of Urdu in the army – is thereby facilitated (Khan 1989, 11–12).

In India the question of identity politics is even more vexing for Muslims than it is in Pakistan. The major narrative of Indian Muslims is that Urdu is a symbol of the composite culture of the Hindus and Muslims of north India. Indeed, Muslim leaders are at pains to prove that Urdu is an Indian language (both geographically and genealogically) and that it is a shared cultural product of all North Indians. Salman Khurshid, an important Muslim politician, has written as follows:

> Urdu has always been projected as the language of the Muslim invaders, and later on was deemed responsible for the partition of India and the formation of Pakistan. In other words, it lost its primary relevance as a language of common Indian civic space. (Khurshid 2006, ix)

The question of ownership is a key issue in India. If it is only a Muslim preserve, then it is a minority language. This, exactly, is what has been happening and the Report of the Committee for Promotion of Urdu (Gujral 1975) assumes that this is so. But if it is the common language of north India and major Indian cities – as its spoken form arguably is – then it has the same

legal standing as Hindi written in the Devanagari script. (For an explanation of this position see Pemberton 2006, 142–144.)

In short the narratives of ownership of Urdu are constrained by the political realities of one's country of residence, the religious community one happens to be born into and such other non-linguistic factors.

Conclusion

To sum up, the historiography of Urdu has been under the domination of identity politics and other aspects of ideology. The debate about the origins of Urdu is influenced by identity politics because the geographical location and genealogy of the language facilitate its appropriation as a cultural product by Indians and Pakistanis, Muslims and Hindus and, indeed, by both under certain circumstances. Pakistani nationalists have appropriated the debate about Urdu's roots to the nationalist enterprise. Claims about Punjabi, Sindhi and Hindko and Siraiki being the ancestors of Urdu are also flattering for the speakers of these languages because Urdu is the national language and the symbol of Muslim identity in South Asia. Thus, besides feeding into the imperatives of nationalism, the debate also feeds into ethnic and linguistic pride. Indian Hindus – specifically the identity-conscious among them – have also moved from locating Hindi in India and tracing its ancestry to an Indian language to owning it after moving it as far from Urdu as possible.

Thus, the debates on Urdu as well as Hindi shift from linguistic identity to nationalistic identity; from cohesion to confrontation. And now as the world has shrunk to an interdependent 'global village' – but one with the means to destroy itself through nuclear, chemical and biological weapons – it is all the more necessary that we emphasise social cohesion and development for all rather than ideas leading to confrontation. This chapter dare not claim to contribute in any significant way to that lofty aim but it tries to make the point that scholars may confront and reinterpret narratives of confrontation in a spirit of truthfulness and understanding.

Notes

1 This chapter is adapted from a chapter in Rahman (2011).
2 Kharoshthi was an ancient alphabet used by the Gandhara culture.
3 People who, having learned Persian and Arabic, served as clerks and higher bureaucrats of Muslim rulers.
4 Kaithi is a script formerly used for writing Hindi. However, the British standardised the Devanagari script and Kaithi was phased out.

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Education and social cohesion in multilingual contexts

8

Timor-Leste: Language and identity in Southeast Asia's newest nation

Kirsty Sword Gusmão

Bondia, good morning. Thank you for extending the invitation to me and my colleague, Mr Agustinho Caet, to contribute our thoughts and experiences to this Conference.

My name is Kirsty Sword Gusmão. As well as being the wife of Timor-Leste's Prime Minister, Xanana Gusmão, I have a number of lofty titles to my name, including Goodwill Ambassador for Education, Chair of the Timor-Leste National Commission for UNESCO, Chair of the Alola Foundation and Chair of the National Education Commission. The roles I most cherish, however, are those of a mother and a teacher. And it is as a mother and a teacher that I wish to speak to you today, since more than the others they are the roles that have spurred me on to tackle the issue of language in education in my adopted homeland. You see, it was a love of languages and of language learning that led me to where I am today, contributing to rebuilding our tiny and fragile little nation from the ground up. I majored in Indonesian and Italian studies at Melbourne University in the 1980s. My knowledge of the Italian language made it fairly easy to acquire Portuguese. I went to live and work in Jakarta in the dying years of Suharto's oppressive regime in the early 1990s and from there I was able to put my language skills to good use in the service of Timor-Leste's struggle for self-determination. I translated reports of human rights abuses coming out of Timor-Leste (then known as Timor Timur) and became the private secretary and English teacher of Indonesia's then most famous political prisoner, Xanana Gusmao, the man who is now my husband. But that's another and a long story.…

Timor-Leste is one of the newest nations in the world, having declared its independence in 2002. For over 500 years, it was a colony of Portugal and was then occupied by Indonesia for a further 24 years, resulting in the annihilation of close to a third of its population. Timor-Leste is one of the poorest nations in Southeast Asia and a country of tremendous cultural and linguistic diversity. Some 30 languages, in addition to the official languages of Tetun and Portuguese, are spoken across the country. In spite of the fact

that the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste obliges the state to value and preserve the local languages of the country, the task of granting mother tongues an official role and status in the life of the nation, including in the education system, is proving to be challenging. Let me tell you why through the lens of my personal experience of language learning and of engaging with efforts to develop our education system.

I took up residence in Timor-Leste some twelve years ago and since doing so acquired Tetun, the national lingua franca, somewhat by osmosis as the hectic pace of life over that period has not allowed me to take a course or to be more deliberate and systematic about my language learning. The experience of acquiring and using Tetun on a daily basis has, however, taught me a great deal about the attitudes of the East Timorese people to language, their own experiences of learning languages and their perceptions of the place of their indigenous languages in the nation building process. In spite of the fact that Tetun is the most widely spoken language in all spheres of public and private life across the country and is considered the second language of the vast majority of the population, very few East Timorese claim to have a good command of this language, particularly in written usage. This is perhaps not surprising, given that Tetun was suppressed as a language of written communication under both Portuguese and Indonesian colonial administrations, with the Church being the only institution to make efforts to document, develop and use the language for liturgical purposes. I find it truly sad that many East Timorese comment that I speak better, more correct Tetun than they do – and believe me my Tetun is far from perfect! What is even more tragic, I believe, is that successive governments in our country have failed to seize upon the opportunity afforded by national independence to actively promote pride in and the teaching of Tetun based on the standard orthography. This has something to do with debates surrounding the legitimacy of the standardised orthography developed by our National Institute of Linguistics, but more than that it is the result of government preoccupation with promotion of our co-official language, Portuguese, a language which enjoys greater status as a developed European language with a proud and prestigious literary tradition.

In spite of being the third language of the vast majority of East Timorese citizens, Portuguese has been promoted as the principal language of instruction across all levels of education over the past ten years. This has not only compromised the learning of children, but it has also significantly hampered efforts to improve teaching quality and to introduce child-centred teaching methodologies which enable children to engage more actively in their learning. Research conducted between 2007 and 2010 by Australian academic, Marie Quinn, shows that less than ten per cent of classroom time is spent on student talk, with the remaining instructional time being dominated by teachers talking at students. And all too often that teacher talk is very formal and highly structured. This is because the teachers' own limited command of Portuguese deters them from making connections between subject content and the daily lives and realities of their students through the use of anecdotes and other devices which would enhance children's enjoyment of learning. As

a result, teachers tend to stick rigidly to the curricular content outlined in the scant teaching materials available to them.

Since independence, the issue of language of instruction in our schools has dominated debate about education quality. Indeed, alongside factors such as distance from home to school, low levels of literacy and education amongst parents, lack of water and adequate hygienic facilities in schools, the question of language use in schools is a major contributor to low rates of school enrolment, high levels of grade repetition and exceedingly high drop-out rates. Close to 80 per cent of students fail to complete primary schooling. The Early Grade Reading Assessment, conducted in 2009, revealed that large numbers of primary school age children across Timor-Leste are taking up to four years to learn to read and write, with 70 per cent of students in Grade 1 unable to read a single word of a simple text presented to them. [1]

Whilst language of instruction has long been acknowledged, particularly by key international stakeholders such as the World Bank and UNICEF, as a key issue in determining quality of education, the question was been conveniently sidestepped by successive Ministers of Education due to perceptions that the issue of language generally in Timor-Leste, and particularly the language of instruction, was steeped in politics and was therefore too sensitive to broach in a head-on manner. In 2009 the National Education Commission, which I chair, offered to lead the process of consultations and deliberations which would precede the drafting of a national Language in Education policy. A visit to Timor-Leste in November 2009 by four officials from the Portuguese Ministry of Education in Lisbon and two Australian language in education specialists resulted in a recommendation to Timor-Leste's education authorities in favour of the use of local languages in the first cycle (grades 1 to 4) of basic education. As a follow-up measure, in April 2010, the National Education Commission launched a Language in Education Working Group in Dili. Consisting of some 18 members representing civil society organisations, the government, the Church and academics, the Working Group spent close to one year conducting consultations and workshops with teachers, students, Ministry of Education officials, non-governmental organisations and United Nations agencies to assess the situation of language use in classrooms and to formulate a policy. In this work, it had the invaluable technical expertise, vast experience and wisdom of Dr Carol Benson of the University of Stockholm and Professor Joe Lo Bianco of Melbourne University.

The Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education policy[2] was launched on International Mother Language Day in Dili on 21 February 2011 in the presence of President José Ramos-Horta, senior officials of the Ministry of Education and other key stakeholders. The policy's presentation to the public was accompanied by a 'national debate' during which all those present were invited to comment, raise doubts and propose solutions. The overwhelming response was positive, with some educators present raising good questions in relation to the implementation plan (for instance, what language will be taken to be the mother tongue of students in schools with significant linguistic heterogeneity?).[3]

Two other significant events drawing attention to the role of local languages in nation-building, development and identity took place in August 2010. One was the first conference on the National Languages of Timor-Leste, a gathering organised jointly by the Timor-Leste National Commission for UNESCO, the National Institute of Linguistics, the Secretariat of State for Culture and the Timor Lorosa'e Nippon Culture Centre. Two hundred individuals from across the country came together over two days to debate issues such as orthography development and design and the importance of the use of local languages in early grade classrooms. On the final day of the Conference, President Ramos-Horta launched the *Ha'u Nia Lian, Ha'u Nia Rai* (My Language, My Country) national languages writing competition. The competition attracted some 600 entries in 21 languages, with contributors ranging in age from six to sixty. Importantly, this competition conferred value upon literary production (music, poetry and short stories) in languages with no significant tradition of being recorded in written form.

In June 2011, our Council of Ministers debated an historic Decree Law on the Curriculum Framework of Basic Education (grades 1 to 9) which, for the first time in our history, granted an official role in the early years of primary education to the nation's mother tongues, as recommended by the mother-tongue based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) policy. Sadly, rather than being embraced and celebrated as a significant step forward for children's learning, for consolidation of Timorese identity and for preservation of our indigenous languages, however, the passing of this law triggered a national debate which tended to view the issue of mother tongue as a threat to national cohesion and unity as well as to the teaching and learning of the official languages. With general and presidential elections looming in 2012, the opposition party Fretilin immediately declared that, should it win government in 2012, it would do away with the 'nonsense' of MTB-MLE at once.

Responding to what it perceived as a threat to the role of the official languages in the life of the nation, Timor-Leste's National Parliament issued a resolution in August 2011, recalling 'the importance of promoting and teaching the official languages towards national unity and cohesion and to consolidate (Timor-Leste's) own original identity in the world.' It is of concern that our law-makers seem to view linguistic diversity as a threat to national unity, whilst the defence of Timor-Leste's unique cultural heritage is seen only in terms of the majority national culture (Tetun).

Nevertheless, we are moving forward undeterred and with tremendous support at the grassroots level. Since it is clear that we still have a good deal of work to do in educating our leaders, government officials and the general populace as to the important role of mother tongue education in improving access to and quality of education, our UNESCO National Commission recently launched a Network for the Promotion of Multilingual Education, which draws members from twenty national and international organisations working in the education field in Timor-Leste.

As we advance in the important work that lies before us, we very much hope to have ongoing support and inputs from the participants at this

conference. As a young nation, Timor-Leste is, I believe, ideally placed to get things right early on in our process of national development, to avoid the mistakes made by other post-colonial nations and indeed to set an example of good educational practice in the service of equitable development, social cohesion and national pride in our unique East Timorese identity.

In closing, I would like to share with you a short film[4] that we made to publicise the *Ha'u Nia Lian, Ha'u Nia Rai* ('My Language, My Country') national languages writing competition organised in 2010. It features our President, Dr Jose Ramos-Horta, and some other key figures on the political stage – we hope you enjoy it.

Thank you.

Notes

1   See World Bank (2009).
2   The policy in Portuguese, English and Tetun is available at this site: www.scribd.com/my_document_collections/3046404.
3   For details of the policy and plans to pilot it in three districts in 2012 see Caet (2011).
4   The commercial/public service announcement can be viewed here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=w4BMwo2Zm4k.

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9

The effectiveness of English language learning in multilingual schools in Pakistan[1]

Khawaja A. Rehman and
Muhammad Zaman Sagar

Introduction

Linguistic diversity is an essential part of life and vital for the long-term survival of humanity. Multilingualism symbolises the value of building bridges between peoples of different colour, creed, culture and language (Baker 1995, quoted by Cavaluzzi 2010, 3). Crawford (2000) claims that developing bi-lingualism and cultivating academic excellence are complementary, rather than contradictory goals. At an early stage of learning, mother tongue instruc-tion not only develops a strong educational foundation but also strengthens the cognitive development of learners (Kadel 2010).

Pakistan is a multilingual country with between 61 and 72 distinct languages (Rahman 2010, Lewis et al. 2014). Among these only Urdu, English and to some extent Sindhi and Pashto are used in state-sponsored basic education and literacy programmes. Usually, Urdu and English are used as the medium of instruction. Urdu is spoken by only six per cent of the total population as a mother tongue (Rahman 2010, based on the 1998 Census) while English is a foreign language. Like many other developing countries, in Pakistan mother-tongue-based (MTB) literacy programmes are almost non-existent. A situation like this, where the medium of instruction is a language which is not spoken by the learners or which they are unfamiliar with, is defined by Benson as 'anologous to holding learners under water without teaching them how to swim' (2005, 2). This makes both learning and teaching difficult.

In MTB multilingual education (MTB-MLE), the learners' mother tongue is used to teach beginning reading and writing skills along with academic content. Later on, second and foreign languages are taught systematically so that skill transfer is gradual. The progression is from familiar to unfamiliar. The advantages of MTB-MLE programmes are evident from the academic litera-ture (Cummins 2000). A learner needs to learn to read and write only once in their life and it is easiest to do this in a language with which are familiar

(Skutnabb-Kangas no date). Keeping in view the recent research findings favoring MTB-MLE, many programmes have been started in different parts of the world. In Pakistan, where most of the languages have remained out of the curriculum, recently some attempts have been made to introduce MTB literacy programmes in a few small minority language communities in the nothern and southern parts of the country.

The aim of these MTB-MLE programmes is to teach reading and writing skills to minority-language pupils in their own languages and also to develop reading, writing, listening and speaking skills in Urdu and English. The mother tongue is used as a bridge to Urdu and English.

Presently, MLE programmes are successfully running in the Gawri and Torwali languages in Swat, Palula and Kalasha in Chitral, Gojri in the Kaghan valley, Parkari and Kachchi in the interior Sindh and Balochi in Liyari, Karachi. Most of these MLE programmes teach Urdu as a second and English as a third language. In the MLE schools in Sindh, Sindhi is the second language, Urdu the third and English the fourth.

The goal of our present study is to report on an initial, exploratory effort to assess the effectiveness of English language learning in these MTB-MLE schools in Pakistan, in comparison to English language learning in Urdu- and English-medium schools. In the first phase of our research we surveyed MTB-MLE schools in four areas: Ashret and Bamboret in Chitral, Kalam in Swat and Budgran in Kaghan. The detailed findings of the research in these areas are presented below. We then briefly consider issues relating to materials for language teaching. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the challenges that face MTB-MLE programmes.

Palula MLE Programme in Ashret

Two Palula MTB-MLE schools have been operational in Ashret in Chitral since 2008. These schools offer two years of pre-school education. In the pre-school, teaching starts in the mother tongue while after one year English and Urdu are introduced. Having completed two years of education in Palula, Urdu and English, the pupils are then admitted into the government primary schools. In the two-year pre-school programme, pupils learn how to read and write in their mother tongue while also learning Urdu and English. In the government schools no mother tongue education is given.

The first batch of pupils completed the pre-school programme in August 2010. At that time they could not be admitted to the Ashret Government Primary School (AGPS), as that school had already started its session in April 2010. Consequently, the government's curriculum for Primary Class 1 was taught to group of pupils in the MLE school. In April 2011, the pupils were admitted to Class 2 of AGPS.

For our research, eight pupils were selected from the AGPS Class 2: four former MLE pupils and four non-MLE pupils. The actual selection was made by the teacher of the class, whom we asked to pick the best four pupils from the non-MLE group and a further four pupils at random from the MLE group.

Table 1: Comparison of proficiency in English of MLE and non-MLE pupils
(Palula mother tongue, Class 2)

Pupil code	Programme	Letter recognition (15 points)	Word recognition (15 points)	Response to simple commands (15 points)	Mathematics in English (15 points)	Total points (max 60)
WA	MLE	14	11	13	13	51
MA	MLE	14	12	14	15	55
A	MLE	12	10	13	12	47
UG	MLE	13	11	13	13	50
MLE sub-total		53	44	53	53	203
MLE mean scores		13.3	11.0	13.3	13.3	50.8
AD	Non-MLE	12	10	13	12	47
JA	Non-MLE	12	8	11	13	44
TA	Non-MLE	12	7	10	12	41
SH	Non-MLE	13	8	9	12	42
Non-MLE sub-total		49	33	43	49	174
Non-MLE mean scores		12.3	8.3	10.8	12.3	43.5

Four language proficiency tests were administered:

- Recognition and production of the letters of the English alphabet;
- Recognition and production of English words;
- Responding to simple commands in English;
- Recognition of numbers, saying the lower multiplication tables and spelling out numbers between 1 and 10 (all this in English).

The results are presented in Table 1.

The comparison shows that the average English scores of the MLE pupils are consistently higher than those of the non-MLE pupils. For example, in word recognition, the four MLE pupils scored 11.0 points on average from a maximum score of 15.0, whilst the four non-MLE pupils (considered by their teacher to be the best in the class among those who had not been exposed to MLE education) scored on average only 8.3 points. In other words, by the second year of primary school, the English competence of those who learnt to read and write in their home language is already markedly better than the English of those who were taught in Urdu and English from the beginning of pre-school.

To find out what the perceptions of the pupils is with regard to the effectiveness of the MLE schools, both MLE and non-MLE pupils were asked the question, 'Who performs better in your school?' The responses of the pupils are shown in Table 2. Table 2 shows that the perceptions of the academic

Table 2: MLE and non-MLE pupils' perceptions of who performs better
(Palula mother tongue, Class 2)

Pupil code	Programme	Who performs better?
WA	MLE	MLE pupils
MA	MLE	MLE pupils
A	MLE	MLE pupils
UG	MLE	MLE pupils
AD	Non-MLE	MLE pupils
JA	Non-MLE	MLE pupils
TA	Non-MLE	MLE and Non-MLE perform equally
SH	Non-MLE	MLE and Non-MLE perform equally

performance of the MLE pupils is positive both among the MLE pupils and the non-MLE pupils, as out of eight informants six are of the opinion that the MLE pupils perform better.

We interviewed three teachers from the government school AGPS: Samiullah, Noor Shahdeen and Mushtaq Ahmed. They confirmed that the pupils whose pre-schooling was in the MLE schools perform better in all subjects, including the learning of English, as compared to those pupils who start their pre-schooling in AGPS.

The coordinator of the Palula MLE Project, Naseem Haider, told us that in the beginning people were very reluctant to educate their children in the MTB-MLE school. When the MTB programme first started the teachers had to visit parents and convince them to send their children to the new school. However, this reluctance is being overcome. Parents are now requesting admission for their children in the MLE Schools.

A local councillor and head of the Palula community, Siraj Din, also told us that in the beginning many community members were against the MLE programme and he himself was not in favour of it either. However, seeing the success of the programme he is now involved in it and has become a member of the *Anjuman Taraqi Palula* (Society for the Development of the Palula Language). He said, 'I think this programme is providing us with two types of benefits: firstly, our children perform academically better and secondly, saving our heritage language, which was otherwise being abandoned by the younger generations, especially by the school going children. Now they feel proud in speaking their language.'

We were surprised when we observed Palula community activists using the Palula language in their formal speeches in the community meetings. This happens rarely in Pakistan. Even in Punjab province (the largest province in the country), meetings are addressed in Urdu rather than Punjabi (the predominant language of the province). This seems to be a substantial step towards the preservation and promotion of an endangered language.

Kalasha MLE School in Bamboret, Chitral

The Kalasha are a unique ethnic group with their own religion, culture and language. They live in three valleys in southern Chitral. The group is endangered and the population is dwindling through conversion and migration. Bamboret is one of the valleys where the Kalasha people live. An organisation called the Greek Teacher Association has opened a Kalasha MLE school in this valley, with the cooperation of the government of Pakistan. Unlike the Palula MLE programme, this school offers education up to grade 5. Also unlike the Palula MLE programme and other MLE programmes in Pakistan, such as Torwali in Swat and Gawri in Swat, the MLE programme uses the Roman script for the Kalasha language.

There is a Government Primary School located close to the Kalasha School, but it has no MTB-MLE programme and so English and Urdu are directly introduced from the beginning. To compare the performance of the MLE and non-MLE Kalasha pupils, we asked teachers from each school to provide us with three pupils of different ages and classes, in such a way that each pupil from the MLE school was matched with a pupil of the same age and class from the government school. The difficulty of the tests that were administered was determined keeping in view the grade level of each pair of pupils. We tried to explore their performance through testing in language proficiency and mathematics. The tests involved the following tasks.

For grade 1:
- Recognition and production of the letters of the English alphabet;
- Recognition and production of English words;
- Responding to simple commands;
- Recognition of numbers, saying the lower multiplication tables, spelling out numbers between 1 and 10 (all this in English).

For grade 3:
- Recognition and production of short phrases;
- Writing and reading of short sentences;
- Responding to simple commands and questions;
- Mathematics in English according to the pupils' grade.

For grade 5:
- Filling in blanks with a word or a short phrase
- Text comprehension
- Responding to commands and questions
- Mathematics in English according to the pupils' grade.

The results for Bamboret are given in Table 3. The data show that among the pupils who were tested, the Kalasha MLE school children consistently score higher in both English and mathematics, compared to the pupils of the government primary school. For example in Class 1 pupil MR – who

Table 3: Comparison of English proficiency of MLE and non-MLE pupils in English (Kalasha mother tongue, Classes 1, 3, 5)

Pupil code	Class	School	Letter recognition (15 points)	Word recognition (15 points)	Response to simple commands (15 points)	Number recognition (15 points)	Total points (max 60)
N	1	MLE	13	10	13	12	48
MR	1	non-MLE	10	8	12	10	40
			Recognition + use of phrases (15 points)	Reading + writing simple sentences (15 points)	Responses to simple questions (15 points)	Mathematics in English (15 points)	Total points (max 60)
M	3	MLE	14	11	13	12	50
ND	3	non-MLE	11	8	9	10	38
			Blank filling (15 points)	Text comprehension (15 points)	Responses to questions (15 points)	Mathematics in English (15 points)	Total points (max 60)
R	5	MLE	12	9	12	13	46
D	5	non-MLE.	10	5	10	10	35

had never been taught through the home language – achieved an overall English score of 40 out of 60 points, whilst pupil N – who was studying in the Kalasha-medium school – obtained an overall score of 48 points. In Class 5, for text comprehension in English, pupil R, from the Kalasha-medium school, scored almost double what pupil D, from the Urdu- and English-medium school, achieved (9 points compared to 5).

Yet again, then, we have evidence that children who become literate first in their home language then go on to achieve higher scores in English and mathematics in English than their peers who were taught through English and Urdu from the very beginning of school. Moreover, while sitting in the lessons, we observed that the Kalasha MLE school children could read and write Kalasha freely and could also answer questions in English if asked in Kalasha and vice versa.

Two Kalasha school teachers, Meer and Imran, told us in an interview that the pupils of the Kalasha schools perform better than those in government secondary schools. However, due to time constraints we could not confirm this directly from the High School in Bamboret, where the pupils of the Kalasha MLE School continue their education after completing primary school.

We interviewed Abdul Khaliq, an elderly member of the Kalasha community. He told us that some people who want to send their children to the Kalasha School cannot do so because the school has limited space available. Now he himself is planning to open a Kalasha MLE school with

the cooperation of the Forum for Language Initiatives (FLI). The approach promoted by FLI is different from that in the Greek Kalasha school; in the latter school the teaching methodology is not based on 'primer tracks' and 'story tracks' as developed jointly by UNESCO and SIL International. Also, their method is less child-centred and more teacher-centred than the language teaching approach adopted at Palula, Gawri, Torwali and Gojri MLE Schools.

We observed that English is much easier for the Kalasha MLE pupils, as they start with the Roman alphabet and consequently find it easier to learn to read and write in English than in Urdu.

During our interviews we also observed that the pupils of the Kalasha-medium school are more confident and extrovert than their counterparts studying in the government school. An elderly Kalasha man, Noor Ahmed told us, 'The teachers in the Kalasha School teach more efficiently to our children than the government schools.'

We also came to know through our interviewees that after the abduction by the Taliban in 2009 of Professor Athanasios Lerounis, the Greek social worker who also worked as a teacher at the Kalasha MLE School, the school has suffered and the standard of education has dropped slightly. Later Lerounis was released and returned to Greece as he was not allowed by the Pakistan government to stay in Chitral. Growing extremism poses a great threat to the programme and to this unique culture as a whole.

Gawri MLE Project in Kalam, Surat

In Kalam in the Swat Valley, the Gawri Community Development Programme (GCDP), in collaboration with the Forum for Language Initiatives (FLI), initially started two pilot Gawri MTB-MLE schools in 2008. By April 2011 forty pupils had successfully completed a two-year pre-school MLE programme, as well as the Primary Class 1 curriculum (just as in the Palula programme described above). The success of this pilot project encouraged the GCDP to open two more Gawri-medium MLE schools. Abdul Ali, co-ordinator of the programme, told us that they want to continue to increase the number of schools gradually.

The records of the annual examinations administered by the Gawri pilot MLE schools show that many children obtained good marks. Some of them even gained score of more than 90 per cent. The tests included a comprehension component, because a focus on meaning and a focus on accuracy go hand-in-hand in the MLE schools (as opposed to rote memorisation, which is common in the government schools). In contrast, poor results were recorded by Gawri children who leave school for long periods when they migrate with their parents to the plains each winter and then rejoin school when they come back to Kalam in the summer.

The cases of two individual pupils of the Gawri-medium school – Shakir Ali and Bakht Jumma – are revealing.

Shakir Ali was admitted to the Gawri MLE school in August 2008 at the age of six. He had not attended any school previously. One day in 2010, after he

had been at the school for two years, he was sitting with his elder brother and father and started to read aloud the headlines of the Urdu newspaper which his father was reading. This surprised his father as the older brother, who was in Class 7 at a government school, was still not able to read a newspaper. The elder brother had started his education in Urdu whereas Shakir had started in Gawri, then Urdu was introduced at a later stage.

Bakht Jumma attended a Gawri-medium MLE School for two years and afterwards joined the Girls Government Primary School (GGPS). While in the Gawri-medium school she had successfully completed Primary Class 1 and so when she moved to the GGPS she was promoted to Class 3 immediately (instead of Class 2). This was because her academic performance, compared to others who had received their earlier education in the non-MLE school, was excellent. At the time of our study she was in class 4 and was continuing to receive the highest scores in her class.

On the other hand, a few pupils who transferred from the MLE schools were reported to perform poorly. This is because they do not come to school regularly, as a result of factors external to the school.

The popularity and success of the Gawri MLE programme has further widened the scope of the MLE Schools. In response to community desires, the Gawri MLE project is planning to start adult literacy classes in the community for women and men. Abdul Ali stated, 'Hopefully by early 2012 we will have pilot adult literacy schools in the Kalam valley.'

Aslam Academy in Budgram, Kaghan

The literacy rate among Gojars all over Pakistan is generally lower than that of most of the other communities in the country. The village of Budgran in the Kaghan Valley, home to a Gojar community, originally did not have its own primary school; children had to travel a long distance if they wanted to go to school. In order to promote literacy among this community a Gojri-medium MLE programme was initiated in the area. The school was named after Aslam, a resident of Budgran who died in the earthquake of 8th October 2005, along with eleven of his family members.

The Aslam Academy was founded in 2008 with just fourteen pupils. Gradually the number of the pupils grew and at the time of our survey it had 34 pupils and two teachers. The teachers are well trained and use modern teaching methods. According to Javaid Hussain, one of the teachers, new pupils keep coming from other non-MLE schools; the attitude of the local population people is rapidly changing in favour of the MLE school and now parents prefer to enrol their children in the Aslam Academy rather than in non-MLE schools. School records show that no child has dropped out since the school was established and the average attendance rate is 94 per cent.

We informally observed the way that teachers teach and we also paid attention to the learners' level of understanding. The teachers frequently use Gojri and very rarely use Urdu to clarify concepts. The learners told us that they understand concepts in Gojri more easily than in Urdu. Learning seems

to take place in a friendly classroom environment, unlike the situation in many 'public'[2] and government schools in Pakistan.

Four pupils were interviewed during the survey visit; all four said that they came to Aslam Academy because it provided a better quality of education. Three of these interviews are described here.

Basharat is twelve years old and studies in Class 3. He was originally admitted to the government school in Shongo but dropped out after a year. When the Gojri MLE School opened, Basharat enrolled and at the time of the survey he was in Class 3. When he was asked why he had dropped out of the government school he said that he had found the environment threatening; in contrast, the Gojri MLE school was friendly and

> We learn with interest and understand the lessons better. Teachers were always beating us [in the former school].

Aneesa is a girl who also dropped out of the 'public' school in a nearby village and enrolled in the Gojri MLE School. She explained:

> Sometimes I would visit the Aslam Academy and attend the classes [unofficially] and finally I decided to leave the 'Public' School and join the Aslam Academy.

She also told us that her parents had been reluctant for her to move and at first did not give her permission to go, believing that the Gojri MLE school would be below standard because lessons were taught in a 'backward' language. She argued with her parents and finally they agreed for her to enrol in the Academy. When asked to compare the teaching methods in the two schools, she said:

> In the 'public' school mathematics was taught orally and no audio-visual aids were used. Most of the teaching was done orally, while in the Aslam Academy all subjects are taught through using audio-visual aids, and the use of flash cards and whiteboard is helpful in learning our lessons. English lessons are revised through recording machine. The burden of homework was very boring in the 'public' school while in Aslam Academy there is less homework.

Riasat Hussain is another pupil who left the Government School of Shongo when he was in Class 3 and moved to the Aslam Academy. At the time of the survey he was in Class 5. Although he did not attend Gojri MLE classes, he loved using Gojri in the class and said that he could understand things more easily in Gojri than in Urdu. He also said that the corporal punishment in the government schools was 'horrible' and 'scared the learners'. He told us that he left the previous school and joined the Aslam Academy because of the unfriendly attitude of the Hindko school children and teachers towards the Gojri pupils and their language. The government school had a majority of Hindko speakers and they would make disparaging and derogatory comments about the Gojars and their language. He is now successfully furthering his education.

In order to gain an indication of the academic progress of children in Aslam Academy we looked at one case, Naveed Ahmed, and compared

him with Iftikhar Arifeen, a pupil from the Government Primary School of Shongo (GPSS). At the time of the survey Naveed was eight years old and was still in Class 1 of Aslam Academy in class 1 while Iftikhar Arifeen was aged twelve and was studying in Class 4 of GPSS. Both pupils were tested in English and Urdu reading and writing and in mathematics. The tests were selected from the syllabus of GPSS Class 4, so one would predict that Iftikhar would perform better. In fact Iftikhar scored only 20 points out of 40, whilst Naveed – who was still in Class 1 and had no idea what the GPSS Class 4 syllabus was like – obtained 30 points. This simple example indicates that a child taught through the mother tongue can achieve much better results than a peer taught through a language that is not their home language.

For comparison, we spoke to Ghulam Hussain, who has been teaching at GPSS since 1994. He told us that there were thirty pupils in the school. The normal medium of instruction is Urdu, but Hindko is sometimes used informally. Using Hindko is considered to be a sign of 'backwardness' in the class. School records show a 25 per cent dropout rate.

Teaching materials

A detailed survey of the teaching materials used for teaching mother tongues, Urdu and English showed that there are marked differences between MTB-MLE schools on the one hand and government and 'public' schools on the other. The MLE schools use materials which are related to the local context to a much greater extent; the stories, symbols and shapes in the textbooks and primers are all readily recognisable by the pupils, whereas the teaching materials used in government and 'public' schools mostly contain alien material which is difficult for learners to understand.

In the MLE schools the material for literacy programmes is developed in consultation with members of the local community; they keep their cultural values in mind when selecting what to use. Moreover, the storybooks use only stories which describe the local culture and environment. On the other hand, literacy materials used in government and 'public' schools usually contain stories that are not relevant to the local culture, geography and social values. As a consequence, the learners experience difficulty in understanding them.

Challenges and conclusions

The field data collected during our survey provides strong and convincing evidence that the English language proficiency of pupils in MTB-MLE schools is better than that of pupils in schools where no mother tongue education is given and where Urdu and English are introduced directly. The research has also found that learners in the MLE schools perform better in mathematics.

Apart from their academic benefits, the MTB-MLE programmes also help to develop cohesion among diverse communities. The minority groups who have become involved in MLE arrange functions and workshops together.

They have been developing systems jointly and learning from each other's experience. Respect and promotion of minority languages will promote tolerance in a society where extremism and intolerance are spreading at an alarming rate.

Though the MTB-MLE are programmes are undoubtedly beneficial, we also need to recognise that the programmes face considerable challenges.

Firstly, MLE programmes still meet resistance from policymakers who are not yet aware of their advantages. In their view, beginning a child's education through the use of Urdu and English is considered to be more beneficial than using a small local language. Time is needed to raise awareness among agents of change in Pakistan, especially policymakers, that developing literacy in the mother tongue can make it easier to learn other languages, especially English.

Not only is there a reluctance to consider the possibility of using the mother tongue as the medium of instruction, but there is also a widespread perception that children will perform better in school if English is used as the medium. Indeed some people may argue that teaching indigenous languages leads to ghettoisation in schools.

Another challenge is posed by the fact that almost all MTB-MLE programmes are supported financially and technically by international agencies. The volatile nature of the country – especially religious extremism – may cause these agencies to stop their programmes at any time. The case of the Greek voluntary teacher, discussed above, is just one example of this volatility. Meanwhile, the local organisations running these programmes do not yet have the capacity to function on their own. The future of MLE programmes will therefore remain uncertain until the time is reached when local organisations can manage without being dependent on external support.

Finally, there is a problem of resources. With many small language communities scattered across the country – in some cases with several languages co-existing in the same small village – it is currently impossible to meet the needs of the speakers of all of Pakistan's mother tongues.

Despite these challenges, these small scale experiments in mother-tongue-based multilingual education in Pakistan offer encouraging models for the rest of the country.

Notes

1   The authors are grateful to the British Council Pakistan for providing funding to carry out the research and for enabling them to present the findings in the Ninth Language & Development Conference in Colombo.
2   Following the British convention, private schools in Pakistan are known to as 'public' schools.

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10

Multilingual education, social transformation and development in Nepal

Prem Phyak

Introduction

The discourse of 'development' in late capitalism is largely dominated by the economic perspective (Harvey 2005, Sklair 2002). Invoking the neoliberal ideology of development-as-an-accumulation-of-wealth through a free market economy, which legitimises corporate power (not the people's power), nation states often develop their educational and economic policies to address the needs of the global neoliberal market, rather than focusing on the everyday local needs of people. However, the ideology of development-as-economic-growth disregards social justice and equity (Luke, Luke, & Graham 2007, Steger, Goodman & Wilson 2012). Educational policies guided by such ideologies tend to be top-down and largely exclude the participation of people at the grassroots in the multiple layers of the policy-making process. Embracing the neoliberal ideology of development, Nepal has focused on poverty reduction in all of its national plans and policies since 1990. In line with this goal, Nepal's educational policies, which are largely driven by donors, also embrace the global neoliberal ideology that buttresses privatisa-tion and the commodification of education and defines students' success in terms of their achievement scores in local and national exams (Carney 2003).

However, such policies do not ensure participation, voice and agency of multiple stakeholders at the grassroots level. This chapter is an attempt to analyse how multilingual education has filled this gap by providing space for indigenous people's participation in school-related activities and by legitimis-ing local language, culture and epistemology in educational transformation. I argue that multilingual education (MLE) policy is transformative and has the potential to contribute to social development: it bridges the gap between community and school and recognises the identity, epistemology and voices of local communities. I begin this chapter with a brief introduction to Nepal's political economy followed by the history of its language policy and social

stratification to provide a backdrop for understanding how MLE is transformative in the present context of Nepal. Then I analyse how both ideological and implementational spaces for multilingual education (Hornberger 2005) are provided by the recent policy followed by some recommendations for future research and policy revisions.

Political economy of Nepal

Nepal, situated between China and India, is a multilingual, multiethnic and multicultural country. The 2011 Census reported 125 caste/ethnic groups, among whom the Chhetris and the Hill Brahmans made up 29 per cent of the population. The ten most numerous caste/ethnic groups constituted 69 per cent of the population in total. The remaining 31 per cent of the population is made up of 115 caste and ethnic groups.

The Census also reported that 123 languages are spoken by the various ethnic and caste groups. It revealed that Nepali and Maithili are the mother tongues of more than 56 per cent of the population of the country, while just ten languages are the mother tongues of 88 per cent of the population (Table 1). The remaining twelve per cent of the population share 113 mother tongues between them.

Table 1: Caste/ethnic groups and mother tongues in Nepal*

Caste/ethnic group	% of population	Mother tongue	% of population
Chhetri	16.6	Nepali	44.6
Hill Brahman	12.2	Maithili	11.7
Magar	7.1	Bhojpuri	6.0
Tharu	6.6	Tharu	5.8
Tamang	5.8	Tamang	5.1
Newar	5.0	Newar	3.2
Kami	4.8	Bajjika	3.0
Musalman	4.4	Magar	3.0
Yadava	4.0	Doteli	3.0
Rai	2.3	Urdu	2.6
115 other groups	31.2	113 other languages	12.0
Total: 125 groups	100.0	Total: 123 mother tongues	100.0

* Source: CBS (2011)

Among the ten major religions, the Census showed that 81.3 per cent of the people follow Hinduism, followed by Buddhism (9.0 per cent), Islam (4.4 per cent), Kirat (3.1 per cent), Christianity (1.4 per cent) and Prakriti

(0.5 per cent). Other religions include Bon (13,006 people), Jainism (3,214), Bahai (1,283) and Sikhism (609) (CBS 2011).

Despite this diversity, the majority of languages other than Nepali are endangered, for various reasons (Turin 2007, Yadava 2007). On the one hand, these languages do not have their own orthographies and, on the other hand, there is an increasing trend for young people not to speak their mother tongues; this is caused by migration and the long domination of Nepali and English in education and other sectors. While the pre-1990 era was characterised as the era of linguistic nationalism – defined in terms of a monolingual ideology (Nepali only) – the post-1990 era is considered to be the age of modernity and globalisation. As the nation state adopted a liberal economic policy paving the way for the private sector and multinational companies to invest in various fields, a large number of foreign donor agencies began to play key roles in intervening in national policies.

Nepal's Human Development Index (0.463 in 2013) indicates that this is one of the poorest countries in the world, occupying 157th position from 186 countries (UNDP 2013). The Nepal Living Standards Survey (NLSS) of 2004 showed that 31 per cent of Nepalis are below the poverty line (CBS 2004). The condition of indigenous nationalities (Janajatis), marginalised caste groups (Dalits) and religious minorities is even worse. The NLSS report indicates that only 19 per cent of Hill Brahmans and Chhetris (upper caste people) are below the poverty line, far less than that of the Janajatis (44 per cent), the Dalits (47 per cent) and the Muslims (41 per cent). Such a disparity in terms of caste and ethnicity also exists in literacy. For example, while the literacy rate of Brahmans is 72.4 per cent, only about 48 per cent of Janajatis are literate. Moreover, NLSS shows that 32 per cent of Brahmans and Chhetris have not been to school compared to 43 per cent, 62 per cent and 45 per cent of hill Dalits, Muslims and Janajatis respectively. Likewise, while 10 per cent of Brahmans and Chhetris complete their School Leaving Certificate (SLC) examination only 3 per cent and 1.7 per cent of Janajatis and Dalits respectively complete their SLC (CBS 2004).

These data clearly indicate that disparity in socio-economic and educational development still persists in Nepalese society. One of the fundamental reasons behind the low educational attainment of Janajatis is the unequal language-in-education policy that the country has adopted for more than two and a half centuries. Due to the one language policy (only Nepali), children from non-Nepali speaking communities (most of whom are Janajatis) could not attend school; although they attended school, they dropped out before they completing their education. One of the major reasons for this is that the national curricula and language education policy do not seem to be relevant to the indigenous communities. To address these issues the Ministry of Education (MOE) has made some policy level developments by introducing mother-tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) in Nepal. This policy provides space for indigenous languages to be used as the medium of instruction up to Grade 3, while English and Nepali are taught as compulsory subjects from Grade 1. Despite a number of implementational challenges, this

policy has already received positive responses from indigenous communities and helped students to learn effectively through their own mother tongue (Hough, Thapa-Magar & Yonjan-Tamang 2009, Phyak 2011).

Before I discuss the relevance and challenges of MLE, let me critically examine how the history of language-in-education policy has set up a strong foundation for linguistic discrimination against indigenous minority children.

Language and social exclusion

Although Nepal is a multilingual, multicultural and multiethnic country, it has a very long history of possessing a monolingual language policy. Since the unification of the country by a Shah King, Prithvi Narayan Shah, in 1768, only Nepali has been adopted as the official language of the country. The indigenous languages – for example, Newari in the Kathmandu Valley, Limbu and Rai in the eastern region, Magar and Gurung in the western region and Maithili and Bhojpuri in the southern region – were legally banned in schools and other public domains (Awasthi 2008, Giri 2010).

The root of social exclusion in Nepal is the *Muluki Ain* (Law of the Land) of 1854 which firmly developed a caste-based hierarchical Nepalese society (Gurung 2006). According to the *Muluki Ain*, the High Caste people – Brahmans and Chhetris – occupy the highest position. Brahmans, who are traditionally known as Pundits, are allowed to read the Hindu religious texts used in the performance of Hindu rituals, whereas Chhetris are considered to be warriors; they occupy the largest proportion in the Nepalese army and other government positions (also see Gurung 2006, Phyak 2011). The second position in the hierarchy is occupied by the Matawalis (alcohol drinkers); these include the Gurung and Magar people, who are associated with the Gorkhali army. Another group of Matawalis – the Bhote, Kumal, Bhujel, Tharu and Chepang (who were kept as slaves by high caste people) – occupy the third position in the hierarchy. Similarly, lower caste Newars and religious minorities (Christians and Muslims) were placed in the second last position in the hierarchy (see Lawoti 2007). The untouchable castes such as the Damai and Kami are at the bottom of the hierarchy.

Table 2: Categorisation of indigenous nationalities*

Indigenous nationality	Status
Kusunda, Bankariya, Raute, Surel, Hayu, Raji, Kisan, Lepcha, Meche, Kuswadiya	Endangered
Majhi, Siyar, Lhomi (Shinsaba), Thudam, Dhanuk, Chepang, Santhal, Jhagad, Thami, Bote, Danuwar, Baram	Highly marginalised
Sunuwar, Tharu, Tamang, Bhujel, Kumal, Rajbangshi, Gangaai, Dhimal, Bhote, Darai, Tajpuriya, Pahari, Topkegola, Dolpo, Fri, Mugal, Larke, Lohpa, Dura, Walung	Marginalised
Chhairotan, Tanbe, Tingaunle Thakali, Baragaunle Thakali, Marphali Thakali, Gurung, Magar, Rai, Limbu, Sherpa, Yakkha, Chhantyal, Jirel, Byansi, Yolmo	Disadvantaged
Newar, Thakali	Advanced

* Source: NEFIN 2008

As Table 2 shows, apart from the Newar and Thakali, all other Janajatis are disadvantaged in education, politics and other sectors. The high castes have a large proportion of highly qualified people who dominate in all decision making processes. Gurung (2006) reports that in 2000–2001 87 per cent of candidates passing gazetted level examinations conducted by the Public Service Commission were high caste people, followed by the Newars (8.7 per cent). The representation of indigenous people is only 0.5 per cent while Dalits have no representation at all. One of the fundamental reasons behind high caste people's domination is the caste based hierarchical society developed by the *Muluki Ain*. This policy gives two explicit benefits – religious and linguistic – to Brahmans and Chhetris. As Nepal was constitutionally a Hindu religious country (Kingdom of Nepal 1990), Brahmans were the only people authorised to perform social rituals and allowed to read the *vedas*, the most ancient Hindu scriptures. Due to this privilege, Brahmans learned to read and write at home informally with the help of pundits (Bista 1991). They also went to Banaras and other parts of India to learn how to read and write. These informal literacy practices, influenced by the Hindu religion, contributed a great deal to the high educational attainment of Brahmans, while other castes and ethnic groups remained illiterate. On the one hand, schools were not open to the public before 1950 and, on the other hand, ethnic minorities were not allowed even to touch the religious texts. Likewise, high caste people always excelled over the indigenous nationalities and other minorities in education and governance, because they could use Nepali (their mother tongue) in all domains, whereas the indigenous people faced difficulty in expressing their ideas in Nepali since it was not their mother tongue (Phyak 2013).

Indigenous communities have organised movements in opposition to this domination, despite attempts to repress them over the centuries. Lawoti (2007) has identified 25 such ethnic and caste mobilisations and rebellions before 1990, that is to say in the years before the restoration of democracy.[1] There were several major linguistic movements against the 'Nepali only' language policy. Some notable examples are the Limbu language movement in 1870 led by Sri Thebe (who was exiled), the Newar language movement in Calcutta, India, in 1926, the movement against making Nepali the only language of instruction in 1956 and the establishment of the Association of Newar Language Speakers in 1979.

In the remainder of this chapter, I examine one language policy which has been adopted by the country and discuss how indigenous languages are given space in education. I also make use of data from one school which has implemented an MTB-MLE programme in order to analyse how effective that programme is.

Narrow nationalism and monolingual policy

A monolingual policy was adopted by the nation state from the time of the unification of modern Nepal. In the guise of nationalism, education policy permitted only Nepali as the medium of instruction and banned the

use of other languages in schools. The domination of the Nepali language was formalised and systematised by the first democratic government in the 1950s. The Nepal National Education Planning Commission (NNEPC 1956), the first commission on education in the history of Nepal, made some significant recommendations for the systematic expansion and development of education throughout the country. It was a historic commission for the Nepalese education system because it fixed the structure of education, curriculum and textbooks for different levels. However, the commission's recommendations about the medium of instruction (MoI) were against the aspirations of the indigenous people and Nepal's multilingual identity. The commission recommended that:

> The medium of instruction should be the national language [Nepali] in primary, middle and higher educational institutions, because any language which cannot be made lingua franca and which does not serve legal proceedings in court should not find a place … The use of the national language can bring about equality among all classes of people, can be an anchor-sheet for Nepalese nationality and can be the main instrument for promoting literature. (NNEPC 1956, 95)

The commission further stated that:

> No other languages [than Nepali] should be taught, even optionally in primary school, because [only] a few children will need them and they would hinder the use of Nepali … and those who wish [for] and need additional languages can learn them in the sixth grade. (NNEPC 1956, 95)

We see that the beginning of a language-in-education policy in Nepal is marked with narrow nationalism defined in terms only of the Nepali language. To identify oneself as a Nepali he/she has to understand and speak Nepali. This 'one language' policy in education was adopted with an assumption that it would foster equality among people from various classes and groups (Weinberg 2013). Therefore, languages other than Nepali were not allowed to be taught and used as the MoI (even optionally) in primary schools. In addition, the commission strongly recommended:

> […] it should be emphasised that if Nepali is to become the true national language, then we must insist that its use be enforced in the primary school … Local dialects and tongues, other than standard Nepali, should be vanished [banished] from the school and playground as early as possible in the life of the child. (NNEPC 1956, 97)

This indicates that the policy makers at that time were afraid of introducing local languages into schools. They thought that the use of children's mother tongues in schools would weaken Nepalese national identity and thwart the development of the Nepali language (Giri 2010, Weinberg 2013). It is unfortunate that local languages were not allowed even in playgrounds. But the policy makers failed to realise that excluding local languages from primary schools meant excluding non-Nepali speaking children from schools. Due to this policy, the drop-out rate of non-Nepali speaking children (from various

indigenous communities) was very high and they were not able to perform as well as their Nepali-speaking friends (Awasthi 2004).

The domination of the Nepali language continued during the during the party-less Panchayat system[2] (1960–1990). Although the caste based structure established by the *Muluki Ain* was abolished during the Panchayat period, indigenous communities were still severely marginalised as their linguistic, cultural and religious identities were not recognised (Gurung 2003, Lawoti 2007). As the country adopted an ideology of 'one nation, one language, one religion and one dress', languages other than Nepali were not permitted in schools. As a result, children from various linguistic communities could not perform as well as Nepali-speaking children – and so dropped out of school – but they also felt alienated even if they were enrolled in school (Phyak 2011).

Recognising indigenous languages

With the end of the Panchayat system in 1990 the issue of language in education came to the forefront. Various indigenous peoples' organisations were established to put pressure on the government for a guarantee of their linguistic rights. As a result, the 1990 Constitution stated that Nepal was to be a 'multilingual and multicultural' kingdom (Kingdom of Nepal 1990). Although the constitution mentioned that mother tongues spoken in Nepal were 'national' languages (Article 6.2), maintaining the previous legacy, it recognised Nepali as the only 'official' language (Article 6.1). Article 18 of the Constitution enshrined the following linguistic and cultural rights:

(1) Each community residing in the Kingdom of Nepal shall have the right to preserve and promote its language, script and culture.

(2) Each community shall have the right to operate schools up to the primary level in its own mother tongue for imparting education to its children.

It also stated that all communities had the right to preserve their cultures, rights and languages (Article 26.2). Based on these constitutional provisions, the 1992 National Education Commission Report recommended to the Ministry of Education (MOE) that mother tongues should be used as the medium of instruction for non-Nepali speaking children at primary level. Following this recommendation, the MOE included the teaching of the mother tongue as an optional subject (but not as medium of instruction) at primary level.

So far, the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC)[3] has prepared textbooks in 22 different mother tongues. The MOE has given School Management Committees (SMC) the right to select one mother tongue to be taught in the school; the selection is made on the basis of which is the most widely spoken language in the local community.

This policy has encouraged indigenous children to use their mother tongue in schools and it has also increased their participation in learning activities.

However, there are some notable challenges facing the teaching of the mother tongue as a subject while Nepali is still used as the medium of instruction. Due to a lack of trained and competent teachers and insufficient resources such as textbooks and other reference materials, the teaching and learning of the mother tongues is not very effective in practice. In addition, the National Curriculum Framework for School Education in Nepal (MOE 2007) identifies the following challenges facing mother tongue teaching:

- heterogeneous Nepalese communities with diverse linguistic and socio-cultural structures
- lack of development and management of teachers for bilingual education[4]
- lack of community initiation in managing mother tongue teachers
- lack of script, grammar, dictionary and writing practice in most of the mother tongues
- lack of adequate preparation for multigrade teaching
- lack of clear policy regarding the mother tongues
- lack of involvement of concerned stakeholders at policy making and implementation levels.

We can see that, since only one local language is selected to be taught as a subject in schools, children who come from diverse linguistic backgrounds are not motivated and do not find it easy to learn through another language. In this sense, teaching the mother tongue as a subject according to the present policy does not necessarily help children to learn in their own language.

In order to address this challenge, the Ministry of Education has implemented mother tongue based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) for non-Nepali speaking children since 2007. According to this policy, non-Nepali speaking children are taught in their mother tongues from pre-primary early childhood education and development (ECED) and basic education levels. The legal foundation of the MTB-MLE policy lies in the Interim Constitution of Nepal (People of Nepal 2007) which not only recognises Nepal as a multiethnic, multilingual, multicultural and multireligious country but also enshrines the following crucial language-related provisions:

> The State shall not discriminate among citizens on grounds of religion, race, caste, tribe, sex, origin, language or ideological conviction or any of these. (Article 13.3)
>
> Each community shall have the right to get basic education in their mother tongue as provided for in the law. (Article 17.1)

It further states that:

> Each community residing in Nepal shall have the right to preserve and promote its language, script, culture, cultural civility and heritage. (Article 17.3)

Other educational policies also mention the provisions for mother tongue as the MoI in schools. The Education for All (EFA) National Plan of Action (Ministry of Education and Sports 2003), the EFA Core Document for 2004–2009 (Ministry of Education and Sports 2004), the primary level curriculum (CDC 2008) and the School Sector Reform Plan for 2009–2015

(MOE 2009) all clearly mention that primary education can be provided in children's mother tongues. Regarding the MoI, the National Curriculum Framework for School Education in Nepal (MOE 2007) states:

> The medium of school level education can be in Nepali or English language or both of them. However, in the first stage of basic education (Grades 1–3), the medium of education will generally be in the mother tongue. In the case of non-Nepali citizens, there will be a special provision to choose any other language as a subject instead of Nepali. The medium of teaching of any language subject will be in the same language i.e. Nepali will be taught in Nepali (not in the children's mother tongue).

Table 3: Models of mother-tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) in Nepal*

Model of MTB-MLE	District / Language(s) / *School*	Classroom features
Model I monolingual mono-grade grade teaching	**Dhankuta** Athapahariya Rai (Grades 1–3) *Shree Deurali Lower Secondary School*	One teacher teaches all subjects (except Nepali and English) in Athapahariya Rai in one grade. Some teachers cannot speak Athapahariya Rai.
Model II monolingual mono-grade subject teaching	**Kanchanpur** Rana Tharu (Grades 1–3) *Rastriya Primary School* **Palpa** Magar (Grades 1–3) *Nava Jagriti Primary School* **Rasuwa** Tamang in Grades 1–3 *Saraswati Primary and Bhimsen Primary Schools*	Separate teachers teach different subjects in children's mother tongue in one grade. All teachers can speak children's mother tongue.
Model III monolingual multi-grade grade teaching	**Jhapa** Santhal (combined class of Grades 1 and 2) *Rastriya Ekta Primary School*	One teacher teaches all subjects (except Nepali and English) in Santhal. There is a lack of Santhal-speaking teachers.
Model IV monolingual multi-grade subject teaching	**Sunsari** Uraw (combined class of Grades 2 and 3) *Sharada Primary School*	Separate teachers teach different subjects in Uraw. All teachers can speak Uraw.
Model V multilingual mono-grade subject teaching	**Sunsari** Tharu/Maithili, Uraw and Nepali (Grade 1) *Sharada Primary School*	Separate teachers teach different subjects in three languages. All teachers are multilingual.
Model VI multilingual multi-grade grade teaching	**Sunsari** Tharu/Maithili and Nepali (combined class of Grades 2 and 3) *Sharada Primary School*	One teacher teaches all subjects of two grades (except Nepali and English) in both languages.
	Jhapa Rajbansi and Nepali (combined class of Grades 1 and 2) *Rastriya Ekta Primary School*	Half-day instruction in Rajbansi and half-day instruction in Nepali by one teacher.

* Sources: DOE 2009, Phyak 2011

In order to translate these provisions into practice, the Department of Education (DoE) piloted the MTB-MLE programme for non-Nepali speaking children in eight languages and in seven schools in six different districts between 2007 and 2009. As Table 3 shows, there are two types of MTB-MLE school in terms of the number of languages: monolingual and multilingual. In monolingual schools children come from only one linguistic community whereas in a multilingual school they come from diverse linguistic backgrounds. In the multilingual schools children are separated according to their mother tongues. Similarly, there are two models of teaching according to whether a 'grade teaching' or a 'subject teaching' approach is employed (see DOE 2009). In the 'grade teaching' system one teacher teaches all subjects (except Nepali and English) in the children's mother tongues. Meanwhile, in the 'subject teaching' approach separate teachers teach different subjects. Grade teaching has been implemented in the schools where not all teachers speak the children's mother tongues (Phyak 2011). On the other hand, the subject teaching approach is relevant in schools where all teachers have a good command of children's mother tongues. Likewise, in the multilingual schools (e.g. Jhapa and Sunsari) children from the same linguistic backgrounds from two grades are combined and taught in their mother tongue (multi-grade).

Multilingual education and social transformation: A case study

Shree Deurali Lower Secondary School (SD), which is situated in Dhankuta-8, Santang, is one of schools in which the MLE programme was piloted for two years between 2007 and 2009. The school is situated in a monoethnic Athapahariya community with a population of 1,274. Consequently, all the children enrolled in the school are Athapahariyas. Athapahariyas are identified as one of the most highly marginalised groups in Nepal. Their socio-economic and education status is very low and their main source of economy is subsistence agriculture. Although these indigenous people live close to the town, they are not generally aware of what is happening outside their community (Dahal 1985, Rai 2007).

Before the implementation of the MLE programme in the school, the drop-out and class repetition rates were high. Rai (2007) shows that the net enrolment of the Athapahariya children in the school was only 72.1 per cent in 2007. Likewise, 27.4 per cent students repeated the class followed by 9.26 per cent who dropped out. Rai (2007) further argues that since Athapahariyas could not speak and understand Nepali very well, these children found it hard to learn in Nepali, the only medium of instruction in the school up to 2007. Due to this language problem, Athapahariya children were not motivated to go to school and instead they tended to help their parents in doing household activities.

The MOE implemented the MLE programme in SD in 2007 in collaboration with the Athapahariya indigenous people's organisation, parents and teachers. The MLE adopted a bottom-up and indigenous approach to develop textbooks and other teaching materials (Hough et al. 2009, MOE 2010,

Nurmela, Awasthi & Skutnabb-Kangas 2012). The local elderly people, who possess indigenous knowledge, were placed at the centre of the programme. With the help of the experts from the MOE, local teachers, young people and indigenous activists were engaged in documenting and transcribing oral histories, stories and folktales from the Athapahariya parents. Athapahariya students and young people were engaged in drawing pictures to illustrate their family, school and community. One of the Athapahariya teachers, during an interview, said 'I sit with the elderly people, ask them to tell stories and document them to use as teaching materials.' He had already co-authored two books in Athapahariya.

Rather than focusing on borrowed technical knowledge as in mainstream education, the MLE programme is 'grounded in indigenous epistemologies, metaphysics and values' (Hough et al. 2009, 166). In this approach, indigenous knowledge about conflict resolution, maintaining social harmony and cooperation, generosity and collectivism – rather than individualism, testing, competition and diagnosis (neoliberal ideologies in education) are the guiding principles for providing education to the Athapahariya children. Focusing on the history of the Athapahariyas, their folk songs and folktales, ecology, food, cultural practices and local knowledge about medicine and healing, the MLE not only legitimised the Athapahariyas' own knowledge as a principal component of education, but also provided space for their participation in the policy creation and implementation process.

The MLE programme has contributed immensely to bridging the gap between community and school. The school walls now have slogans in the Athapahariya language painted on them, including 'Our school is a mother tongue school,' 'We have to preserve the Athapahariya language, culture and religion' and 'We learn our mother tongue'. In addition, the number tables, pictures and names of various animals and the names of the months and days have also been painted on the classroom walls in Athapahariya. Out of fourteen teachers eight are Athapahariyas and the remaining six are Nepali speaking. There are two teachers who teach all subjects, except Nepali and English, in Athapahariya in Grades 1 and 2. Social Studies, Science and the Athapahariya language are taught through Athapahariya. The textbooks for Social Studies and Science have been developed by the teachers themselves. Regarding the relevance of the MLE programme one parent said:

> Before introducing Athapahariya in the school, it was so hard for my children to understand what their teachers taught them. They could not freely express their feelings. By implementing MLE, a homely learning environment has been created in the school. The relationship between school and community has become closer.

Similarly, one of the Athapahariya teachers commented that 'the MLE policy has helped us preserve the Athapahariya language, culture and identity. Now children can learn happily in the classroom.' He further commented that 'parents do not hesitate to come to the school as they are allowed to speak Athapahariya here.' In the same vein, the head teacher, whose mother tongue is not Athapahariya, reiterated:

> Implementation of Athapahariya in the school has created a friendly student–teacher relationship. Students come closer to their teachers and feel free to share their feelings. They have also started asking questions to the teachers in the classroom. They can easily interact with friends as well.

He also reported that the 'drop-out rate of the students has decreased, their regularity in the school has increased and their performance has improved since we introduced Athapahariya in the school.' This implies that MLE is not only helping Athapahariya children to achieve more in school, but also, most importantly, they experience a better learning environment as they can use their own language in the school. My own observations of classes show that students feel more comfortable expressing their ideas in Athapahariya rather than in Nepali.

Despite these advantages, some notable challenges have been reported by teachers, parents and members of the school management committee (SMC). Pointing out parents' lack of awareness about the importance of the MLE programme, the headteacher contended that 'Parents desire to send their children to private schools. They assume that learning English is important for their children.' As private schools have been opened in the nearby town, some parents have already started to send their children to those schools. This has also created a dilemma among parents: whether or not the MLE programme is important for their children. For example, one parent strongly emphasised that 'Our children should also be taught in English like in private schools.' The Joint Evaluation of Nepal's Education for All (NORAD 2009) has identified the same issues. It reveals that:

> Some perceived that learning [in] mother tongues would hold their children back from learning Nepali [English] and thus disadvantage them further. By extension of the same argument, quite a few people consulted, wanted schools to [use English as MOI] from Grade 1 on the assumption that this would mean that children would learn English faster, regardless of practical consideration such as availability of English speaking teachers. (NORAD 2009, 20)

However, parents' desire to have their children taught in English is an ideological issue rather than a pedagogical and academic one (Davies 2009). As the English language is the dominant language in the global economy, people around the globe, especially from developing countries, consider it as an important language to learn to help them to gain access to global opportunities. As English has symbolic capital built on its economic value, nation states often focus on teaching English from the early grades without considering local realities and availability of resources and teachers (see Coleman 2011, Nunan 2003). Similar to the Athapahariya parents, other parents around the country also want their children to be taught in English, not because their children need it but because they are heavily influenced by their peers who send their children to private schools (Phyak 2013).

What is true about the MLE programme is that the Ministry has given less attention to its sustainability since the pilot phase came to an end in 2009.

(See Phyak 2012 for a critical analysis of MLE in Nepal.) The SMC members, headteacher and teachers said that the MOE must provide regular training for teachers and training on materials preparation if teaching in the mother tongue is to be effective. In this regard, the chairperson of the SMC pointed out that:

> The sustainability of the MLE programme depends on the commitment of the MOE as well. There is no proper budgeting and advocacy after the completion of the Finnish Government funded pilot project. There is also lack of a mechanism to establish a proper coordination among the stakeholders. … We do not have textbooks and other relevant materials as well.

This view indicates that strong political will power and commitment from the MOE is necessary to keep this programme functioning. As argued by the SMC chair, the MOE must provide both technical and financial support to the community and the school. This further implies that while the MLE programme itself is relevant to the community, parents' awareness about its importance should be repeatedly emphasised raised through regular discussions and interaction programmes with community members (NORAD 2009). This will help parents resist the sweeping influence of private schools and the ideology of English-as-education.

Conclusion

This chapter shows that Nepal has shown a significant transformation from a monolingual to a multilingual education policy. There are some significant lessons we can learn from Nepal's MLE policy and practices. First, MLE is not only about helping indigenous children to learn effectively in school, but, more importantly, it is about upholding a larger mission of social transformation and development. By providing the indigenous people, whose voices are often unrecognised in mainstream educational policies, with a space to interact and participate in the creation and implementation of policy, MLE has ensured their inclusion in school-related activities (Skutnabb-Kangas & Mohanty 2009). This has encouraged the indigenous people to take greater responsibility and ownership for the overall development of education in Nepal. By recognising the agency of parents, teachers, students and the local community, MLE has redefined mainstream education policy from the local and on-the-ground perspective.

Second, the MLE programme has provided an alternative perspective on education; the perspective places local knowledge, values and beliefs at the centre. Unlike the neoliberal ideology of education, MLE considers local and indigenous people as the key source of knowledge. MLE has not only helped to document profound indigenous knowledge, but it has also legitimised their role in providing education for their own children. By focusing on multi-literacies (knowledge about local environment, language, culture and history) of indigenous children and parents (Street 2002), MLE has addressed Nepal's multilingual and multicultural realities.

Third, there are some critical issues that emerge from the present MLE policy. Although the MOE (2010) considered MLE as an integral part of Nepalese education, it rather loosely stated that it is applicable only to 'the schools that are willing to introduce the mother tongue' as medium of instruction. This implies that MLE is not an integral part of education. Most often, due to the influence of the private schools, public schools are facing pressures to introduce English as the medium of instruction. The MOE has not mentioned whether or not the MLE policy is to be implemented in private schools, which are virtually all English medium. Due to the growing popularity of English medium schools throughout the country, parents are not only sending their children to expensive private schools, but also putting pressure on public schools to adopt an English medium policy. With this pressure, District Education Offices are now giving approval to public schools to switch from Nepali to English as the medium of instruction (Phyak 2012).

This development implies that without strong political will power, advocacy and awareness-raising of parents and other stakeholders about the importance of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction, the MLE policy might not be as effective as it could be. However, the case discussed here shows that by helping indigenous children to join school and perform better, by promoting the participation of indigenous parents in education, by legalising the importance of local and indigenous knowledge and by recognising the agency of local teachers and parents in the creation and implementation of policy, MLE has contributed to social transformation and the development of Nepal. This policy is not only concerned with mother tongue teaching and learning but also with addressing the cultural, ethnic and historical identities and epistemology of the indigenous people. Ultimately, this policy fosters Nepal's multilingual, multicultural and multiethnic identity and certainly contributes to the development of a cohesive and just society.

Notes

1 Nepal had a democratic government between 1950 and 1960.
2 The Panchayat system was introduced by the former King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah. In this system, the political parties were banned and power was taken over by the King. The people did not have fundamental rights such as the right to speech and the right to press freedom.
3 The CDC is an institute under the Ministry of Education which is responsible for preparing and implementing school level curricula.
4 Although the MOE does not define 'bilingual education', in the context of Nepal it refers to teaching the mother tongue and Nepali.

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11

Mother-tongue-based literacy, a tool for indigenous people's empowerment: The Western Subanon and Binukid/Higaonon experience

Leslie Laviña-Gumba

Introduction

Illiteracy remains one of the perplexing problems confronting the world today. UNESCO estimates that there are more than 780 million adults and 126 million youth (aged 15-24) who cannot read or write a simple sentence (UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2014a). Furthermore, 121 million children of primary and lower secondary school age are not in school (UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2014b). Illiterates are trapped in a lifetime of poverty, unable to defend their rights.

The UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, in his speech on International Literacy Day in 2011 stated, 'Illiteracy exacerbates cycles of poverty, ill-health and deprivation. It weakens communities and undermines democratic processes through marginalisation and exclusion. These and other impacts can combine to destabilise societies.' (Ban 2011)

TAP, the Translators' Association of the Philippines, is a non-government organisation dedicated to conducting language development strategies among communities of indigenous peoples (IP). TAP believes that, for language development to happen, literacy in the mother tongue is of utmost importance. Mother-tongue-based literacy programmes have therefore been initiated by TAP in key IP communities throughout the country, since the majority of illiterate people belong to IP communities. TAP is involved in language development, translation and community development with eighteen language groups.

The literacy projects conducted by TAP are language-specific, culturally-appropriate, adaptive to the local situation, community-assisted and responsive to the immediate felt needs of the literacy participants, aimed at

empowering the people in these communities. Prior to project implementation, these communities had very limited access to basic public social services and were unable to participate in local governance. As such, many of them developed a negative attitude towards their own language and culture and were even pushed back from mainstream society.

The study reported here aimed to assess the outcomes and impact of TAP-initiated literacy projects on the overall development and empowerment of the IP beneficiaries to improve their lot.

At the time of the study, TAP had literacy projects in seven language groups in different parts of the country. From 2004–2007, TAP literacy classes were focused on continuing education through fluency classes, building on previous basic literacy classes. Of the seven language groups, only three were ready recipients of the mother-tongue-based multilingual education (MTB MLE) projects which TAP initiated in early basic education (pre-school, Grades 1 and 2), following on from the adult literacy programmes. However, the study was conducted in just two of the adult literacy programmes – in the Western Subanon and Binukid/Higaonon language communities – because of time constraints and security conditions.

The Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines are supposed to be protected by the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) enacted in 1997. According to Awid (2008), the IPs ought not to suffer from extreme poverty since their ancestral lands are endowed with rich natural resources. However, in reality, they experience extreme inequality, poor infrastructure and massive exploitation.

Time and again the IPs lose their land as at the same time they are faced with inadequate social services. This pushes them farther down the drain of poverty as they contend with a 'foreign' medium of instruction in school, non-participation in governance, lack of access to land, resources and basic services. IPs are marginalised.

To reiterate the words of Ban Ki-moon, literacy is equated with empowerment, development and alleviation from social ills. However, literacy content must be culturally relevant and in the mother-tongue in order that the learners can understand what their teachers and facilitators are saying and can follow the lessons taught (Nolasco 2008).

Elsewhere in the Philippines, the Lubuagan experience showed that learners gain mastery of the lessons when the medium of instruction begins in the mother tongue (L1), then gradually Filipino (L2) is introduced and, later still, English (L3), starting with speaking and moving on to reading and writing (Dekker & Dekker 2008).

Women are especially benefited by literacy programmes. For example, in Banda, India, illiterate women trained as hand-pump mechanics, to address scarcity in water supply, gained self respect and improved self-image after they joined literacy classes (Ghose 2001). Meanwhile, according to Awid (2008), 'The women [in a literacy programme in the Philippines] viewed literacy as instrumental to the development of critical understanding of their realities, joys, struggles and the indigenous ways of knowing.'

IPs are mostly communal and as such they facilitate decision-making by consensus. This is changing nowadays as politically appointed leaders emerge and the electoral process is observed, resulting in tension as customary governance is weakened (Awid, 2008).

There are essentially four areas in which empowerment of IPs will have an impact. These are participation in governance, recognition of their rights and consent as stipulated in the IPRA Law, access to basic resources, as well as access to social justice and human rights.

The remainder of this chapter consists of five sections: a brief description of two particular communities in Mindanao, a summary of the literacy projects implemented with these communities, a short explanation of how the research was carried out, the findings of the research and finally some conclusions and recommendations for the future.

The Western Subanon and Binukid/Higaonon communities

For over twenty-five years, TAP has been initiating literacy programmes in the Western Subanon and Binukid/Higaonon language communities. By 2004 seven of the language communities showed readiness to implement literacy classes; these included the Western Subanon people in Zamboanga and the Binukid/Higaonon people in Bukidnon, both on the island of Mindanao.

The Western Subanon are a distinct ethnolinguistic group spread out in the western part of the Zamboanga Peninsula (Zamboanga Sibugay and Zamboanga del Norte) along the coastlines and river banks. There are approximately 125,000 speakers of the language (Lewis et al. 2014). Pirate attacks and tribal invasions have contributed to the inland migration of a number of Western Subanons. There they began to practise swidden agriculture and survived on a subsistence economy; they urgently needed technical skills and access to capital and markets to help them to improve their living conditions. Early basic literacy work with the community enabled them to make a formal written claim to their ancestral lands. This achievement greatly encouraged other communities to also request literacy programmes.

The Binukid/Higaonon are found mostly in Talakag District, in the mountainous province of Bukidnon in Northern Mindanao. The term Higaonon is actually a juxtaposition of two words: *higad* 'at the side or mouth of the river/coastal areas' and *gaon* 'taken'. By etymology, then, there was violence in the historical makeup and background of the Higaonons. They were forcibly driven out of their lands toward the mountains. There are approximately 180,000 speakers of the Higaonon language, scattered throughout ten municipalities.[1] When TAP started work among the Higaonons, illiteracy, poverty and poor health were major problems. Illiteracy was slowly addressed with the start of basic literacy classes in 2000. Greatly encouraged at seeing adults learning to read and write even without undergoing basic education, the people clamoured for continued literacy development. Issues relating to primary health care, environmental management, small scale industries and entrepreneurship were then incorporated into the programme.

The literacy projects

The TAP-initiated literacy projects were inspired by the contention of Paulo Freire (2000) that education can either empower or disempower individuals. It can only have an empowering effect if it is done as a result of praxis and dialogue out of mutual respect and cooperation between the learners and the teacher/facilitator. In order to maintain and nurture dialogue among the stakeholders, Vella's principles for adult learning were put into practice (Vella 2002).

TAP literacy workers discussed with the community the themes for learning which were relevant in their context. The community suggested health, nutrition, augmenting income through small-scale industries and entrepreneurship, their local culture and their demand for ownership of their ancestral domain. These topics were integrated in the literacy curriculum, primarily using their own mother tongue. A venue and schedule for literacy classes were suggested and adjusted to accommodate the needs of the participants. Literacy classes did not only allow the teaching of basic literacy skills, numeracy and functional literacy but also became venues for awareness-raising, development of critical thinking and leadership formation.

The TAP-initiated literacy projects have five components: research assessment, advocacy and mobilisation; recruitment and training; orthography curriculum development and materials production; classes and organisation; monitoring, supervision, evaluation and reporting. Each component needs to be in place before the next component can be carried out.

Research and needs assessments (RNA) were conducted with the stakeholders initially through dialoguing, focus group discussions, 'vision casting' (identifying a shared vision for the future) and community mapping. The latter was done not as a way to find out the literacy status of the community but as a way to identify the major themes and areas of interest. The information gathered from the RNA was used in planning the project and its components.

Participants identified those members of their communities who were qualified to serve as literacy facilitators, the storytellers and illustrators and those who could help in other aspects of the conduct of the project. The local partners were subsequently trained by TAP staff.

Issues of orthography were dealt with prior to the development of curriculum and production of materials. These were designed with the participants and facilitators. Even during the course of classes as the facilitators and staff interacted with the learners, changes to the curriculum, lessons and materials were done to address their immediate needs within the bounds of the project.

The participants were then organised into classes wherein basic literacy was introduced. After completing the basic literacy stage they moved on to a reading fluency class. In the fluency class, the learners came to their class not only excited to read with the intent of becoming fluent readers but they were also keen to take part in other activities integrated into the lessons. These included FAITH (Food Always in the Home), gardening, cooking, herbal

medicine making, basket and bag weaving, beading, soap making, farming methodologies and health care practices.

Monitoring and supervision were conducted by stakeholders based in the community to ensure maximum mobility and project sustainability. Evaluation of the data from the aforementioned were later included in the project to make it more adaptive.

These components made the literacy project community-based and empowered the learners and communities as they participated not only in the learning process but also in the conduct of the project. From the first activity and throughout the process – initial research, assessment, advocacy and mobilisation – the members of the community were involved. As each component was accomplished, community members learned how to think critically and make informed decisions relating to other aspects of life.

Graduation of learners from the programme was not just a personal or family affair but a community affair as it became an avenue for showcasing local culture. The whole community joined in the celebration. Cultural stories, songs, dances and colourful costumes, which have been slowly replaced by modern and Western and lowland equivalents, were displayed with much pride. Spelling, reading and writing contests were also conducted as part of the celebration. Local government and tribal leaders were invited as guest speakers and challenged the graduates to persevere in order to attain a better future.

Research method

Research participants from both ethnolinguistic groups were identified: six learners, six immediate family members of the learners, two facilitators, two immediate family members of the facilitators, one project trainer, one supervisor and one member of the monitoring team, a total of thirty-eight participants.

Among the participants from the two ethnolinguistic groups, two learners and one facilitator were asked to share their life stories. The learners were identified by the facilitators on the basis of their participation in the literacy class. They were participants who had been particularly highly motivated to learn and who expressed what they had gained from the literacy class. The remaining sixteen participants from each ethnolinguistic group served as Key Informants and were interviewed with a focus on the key areas which had been directly impacted by IP empowerment.

Results

Outcomes and impact were analysed in terms of four essential areas which have direct implications for IP empowerment: access to basic services, participation in governance, human rights and social justice. As a result of the literacy projects, learners and other community stakeholders observed changes in individuals and as communities.

Individual changes observed were:

- improved self-image
- expanded worldview
- developed critical thinking
- improved health condition
- ability to access information
- increased knowledge
- ability to transact and negotiate with others
- better parenting skills
- increased appreciation of own culture and heritage
- improved community participation.

Changes as a group were also observed:

- ability to learn and work together
- strengthened family solidarity
- empowerment to initiate group action and organise themselves as leadership skills were enhanced and developed
- heightened awareness of community issues
- increased appreciation of own culture and heritage
- improved community peace and security
- improved interaction and interpersonal relationships
- increased appreciation of literacy and education
- augmented family income through small-scale entrepreneurship activities.

To summarise, the results showed that, as a result of the mother-tongue-based literacy programmes, Western Subanon and Higaonon participants were not only helped to become literates but they were also able to think critically, to make informed decisions, to develop their potential and to function effectively within their own contexts as individuals and as members of their communities.

We can therefore state that literacy in the mother tongue:

- transforms lives;
- evolves as dialogue continues between the teacher/facilitator and the learners;
- integrates learning into everyday community life;
- is learner-centred;
- is empowering, since learners contribute to the content and focus of the project;
- is development-oriented and is achieved by building self-reliant individuals and communities; and
- is sustainable as learners and communities see and experience the benefit it brings to their lives.

Conclusions and recommendations

Individually, as a result of the literacy projects, community leaders and other literacy participants gained the following: improved self-image, expanded world view, improved health condition, ability to access information, increased knowledge and ability to transact and negotiate with others, better parenting skills, increased appreciation of their own culture and heritage and improved community participation. Leadership skills were enhanced and developed, while family incomes were augmented through small-scale industries and entrepreneurship. Furthermore, literacy participants saw the need for the use of their mother tongue in basic education to foster better learning among their children.

Literacy advocacy does not and should not happen in a vacuum. Learning must occur within the social context of the learners and has to be anchored on participatory development principles. Dialogue must be open between the teacher/facilitator and the learners, each understanding the other so that issues are immediately clarified. The project components must be varied out in a participatory manner, allowing the learners to learn concepts and skills that were not originally part of the intended learning outcomes. The process has to be adaptive, whereby there is a continuous action and reflection based on the changing realities of the participants. Literacy will have lasting impact only when it provides the venue for development and group solidarity. Lastly, literacy has to be culturally appropriate, starting from what the learners are familiar with and what lies within their area of interests. Furthermore, it has to be implemented within a safe environment.

Following the success of the mother tongue literacy programme for adults, parents demanded a similar programme for their children so that the vicious cycle of illiteracy could be broken. In 2009, mother-tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) projects were initiated first in pre-schools in some of the Western Subanon and Higaonon communities. The number of classes has expanded and MTB-MLE is now conducted from pre-school to Grades 1 and 2.

Note

1   According to Lewis et al. (2014), Binukid and Higaonon are two separate but closely related languages. In 1997 Binukid was recorded as having 100,000 speakers whilst in 1996 Higaonon had 30,000 speakers.

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Languages, education and social cohesion in Sri Lanka

12

Building bridges: National integration through the teaching of the Second National Language

Marie Perera

Background

This chapter is based on a study – carried out in 2006 (NEREC 2007) – which looked at the status of Second National Language teaching and learning in the National Colleges of Education of Sri Lanka. The research was funded by the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (as it was then known) and was conducted by the National Education Research and Evaluation Centre (NEREC) in the Faculty of Education, University of Colombo.

The chapter begins by providing background information about Second National Language (2NL) education in Sri Lanka. The following section describes briefly how the study was conducted. Next, the main findings of the study are presented in some detail. The following section sets out the recommendations which emerged from the study. The final section of the chapter discusses the current state of 2NL in Sri Lanka – enabling us to judge whether the 2006 recommendations have been implemented or not – and then it looks to the future.

Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, pluralistic society. In ancient Sri Lanka, all ethnic groups lived together in harmony. While the different ethnic groups united in the struggle to gain independence from foreign rule, after gaining independence the nation became divided. This division originated mainly in the issue of language.

In the 1950s a nationalist movement began and a 'Sinhala Only' policy was adopted in 1956 (Sri Lanka Consolidated Acts 1956). Sinhala, the language of the majority ethnic group, was made the official language and every person engaged in a state job had to be proficient in this language. This move impacted on the learning of English, the link language, and it also resulted in disharmony between the two main ethnic groups, the Sinhalese and the

Tamils, which led to riots. In 1958, a new Act was passed redressing some of the discrimination against the Tamil community (Sri Lanka Consolidated Acts 1958). According to this Act, Tamil students in schools and universities were entitled to be instructed through the medium of Tamil; furthermore, a person educated through Tamil was entitled to be examined through that language in any examination for admission to Public Service.

Since 1958 Tamil has been used as the language of administration of the Northern and Eastern provinces. By the 13th Amendment to the Constitution of Sri Lanka (Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka 1987), Tamil was also declared to be an official language and English was recognised as the 'link language'.

Yet, the number of Sri Lankans who have even a smattering of the other national language which is not their own first language is very limited, as can be seen from Table 1. At the time of the Population Census of 2001, only 31 per cent of Sri Lankan Tamils and 16 per cent of Indian Tamils claimed to be literate in Sinhala, whilst a mere two per cent of Sinhalese reported that they were literate in Tamil.

Table 1: Literacy rates in Sinhala, Tamil and English of major ethnic groups, 2001*

Ethnic group	Language		
	Sinhala	Tamil	English
Sinhalese	92.3	1.8	16.2
Sri Lankan Tamil	31.4	78.5	24.1
Indian Tamil	15.7	72.7	11.0
Sri Lankan Moor	38.5	84.2	24.0

* Source: Department of Census and Statistics (2009)

With the ending of the thirty year secessionist conflict in the country, understanding between the two main ethnic groups is a key to sustained peace and harmony. Since language is the vehicle through which communication takes place, learning each other's language is vital.

A major reason for the limited extent to which Sri Lankans have learnt each other's languages was identified by the National Education Commission in 2003:

> In a plural society driven by ethnic and religious divisions, education has failed conspicuously to promote nation building by fostering mutual understanding and tolerance and respect for the rich cultural diversity of Sri Lankan society, and in the process has made little contribution to ensuring social cohesion and stability. (NEC 2003, 11)

Sri Lanka's overall education policy is geared to meeting nine national goals. Of these, the first is 'The achievement of national cohesion, national integration and national amity' (NEC 1992, 6). The teaching and learning of 2NL are therefore crucial to Sri Lanka's national integration and cohesion and

it is incumbent upon every Sri Lankan to learn a national language other than his or her own.

Various measures have been taken over the years to teach the Second National Language in schools. According to the Education Reforms proposed in 1997 (NEC 1997, Presidential Task Force on Education 1998), 2NL was to be introduced both at primary and secondary levels in schools. As a result, all schools (except international schools) are expected to teach Tamil for Sinhala medium students and Sinhala for Tamil medium students for two class periods a week (both of forty minutes' duration) between Grades 6 and 9.

However, research in 2004 suggested that this programme was not successful. The Civic Education in Sri Lanka study (NEREC 2004, 42) showed that, while attitudes towards learning 2NL were positive, the languages were not actually being taught in the majority of schools. This was mainly because:

- there was a shortage of competent teachers
- there was a lack of learning materials prepared specifically for the teaching of the 2NL
- there were inadequate opportunities for 2NL learning and disparities in the availability of those opportunities; for example, some provinces were better equipped than others
- there was an imbalance in the availability of opportunities for 2NL learning; it was sometimes easier to access one of the 2NLs rather than the other
- there was a lack of will and enthusiasm on the part of stakeholders to make the necessary provision.
- students' 2NL proficiency was not assessed or given due credit; this detracted from the importance accorded to 2NL proficiency by students, parents and teachers.

The same report made suggestions for the way forward:

- due recognition and importance should be given to the acquisition of 2NL proficiency by all students
- learning and teaching should be made functional
- target proficiency levels should be stipulated and tested.

In general, the report argued that removing barriers to communication between students from different ethnic groups would enable the fostering of social cohesion and mutual exchanges among them (NEREC 2004, 147).

By 2007 it had become clear that there was an urgent need for a follow-up situation analysis of 2NL teaching and learning in the school system in Sri Lanka. As a first step to meeting this urgent national need it was proposed to generate a baseline data set by conducting a state of the scene survey of 2NL teaching and learning in the National Colleges of Education (NCOEs) to inform policy formulation and enable comprehensive systematic intervention for effective implementation of 2NL teaching and learning in the school system.

How the study was conducted

The follow-up study (NEREC 2007) collected data from NCOEs and schools, using language proficiency tests, questionnaires, interviews and classroom observations.

A test of 2NL proficiency was administered at entry level to the entire population of trainees who had entered the NCOEs in 2006. An exit level test was administered to all trainees who completed the two years of institutional training in 2005.

All pupils in one Grade 7 class and one Grade 9 class in six selected schools in Colombo district also completed a language proficiency test. The six schools selected comprised a Sinhala-medium National school for girls, a Tamil-medium National school for boys, a bi-medium school for boys, a bi-medium school for girls, a Tamil-medium mixed gender school and a Sinhala-medium mixed gender school.

The questionnaire was administered to thirty trainees randomly selected from each monolingual NCOE and to sixty trainees in the bi-medium colleges. Lecturers and college presidents also completed the questionnaire.

Interviews were held with Ministry of Education officials and the Director of the Teacher Education Faculty of the National Institute of Education (NIE) with the aim of identifying the policy, procedures and processes which the colleges adopt for implementation of 2NL teaching and learning. In addition, five lecturers teaching 2NL were interviewed to find out about their motivation, attitudes and commitment to 2NL teaching and to cross-check the questionnaire data.

Focus group interviews were held with groups of students in two NCOEs to find out about their motivation, attitudes and commitment to 2NL learning and to cross-check the data gathered through the questionnaires. Teachers teaching 2NL in schools were also interviewed to find out about their motivation, attitudes and commitment to 2NL teaching and the problems which they faced in teaching 2NL.

Observations were carried out in the NCOEs and schools to facilitate understanding of the teaching–learning process.

Findings of the study

This discussion of findings of the study of the teaching and learning of the 2NL looks first at the situation in the colleges and then at conditions in schools.

National Colleges of Education

In the National Colleges of Education (NCOEs) 2NL is a mandatory subject in all primary and secondary teacher education programmes. For example, since 2006 two colleges had been offering courses specifically in 2NL teaching. However, in some cases the time allocation was limited: in the

NCOE primary teacher education programme 2NL was taught for a single period per week and only in the first year, while performance was assessed at the classroom level. Annually, approximately 3,000 NCOE trainees completed their internships and joined the cadre of teachers in service. The NCOEs therefore were the main institutional training system expected to cater to the need for 2NL teachers (NEREC 2007).

The study investigated five issues: the competence of trainee teachers in their second national language, the availability of staff qualified to teach 2NL, the methodology and resources used in the teaching of 2NL, how colleges assessed students' competence in their 2NL and, finally, the attitudes of stakeholders in the colleges towards the teaching and learning of the 2NL.

The 2NL competency of trainee teachers appeared to be heterogeneous at both entry and exit levels. A range could be observed in test results for both Tamil and Sinhala as 2NLs. In general, Tamil students' entry proficiency in Sinhala was higher than the Sinhala students' entry proficiency in Tamil.

There were distinct differences in students' entry level competence in the 2NL depending on their home districts: students from certain parts of the country tended to have higher levels of ability in their second national language compared to students who shared the same first language but who originated from other parts of the country. It can be hypothesised that in some linguistically mixed districts students come into contact with the 2NL from childhood whereas in other more linguistically homogeneous districts students have few opportunities to interact with speakers of the 2NL. The overall 2NL performance of students also appeared to vary from college to college, but on further investigation it was discovered that this variability was related to students' district of origin, as already noted.

The heterogeneity that was visible in students' marks at entry level could still be seen at exit level. Once again, the overall performance of students whose 2NL was Sinhala was better than that of students whose 2NL was Tamil. In the eight NCOEs where trainees were being prepared to teach in primary schools, trainees in six of these colleges scored on average more than 50 per cent in the final Sinhala as 2NL test. On the other hand, primary level trainees in all eight colleges achieved average scores of below 50 per cent in the final Tamil as 2NL test.

A similar pattern was observed among students preparing to teach in secondary schools, with Tamil speakers achieving higher scores in Sinhala as 2NL (average score 40 per cent or higher in most colleges) when compared to Sinhala speakers' competence in Tamil as 2NL, although the difference was not so extreme as was seen among primary level trainees.

There was a correlation between the entry and exit level scores of Tamil-medium students offering Sinhala as 2NL. In contrast, there was no strong relationship between the entry and exit level performance of Sinhala-medium students offering Tamil as 2NL; indeed, in some instances their exit level scores were lower than their entry level marks.

On the whole, Sinhala-medium trainees preparing to be secondary teachers performed better in Tamil as 2NL than those specialising in primary

education. In contrast, in most colleges, Tamil-medium students performed equally well in Sinhala, regardless of whether they were preparing to be primary or secondary teachers. It was also noted that Tamil students' performance in Sinhala was better if they studied in multi-ethnic colleges; this may be because Tamil students constituted only a small minority in these colleges and so they were compelled to speak with their Sinhala speaking classmates.

Regarding the availability of qualified staff, it was found that most Colleges did not have full-time lecturers to teach 2NL. In bi-medium colleges, 2NL was generally taught by staff members who were specialists in other subjects but happened to be competent in the language; the majority had not had any training in teaching 2NL. Even those few who had had some training had followed only short courses. The qualifications of visiting (part-time) staff varied and the remuneration they received was very low. As a result, the colleges found it very difficult to recruit visiting lecturers of 2NL.

With regard to methodology, it was observed that traditional teacher centred methods were widely used, although in some Sinhala as 2NL classes group work was seen. The outline syllabus for the Primary pre-service teacher education course states that the 2NL course content is divided into two broad areas: '2NL improvement' and 'teaching–learning methodology' (NIE 2000, 40). However, the resource book (for example NIE 2003) contains activities that are almost entirely aimed at developing the student teacher's language proficiency (2NL improvement) with only minimal attention given to teaching–learning methodology.

Most NCOEs also lacked basic resources such as textbooks, audio-video equipment and language laboratories. Secondary level trainees did not have 2NL textbooks at all.

Students' proficiency in the 2NL was not assessed by the Department of Examinations as part of the NCOE final examination. Instead, the general practice was to administer an internal common paper, prepared by a panel of lecturers from different NCOEs. However, lecturers were not provided with any systematic guidelines for course assessment. Hence, assessment procedures varied from college to college, some depending only on the internal paper while others administered both individual and group assignments.

Finally, all stakeholders – trainees, lecturers, college presidents and officials of the NIE – claimed to have positive attitudes towards the teaching of 2NL. However, as we have seen, the opportunities provided for the teaching, learning and use of 2NL were inadequate. It can be concluded that, despite these claims to be enthusiastic, there was actually only a limited sense of commitment towards the 2NLs in the colleges.

Schools

The survey found that there was no explicit policy on the teaching of the 2NL in schools, just as had been found regarding the training of 2NL teachers in colleges (NEREC 2007). Consequently, the implementation of the Official Language Policy in Sri Lanka is hampered. Although in principle 2NL should

be taught in all primary and junior secondary grades, in reality the 2NL was not taught in most schools.

No impact of past 2NL training at the NCOEs on 2NL teaching in schools could be identified through this study. This was because there were no NCOE diploma graduates teaching 2NL in any of the classes observed for the study.

There were no teachers appointed specifically by the Ministry of Education for teaching 2NL in schools. Teachers who had some knowledge of a 2NL either volunteered or were forced by the school administration to teach the 2NL. Often teachers volunteered because schools were overstaffed; teaching 2NL thus ensured that teachers would not be transferred out of the school.

Finding a teacher to teach 2NL was more difficult in single- than in bi-medium schools. Sometimes school authorities hired visiting (temporary) staff using School Development Society funds; such payments varied from school to school. There were no specific qualifications for teachers who taught 2NL and often the teachers who taught in schools were not specially trained in language teaching. Furthermore, their own 2NL competency was often not very high.

Textbooks were not attractive for students and did not cater to their interests. The language of the Sinhala book for Tamil students was considered to be particularly difficult. Meanwhile the Tamil book for Sinhala students consisted of just two volumes or 'steps' to cover four grades (Grades 6 to 9).[1] Although the textbooks were readily available, there were still no teacher guides or syllabuses to accompany them.

There was no systematic supervision of the implementation of 2NL teaching in the schools, even though both the Ministry of Education and the NIE have units whose responsibility is to carry out such supervision. In-Service Advisors (ISAs) for 2NL were not available, although at the zonal level 2NL resource persons had been identified and they were conducting in-service development for 2NL teachers; these development activities were in line with the curriculum reforms currently being adopted in schools.

In the NCOEs (discussed above), it was observed that Tamil medium students' proficiency in Sinhala tended to be higher than their Sinhala medium peers' proficiency in Tamil. Exactly the same phenomenon was found in schools, where Tamil speakers were more likely to speak Sinhala and spoke it at a higher level of proficiency than Sinhala speakers spoke Tamil. However, it was found that the 2NL marks obtained by Grade 7 students in all schools in the study were higher than those obtained by Grade 9 students. It has been suggested that this reflects a decline in learners' motivation to learn the 2NL as they moved up through the education system, but this issue needs further investigation.

A related issue is that assessment processes varied from class to class and from school to school. Examinations were school based. In some schools the 2NL marks were included in the calculations when pupils were ranked at the end of the school year whilst in other schools the 2NL scores were not taken into account in this way. In the General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level (GCE O/L) examination, 2NL is only an optional subject.

Although school principals, teachers and pupils did not express negative attitudes towards the teaching and learning of 2NL, the status assigned to the subject in the curriculum was very low. Since it was taught only up to Grade 9 and was not a compulsory subject, students did not consider it to be an important subject. Principals tended to assign the task of teaching 2NL to those teachers who were least committed to their work. Moreover, the teaching hours assigned for 2NL were sometimes reallocated at short notice for the teaching of other more 'important' subjects.

Overall, therefore, the teaching of 2NL in schools was far from satisfactory:

- there were not enough people who could teach the subject
- there was no guidance and monitoring for teachers
- the subject was given no status in the school curriculum.

Recommendations

Based on the above findings the following suggestions were proposed (NEREC 2007):

- A comprehensive and clearly stated policy regarding the teaching of 2NL both in schools and in the NCOEs was needed.
- A specialised NCOE to train 2NL teachers should be established.
- 2NL should be introduced as a minor discipline in colleges where other language teachers are trained.
- Evaluation of the 2NL curriculum in the NCOEs was necessary to find out why there was a mismatch between the existing syllabus, what was implemented in class and the contents of the resource book given to trainees. If the existing syllabus did not cater to the needs of the trainees it should be revised. However, the syllabus should continue to consist of both a language component and a teaching methodology component, in line with second language acquisition theories.
- The NCOE 2NL syllabus should also be in line with the school 2NL system. Thus there should be coordination between the schools and the colleges in preparing learning materials.
- All 2NL lecturers should be trained to be bilingual. Teacher centres should organise language courses with the help of the Official Languages Department and the NIE.
- Preferably, all 2NL teachers and lecturers should be trained in the teaching of a second language.
- As suggested by students, lecturers and college presidents, more co-curricular activities should be organised. It was found that mixed ethnic student hostels alone did not foster bilingualism.
- The final assessment of competence in the 2NL should be conducted by the Department of Examinations. However, before introducing this policy all NCOEs should be provided with permanent 2NL lecturers.
- There should be collaboration among all teacher education provider institutions. The training of 2NL teachers needed to be extended to other

teacher training institutions as well. The Faculties and Departments of Education in the Universities and the NIE – that conduct Bachelor of Education and Post Graduate Diploma in Education courses – should include, under the rubric of 'special methods', a unit on teaching methodology for 2NL.

• In this initiative, all teacher education provider institutions should collaborate in designing curricula and in maintaining standards. Further, they should share resources to increase efficiency.

The current status of 2NL teaching and learning and the way forward

It is nearly ten years since the original study was carried out (NEREC 2004) and almost seven years since the follow-up study (NEREC 2007) was undertaken and findings were disseminated. Therefore, it is appropriate that at this time an evaluation of how far the recommendations in those reports have been implemented should be carried out.

It is a positive sign that Sri Lanka has been able to overcome the thirty year war (which originated largely from a language issue). A knowledge of the two national languages by all citizens would pave the way for reconciliation and rebuilding. The Presidential Secretariat has taken the initiative by introducing a ten year plan for a trilingual Sri Lanka (Presidential Secretariat 2012). Furthermore, the National Education Commission has drafted a policy for the teaching of the 2NLs (NEC 2011). In addition, the Social Cohesion and Peace Education Unit of the Ministry of Education has prepared a National Policy and Comprehensive Framework of Actions (MoE 2008), which contains a chapter on the teaching and learning of the 2NLs. Therefore, there appears to be a new political will to promote the teaching of the 2NL at the policy level.

School textbooks for 2NL have been revised. From the point of view of face validity these books are attractive and appear to be activity based. However, there are still complaints from teachers and students that the books are too difficult (NEC 2009). A more systematic study is needed, therefore, before conclusions are drawn regarding their suitability.

There has also been a revision to the NCOE curriculum and 2NL is now taught during both years of the teacher preparation programme. However, even though the number of hours for teaching the language has been increased, there is still no teaching methodology component in the 2NL programme for student teachers. Knowing the language alone does not by itself equip a person to teach the language.

Intensive ten day workshops are now held for new students in the NCOEs as well as for NCOE lecturers and school teachers. Although these workshops may be considered to be effective, the sustainability of the skills acquired is questionable unless there are follow-up activities.

So far, there still do not appear to have been any attempts at resource sharing. New materials are being prepared even though there are existing

materials at the same level. In fact, what is needed is material appropriate for different language proficiency levels. Similarly, there still does not appear to be any collaboration among the different teacher training provider institutes and among the different stakeholders.

Although there is now a designated NCOE with responsibility for training 2NL teachers, the number of teachers produced annually is fewer than 100. Thus the main problem of a lack of teachers to teach 2NL persists. Similarly the shortage of lecturers in the NCOEs has not been addressed.

In spite of not having lecturers in the subject, all students now have to sit for a common test paper set by the Department of Examinations and so it can be hoped that henceforth there will be uniformity in assessment methods. Not surprisingly, however, a study by the Department of Examinations in 2010 revealed that the performance of the majority of students in the 2NL in the final examination in some NCOEs was very low (Perera 2011).

This discussion reveals that essentially the same problem has been considered time and again over the years without addressing the basic issue: the need to increase the number of 2NL teachers and teacher trainers. Unless and until this issue is resolved there will be no progress. On the other hand, there has been a positive development in that the number of institutes teaching the 2NL has increased over the years with the State granting an incentive allowance to those who are proficient in both of the national languages. The challenge, then, is to find people competent in the language and provide them with the pedagogical skills needed to teach a second language.

In this regard the following measures already suggested (NEREC 2007) need to be implemented immediately:

- A thorough island-wide needs survey should be undertaken to describe the present state of 2NL teaching and learning in schools.
- A comprehensive curriculum revision both at school level and at the NCOE level should be undertaken to cater for the different 2NL competency levels of students. There is an extensive research literature on second and foreign language teaching and learning in situations similar to Sri Lanka. The findings of this research should be drawn upon and parallels identified as the 2NL curricula for Sri Lanka are prepared.
- Ways in which available resources for 2NL teaching can be shared among the different provider institutions should be investigated.

Until such measures are taken it will not be possible to build bridges and forge national integration through the teaching of the Second National Languages.

Note

1 At the time of writing, a new set of textbooks is being prepared.

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Instruction in the English medium: A Sri Lankan case study

Jayageetha Balakrishnar and Thaiyamuthu Thanaraj

Introduction

English was the language of government administration under the British rule (1796–1948) in Sri Lanka as well as the medium of instruction in the prestigious English medium schools. These schools were mostly fee-levying and catered to the needs of the elite and privileged of the society and were generally inaccessible to the majority of the population. The English medium schools were mostly administered by Christian missionaries, whereas schools that used the native languages were under government control. Thus the country had a dual system of education; this remained in place until the 1960s when – with just a few exceptions – all schools in the country were taken over by the government.

English became the inevitable tool for government employment, social mobility and prestige which created two 'nations' in the country: one which spoke English and enjoyed the fruits of social development and the other which spoke Sinhala and Tamil and lived in utter frustration and hopeless-ness (Jayasuriya 1969). This situation continued unabated and unchallenged amidst the dissatisfaction of the deprived majority until the Sri Lankan people were given a reasonable share in the governance of their own country under the Donoughmore reforms[1] in 1931. The agitation and struggle to give the national languages their due place in the state administration as well as in education turned into an unhealthy dog-fight with the unimaginative political purpose of dethroning English without recognising its relative and emerging importance in international trade and communication. This senseless and visionless action unfortunately denied the next generation their right to communicate effectively in a global context, reduced their capacity to pursue higher education in world class universities and also dwarfed their chances to compete in the global jobs market.

Suddenly awakened to this stark reality, the policy makers once again introduced English medium education in the early 1990s without proper planning and preparation. This led to confusion among children and parents in schools where English as a medium was hastily introduced without an adequate number of qualified teachers and resources such as textbooks. Consequently, quite a number of students who had opted for English medium education had to transfer back to Sinhala/Tamil medium after a while. This unsatisfactory situation, which is detrimental for the educational future of the children of this country, has not yet been addressed by the policy makers.

This chapter investigates this situation as it played out in the northern part of Sri Lanka. In the light of its analysis, it offers suggestions for enhancing the effectiveness of English medium education in the future. But before we come to the study, it is necessary to acquaint ourselves with the salient features of the language policy regarding the medium of instruction in Sri Lanka in its historical perspective.

Medium of instruction in Sri Lanka: A historical perspective

Sri Lanka being a multiethnic and multicultural society, language has always been a bone of contention in the Sri Lankan polity, particularly in the post-colonial period. The lack of a vision and far-sightedness among the policy makers and legislators in developing and sustaining a language policy – which ought to be able to promote ethnic harmony, social cohesion and overall socio-economic development – has led to misunderstanding, mutual suspicion and hatred among the different communities in the country. In 1956, the Bandaranaike government made Sinhala, the language of the majority ethnic community, the official language of the country. This showed scant respect to the sensibilities of the Tamil community; it was a decision based solely on political expediency and political insensitivity and it has continued to cause irreparable damage to the well-being of the country right up to the present time.

This confusion and uncertainty on language policy naturally also included the issue of medium of instruction in post-colonial Sri Lanka. The English language held a position of pre-eminence in the educational and administrative set up of the country whilst the languages of the native people, Sinhala and Tamil, occupied an insignificant place. Only seven percent of the population, however, was literate in English (Jayasuriya 1969). This situation opened the doors of employment and social mobility to only those who were English educated. Disgusted and frustrated by this unacceptable state of affairs J.R.Jayewardene – who was a member of the State Council (1931–1947) and destined to become the President of the country in 1977 – grieved and exclaimed:

> … this country is always in danger of being governed by a small coterie who go through these English schools, whereas the vast majority who go through Sinhalese and Tamil schools must always be in the position of hewers of wood and drawers of water ... (quoted by Jayasuriya 1969)

However, in spite of the fact that he was concerned with both the native languages, in 1943 Jayawardene brought a motion in the Council to make Sinhala the medium of instruction in all schools and also a compulsory subject. He thus forgot Tamil, the language of the second major community in the country. But he later agreed to add 'and Tamil' after the word 'Sinhala', in a positive response to an amendment proposed by V.Nalliah, another member of the State Council, and the motion was later passed in the State Council.

Meanwhile, the Special Committee on Education – also known as the Kannagara Committee – published its report in November 1943 in which the existence of 'two types of education based on the medium of instruction' was criticised. The report stated:

> The first major defect is the existence of two types of education according to the medium of education. The great majority of our pupils are taught in the vernacular schools where Sinhalese or Tamil is the medium of instruction. With a few exceptions, the rest are taught in 'English Schools' where English is the medium of instruction. (Jayasuriya 1969)

The report argued that this situation was unacceptable because:

1. English has become a badge of superiority, thus dividing the population into two more or less watertight social compartments, namely the English educated and the vernacular educated;
2. Sinhalese or Tamil, the 'natural' medium for Sinhalese or Tamil people respectively, and the best medium through which they can effectively contribute to the world of literature and art, has not been developed; and
3. the absence of equality of opportunity, the development of our educational system having resulted in two types of schools – one attended mainly by those who can afford to pay fees and the other attended by those whose means do not permit them to do so. (Jayasuriya 1969)

The strong opposition to English medium education was mainly based on socio-economic factors: 1) Knowledge of English was a mark of social prestige; 2) English was required for employment in government as well as in the corporate world and thus laid the path for affluence and 3) English was required for higher studies.

However, the Committee was extremely careful in its recommendations in dethroning English all at once and placing the national languages in its place, because they justifiably understood the importance of English and its place of pre-eminence in world affairs. Hence, the Committee made the following recommendations in May 1944:

1. The medium of instruction in the mother tongue shall be the mother tongue;
2. The medium of instruction in the lower department of the post-primary school may be either mother tongue or bilingual;
3. The medium of instruction in the higher department of the post-primary school may be English, Sinhalese, Tamil or bilingual. (Jayasuriya 1969)

These recommendations demonstrate that the Committee was quite visionary in its deliberations and wanted the transition from English to mother tongue as medium of instruction to be incremental and well-prepared. Though extremist legislators like J.R.Jayewardene demanded the immediate dethronement of English, moderates like W.Dahanayake – who later became a Minister of Education – moved amendments such as this one:

> … the mother tongue shall be made medium of instruction in all schools [and] English [shall be] a compulsory subject.

However, both these amendments were defeated and the recommendations of the Committee prevailed (Jayasuriya 1969).

The provision that allowed the pupils who learned through the mother tongue in the primary classes to join the English medium in the secondary classes clearly showed the confusion in language policy:

> Compulsory English for all the children in and above Standard III is one of the greatest deceptions perpetrated on the people of this country ... about 20 to 25 per cent of the schools never had a single English teacher. ... in 1957, out of the total 2,727 schools 1,728 did not have an English teacher. (Jayasuriya 1969)

In addition to the shortage of English teachers, the quality of the available English teachers was also questioned.

In spite of the many attempts in parliament and elsewhere to give the native languages their due place as medium of instruction, the pre-eminence given to English did not change for a long time because entry to lucrative jobs – both in the private as well as in the government sector – depended on one's knowledge of English. The non-availability of curricular material in the native languages contributed to the utterly confused policy regarding the medium of instruction and to the preservation of higher education as being exclusively in English. It was a policy of vacillation and indecision.

The year 1956 has been acclaimed as a turning point in the post-colonial history of Sri Lanka. The party that came to power on an ethno-nationalist cry dethroned English overnight from its colonial pedestal and made Sinhala the official language at the expense of the ethnic harmony and social cohesion which had prevailed between the two major communities in the country for a very long time. However, the new government was also unable to formulate a viable and development-oriented policy regarding the medium of instruction. Hence the perennial situation of confusion and indecision continued.

But the government that came to power in 1960 took a firm decision with regard to medium of instruction. Mrs Srimavo Bandaranaike, who became the world's first woman Prime Minister, with the support of left wing political groups with their policy of egalitarianism firmly abolished denominationalism in the school system in Sri Lanka and effectively ended the unjustifiable grip of some religious groups on the national education system. All schools except a few non-assisted schools were 'taken over' by the government, thus ending the dual system in education. This new situation also paved the way to find a

solution to the issue of medium of instruction. The Jayasuriya Commission in its interim report recommended that the use of English for teaching selected subjects should cease (Jayasuriya 1962). The White Paper on Education (Ministry of Education 1964) finally made Sinhala and Tamil the languages of instruction in all schools and effectively stopped the enrolment of students to English medium classes from 1965. Consequently the universities also commenced teaching science based course in the native languages in 1970.

The 'homecoming' of English medium education

As mentioned earlier, the political decision to completely eradicate the position of pre-eminence that English had in Sri Lankan society was short-sighted and disastrous for the future generation of students in this country. In 1977, the United National Party government introduced a liberalised economic policy which enabled international companies to set up factories in Free Trade Zones in Sri Lanka. Globalisation was taking place with labour migration and the whole world became a job market. The young Sri Lankan who was not competent in English apparently lost his or her competitive edge to counterparts in India and elsewhere. On the other hand, human knowledge in many fields was exploding and someone without knowledge of English could not enjoy the benefits of such new knowledge. All these factors collectively created an irresistible demand for English medium education in the country. But, following the Assisted Schools and Training Colleges Act of 1960, it was now illegal to establish English medium schools. However, before long people realised that it was possible to circumvent the Act by establishing 'international schools' – where instruction was in English – and soon these were mushrooming all over the country.

Hence, the government has to reconsider its medium of instruction policy in response to the emerging global situation. In 2000, the government gave permission to commence English medium classes in government schools but unfortunately this was done without adequate planning and preparation. The National Education Commission approved the new policy, under which (a) science subjects preparing pupils for the General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (GCE AL) examination could be taught in English, (b) selected subjects could be taught in English from Grade 6 and (c) English could be the medium of instruction from Grade 1 in particular schools, without prior approval from the Cabinet, if adequate resources were available in those schools.

Many schools, particularly those in urban areas, commenced English medium classes after this new policy had been introduced, in spite of the fact that there was a serious lack of teachers who were competent to teach in English. Even the few available teachers who were competent in the language did not have experience in teaching their subjects in English. In addition, English medium textbooks and other materials were not available in sufficient quantities and the process of translating textbooks from native languages into English was tedious and time consuming. Yet, despite all these issues, English

medium education was introduced and consequently many, many students became victims of their parents' ambitions and their school's unprepared and ill-planned implementation of the new policy.

The study

In 2003, English medium education was introduced in Vadamaradchy Education Zone (VEZ), one of the five Education Zones in the Jaffna District. The Zone has 80 government schools distributed across three Education Divisions. English medium was introduced in eight schools – seven 1AB schools and one 1C school. (1AB schools have a science stream in GCE AL while 1C schools do not have such a science stream.)

At the time that English medium education was introduced, the situation on the ground in terms of the availability and qualifications of English teachers was serious, not only in VEZ but throughout the whole of Jaffna District. There was a shortage of 996 English teachers at the district level while in VEZ there was a shortage of 120.

Yet, English medium education was introduced in VEZ as a knee-jerk reaction to pressure from parents, as they justifiably thought that their children would be left out in the job market because English medium education had already been introduced elsewhere in the country. Thus it can be seen that the introduction of English medium education was generally an ill planned activity which did not take into consideration the unfavourable reality at ground level. After five years the Planning Division of VEZ (Planning Division 2008) discovered that although ten per cent of students opted to join English medium education later 56 per cent of these students transferred back to Tamil medium schools. This disturbing and distressing fact – which indicates that there is something seriously detrimental for the educational future of Jaffna's students – was the basic foundation for this study.

The major objectives of the study, therefore, were to analyse the effectiveness of the English medium policy in Jaffna District and to make recommendations for the implementation of this policy. The specific aims of the study were a) to study the prevailing situation in English medium classes with regard to the teaching–learning process and b) to identify the reasons why English medium students shift back to Tamil medium education.

Theoretical foundation of the research

There have always been differences of opinion among academics in Sri Lanka with regard to the medium of instruction in this country. From Prof. J.E.Jayasuriya (1969), the pioneering educationist in Sri Lanka, Arumugam (1999), Jeyarajah (2007), Karunanithy and Sandarasegaram (2006), Sathiaseelan (2005), Sivasegaram (2005) and Sivathamby (2005) were not in favour of English medium education. They argue that the best medium of instruction must be one's mother tongue and not English. Jeyarajah (2007) argues that it gives a double load for a student who is not learning in his/her

mother tongue, namely the load in learning the content of the curriculum and the extra load of learning the foreign language. He says that it might take six to seven years for a student to achieve reasonable competency in a foreign language of instruction whereas a child becomes reasonably competent in his or her mother tongue within the first five to six years.

But some other researchers (Ravindran 2004, Suntharesan 2005) argue that learning in English helps the child to become competent in both languages. Suntharesan found that in Jaffna about 60 per cent of parents think that their children can learn in English.

Methodology

The study was based on a mixed qualitative and quantitative approach and a survey research design was adopted to collect relevant data from the participants in the research. Out of the eight schools where English medium education is implemented four schools were selected (three 1AB schools and one 1C school). A random sampling method was used to select 25 students – 12 boys and 13 girls – from across the four schools. Out of these 25 students, 14 were still studying through the medium of English whilst the remaining 11 students had 'transferred back' (that is to say they had opted to leave the English medium programme and had returned to Tamil medium classes. Further the principals of the four schools, 13 teachers, one Zonal Education Officer (ZDE), two Assistant Directors of Education(ADE), 14 parents and six community leaders were identified for data collection.

Questionnaires were given to students, teachers and parents; ZDE, ADEs and community leaders were interviewed. A check list was used to collect information about the physical facilities in schools. The collected data was analysed using simple descriptive statistical techniques.

Findings

Seven principal findings emerged from the study. These are summarised below.

1. The students who were still following their studies in the English medium generally speaking had a reasonable level of competence in English, although there was some variation. Interestingly, 28 per cent of them said that they never communicated in English, either at school or at home. In contrast, the English language competence of the transferred back students was generally weak: only about 40–50 per cent were able to speak, read or write in English and more than 60 per cent had problems comprehending English.

2. Why did students join the English medium programme in the first place? There was a marked difference in the responses of the two groups of students: 86 per cent of those who were still in the English medium programme said that it had been their own decision to take this route,

whereas 65 per cent of those who had transferred back to Tamil medium education reported that they joined the English medium in the first place because of pressure from their parents.

3. Why did students decide to leave the English medium programme? Students gave many reasons, of which the most frequently mentioned were:

   - There was no-one to help them with their studies at home
   - They were unable to communicate in English
   - They had difficulty in memorising material in English
   - They were fearful of what the examinations would be like
   - They were unable to comprehend examination questions
   - They experienced difficulty in finding Tamil equivalents for technical terms in English
   - Textbooks were not available on time
   - There was a lack of competent teachers
   - They were subjected to unpleasant comments from teachers if they scored low marks.

   It was not possible to rank these nine reasons as they all seemed to be more or less equally important to the respondents. In the light of these difficulties, the students' decision to drop English medium study and return to Tamil medium is understandable.

4. In contrast, teachers had different perceptions as to why students gave up on English medium and returned to Tamil. The most important reasons stated by teachers are:

   - Parents' wish
   - Parents' economic situation
   - Parents' poor knowledge of English
   - Low numbers of students in the class
   - Teacher's incompetence in English
   - Students' difficulty with technical terms in English.

5. What did the parents think lay behind their children's decision to opt out of English medium education? The most important reasons given by parents are listed here:

   - They were unable to help their children with their studies: 'They do pester us for help ... but how we can we help them? We do not know any English.'
   - They were unable to communicate with their children in English.
   - 'Financial difficulty.'
   - Teachers do not complete the syllabus.
   - There are no textbooks or the books are delayed.
   - No tuition classes

   Although some parents claimed that there were no tuition classes where their children could obtain additional support outside school, we found

that in fact there were tuition facilities in Jaffna for English medium students. The parents' complaints therefore seemed to be unfounded.

6. Most teachers were trained. About 70 per cent held the Post Graduate Diploma in Education while 15 per cent were trained teachers. However, nine per cent were not trained and had only GCE AL qualifications. Furthermore, although they were graduates some teachers taught subjects for which they were not qualified. Regarding competence to teach in English, only 30 per cent of teachers were themselves graduates of institutions where they had studied their main subjects through the medium of English.

7. Did the teachers have any problems? Of course, yes. They reported many problems and issues relating to teaching through the medium of English, including the following:

   - They felt that they were not sufficiently competent in English.
   - There were not enough in-service training programmes for English medium teachers and even those which were available were of low quality
   - There was a lack of additional books and other reading materials.
   - There were no teachers' manuals for the subjects they had to teach. Furthermore, any information that was made available by the authorities was not delivered on time.
   - Most learners could not comprehend their lessons because they were so weak in English.

The findings summarised above reveal some sad facts about English medium instruction in the Jaffna District. Most of the children who returned to Tamil medium had originally joined the English medium because their parents wished them to do so. The home language of these children was not English and English was not used at home; this is unlike the situation in many Tamil homes in Colombo where English is also widely used alongside Tamil for general social communication. Basically, Jaffna society is monolingual and English is rarely used for social and official communication.

Interestingly, most of those children who continued to study in the English medium had selected that medium by themselves; they were not in English medium education because of parental pressure. These children also showed that they possessed a reasonable level of competence in English.

On the other hand, one can understand the parents' desire for their children to take part in English medium education, because they perceived that there were considerable advantages of learning in English and naturally they hoped that their children would also be recipients of such advantages. But learning in the medium of English inevitably needs some basic prerequisites, such as appropriately qualified teachers, relevant text books as well as supplementary books and additional support for needy children to help them to acquire mastery in that language. The study shows that these prerequisites were hardly available in most schools in the District.

This situation should have been addressed in advance by headteachers and other relevant authorities by counselling parents about the risks of choosing English as the medium of instruction for their children. (This could be a topic for a separate study, as it is not known whether such counselling was provided for parents before they selected English medium instruction for their children.)

English medium instruction has not been a total failure in Jaffna District. Nevertheless, resources could have been saved and the mental distress experienced by those children who returned to Tamil medium education could have been avoided if the authorities had been proactive. This might also have helped to increase the success rate of English medium education in Jaffna District.

Recommendations

The study generated a number of recommendations, of which the twelve most important ones are listed below.

1. Teachers should motivate English medium students. They should endeavour to reduce fear and encourage self-confidence among the students.
2. Special projects to enhance competency in English should be conducted, including intensive English programmes and exchange programmes. British Council support programmes should be utilised and attempts should be made to convince the British Council to establish a branch in Jaffna.
3. Library facilities must be improved. English magazines and books should be bought for the library and time should be allocated for students to use them.
4. The classroom environment must be improved. Exhibit students' creative work. Encourage students to produce a wall newspaper.
5. Ensure competency in English from Grade 1. Communicative English can begin in Grade 1; this will strengthen students' English before they get to Grade 6. Highly qualified English teachers are not required to achieve this; class teachers are already doing this successfully in other parts of the country.
6. Apply flexible, innovative and interesting teaching techniques such as projects and assignments. Work in this area has already been started by the National Institute of Education.
7. Support programmes should be provided for parents, as required, to help them to improve their competence in English. Parents complained that they were unable to help their children at home.
8. Bring together students from both language groups (English medium and Tamil medium) whenever possible. Foster a sense of 'We are equal.' Do not allow English medium students to develop a superiority complex and Tamil medium students an inferiority complex. Knowledge and competence in both Tamil and English will support each other.

9. Increase parental participation and involvement in school activities with regard to English medium education. Give them a chance to talk to the teachers about their children's progress.
10. Bring in teachers and In-Service Advisers (ISAs) from other parts of the country, for example by organising exchange programmes. Let teachers from the south come and work in the north for some time and vice versa. This will also help to develop Sri Lankan national harmony and social cohesion in addition to improving English language competence.
11. Ensure that textbooks, teachers' manuals and other materials reach schools on time. Coordinate with the relevant authorities.
12. Conduct professional development programmes for English medium teachers. These can take place in school and also elsewhere.

Although most academics in Sri Lanka have argued in support of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction, this study did not come across any parent – whose child was participating in English medium education – who argued that the English medium should be scrapped and that everyone should go back to Tamil medium schooling. Consequently, our recommendations focus on how the current situation regarding English medium education in the District of Jaffna might be improved.

At the same time, however, it should be noted that the majority of children in Jaffna are still educated through the medium of Tamil and study English just as a subject. Our study was restricted only to those schools with English medium classes; all of these schools also have Tamil medium classes and there is no school in the district where the medium of instruction is exclusively English.

Conclusion

Language policy in Sri Lanka with regard to the medium of instruction has always been a matter of confusion and uncertainty. In the past the policy was based mostly on ethno-nationalism and political expediency rather than on the educational needs of the child and the needs of the country as a whole. Policy was not based on educational research and thought. English, which was the medium of instruction and the language of state administration in colonial Sri Lanka, was replaced after independence by the native languages, but without adequate planning and preparation. This thoughtless action had a serious impact on the Sri Lankan polity. Unfortunately, the same poor planning and unpreparedness prevailed when English was brought back as the medium of instruction in the 1990s. This study carried out in an educational zone in Jaffna district is a small effort to highlight the detrimental effects of politically motivated language policy regarding the medium of instruction on innocent children as well as on the educational development of the country.

Competence in English is essential for personal success in today's globalised world. But the ways and means of achieving such competence have to be carefully decided by the authorities, taking into consideration the research

findings of Sri Lankan scholars and also making use of the experiences of other countries that have similar characteristics and colonial legacies as Sri Lanka. There may be very effective ways of reaching a high level of competence in English while maintaining the mother tongue as the medium of instruction. This would be beneficial for both urban and rural children. The authorities should make genuine efforts to develop a viable medium of instruction policy that will narrow the urban–rural divide in terms of competence in the English language.

Note

1 The Donoughmore Commission decided that a universal franchise should be given to the people of Sri Lanka. It also established a State Council which became responsible for all matters excepting finance, the judiciary and administration, which remained under the control of the British. Seven Executive Committees were established. The Executive Committee on Education was chaired by Mr C.W.W.Kannagara. The State Council functioned between 1931 and 1947.

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14

Sri Lankan English: An appropriate model for the teaching of English in Sri Lanka?

Michael Meyler

Introduction

Since the launch in 2009 of a 'Presidential Initiative' to promote 'English as a life skill' in schools – popularly known as 'Speak English Our Way' – the subject of Sri Lankan English (SLE) has become a controversial topic. Some welcomed the initiative as a way of taking ownership of the English language, stripping it of its colonial baggage and making it more relevant to the practical needs of Sri Lankan learners; others saw it as a sign of falling standards, creating and validating a devalued variety of English which would disadvantage Sri Lankans on the world stage.

This chapter looks at the background to the 'English as a Life Skill' initiative and examines the arguments for and against promoting the local variety of English as a model for learners. It also discusses the background to the Sri Lankan English debate and the extent to which SLE is understood and accepted by Sri Lankan teachers, learners and speakers of English.

English as a Life Skill

During 2009 the government launched the Presidential Initiative to promote 'English as a Life Skill' in schools. This was an ambitious programme which aimed, within an 18-month period from June 2009, to achieve the following:

- training 21,984 teachers in spoken/communicative English
- training of teachers as Master Trainers at the English & Foreign Language University (EFLU) in Hyderabad, India
- introducing spoken English into the school syllabus and examination system
- preparing new teaching materials in spoken/communicative English

- introducing public examinations for learners and teachers of English
- producing a television programme for distance teaching of spoken English
- training public servants in English as a Life Skill
- introducing spoken/communicative English to private 'tutories'.[1]

This list of aims is summarised from Fernando (2009).

Some of the rhetoric surrounding the initiative was interesting. In the same document, Presidential Advisor Sunimal Fernando wrote about a 'paradigm shift' in English teaching, from:

> … the old, conservative, outdated, elitist Sri Lankan ideology of English that still enjoys an unwarranted amount of social legitimacy and power, which sees English as an instrument of social oppression, the prized possession of a privileged class and an exclusive emblem of upper class status, to be therefore spoken as an English person would speak – with unblemished diction, perfect grammar and technically perfect pronunciation. This anti-national ideology of English was crafted by our Anglo-centric urban elites as one that provided the gateway to the West and a repudiation of our own values and heritage.

to:

> … a new Sri Lankan ideology of English that … sees English for its utility value and not for its social worth, English as a skill for employment and a vehicle for reaching out to the external world of knowledge and learning, English as a straight and simple tool of communication stripped of its historical baggage, English as a common property resource to be owned by all – 'English as a Life Skill' similar to other natural life skills such as the skills to ride a motor-cycle or drive a car or use a computer. (Fernando 2009)

And in an interview in March 2009, Sunimal Fernando spoke of building on the achievements of 1956:

> What we disempowered, or shall we say destroyed in 1956 was the ideology of English as an instrument of social oppression, English as the repudiation of our own cultural values, English as the prized possession of a privileged class. What we are bringing in now through the Presidential Initiative is 'English as a life skill'.… We disempowered one kind of English, one ideology of English, and we are bringing in another kind of English which has another kind of ideology. (Kahandawaarachchi 2009)

In his keynote speech at the Language & Development Conference in Colombo (Fernando 2011), Sunimal Fernando reiterated this theme, drawing comments from the audience expressing the widely held view that 1956 represented a severe setback in English language education in Sri Lanka.

As part of the Presidential Initiative a publicity campaign was launched in which celebrities such as Sanath Jayasuriya (cricketer and parliamentarian) and Susanthika Jayasinghe (Olympic athlete) spoke of the importance of English and emphasised that they were happy to speak English 'their way'.

The motto 'Speak English Our Way' was adopted by the programme, together with the symbol of the *manna* knife (symbolically replacing the earlier image of English as a *kaduwa*, or sword).[2]

As a publicity campaign it seems to have been remarkably successful. Suddenly everyone was talking about 'English Our Way'. The comments at the time seemed to divide roughly evenly between those who welcomed the initiative as a way of taking ownership of the English language, stripping it of its colonial baggage, and making it relevant to the practical needs of ordinary Sri Lankans and those who feared that it was a sign of falling standards, creating and validating a devalued variety of English which would disadvantage Sri Lankans on the world stage.

The existence of Sri Lankan English as an area of academic research – and the idea that a local variety of English exists and has been validated by ELT professionals – fitted very conveniently into the agenda of the Presidential Initiative. It seemed that scarcely a day went by that there was not an article about Sri Lankan English or 'English Our Way' such that the two terms started to be used interchangeably. The confusion was understandable, but I feel it is important to differentiate between the terms because of their different origins and connotations.

'Sri Lankan English' is – or ought to be – an inclusive term, accommodating all the various ways in which English is used in Sri Lanka, by people from different regions, different ethnic and linguistic groups, different religions, different generations, different social classes and so on. This point is emphasised by the fact that the chapter on SLE in the *Routledge Handbook of World Englishes* (Mendis and Rambukwella 2010) is titled 'Sri Lankan Englishes', acknowledging the increasing recognition not only of SLE itself but also of its various sub-varieties.

But in the political context in which it was introduced, the term 'English Our Way' aroused suspicions that the 'our' was not an inclusive term but one which defined English the Colombo way, or the Sinhala way, or some other way which was not necessarily what everyone could call 'ours'. I followed the debate closely, partly because it related to my own area of interest, Sri Lankan English, but also because, from the perspective of World Englishes, I saw it as an interesting development in that it was – to my knowledge – the first time that a national government had so enthusiastically embraced its own local variety of English.

Among the criticisms of the programme mentioned at the time was a deep mistrust of the Indian involvement in the training process. People seemed to think that Sri Lankans would suddenly be teaching their children 'Indian English' instead of 'Sri Lankan English' or any other English; this idea was anathema to them. The criticism implied the inferiority and unsuitability of the Indian model and provided a cue for several disparaging remarks about Indian English in the press. But in fact the involvement of EFLU Hyderabad was merely in a trainer-training capacity, so there was no reason why the process should have any effect on the English of the teachers themselves or on the language that they would be teaching.

Another widely held fear was that 'English Our Way' meant abandoning standards altogether, a free-for-all where anything goes and no one cares. A more insidious variation on the same argument was the fear that somehow the programme was deliberately designed to lead to the creation of a two-tier system, where the Colombo elite would continue to speak a standard SLE almost identical to the international standard, while promoting a low-grade, 'not-pot'[3] variety for the masses.

My own concern at the time was that perhaps too much faith was being placed in Sri Lankan English, elevating it to the status of a magic wand which would transform attitudes to English, allowing everything else to fall into place. But in reality it was just one element in a hugely ambitious project. The danger was that placing too much emphasis on SLE would detract from the much greater challenges facing English language educators in Sri Lanka – including teacher training, methodology, syllabus design and materials development – all of which elements of the Presidential Initiative needed to be given equal or greater weight. Another danger was that over-emphasising SLE provided ammunition to the detractors who wished to undermine the effectiveness of the whole project by focusing on this one rather controversial aspect of it.

One task which was undertaken as part of the programme was an attempt to codify standard Sri Lankan English. A committee was set up in May 2010 under the auspices of the Presidential Initiative and the Ministry of Education, tasked with defining what is meant by 'standard Sri Lankan English' and drawing up a guide for teachers. This was the only part of the Presidential Initiative in which I myself was involved, as a member of this committee alongside Sri Lankan ELT professionals from the universities and the National Institute of Education (NIE).

It was my personal hope that the committee could succeed in defining standard Sri Lankan English in terms which were compatible with current thinking in the ELT field, so that 'English Our Way' would not mean abandoning standards as some feared but would produce something more relevant for the contemporary Sri Lankan context. But the work of the committee was never completed and appears to have been abandoned. This was a missed opportunity.[4]

Standard Sri Lankan English

The term 'standard Sri Lankan English' is used by Gunesekera (2004) to describe the variety of English used by Sri Lankans who speak English as their first language, or who are bilingual in English and Sinhala or Tamil. Although 'standard Sri Lankan English' itself has not yet been adequately codified, it is a more precise term than 'Sri Lankan English', which as mentioned earlier is an umbrella term covering all the different ways in which the language is used in Sri Lanka. Some of the features of standard Sri Lankan English, in the areas of lexis, grammar and phonology, have been documented in my book, *A Dictionary of Sri Lankan English* (Meyler 2007) and in the website www.mirisgala.net.

Relevance to English teaching in Sri Lanka

So what is the relevance of all this to the teaching of English in Sri Lanka? On one level, it is stating the obvious. It means creating learning and teaching materials relevant to the local environment in which, to take a simple example, students talk about 'mangoes' and 'rambutans' rather than 'blackberries' and 'gooseberries'. It is also perfectly natural, because since teachers themselves are Sri Lankan, speak Sri Lankan English and share the Sri Lankan culture and environment of their students, they will inevitably, and subconsciously, model the language in a way which is locally appropriate, whatever materials they are using.

But it also needs to go further, because for as long as the official standard is one which is outdated, or alien, or unrealistic, there will always be uncertainty about what exactly should be taught and what should be achieved at the end of the process.

Syllabus designers and materials writers should ensure that the content of the courses they design are relevant to the local context and that the language introduced is consistent with the local standard. However, this is not to say that other varieties of English have no place. Especially at higher levels, students should be exposed to as many different varieties as possible. The vast resource of authentic material provided by the internet should be exploited, not only as a source of language but also as a window on the world and as a prompt for further discussion and research.

Testing is one area that cannot possibly be undertaken without agreement on accepted standards. It is unrealistic and unfair to test students' English ability according to an alien and outdated standard. This applies particularly with the introduction of a speaking test as part of the O-level examination, which is one of the objectives of the Presidential Initiative, planned to be introduced in 2012.

Sri Lankan English is also relevant in the area of teaching and learning resources, such as dictionaries, which are seen as valuable resources for language teachers and learners. And yet the most widely available and authoritative dictionaries are of limited relevance to the local context. Take the Oxford Intermediate Learners' Dictionary of English for example. Looking through the C words, most are core words which are likely to be relevant to any learner of English anywhere in the world: cabbage, cable, cage, cake, call, camel, camera, candle, car, cat, catch, caterpillar, cattle, …

But there is also a number of marginal words: cagoule, Calor gas, car boot sale, cardigan, carnation, cashmere, caviar, Channel Tunnel, chestnut, chicory, chilblain, chimney sweep, chip shop, chrysanthemum, ciabatta, clementine, clotted cream, conker, cress… These are standard English words, which students might come across at some stage, but they are very specific to the UK and/or the US and therefore are not priority language for an intermediate Sri Lankan learner.

On the other hand, another set of words is missing altogether: cadjan, carrom, chena, chilli powder, coir, copra, cowpea, curd pot, curry leaves,

custard apple… These are all English words (not Sinhala or Tamil loanwords) which are needed by Sri Lankan learners to describe the world around them. And they are not necessarily specific to Sri Lanka as many of them would also be used in India and elsewhere in South and Southeast Asia.

Also under the letter C, collocations of the word *coconut* tell an interesting story. If we look up *coconut* in a standard British dictionary, we find *coconut matting, coconut milk* and *coconut shy.* Of these only *coconut milk* is used in SLE.[5] We do not even find an entry for *coconut tree*, which is surely common to many varieties of English, but which in standard British English is referred to as a *palm tree.*

Apart from *coconut milk* and *coconut tree*, the word *coconut* is also found in a wide variety of other collocations in SLE: coconut arrack, coconut estate, coconut flower, coconut husk, coconut oil, coconut plucker, coconut sambol, coconut scraper, coconut shell, coconut toddy, and so on. None of these collocations appears in a standard British English dictionary.

An Intermediate Learners' Dictionary for Sri Lankan learners, taking account of these factors, would be a valuable resource. It could be a simpler and more affordable publication than the Oxford equivalent. It would need to make use of notations identifying those words which are unique to Sri Lanka, or to South Asia, and so on. Such a dictionary would serve not only as a reference book for learners but also as a resource for teachers and materials writers, for example when choosing which elements of the target language are to be introduced to learners or for checking how words are used, or spelt, in SLE.

This is just one example of an area where acknowledging the relevance of SLE to English teaching in Sri Lanka could lead to the development of resources which would be of genuine practical value to learners and teachers of English.

Conclusion

So what became of 'Speak English Our Way'? After a flurry of publicity in 2010, it seemed to fade away. I cannot comment on the overall effectiveness of the Presidential Initiative, because I do not have any direct experience of the programme myself. But as far as the question of Sri Lankan English was concerned, it seems that there were three issues which led to it being quietly dropped from the agenda:

- resistance from the general public, manifested in the form of a number of articles and pronouncements, in the press and elsewhere
- resistance from teachers and other ELT professionals (including perhaps from within the Education Ministry itself) who remained unsure about what was really meant by Sri Lankan English and therefore felt uncomfortable about being told to teach it
- resistance from academics and ELT professionals in Jaffna, who felt that 'Sri Lankan English' was a Colombo-centric concept which did not take

adequate account of the way English is used by all language communities and especially by Tamil speakers.

Fernando (personal communication) has confirmed that this resistance was indeed a significant factor in the decision to drop SLE from the agenda. Anandakumarasamy (2011) has shown that recent English language textbooks designed for use in schools all over the country actually include a large number of Sinhala words which are presented as 'Sri Lankan English' but which are not familiar to Tamil speakers in the North, even though many of these words have English and/or Tamil equivalents. A similar criticism can be made of materials in the *Teacher Guide* produced by the English as a Life Skill programme.

'Sri Lankan English' should be an inclusive term, incorporating elements of the way the language is used in all parts of the island and by all communities. But it is true that the majority of the people who have written about the subject have been Colombo-based and/or Sinhala-speaking. The danger then is that fears about the true meaning of the 'our' in 'English Our Way' can seem justified while the inclusion of a few Tamil words like *kovil* and *thosai* in SLE wordlists can seem tokenistic. For this reason it is vital to involve Tamil-speaking ELT professionals in the process of defining standard SLE, so that it is genuinely inclusive and is seen to be so.

In his public comments, Sunimal Fernando has suggested that in the absence of standard Sri Lankan English as a model, 'English Our Way' means encouraging learners to speak English their own way, giving them the confidence to express themselves in English, even if they make mistakes. This is accepted communicative methodology, but it is only one part of the picture because it assumes that learners are exposed to a standard model of the target language so that they can learn from their mistakes and improve. But, in a classroom environment, this may not be the case. This is why an agreed standard is so important. I believe that 'standard Sri Lankan English' can provide a relevant, realistic and definable standard.

Notes

1   tutories = tutorial college (Sri Lankan English)
2   *Kaduwa* is Sinhala for 'sword', a popular metaphor for the English language, a symbol of power which divides those who have it from those who do not. A *manna* is an everyday knife used for everything from cutting branches to opening coconuts. Here it is a symbol of English as a tool for ordinary people.
3   'Not pot English is a derogatory and/or humorous term used by speakers of "standard Sri Lankan English" to describe the way first language speakers of Sinhala and Tamil pronounce the language. The words "not" and "pot" are pronounced with an exaggeratedly closed "o" sound to imitate an accent that is widely perceived as socially inferior.' (Michael Meyler, *A–Z of Sri Lankan English*, www.mirisgala.net/SL_English_A_to_Z.html)
4   Sunimal Fernando (personal communication) has confirmed that the codification of SLE was indeed dropped from the agenda of the English as a Life Skill programme, for reasons which are outlined later in this chapter.
5   *Coconut milk* is often wrongly defined in standard dictionaries as the liquid inside a coconut. In Sri Lanka and elsewhere this liquid is referred to as *coconut water*, whereas *coconut milk*

is the milk-like liquid made by squeezing grated coconut with water, a basic ingredient of many Sri Lankan curries.

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15

The role of the standard variety in defining sub-varieties: A study based on teaching English and Tamil

Rukshaan Ibrahim

Introduction

The present government of Sri Lanka has launched a number of programmes aimed at enhancing knowledge of languages among the population. These include 'Speak English Our Way' and 'English as a Life Skill', launched in 2009 to encourage students to speak in English. 'Speak English Our Way' was intended to nativise the English language by dethroning it from its position as the emblem of a privileged class and transforming it into a useful tool. Through a third programme, aimed at bridging the gap between Sinhala and Tamil (the two national languages), the government also took the initiative to teach Tamil to Sinhala speakers. All of these programmes were conducted by the Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration and were intended to lead towards a national level attitudinal change and a national commitment to use the three languages in building the Sri Lankan state.

   This chapter begins with a brief look at the 'Speak English Our Way' campaign, then it moves on to consider the 'Tri-Lingual Sri Lanka' proposal. We then examine the respective histories of English and Tamil in Sri Lanka and note that there are several different varieties of Tamil in the country. This leads to a discussion of the politics of language standardisation. The chapter concludes by highlighting the dilemma that a government language policy – albeit designed with the best of intentions – cannot avoid re-creating hegemony since state sponsorship of a particular variety of a language re-creates another standard.

'Speak English Our Way': An overview

The 'Speak English Our Way' programme was launched as part of the long awaited policy change that was needed to promote English education in the country. This programme was intended to make English available to

the mass of the population as a 'link' language between the Sinhala- and Tamil-speaking communities. In June 2009 the government launched an eighteen month 'Road Map' to promote spoken or communicative English throughout the country. The Road Map was designed by the Presidential Task Force on English and Information Technology and it was meant to mark a paradigm shift in the teaching of English in Sri Lanka (Fernando 2010). As a step towards the implementation of this programme, the Cabinet decided to change the school syllabus for English by putting a special emphasis on improving students' spoken and communicative skills in the language and shifting away from writing and grammar.

A 'note' on the Road Map was prepared by Dr Sunimal Fernando, Adviser to the President and Coordinator of the Presidential Task Force. According to him, the objective of this project was to challenge 'the old, conservative, outdated, elitist Sri Lankan ideology of English that is still enjoying an un-warranted amount of social legitimacy and power.' In his opinion, English has to be seen as a language, not as 'an instrument of social oppression, the prized possession of a privileged class and an exclusive emblem of upper class status.' He further states that English has to be given importance for its utility value and not for its social worth. Thus, under this programme, knowing English will be considered to be a skill for employment and a vehicle for reaching out to the external world of knowledge and learning rather than a marker of prestige and power (Fernando 2010).

'Tri-Lingual Sri Lanka': An overview

The Tamil language has long been widely used in Sri Lanka, yet, for decades it was overshadowed by the monopoly of Sinhala, the language that represented the dominant ethnic group. Tamil was marginalised at many levels as the language itself was said to carry an ethnic baggage that was identified to be the political consciousness of a particular community. Yet, after the end of the thirty year civil war, it transformed itself into a language of healing: The state recognised the need to promote the language to the masses that were either consciously or unconsciously avoiding possible contact with the language. After the end of the war, there was a need to introduce the language at least in public spheres where the masses need to interact with one another using their own language. Accordingly, the government proposed to undertake this task through the establishment of a new ministry and thereby took an initiative to promote not only Tamil but also the other languages that existed in the country, Sinhala and English. As a result, the Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration was established in 2010 to promote Sinhala and Tamil bilingualism and thereby create a trilingual society. The Ministry conducts programmes to enhance the translation and interpretation skills of public servants so that they can provide better services to the public. It also carries out programmes aimed at raising popular awareness of the Official Languages Policy and related laws and regulations which in turn will lead to the propagation and promotion of languages.

English and Tamil in Sri Lanka

The English and Tamil languages have evolved in ways that reflect the important socio-political changes that have taken place in the country. The current dominance of the English language as an emblem of power can be traced back in history to the British Era, when English was the tool of British subjugation. The English language is often referred to as the *kaduwa* (later *kadu* or *kadda*), meaning 'sword'. It is said that this term was first created about two decades ago, after Independence, by some hapless rural children who were studying in rural or semi-urban government schools; it was a response to the trauma and frustration that they experienced in their useless and ineffective English classes (Kandiah 1984). To speak in English for these students was to cut through and make one's way using a sword. Speaking in English was referred to as *kadden kotanawa/kapanawa* (cut through using a sword). Even now this expression remains in its verb form *kottanawa* (to cut) and, in state universities, students often refer to their English classes as *kadu panthi* (sword classes).

According to Kandiah, English is symbolised by the term *kaduwa* because of the language's association with the British Empire and the loss of independence in 1796. Accordingly, English is connected with all sorts of negative states of mind, including defeat, subjugation, humiliation and oppression (Kandiah 1984). The main reason could be the formation of a class system, centred on the English language, that privileged only a particular segment of society. Thus, in Kandiah's view, these hapless students who did not belong to the class structure favoured by English saw the language to be a weapon that privileged its owner to 'cut through' various segments of the society and thereby exercise autonomy. Yet, during the British Era itself, English would not have been regarded as a *kaduwa*. Rather, it was a useful tool and a language of social elevation to at least certain segments of society, while the 'others' would not have had a voice in its discourse. Kandiah further states that the British government favoured individuals who were well-versed in English and they were often hired for administrative positions in the Empire. In this way, a class of local individuals was created who were Lankan but who spoke like the British. Thus, the *kaduwa* is not only an innocent symbol which describes the language, but 'a pregnant and not necessarily a conscious symbol which encompasses the psycho-social anxieties of the user' (Kandiah 1984).

The nationalist revival of the country against British rule did not fail to draw the attention of the masses to the negative aspects of the English language. The privileged position enjoyed by the language itself was questioned by these movements and its importance and superiority were rejected. Yet, during the British occupation of Sri Lanka, the word *kaduwa* – representing the oppressive nature of the language – did not yet exist due to the prevalent social system and the education system which favoured English education (Kandiah 1984).

Certain significant changes took place in the country during the independence period and following independence with regard to the language policy

of the country. The most striking was the restoration of the rightful place of the native cultures and languages. The Sinhala Only Act, adopted by the S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike government, was an attempt to dethrone English from its privileged position. English was no longer needed as the country was free to use its own languages. Also, it represented a shift of political power from the westernised bourgeoisie into the hands of the national bourgeoisie who lived in small towns and villages (Kandiah 1984).

The independence movement was spear-headed by the bilingual, western-ised elite who evoked several principles of freedom, nationalism, equality, democracy and socialism in order to secure the support of the masses (Kandiah 1984). Yet despite these socio-political changes, the English language continued to play a significant role in the country. The Official Language Act of 1956 replaced English with Sinhala as one of the official languages while Tamil became a language for official purposes. English continued to exist and exercise dominance as it was still used at higher levels and most important spheres of society. This is because the Official Languages Act did not totally efface the prominence or the dominance of the English language and its ability to exercise power over the non-English-speaking social groups.

Tamil is a second language in Sri Lanka and is spoken by nearly twenty per cent of the population. In South India it is the official language of the state of Tamil Nadu. It is also spoken in Burma, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, East and South Africa, Fiji and Mauritius. Tamil has a very long history (Suseendiraraja 1999) and it has been used in Sri Lanka for centuries, in both spoken and written forms. Not surprisingly, the language has evolved over the years and, as a result, there are several varieties of Tamil spoken in the country at present, each of which has its own distinct characteristics.

Nowadays, the majority of the Tamil speaking population is found in the North and East of Sri Lanka. Also, there are Tamil speakers in the Central, Uva and Sabaragamuwa provinces. In addition, there are Tamil speaking settlements that are situated in predominantly Sinhala speaking areas. In Sri Lanka, the varieties of Tamil are often placed in a hierarchical order, in terms of the number of speakers and also in terms of 'purity'. The notion of purity is justified by the history of its speakers who, it is said, have retained certain archaic structures of Tamil that existed in the past. These varieties are:

- Jaffna Tamil dialect spoken by people in the Jaffna peninsula, Mannar and the Vannni region
- Batticaloa Tamil dialect spoken in the eastern province
- Upcountry Indian Tamil dialect spoken in the central region of the country
- Indian Tamil spoken by people in Tamil Nadu state in South India
- Muslim Tamil spoken by the Muslims in different regions in the country (Suseendiraraja 1999).

It is said that there are distinct differences between the varieties of Tamil. For example, the Jaffna dialect is said to be differ in pronunciation and structure from the Batticaloa dialect. Yet, both of these varieties are considered

to be examples of 'Sri Lankan Tamil'. The other varieties – like Indian Tamil – are said to be closer to the Tamil spoken on the Indian mainland. Yet, there are linguistic features – such as the use of Sinhala loanwords – that make this variety unique to Sri Lanka. Also, unlike 'Sri Lankan Tamil' speakers, most 'Indian Tamil' speakers are bilingual, as they have more contact with the Sinhala language. The two varieties are so distinct that mutual intelligibility and communication is difficult between the two groups at times. The Muslim variety of Tamil, which cannot be confined to a particular region, has evolved with its own distinct features compared to Sri Lankan Tamil and Indian Tamil. Yet, Muslims in the North and the Eastern region are mostly mono-lingual – like Sri Lankan Tamils – and they are considered to be speakers of Sri Lankan Tamil.

The Jaffna variety of Tamil is considered to be the 'best' or the 'purest' out of all the varieties of Tamil (Suseendiraraja 1999). It has exercised power and dominance because it is said that, in times of history, the Jaffna peninsula remained isolated as a kingdom with its own linguistic and cultural identity. Also, most of the policy makers in linguistic issues related to the Tamil language in the past and up to the present day are scholars from the Jaffna peninsula who promote their own variety of Tamil. It is argued that the Jaffna variety of Tamil retains some of the archaic features of Tamil that are not found in other varieties of Tamil. The structure of Jaffna Tamil is said to be close to the standard written form of the language. Therefore it is placed at the top of the hierarchy of Tamil dialects. It is identified to be 'Sri Lankan Tamil' although Batticaloa Tamil also consists of distinct features that are not present in Jaffna Tamil. On the other hand, Indian Tamil and Muslim Tamil are not considered to be 'Sri Lankan' varieties of Tamil. This notion is widely accepted by linguists in the field of Tamil studies. The very categorisation of the dialects as either 'Indian' or 'Muslim' reveals that these varieties are excluded from a collective form of what 'Sri Lankan' is in language.

The above discussion of English and Tamil in Sri Lanka in terms of the historical context of the language and in terms of the politics related to the hierarchisation of the language reveals that these languages do not exist as mere languages. Instead, they reveal affiliations to certain class and socio-ethnic groups that choose to include and exclude elements. The English language is inevitably tied to power structure that is promoted by colonialism and it has a history of functioning as a language of power and dominance. Accordingly, English is sought for social ascendancy even today. Tamil, on the other hand is widely used in the country by many groups of people. Yet, the language is marked by regional affiliations that are tied to a notion of 'purity'. These in-built power structures of the languages result in a notion of standard or a most widely accepted form that can marginalise other forms to be non-standard or non-acceptable forms of language. Accordingly, when a variety of language is promoted with the mediation of the state, the hegemony that governs standards becomes apparent and cannot be avoided. For example, despite the attempt to introduce a variety of English that is 'ours', the state cannot help recreating hegemony. Similarly, the choice of a particular variety

of Tamil subtly creates a standard and thereby creates other non-standard varieties.

The politics of language standardisation

The standard variety of a language becomes very important in defining sub-varieties, since standardisation of a particular variety of language is a historical process which is always in progress (Parakrama 1995). Thus, standards may vary in a particular historical bloc and a non-standard variety may become a standard as a result of displacement of hegemony. Also, a standard is an ideology, which is abstract, and it is not a particular set variety. As a result, in usage, these abstract norms may conform at different levels. Standardisation principles may occur in spelling, pronunciation, word-meaning, word-forms and sentence structure conventions. Thus, standardisation is endorsed in language teaching contexts, as it is important to have uniformity of elements.

The present government policies related to language and language policy involve dehegemonising the English language and making Sinhala and Tamil languages accessible to the masses in order to create a Tri-Lingual Sri Lanka. The state sponsorship of these languages will validate these language varieties. Yet, at the same time, it will endorse these language varieties to be the 'standards' or the 'recognised' forms of the language.

Antonio Gramsci spoke about the role of hegemony and ideology in the process of winning the consent of the masses and creating the 'nation popular' or the 'common will'; for example, the creation of a 'standard' variety in a language. As a theorist, Gramsci worked along the paradigms of Marxism but in his interpretation of culture, he did not use the traditional model of economic reductionism of Marx. Instead, he used hegemonic constructs of society to interpret culture (Hall 1994). Accordingly, the construction of the 'common will' or a 'standard' and its impact on the English and Tamil languages in relation to modernity can be speculated about using the views of Gramsci.

In the case of 'Speak English Our Way', from a Gramscian perspective 'Our Way' – which is meant to remedy the anxieties of the non-elite, non-standard English learner or 'the other' – again creates a 'self' and an 'other' as observed in the use of the hegemonic symbol *kaduwa*, which represents the anxieties of the Sinhala learner of English as a second language and not 'the other' learner/s. The present transformation of the *kaduwa* to *mannaya* (a sickle) is yet again another way of cutting through: it involves' cutting through' using a different, 'native' apparatus while the action of 'cutting' is still intact.

The rise of Asian states like China, Japan and India and their economic development which were said to be the result of a national revival against imperialism and domination of the West are taken as examples to manifest the ability of the Sri Lankan nation to rise up against the domineering pressures of the English language which was considered to be a weapon of dominance and subjugation. In this context, Indian English is taken as an example to highlight the use of a nativised variety of English which does not adhere to

the characteristic features of the standard varieties of English. Indian English is marked by a heavy accent and this accent is widely accepted in India as it is considered to be the result of an influence of native Indian languages. In the same way it is said that a Sri Lankan variety of English has evolved over the years but it is 'standardised' by considering certain features which specify it as 'Standard Sri Lankan English' (Gunesekera 2010), while denouncing other forms of English that do not have these characteristics.

Gramsci talks about 'class in itself' and 'class for itself' and says that class solidarities are formed in three different stages (Hall 1996). Unlike in economic stages of class solidarity, in 'the moment of hegemony' class interest transcends the corporate limits of economic solidarity and reach out to the interests of other subordinate groups. Then it begins to propagate itself throughout society bringing about intellectual, moral, economic and political unity. This unification of interests can be seen through the usage of the term 'Our Way' which seems to represent the interests of all the learners of English devoid of racial and class barriers. Yet, it creates hegemony of a particular historical bloc as it encompasses the interests of the masses at a particular moment of time and thereby creates the 'national popular' which constitutes the needs and interests of the dominant group adhering to the dominant ideology. It is only in such moments of 'national popular unity' that the formation of what is called 'a collective will' is possible. Thus, the collective will of the masses is to convert their learning target to a variety that is defined by the state as 'Our Way', which does not necessarily represent the needs of all the learners.

In the case of Tamil, there are distinct differences between varieties to a point where mutual intelligibility itself is an issue. In practical contexts, such as in a teaching context, these differences may pose problems depending on the needs of the learners. In this backdrop, the mediation of the state in the above mentioned language teaching programme and the validation of one variety as the most suitable for the purpose of language creates hierarchical structures in language varieties. The so called 'Sri Lankan variety' of a language is enforced not only due to linguistic features that promote a Sri Lankan identity, but also by nationalism and its various apparatuses. In the case of Tamil, the 'Sri Lankan variety' became the medium through which the Tamil nationalistic struggle of the Sri Lankan 'other' took place. It was also through these linguistic forces that an idealistic, separatist movement was spear-headed which excluded the non-Sri Lankan Tamil varieties. Thus, these dialects embodied the linguistic, political and social interests of the Sri Lankan Tamil and not the 'other'. This exclusive privilege enjoyed by the Sri Lankan Tamil variety took place in a particular historical bloc and it has a tendency to be continued because the purist ideology of Tamil is taken as a given without being challenged.

Thus, it could be argued that, in its attempt to endorse one variety, the government subtly creates hegemony, as the state sponsored variety becomes the 'self' excluding 'the other'. In the case of English, 'Standard Sri Lankan English', the variety spoken in urban Sri Lanka, becomes the standard variety

to be included in text books and in teaching contexts. The linguistic features of this variety are prescribed by policy makers who define it and recommend it as the best variety to be used in order to 'Speak English Our Way'. In the case of Tamil, as policy making with regard to language teaching is done by the intellectuals and educationalists who speak 'Sri Lankan Tamil', the parameters that govern this variety become the norm or the standard. Thus, in a context where Tamil is being taught to Sinhala speakers, as in the case of teaching English, a 'Sri Lankan Tamil' variety will be accepted to be the best variety.

Louis Althusser talks about the use of ideology in the creation of the modern state (Althusser 2009). Althusser's notion of social formation is similar to the Gramscian theory of race and ethnicity. Gramsci says that the 'national popular' is constructed by the state and it governs the masses through consent (Gramsci 2009). Althusser also says that the state interpolates its subjects as the ideological state apparatuses inscribe ideologies – whether national, ethical, religious or legal – upon the consciousness of individual subjects (Storey 2012). The apparatuses of Sri Lankan Tamil ideology – primarily the education system – interpolate and hail the speakers of Sri Lankan Tamil as this variety is said to encompass the traces of a glorious Tamil culture that existed in the country in the past. To speak in Sri Lankan Tamil is to belong to that past which embodied a unique identity and culture. Thus, Sri Lankan Tamil is said to possess that archaic past of the Tamil speakers of the country and this is the 'correct' and 'purest' form of Tamil in the country. Accordingly, in selecting a variety for teaching purposes, ideology and hegemony play an important role.

Conclusion

The present government's language policies are targeted towards bridging the gap between languages and creating a unified Sri Lanka. Accordingly, the government has launched language teaching programmes through its ministries. These programmes aim to enhance the language capacities of the masses. 'Speak English Our Way' was targeted towards remedying learner anxieties related to the English Language while Tri-Lingual Sri Lanka was targeted towards bridging the gap between the two national languages. Yet, while attempting to remedy the already existing linguistic problems of the country related to hegemony and power, these programmes re-create hegemony as the state sponsorship of a particular variety of language will in return re-create another standard and thereby create hegemony. Also, as the policy making for these programmes involves educationists and intellectuals – who embody linguistic interests and ideology – their intervention and recommendations will re-endorse certain norms and standards that the government is attempting to revise. Thus, the standard variety of language will continue to exist as one standard will eventually be replaced by another normative variety, which in turn becomes the standard.

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