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Language-in-Education Policy in Low-Income, Postcolonial Contexts: Towards a social justice approach

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Abstract

The article considers how language-in-education policy in low-income, postcolonial countries may be better understood from a social justice perspective and some of the implications for policy, practice and research that arise from this. The article starts with a critical overview of the two dominant approaches towards conceptualising language-in-education policy, namely the instrumental and rights based approaches. The article then sets out a social justice approach that builds critically on a rights based perspective. Key features of the approach include considering language-in-education as a capability that has the potential to contribute to human well-being and to social justice and understanding the pedagogical, institutional and wider social barriers to achieving linguistic social justice in education and means for overcoming these barriers. Based on this understanding the article then sets out a research agenda that can assist in realising linguistic social justice in education across the three inter-related domains of the school, the home/community and the education system.

Introduction

As the leading development economist Amartya Senⁱⁱ has recently pointed out, developing capability in more than one language is a key enabling factor in accessing goods and services as well as labour market opportunities within an increasingly globalised economy. It is also crucial for converting these into valued outcomes that can contribute to well-being and the fight against poverty (see also Mohanty 2009). The promotion of multilingualism also serves as an important basis for national and regional unity and for promoting democracy. In relation to education, being proficient in both the mother tongueⁱⁱⁱ and a global language is not only an important outcome in its own right but is also critical for achieving other learning outcomes. There is a large body of evidence, however, to suggest that medium of instruction policies often impact negatively on the development of linguistic capabilities for disadvantaged groups and that this in turn has a negative impact on other learning outcomes including basic literacy and numeracy. Given this wider context it is alarming that language-in-education policy is so often at the periphery of global debates about the quality of education at a time when learning for all is a key part of the educational component of the Sustainable Development Goals.

This article aims to better understand how language-in-education policy can support the development of valued linguistic capabilities in low-income, postcolonial countries from a social justice perspective and some of the implications for policy, practice and research that arise from this. The article commences by providing a critical overview including the strengths and weaknesses of dominant instrumentalist and rights based approaches towards language-in-education policy. This will provide a basis for setting out a social justice approach. Central to the perspective outlined is a view of language as a human capability that can contribute to well-being. Drawing on the wider literature as well as contributions to

this special issue, the second part of the article will sketch out the existing evidential basis for understanding language as a capability including evidence relating to the nature of language itself, theories of second language acquisition and the link between medium of instruction and educational outcomes. This will then lead into the suggestion of a framework for considering how language-in-education policy may be understood and evaluated from a social justice perspective across the three inter-related domains of the school, the home/ community and the wider education system.

Before proceeding further, it is worth clarifying what is understood in this context by the 'postcolonial condition'. This has been discussed extensively elsewhere in the context of language (Phillipson, Skutnabb-Kangas, Mohanty, & Panda, 2014a; Rassool, Heugh, & Mansoor, 2007; Tikly, 1999; Tikly et al., 2003). For our purposes, consideration of the postcolonial condition with respect to language-in-education policy draws attention to the continuing hegemony of colonial languages in the context of contemporary globalization and the marginalization and under-development of indigenous languages. It also draws attention to historically based inequalities in access to 'powerful' global languages between postcolonial elites on the one hand and those who have historically been denied access to dominant languages on the other. As we will see below, however, it further signals the complexity of linguistic identities and language rights for marginalised groups in the global era (see also the contribution from Kuchah in this special issue).

It is also worth clarifying what is meant by 'language-in-education policy'. Tollefson (2013) has provided an overview of two critical approaches for studying language-in-education policy; one which is focused on the historical-structural determinants of state education policies and how these reflect and reinforce different colonial, class and other interests; and, more recent emphasis on the role of agency and identity for shaping the creative choices exercised by individuals and communities. By way of contrast the current article is informed, albeit implicitly, by an understanding of policy as arising from the dialectical interaction between the agency of actors on the one hand and structures and processes on the other at a number of levels. Specifically, critical analysis needs to take account not only of the interests involved in formulating official language-in-education policy but also of how policy is enacted in schools and classrooms as well as processes of community engagement and advocacy. Language-in-education policy also needs to be seen as part of a broader policy nexus with which it interacts in sometimes contradictory ways. Of particular importance is understanding language-in-education policy as a key aspect of wider debates about the quality of education for different groups of disadvantaged learners in which they play a central (if often unacknowledged) role.

[The critique of dominant approaches](#)

The aim of this section is to set out and critique two dominant approaches for understanding language-in-education policy namely, instrumental and rights-based approaches. Both provide a powerful set of rationales for those with an interest in policy. The two approaches will provide a basis for setting out a third, social justice approach below. Although each approach may be differentiated there are in reality overlaps and each may simultaneously influence policy sometimes in contradictory ways. Individuals may also hold views that draw on more than one approach. For example, as we will see, there is a strong overlap between rights based and social justice approaches. There are also important

differences between approaches as they may appear in official policy and how they are implemented in practice. For example, approaches in policy that claim to be rights based may in fact transpire to be more instrumental in the way that they are implemented (below). Nonetheless, it is useful to separate out the approaches as a heuristic device and for better understanding broad themes and motives within language-in-education policy.

The instrumental approach

Instrumentalist approaches typically characterise the status quo for policy responses of low-income, postcolonial countries to language-in-education issues. At the heart of an instrumentalist approach is a view of language as contributing to national development in a globalised world. Here, the view of 'development' is usually equated with prosperity and measured in increases in gross national product. Within this approach, language-in-education policy is principally conceived as contributing to the development of human capital. As some commentators have pointed out this is in the form of cultural, linguistic capital that can be traded in global markets (Rassool, Heugh, and Mansoor 2007). In many countries this leads to an emphasis on the development of a global language (often English) as a target language for policy. Instrumental approaches are also often concerned, however, with the role of language as a basis for national unity. In the context of processes of regionalisation, they may also often be implicated in processes of regional integration. This is the case with respect to Rwanda's choice of English as the medium of instruction, for example, which is linked amongst other things to processes of economic integration within the East African region.

In many high-income countries these twin goals of national development are achieved through the use of strong bilingual models in which the mother tongue is used as the medium of instruction at least through the primary and secondary cycle and in some instances through the tertiary cycle. Here both the mother tongue and one or more global languages are the target languages of policy. Proficiency in global languages is realised through the teaching of these languages as subjects throughout formal education. As Kedzierski shows in his contribution to this special issue, English Medium Instruction is now widespread throughout the higher education systems of East Asia and in other parts of the world. In many low- and middle-income countries on the other hand, mother tongue education is more often seen as a bridge to the development of global languages with global languages rather than mother tongue as the principal target language for policy (Alidou et al. 2006; Benson 2014). These weak bilingual models often involve mother tongue education in the early years with a global language taught as a subject. Early exit from mother tongue education to a global language usually takes place at some point in the basic education cycle. These 'subtractive approaches' often result in the devaluing of the mother tongue in favour of a global language. As various commentators have pointed out, instrumental approaches are often justified with reference to pragmatic concerns about the use of global languages as a *lingua franca* in multilingual societies and with reference to the resource implications involved in producing materials in multiple languages (Alidou et al. 2006).

As suggested, language-in-education policies also need to be understood in relation to wider discourses of quality and equity that drive contemporary debates about education. Instrumentalist discourses about quality in low income countries usually equate quality with

a limited number of cognitive outcomes including basic literacy and numeracy that can be measured in standardized tests (Tikly and Barrett 2011a; Barrett 2011; Barrett 2015; Tikly and Barrett 2011b). Notwithstanding the reductionist view of quality itself, there is a contradiction between the underlying view of quality and the instrumentalist approach to language-in-education in that the available evidence suggests a negative correlation between the use of weak bilingual models and cognitive achievement (Alidou et al. 2006; Benson 2014, Trudell, this issue). This is particularly the case for disadvantaged groups of learners who do not speak the language of instruction outside of the school. In this respect, their disadvantage may be compounded by other factors including socio-economic disadvantage, rurality and gender (Smith and Barrett 2011).

Instrumentalist approaches are characterised by top-down, state-led approaches to policy-making although they may draw on and reinforce popular ideas about the relative importance of local and global languages for national development. In this respect, many parents and communities also often adopt an instrumentalist view of the importance of global languages for the future success of their children in the labour market. For many parents, education in English or another global language is synonymous with quality (Trudell 2007). This is evidenced by the prevalence of low-fee private schools in many low-income countries in which the medium of instruction is English (Ashley et al. 2014; Rubagumya et al. 2011; Rubagumya 2003). The perception of parents is often fuelled by the observation that the children of middle class, urban elites almost invariably send their children to schools in which a global language is the medium of instruction. There is often however, a disjuncture between the official policy and pedagogical practice in the classroom where many qualitative studies have revealed the wide-spread illicit use of 'code-switching' as a means by which the teacher makes the curriculum more accessible to disadvantaged learners who are struggling linguistically (Afitska et al. 2013; Brock-Utne and Holmarsdottir 2004; Brock-Utne 2015; Clegg and Afitska 2011) (see also Milligan et al and Desai in this special issue).

The rights-based approach

Rights-based approaches take their warrant from international treaties on human rights as well as from rights enshrined in regional and national constitutions and legal frameworks. They are often championed by United Nations organisations and in particular UNESCO as well as by rights-based NGOs, activists and researchers. Space does not allow for a full exposition of the various frameworks that give rise to linguistic rights and their policy implications (UNESCO 2003). At a general level they may be differentiated between basic Linguistic Human Rights that include, for example, access to education in the mother tongue as well as access to an official language and other linguistic rights that might include, for instance access to a second (e.g. a global) language. Rights-based approaches have in common a view of language-in-education policy as contributing to the achievements of linguistic rights and as a means of achieving further rights for disadvantaged and marginalised populations including in the context of the SDGs, to sustainable livelihoods. The emphasis is on mother tongue and often a language of wider communication as target languages for policy. These are seen as complimentary rather than contradictory goals. Exponents of a rights based approach often favour a mother tongue based strong bilingual approach in low income contexts in which both the mother tongue and a global language are supported (Alidou, Boly, Brock-Utne, Diallo, & Heugh, 2006; e.g. Phillipson, Skutnabb-Kangas, Mohanty, & Panda, 2014b).

Rights based perspectives provide a powerful normative basis from which to critique instrumental approaches where these are seen to inhibit or contravene the realisation of linguistic rights. This relates to a view of rights to in and through education as being central to a conception of education quality and finds expression for example, in concepts such as the child- or girl-friendly school (Tikly and Barrett 2011b). As suggested above rights based approaches also offer a pedagogical critique of the impact of weak bilingual approaches on classroom practice. Part of this critique is linked to the importance of conceptions of learner-centeredness within a rights based approach. In this respect, qualitative studies have revealed the extent to which weak bilingual approaches reinforce teacher-centeredness as the opportunities for more learner-centred approaches usually rely on a firmer grasp of language (Afitska et al. 2013; Brock-Utne 2015; Brock-Utne and Holmarsdottir 2004).

They may also serve as a point of reference for policymakers. In her contribution to the special issue, Trudell discusses how some countries may on paper adopt a strong bilingual approach, but in reality this translates into a weak bilingual model when it is implemented, often on account of community pressure for children to learn in a global language (South Africa provides a good example of this as the contribution by Desai also illustrates). There is also a danger that rights based approaches may appear too homogenizing in their implications for addressing the complex linguistic needs and identities of diverse groups in multi-lingual, postcolonial settings (Pennycook 2009; Rassool, Heugh, and Mansoor 2007; Tikly 1999), to elide issues of the power and status of different languages and to not adequately take account of the aspirations and views of parents and communities in these settings. For example, Freeland (2013), in her discussion of the rights based language-in-education policies adopted by the Nicaraguan government and aimed at indigenous groups in the Caribbean Coast Region whilst well-meaning, failed to address the complex linguistic needs and identities of these diverse groups exposing a disjuncture between indigenous and official interpretations of language rights and indeed of language itself. As several commentators writing broadly within a rights based framework have acknowledged, strong advocacy for language rights also needs to be accompanied by informed public dialogue on language and education policy if it seeks to engage with and transform rather than to appear simply dismissive of entrenched attitudes, for instance with respect to the use of mother tongue versus a global language in the early years of schooling (Tollefson 2013; Rubagumya et al. 2011; Alidou et al. 2006).

[Towards a social justice approach towards language-in-education policy](#)

The aim of this section is to set out a social justice approach towards understanding education policy that seeks to build on the strengths in particular of a rights based approach. It also draws on and seeks to contribute towards an impressive literature that has perceived language-in-education policy from a social justice perspective (See for example contributions to Phillipson et al. 2014). Specifically, the article will aim to add to this literature through positing a view of linguistic capability as a complement to a focus on language rights and to understand this within a specific understanding of global social justice. The section starts by setting out the implications for language-in-education policy of considering language as a human capability and in relation to theories of global social justice.

Language as a human capability

This section makes use of Amartya Sen (for example, 1999; 2011) and Martha Nussbaum's (for example, 2000; 2011) work on human capability. The interpretation of Sen and Nussbaum's work on which the section rests has been set out in more depth elsewhere (Tikly and Barrett, 2013). Capability and the associated concept of well-being as the goal of human development have become increasingly influential in mainstream development thinking. The development of capability has been posited by Sen as an alternative to a focus on economic wealth as a measure of development and described by Nussbaum as, 'a species of a human rights approach' (Nussbaum 2000 78). For Sen, whilst prosperity may be a necessary condition for development, the achievement of well-being depends on increasing the capability of individuals and groups within a population which he defines as 'the opportunity to achieve valuable combinations of human functionings — what a person is able to do or be' (Sen 2005 153). This can include the capability to be sufficiently nourished and healthy, free from physical harm or abuse and able to sustain a livelihood. Nussbaum (2011) proposes a list of what she describes as ten central capabilities that besides basic capabilities to life, bodily health and integrity also include being able to use the senses, to imagine, think and reason, to function effectively as emotional beings, to engage in practical reason, to be able to affiliate with other human beings as well as with other species, to play and to exercise control over one's political and material environment. For both Sen and Nussbaum education is seen as a key enabler for creating capability.

Crucially for our purposes as we have seen, Sen has also described language as an important capability. It is suggested that proficiency in one or more languages can be considered a key component of an individual's capability set in that in multilingual contexts language is critical for achieving all of the capabilities listed above including even the most basic ones (Mohanty 2009). Also relevant here is Nussbaum's distinction between basic and combined capabilities. For Nussbaum, a basic capability can be defined as the innate capacity to develop linguistic competence in one or more languages. The development of these skills requires, however, access to specific opportunities to develop this innate capacity and the removal of barriers to these opportunities. In the case of language acquisition this might relate to opportunities and barriers at a number of levels from the immediate pedagogical environment to the home and community and the wider education system (below). The existence of the basic capabilities and the opportunities to realise these Nussbaum describes as combined capabilities. Following on from Nussbaum, linguistic capabilities, like other kinds of skill or aptitude can be seen as constantly emergent, i.e. as part of an unfolding dialectical relationship between the human mind/ agency on the one hand and the wider structures and processes that either facilitate or inhibit their development.

Also important for our purposes however, is that although Sen has identified in his work various capabilities he, (unlike Nussbaum), is against a definitive 'list', seeing capabilities and functionings as being dependent on context. In this regard Sen is insistent that prior to being embedded in institutional practice valued capabilities (including valued linguistic capabilities) need to be articulated through processes of public debate and advocacy. Also relevant here is the question of language rights. Sen (2005) sees rights as related but distinct from capability. Thus whilst rights can seek to guarantee legal access to basic goods and services including a good quality education in an appropriate medium of instruction,

capability refers to the opportunities that individuals and communities have to convert that access into valued functionings. That is to say that legal rights with respect to language-in-education are an important but an insufficient condition for realising social justice. Whilst the notion of language rights provide a normative vantage point from which to base policy, Sen is also critical of the form that human rights and by implication linguistic human rights take. For example, Sen questions the assumption that human rights are 'universal' on the basis that assumptions are not sometimes necessarily universally shared (Sen draws attention for instance to the scepticism with which human rights are held in some non-Western countries/ cultures). For Sen, if rights are to be considered genuinely universal, then they must be subject to debate and scrutiny at a global level. Rights like capabilities also need to be (re-)interpreted/ negotiated at national and local levels if they are to relate to the contexts and specific claims to linguistic justice put forward by different groups and in this way to provide a meaningful, contextually relevant basis for institutional practice.

Language-in-education policy and global social justice

A common critique of the capability approach is that like some interpretations of human rights it can elide issues of power and inequality in policy making (Stewart and Deneulin 2002). This is in part because of the methodological focus on individual capability as a basis for evaluating well-being. Although Sen (2011) acknowledges the existence of group capability at an ontological level (e.g. the opportunities open to different linguistically defined groups to achieve valued functionings) he pays limited attention to the structural inequalities related to class, gender, race and ethnicity for example, that facilitate or inhibit the interests and voices of some language groups over others in profoundly unequal societies. Sen's own view of comparative justice based, like his views on rights and capabilities on the possibility for the rational evaluation of different claims to justice within democratic societies does not in itself provide a theory of global social justice based on an understanding of these wider 'irrational' structural inequalities. Here the work of Nancy Fraser is more useful. Fraser defines justice as 'parity of participation'. For Fraser, overcoming injustice means dismantling institutionalized obstacles that prevent some people from participating on a par with others as full partners in social interaction (Fraser 2013). By institutionalised obstacles, Fraser is here referring to economic structures that deny access to resources that they need in order to interact with others as peers; institutionalised hierarchies of cultural value that may deny them the requisite standing; and, exclusion from the community that is entitled to make justice claims on one another and the procedures and discourses that define public processes of contestation.

Fraser draws attention to three dimensions of social justice each related to one of the institutional barriers identified above that we need to take account of, namely, 'redistribution', 'recognition' and 'participation'. Briefly, the first, redistribution, relates to access to resources which in our case equates with access to appropriate linguistic capabilities and the potential outcomes that arise from this. Recognition means first identifying and then acknowledging the claims of historically marginalised language groups to have their languages recognized in policy whilst participatory justice includes the rights of individuals and groups to have their voices heard in debates about linguistic rights and capabilities and to actively participate in decision-making. Importantly, for Fraser, this is a prerequisite for realising issues of redistribution and recognition.

Multilingual capability, social justice and the quality of education

Applying Fraser's work specifically to debates about the quality of education, Tikly and Barrett (2011b) have identified three inter-related principles of social justice that can also be used as a framework for considering language-in-education policy. In keeping with Sen's understanding of capability, these are intended as a starting point for advocating a social justice perspective in the context of a debate about issues of quality and language rights. The first of these, that policy should aim at being inclusive, is concerned with overcoming the economic dimensions of ensuring that all learners develop valued linguistic capabilities and achieve specified learning outcomes through using an appropriate medium of instruction. The focus here is not only on access to the necessary resources to develop valued linguistic capabilities but on overcoming economic, social and cultural barriers that prevent individuals and groups from converting these resources into desired outcomes. A social justice approach does not require all learners to have access to the same kind of inputs. Past injustices along with differing educational needs mean that learners require different kinds and levels of resource in order to develop their linguistic capabilities. The second principle is that a language-in-education policy must be relevant, i.e. that linguistic capabilities developed through education are meaningful for all learners, valued by their communities and consistent with national development priorities in a changing global context. The third principle is that education should be democratic in the sense that valued linguistic capabilities are determined through public debate and ensured through processes of accountability but that they also contribute to the development of democratic capability within society as a whole through facilitating future participation in decision-making. These principles inform the discussion below about how language-in-education policy might be conceived across three inter-related domains of the school, the home/ community and the wider education system. Before that, however, attention will turn to a consideration from a social justice perspective of the evidence and related theory underpinning language-in-education policy and practice.

The relationship between language-in-education policy, theory and research

The aim of this section is to consider the relevance of evidence and of theory relating to the development of linguistic capability for socially just language-in-education policy. For Sen, public discourse about valued capabilities needs to be supported by the existence of an appropriate informational base on which to make decisions. This is linked to the central importance for Sen of notions of agency freedom as an aspect of capability. In the case of language-in-education policy this might include evidence relating to the relative advantage of different languages for accessing labour market opportunities or other kinds of resources including cultural resources and of the barriers and opportunities open to communities to convert these into valued functionings. It might also mean evidence concerning the impact of different bilingual/ multilingual models on learning outcomes and the optimal time at which to transit from mother tongue to another language for different groups of learners exposed to different learning environments.

Instrumentalist approaches as they are enacted in policy are rarely evidence-led. To the extent that they make reference to relevant evidence at all this is often partial at best. Alidou et al (Alidou et al. 2006) has described the processes by which evidence relating to the importance of a strong bilingual approach can become distorted in the process of policy take-up and implementation and used to justify weak, early-exit bilingual models.

Proponents of a rights based view on the other hand are able to draw on a range of international evidence relating to language acquisition and cognitive achievement. Such evidence has played a powerful role in critiquing an instrumentalist approach and in advocating for strong bilingual models. Alidou et al go on to provide a useful summary of the implications of such evidence that are used to support a strong mother-tongue based bilingual approach:

- a. The L1 needs to be reinforced and developed for 12 years in order for successful L2 learning and academic success to take place. This means birth to 12 years, i.e. L1 medium for at least 6 years of formal schooling.
- b. The international second language acquisition (SLA) literature indicates that under optimal conditions (these do not apply in most education systems in Africa) it takes 6-8 years to learn an L2 sufficiently well enough to use it as a medium of instruction.
- c. Language education models which remove the L1 as a primary medium of instruction before grade 5 will facilitate little success for the majority of learners.
- d. Language education models which retain the L1 as a primary medium of instruction for 6 years can succeed under very well-resourced conditions in African settings.
- e. Eight years of MTE may be enough under less well-resourced conditions.

Existing language-in-education policies are also explicitly or implicitly linked to theories of bilingualism/ multilingualism that have implications for pedagogical practice. Although theories of bilingualism rarely explicitly inform instrumentalist approaches, they often rely at a 'common sense' level on a deficit view of bilingualism in relation to cognitive development which is in turn based on an underlying assumption of languages as autonomous linguistic systems that are stored separately in the brain taking up finite amounts of 'room'. This contrasts with more recent theories of language acquisition that see the development of linguistic competencies across languages as fluid, relational and interdependent.

Cummins' model of bilingualism (see Cummins 1979; Cummins 1981), for example, has provided a key point of reference for those working within a rights based approach. He proposes that rather than proficiencies in two languages being stored separately in the brain each proficiency is in fact interdependent on the other. Using the concept of Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) illustrated through the image of the dual iceberg, Cummins suggests that although on the surface the structural elements of two languages might look different, there is a cognitive interdependence that allows for the transfer of linguistic practices. The acronyms BICS and CALP refer to a distinction introduced by Cummins (see Cummins 2008) between basic interpersonal communicative skills and cognitive academic language proficiency. The distinction is intended to draw attention to the very different time periods typically required by immigrant children in Canada to acquire conversational fluency in their second language as compared to grade-appropriate academic proficiency in that language^{iv}. This underlying view of bilingualism is often used to support the policy

implications outlined by Alidou et al above, i.e. that transfer is only possible once proficiency in L1 and L2 have been developed for between 6-8 years.

Cummins' subsequent work has also led him to develop over time a pedagogical approach for supporting literacy development in multilingual classrooms that is consistent with his underlying model of language development in bilinguals (Cummins 2011). The approach is summarised in figure one below. It emphasises the key elements required for developing literacy in a second language. The framework posits print access/ literacy engagement as a direct determinant of literacy attainment that Cummins claims is well supported by empirical evidence. The framework also specifies four broad instructional dimensions that Cummins argues are critical to enabling all students (and particularly those from socially marginalised groups) to engage actively with literacy from an early stage of their schooling. Literacy engagement will be enhanced when (a) students' ability to understand and use academic language is scaffolded through specific instructional strategies, (b) their prior experience and current knowledge are activated, (c) their linguistic and cultural identities are affirmed, and (d) their knowledge of, and control over, language is extended across the curriculum. Although the model has been developed from work with immigrant learners in Canada, Cummins (Cummins 2015) discusses the potential of elements of the model for disadvantaged learners in low-income settings in Africa. Some of the ideas, including the idea of 'scaffolding' are explored in more detail in Clegg and Simpson's contribution to this special issue. Whilst Cummin's model has been used as a basis for a rights based approach it is also consistent with a social justice perspective such as the one posited in this article in that it relates issues of pedagogy to wider issues of economic, social and cultural inequality within which classroom practice is located. It also draws attention to the importance for language-in-education policy of the links between the school, home and wider education system, a point that is taken up below.

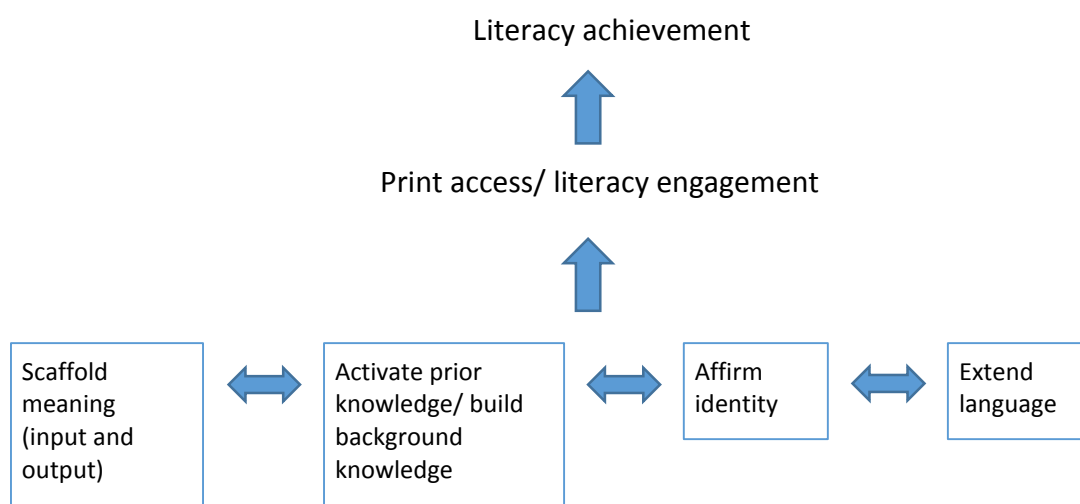


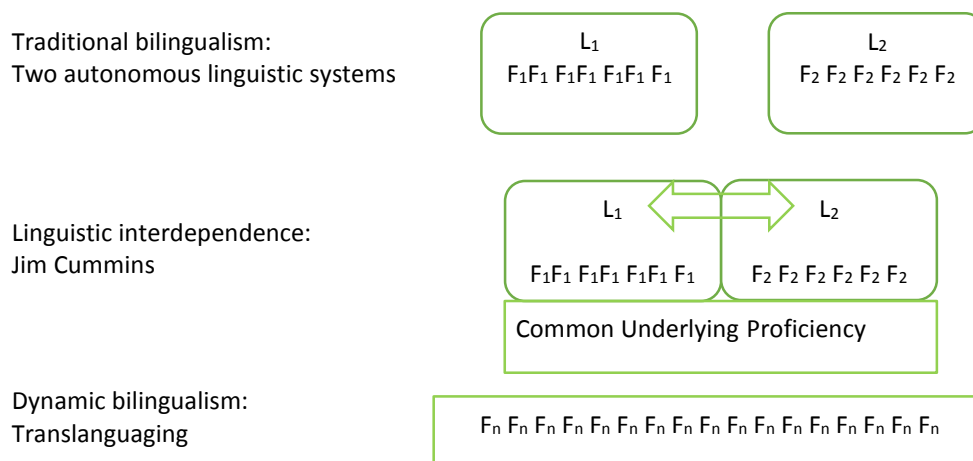
Figure one: the literacy engagement framework (adapted from Cummins 2011)

More recently, Cummins' insights have been developed by researchers working within a 'translanguaging' framework. Drawing on inter-disciplinary insights from psycho- and socio-

linguistics, translinguaging theory emphasises a dynamic view of bilingualism. According to Garcia and Wei:

Unlike the view of two separate systems that are added (or even interdependent), a dynamic conceptualization of bilingualism goes beyond the notion of two autonomous languages, of a first language (L1) and a second language (L2), and of additive or subtractive bilingualism. Instead, dynamic bilingualism suggests that the language practices of bilinguals are complex and interrelated; they do not emerge in a linear way or function separately since there is only one linguistic system (Garcia and Wei 2014a 49).

The assumptions about language proficiency in bilinguals in traditional, interdependence and dynamic models are summarised in figure two below. The singular linguistic system characteristic of the Dynamic Bilingual Model posits that there are integrated (Fn) features of language in contrast to the autonomous (F) features characteristic of the other two models.



L = Linguistic system
F = Linguistic feature

Figure two : Difference between views of traditional bilingualism, linguistic interdependence and dynamic bilingualism (adapted from Garcia and Wei 2014b)

As Cummins (Cummins, 2015) has suggested the dynamic bilingual model is consistent with his own views of languages as not being hermetically sealed off. Arguably, however, translinguaging approaches also help to deepen Cummin’s own views on language including his literacy development framework. From a socio-linguistic perspective translinguaging draws attention to the processes of language use in multilingual settings ‘under social and historical conditions that both constrain and make possible the social reproduction of existing conventions and relations, as well as the production of new ones’ (Heller 2007 15). Translinguaging is, therefore, alive to issues of power and inequality in postcolonial

settings. By positing integrated linguistic functions it affirms and values linguistic diversity as a potentially positive resource for developing linguistic capability whilst recognising the power relations inherent between the language used in the home/ community and in the school. In the context of classroom practice, translanguaging also provides theoretical support for the strategic use of 'code switching' in order to enable learners to make use of the diverse language resources at their disposal in order to access the formal curriculum. The potential for translanguaging in the African context has recently been explored by researchers interested in the effectiveness of a multilingual teaching pedagogy in South African classrooms (Makalela 2015; Probyn 2015). Although not explicitly informed by translanguaging theory, the strategic use of code switching to support learning is considered in the article by Milligan et al in this issue.

A word of caution is needed, however, in relation to the existing evidence and theories of bilingualism. Whilst policy implications such as those outlined above by Alidou et al and the models of bi- and multilingualism and pedagogy discussed are based on the best available evidence and therefore ought to serve as a rule of thumb for policy makers, the evidence on which they are based is derived from well resourced North American and European settings and to a lesser extent from middle and low income countries. This is compounded by the historical nature of some of the evidence. There is, therefore, a danger of treating the evidence deterministically, for example, with respect to the point in time at which it is deemed 'safe' for learners to transition from mother tongue to a global language as the 'official' medium of instruction. As has been suggested, the achievement of learners at the end of the primary cycle is affected by a range of factors that intersect to produce inequality of which proficiency in the medium of instruction is one. Much more research is needed to establish the impact of different models of bi- and multilingual education on learning outcomes that take account of the different contexts across low income countries in which learning takes place.

[Creating an enabling environment to support the development of linguistic capability](#)

The aim of this section is to outline a model that can inform policy, practice and research aimed at developing linguistic capability across different multilingual contexts. The model will seek to draw together key themes relating to language and education policy outlined in the article, the wider literature and other contributions to the special issue. An important caveat is necessary here, however. A criticism of some interpretations of a rights based approach is that the education system is seen as the locus for achieving wider linguistic justice. As commentators have pointed out, the education system alone cannot compensate for the broader issues of the status of different languages within the public and private spheres although a key goal of policy making would be to seek coherence between policies aimed at achieving linguistic rights and capabilities in education and policies aimed at achieving these within the wider society and the economy. In this regard, the domains draw attention to the areas that language-in-education policy can realistically hope to influence.

The domains are represented in diagrammatic form below. The large circle in which the domains are pictured represents the wider socio-cultural/ historical and policy contexts within which the domains are situated. Consistent with the capability approach is that these contexts will invariably differ within and between countries leading to the possible identification of different language-in-education policies and priorities across contexts. In

this sense the ideas presented and their implications for policy, practice and research need to be (re)-interpreted/ articulated in relation to different contexts. The double headed arrows between each domain represent the importance of considering the relationship between domains, i.e. the importance of considering the nature of the home/school, system/ school and system/ home relationships in developing linguistic capability. Each domain will be briefly considered in turn.

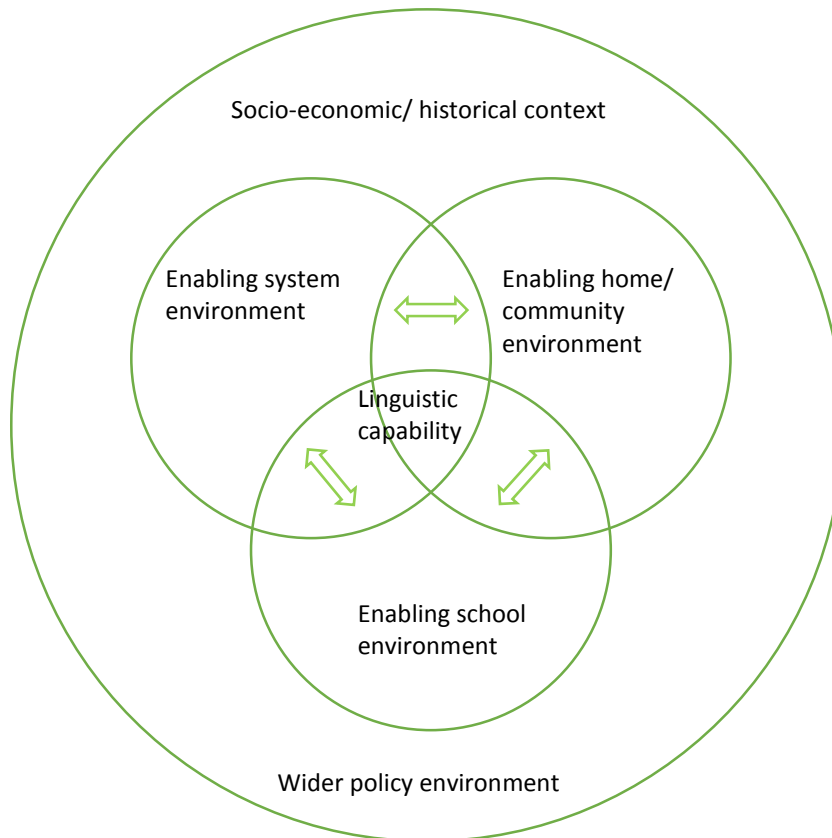


Figure three: Creating an enabling environment for the development of multilingual capability (adapted from Tikly 2011)

The school environment

A key barrier to the development of linguistic capability at a school level is the capability of teachers to implement appropriate language supportive pedagogy. This relates both to their own multilingual capabilities and to their pedagogical knowledge of how to develop multilingual capability in learners (Clegg and Afitska 2011; Afitska et al. 2013; Brock-Utne and Holmarsdottir 2004; Brock-Utne 2015). In this regard, it is suggested that models of language, literacy and pedagogy such as those outlined above and developed in other contributions to the special issue (see the contributions by Clegg and Simpson, Milligan et al, for example) provide a useful point of departure for future inquiry in low income settings. Cummin’s model draws attention to processes of scaffolding and of a school ethos and leadership that is supportive of multilingualism as a positive feature of school life. It also draws attention to the importance of language supportive strategies across the curriculum, a point explored in the article by Milligan et al and by Barrett and Bainton in the Rwandan and Tanzanian contexts respectively. These contributions also highlight the strategic use of code switching as a pedagogic strategy to support learner access to the curriculum and the availability of resources written at the language level of the learner and

designed to scaffold linguistic development.

The home/ community environment

A key finding from research in low income settings is that where children and particularly those from the most socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and from linguistic minorities do not speak the language of instruction in their home and community environment they are more likely to underachieve at school in basic literacy and numeracy (see the contributions from Trudell, Kuchah and Erling et al in this special issue for example). Conversely where parents are empowered to develop their own linguistic capabilities and to support the development of their children capabilities (for example by reading with their children) this can lead to more positive outcomes. The Project for the development of Alternative Education in South Africa, for example, provides substantial evidence of the positive and empowering effect of community literacy interventions on children's learning outcomes (Bloch 2014). As Trudell points out in her contribution, forms of community engagement and mobilisation on the part of governments and NGOs can prove instrumental in shifting deep seated attitudes in support of early immersion in global languages in support of strong bilingual models.

The education system environment

As several contributors have shown in their contributions to the special issue (see contributions from Trudell, Coleman, Desai, for example), the choice of policy including whether to opt for a weak or a strong model can have profound effects on learning outcomes for disadvantaged groups of learners. Even where strong models are officially adopted the tendency can be for them to become diluted. There is a need for a better evidence base in low income settings relating the choice of bilingual model with the learning outcomes of different groups as well as evidence from where policies have been more effectively implemented. In their contribution, Clegg and Simpson draw attention to the disjuncture that often exists between the model of bilingual education adopted and other features of the education system. For instance they highlight the lack of preparation that teachers receive for working in multilingual environments during initial and continuing teacher training; the large gap that exists between the linguistic demands of the curriculum, textbooks and the assessment system and the linguistic capabilities of learners. All this serves to highlight the need to place language-in-education policy at the heart of debates about education quality and education planning so as to create greater coherence between elements of the education system in support of improved learning outcomes for disadvantaged groups. As many curricula in Africa move towards a competency-based model, this would mean embedding the development of linguistic competencies/ capabilities across the curriculum. It would also mean working with the publishing community to ensure that the textbook procurement process includes criteria relating to the accessibility of language and that assessment processes are designed to assess the development of linguistic capability as a central feature of learning (see contribution by Barrett and Bainton, Milligan et al, Clegg and Simpson this special issue).

Conclusion

The article has made a case and attempted to set out a framework for understanding language-in-education policy from a social justice perspective. In so doing it adds to an already rich literature. It has also highlighted gaps in understanding that future research

could address. For example, it has drawn attention to the need to take better account of the views and perspectives of marginalized groups in the construction of language-in-education policy and of the potential of informed public debate. Linked to this is the need for a stronger evidence base focusing on (but not confined to) the link between language-in-education policy, learning and employment outcomes for different groups of disadvantaged learners, the optimum time for transiting from mother tongue to a language of wider communication as the medium of instruction as well as successful practice for implementing socially just, language supportive strategies in multilingual classrooms. Implementing and embedding successful policies and strategies involves taking account of the inter-related domains of the school, home/ community and wider education system.

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ⁱⁱ See YouTube video with Sen entitled “Language as Capability”, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V3MZvPnZW8g> (accessed 5 January 2016).

ⁱⁱⁱ The term ‘mother tongue’ is used in this article to refer to a local/ familiar language, the language of the immediate community which is best known to the child.

^{iv} Conversational fluency is often acquired to a functional level within about two years of initial exposure to the second language whereas at least five years is usually required to catch up to native speakers in academic aspects of the second language (Collier, 1987; Klesmer, 1994; Cummins, 1981a). Failure to take account of the BICS/CALP (conversational/academic) distinction has resulted in discriminatory psychological assessment of bilingual students and premature exit from language support programs (e.g. bilingual education in the United States) into mainstream classes (Cummins, 1984).