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## STUDENTS' HOME LANGUAGES AND THE STRUGGLE FOR SPACE IN THE CURRICULUM

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### **Abstract**

Although the importance of using students' home languages in education has been recognised for many years, home languages (Liddicoat & Heugh, 2014) that are not official languages often struggle to find space in school curricula. This paper examines the ways that language-in-education policies influence the space available for non-official languages in the curriculum. It begins with a brief overview of the historical context that shapes how languages are understood in education. It then presents a critical review of some policies that allocate space to students' home language in the curriculum in order to examine certain ways that such policies both allow and constrain that space. It examines contexts that exemplify some of the key issues which students' home languages confront in educational settings, whether they are present as official languages or non-official languages, as a medium of instruction or a class subject. It then identifies some of the factors that contribute to the marginalisation of students' home languages in educational policy and practice.

**Keywords:** language-in-education policy; non-dominant languages; language ideologies; multilingual education

### **Introduction**

In 1953, UNESCO stated that 'it is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching a child is his [sic] mother tongue' (UNESCO, 1953, p. 11). However, any survey of language use in education, including the papers in this volume, will reveal that educational practice often does not reflect this view of the place of students' home languages.<sup>1</sup> In fact, in many nations students' home languages struggle to find space in school curricula. This does not mean that mother tongue education is absent from school education in all countries. There are in fact such programs in various parts of the world and these programs may deliver high-quality education to children in their home languages. In some cases, these programs are integrated into mainstream schooling, while in others they may receive support from outside of standard government education provision, for example from non-government organisations or by local communities. It is also true that even in those contexts where mother tongue education would

appear to be in place and functioning well, attitudes and ideologies can be seen to emerge in debates about the place of languages in the school curriculum, with frequent arguments being presented for some kind of ‘roll-back’ of education in home languages. It is thus interesting to explore the ideological understandings behind these voices and the ways that they constrain the possibilities for using students’ home languages in education.

In this paper, we focus on government language policies, as these policies are the main instruments through which languages are conventionally allocated curriculum space in mainstream schooling. Language policies construct the role and function of languages in complex ways, and policies and their discourses are an important part of the context in which language education occurs (Hélot, 2003; Liddicoat, 2013). In order to understand how policies, which are ultimately developed by the dominant groups within a society, allocate space to the languages of other groups and how these provide a context for understanding the dynamic of education, it is necessary to examine the ways that policies and the discourses surrounding them construct educational possibilities for students in linguistically diverse contexts.

This paper will examine some of the issues relating to the struggle for space in the curriculum. There are what might be called ‘practical’ matters of implementation, such as a (perceived) lack of bilingual teachers or a lack of teaching materials, but here we are interested in exploring how underlying ideologies of language and language-in-education construct policy, touching on some of the issues raised by other contributors to this volume. We begin by looking at the historical context that has shaped how questions of language are often understood in education. We will then examine some of the ways that students’ home languages do find space in curricula and critique the nature of the space that these languages may find. We discuss various contexts that showcase some of the key issues confronting students’ home languages in educational settings, whether they are official languages or non-official languages, a medium of instruction or a class subject. Finally we identify some of the factors that contribute to students’ home languages being marginalised in educational policy and practice.

### **The historical positioning of students’ home languages in school curricula**

Language-in-education policy focuses primarily on the way that languages will be represented in the curriculum that students will encounter during their period of schooling. In the curriculum, priority is inevitably given to the official language(s) of the polity and these languages may in fact be the only languages that have legitimate space in the curriculum,

perhaps together with some provision for foreign language learning. Such curricula were the default in early mass education in many European countries, for example, in which the official language occupied most of the curriculum space and there were classes in a small number of classical languages and/or the official languages of significant foreign powers, taught usually through the medium of the official language.

Minority languages in such curricula were usually passed over in silence but there is evidence that non-official varieties have often been rigidly excluded, either in policy or in practice. At an official policy level such proscriptions are infrequent but the 1907 Dialect Control Ordinance (方言取締令 *Hougen Torishimari-rei*) (Calvetti, 1992; Heinrich, 2004), which banned the use of Ryukyuan languages in Okinawan schools and punished children who spoke them, is a clear example of such a policy. In this case, the use of students' home languages was deemed contrary to the students' acquisition and use of Japanese. In such legislation languages are seen to be in competition and the use of mother tongues in education represents a barrier to the acquisition of the official languages.

Where students' non-official home languages were not mentioned in policy, they were often explicitly excluded in the policy's implementation. For example, in the program of regulations drawn up by the Commissioners of National Education to establish mass education in Ireland in 1831 there was no mention of the Irish language. In the absence of specific reference to languages, requests were made to the Commission in 1834 and 1844 to include Irish in school programs or to appoint teachers of Irish, but both were refused (Ó Buachalla, 1984). The lack of specification of languages equated in fact with a normalisation of English as the language of schooling in this context. As we can see in this case, lack of specific policy excluding a language does not normally constitute openness to diverse possibilities; rather, it is a reflection of a dominant ideology that sees no possible space for language other than the dominant language in education (Chaudenson, 2008; Liddicoat, 2013).

More commonly than any formal policy, local informal institutional policies in schools forbade the use of minority languages that were the students' home languages through a process of sanctioning the use of the languages as deviant behaviours. This was firmly entrenched in many European education systems. In nineteenth and early twentieth century France, for example, in addition to more conventional punishments, such as corporal punishment, for using minority home languages, students were exposed to ostracism and ridicule through the use of the '*symbole*' – a token that students were forced to wear if they

were heard using their home language in school. The *symbole* required students to police their own language practices as they were freed from the *symbole* only by passing to another who had violated the linguistic practices of the school (Payne, 2007). Similar practices were adopted elsewhere in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such as in the case of the Welsh Not – a wooden block that was hung round the neck of children heard speaking Welsh in class and passed from one child to the next, with the child wearing it at the end of the day being beaten (Ferguson, 2006). We see a similar policy at work in some Kenyan schools today, where ‘students may be physically punished’ (Spernes, 2012, p. 190) if they use their home language in school, outside mother tongue education classes.

The emphasis on the sole use of the official language in such contexts related strongly to the ideological understanding of the nation state at the time that mass education was introduced. The idea that a nation state should have a single official language emerged during the period of European nation-building following the Renaissance and was consolidated in the wake of the French Revolution. The rationalist nation-building agenda of the Revolution argued for a single language for the French state from two main perspectives (Geeraerts, 2003): a pragmatic rationale of promoting effective communication and access to state institutions and political functions and a symbolic rationale that a single language creates and represents a single, unified identity. Schools were used as vehicles for establishing national identity through education, and the conceptualisation of the nation state as monolingual entailed a monolingual conceptualisation of the school, with linguistic diversity framed as a threat to national cohesion.

As a consequence, the linguistic space of a nation’s curriculum was a highly politicised one in which diversity, including linguistic diversity, was seen as contrary to the nation’s self-interest. This is not to say that alternative views did not exist even at this time as, in a small minority of nations, there were possibilities for schools to operate using more than one language. For example, Switzerland’s introduction of compulsory education in 1874 devolved the implementation of education to the cantons and the languages of the cantons were the languages of instruction – that is, the nation of Switzerland had a linguistically diverse education system, although education in the cantons tended to be monolingual (Schmidt, 1981). However in the vast majority of cases, monolingualism in the national language was considered to be the natural position for a nation state, and education was developed to reflect this.

The European conceptualisation of education and its attendant assumptions of monolingualism in official languages were disseminated widely through European colonialism, although colonial practices were not always consistent with the European monolingual model, at least initially. France in particular favoured a strongly monolingual model of education in its colonies in which French predominated and other languages were excluded, much as they were in France itself (Diallo, 2010; Kamara, 2007). The French colonial enterprise had as a core focus the francisation of colonial populations and the monolingualism of schooling was seen as fundamental to this process.

In British colonies, on the other hand, the linguistic space of education was more diverse and local languages were included in schooling. In some cases, such as that of Hong Kong as documented by Pennycook (2002), the use of local languages in education served a particular colonial agenda. In this case, education in Chinese was seen as a way of facilitating colonial domination by engendering Confucian respect for the state among colonised people. Elite education in Hong Kong, which was associated with the British colonial ideal of 'indirect rule' through local elites, was conducted in English, and it was only education in English that gave access to power. In other cases of British colonisation, for example in Africa, local languages were used in early schooling as a bridge to English education later (Akinaso, 1993; Bamgbose, 1991; Spencer, 1974). Thus, even in those contexts where languages other than the colonial language had a place in education, there was an explicit hierarchicalisation of languages in education in which local languages were associated with lower quality education and disempowerment while education in the colonial language was associated with higher quality education and access to power.

One result of exporting the European monolingual model of education was that this model was well entrenched in many colonies when they gained independence, and the pre-independence education systems and their linguistic assumptions were adopted unchanged by post-independence governments. As a result, many former colonies have adopted monolingual education policies, usually involving the colonial language. The consequences of maintaining colonial language-in-education policies and practices can be complex. Chiatoh (this volume), for example, examines the ways that in Cameroon, which was the product of a French and a British colony uniting as a single nation state, the local monolingual traditions in French and English continued in the two parts of the colony. A similar education response also occurred in Vanuatu, which as the New Hebrides was a British and French condominium, and which as an independent state inherited a similar dual monolingualism (Willans, in press

2014). The fact that, in both of these contexts, the dominant languages in education are exogenous colonial languages means that, while these nations have adopted multilingual educational policies, these policies still preclude the use of the minority home languages spoken by the local population.

### **Language-in-education policies and language curricula**

Although the monolingualism exported as the default educational policy has often continued to predominate in many parts of the world, it is nonetheless the case that many countries have adopted policies that recognise the value and place of a learner's own language in education. The adoption of mother tongue education in the schooling sector typically takes the form of multilingual education in which both the student's home language(s) and the nation state's official language(s) have a place in education. However, the solutions adopted by various polities in introducing home languages into the curriculum can differ significantly.

### ***Officialised home languages in the curriculum***

In some polities, the home language of students has become an official language alongside another, usually exogenous, language. In these cases, the home language of students has been integrated into the education system in a significant way. However the introduction of officialised home languages into the curriculum does not automatically establish equality between the languages.

For example, Samoa is an officially bilingual country in which both English and Samoan have been adopted as official languages. The 1995 education policy (Department of Education, 1995) established a bilingual curriculum in which both English and Samoan are taught as subjects and are used as languages of instruction. In the updated 2006 policy (Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, 2006), the goal of education is expressed as the development of equal literate capacities in both official languages. According to these policies, Samoan is the first language of instruction, with English introduced in Year 4. In secondary schools English becomes the language of instruction for all subjects except for the Samoan language. The Samoan language is included in all levels of schooling and is a component of the Samoan Secondary School Certificate examinations.

Although the discourse of the policies asserts the equality of both languages, their distribution across school years is not equal, with Samoan being concentrated in (early) primary school and English being the sole language of instruction at secondary school, with a

transition from Samoan to English occurring at the beginning of secondary school. The 2006 policy acknowledges the problem that this distribution causes:

Transitional bilingualism relegated Samoan to a lesser status than English in the perception of all people including teachers and learners. At the same time, learners were put in a position to learn in a language in which they had not acquired proficiency while their first language was removed as a prop, which could be used to learn the second language. (Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, 2006, p. 34)

While the policy recognises the problem, it does not provide a solution and the existing distribution of languages across schooling continues.

The Samoan case demonstrates that even in contexts in which students' home language of and an exogenous colonial language are both official, the home language may struggle to find a fully legitimate place in schooling. Languages exist within hierarchies of value that influence how they are used in education and in society more generally. These hierarchies of value are influenced by factors such as the international prestige and historical domination of languages and officialisation of a language may not be enough to dislodge the ideologically entrenched value systems that exist around languages. Such ideologies may be so entrenched that people will elect not to educate their children in their home language where education in another more valued language is available.

A case in point is Hong Kong, which is officially trilingual in Cantonese, English and Putonghua and biliterate in English and Chinese. The linguistic reality in Hong Kong is that the majority of the population speaks Cantonese as a first language. The current system in Hong Kong actually has Chinese-medium instruction as the default policy setting, and Chinese can be used through the whole of education from primary to tertiary level, although most universities in Hong Kong are English-medium institutions.<sup>2</sup> Students therefore have access to education in their home language. While all schools have trilingualism and biliteracy as their aims, medium of instruction is a vexed issue (cf. Tam, 2012). Although the Hong Kong government has strongly promoted Chinese-medium instruction since 1984, social and community pressure for English-medium instruction has been significant and continues to increase (Poon, 2013). One of the main pressures against Chinese-medium instruction is a perception that English is a more valuable language than Chinese and that Chinese-medium instruction is a less capable way of developing English (Evans, 2011). Thus, the ideologies of value that attach to languages together with an idea that languages are in



competition in education (see below) mean that the curriculum space available to less ‘valued’ languages may be highly contested.

### ***Home languages in the curriculum as a medium of instruction***

Where space is allocated in the curriculum to a language other than the official language(s), it may be that the language becomes a medium of instruction in which elements of the curriculum are delivered through the language, or the language may be allocated a separate curriculum space as a subject among others. However, where a student’s home language is not an official language, the possibilities for finding space in the curriculum are more constrained. The power that an official language exerts within its society influences the ways other languages are or can be included in the curriculum. In particular, there may be little sense of there being any intrinsic value in learning in or through students’ home languages, and thus even where there is any learning of the home language, this is done as a preparation for learning the official language and for subsequent learning through the official language.

Language-in-education policies may incorporate a student’s home language in the curriculum as the medium of instruction for a part of the student’s education, even where that language is not an official language. This requires an integration of the language into the schooling system and into the educational objectives of a nation state. In many ways, the use of a home language as a medium of instruction suggests a measure of equality between the non-official home language and the official language in the context of education. However, such equality is rarely the result in educational programs, and students’ home languages are often substantially less than equal in the ways in which they are included.

In Colombia, for example, the languages of indigenous people are given space in the curriculum through *etnoeducación* (ethnoeducation), which is officially defined as education for groups or communities who possess a culture, a language, traditions and a code of laws of their own – Article 55 of Law 115/1994 (República de Colombia, 1994). Language-in-education planning for ethnoeducation began with recognition of the special educational needs of indigenous people in the mid-1970s, but the development of ethnoeducation was given a stronger legal basis in the constitutional reform process leading up to the 1991 National Constitution. Article 10 of the Constitution recognises that education in indigenous areas is to be bilingual in the indigenous language and Spanish (Liddicoat & Curnow, 2007). The major legislative text dealing with ethnoeducation, the ‘General Law of Education’, introduces a national ethnoeducation program with a vernacular language component for ethnolinguistic minority groups. It provides some definition of the nature of bilingual

education in indigenous contexts in the general provisions for primary schooling in Article 21:

*c) El desarrollo de las habilidades comunicativas básicas para leer, comprender, escribir, escuchar, hablar y expresarse correctamente en lengua castellana y también en la lengua materna, en el caso de los grupos étnicos con tradición lingüística propia, así como el fomento de la afición por la lectura;* [The development of basic communicative abilities for reading, understanding, writing, listening, speaking and expressing oneself correctly in Spanish and also in their mother tongue, in the case of ethnic groups with their own linguistic tradition, and also fostering a liking for reading:] (República de Colombia, 1991).

Article 21, therefore, allocates a place for indigenous languages in primary school, for those groups that have access to an indigenous language. In ethnoeducation policy, however, the focus remains on the learning of Spanish with the indigenous language contributing primarily to the development of literacy capabilities that can be used in Spanish. Moreover, ethnoeducation applies only to basic (that is primary) education, and if and when indigenous students move to secondary schooling, they participate in a monolingual Spanish education program.

Vernacular language education programs have similarly been developed in Papua New Guinea (PNG) since the late 1980s, with a focus on developing vernacular literacy in the early years of learning. The provision of vernacular literacy in elementary school programs – using either a local vernacular or a lingua franca such as Tok Pisin – has become a core element in PNG education policy (PNG Department of Education, 2003). In these programs, children are educated in their first language for the first three years of schooling and are gradually introduced to English from the second half of the third year, with the amount of English increasing until English is the only language of instruction by Grade 6 (Lindström, 2005). The principle aim of the vernacular literacy program is that children be taught in their first language until they have basic literacy and numeracy, so that these can then be transferred into the official language. That is, the focus of the program is pragmatic; it is believed that developing vernacular literacy first is the best way to develop literacy in the official language. The goals of the program are not focused on language maintenance and cultural identity, and the home language and the official language are certainly not equal in the educational context.

In both the Colombia and PNG cases, and in many other such programs, there is a fundamental problem in the curriculum for a student's home language. The problem lies in the nature of learning that is happening in the language. The programs focus on the development of basic literacy skills in the students' home language, but these languages have no tradition of literate practice (Liddicoat, 2004; Lindström, 2005). That is, students are learning literate capabilities that have little or no real world context of application. The development of vernacular literacy therefore has no identifiable place in the local language ecology — it is not usable if post-educational contexts of use are not developed for it (Crowley, 2007; Mühlhäusler, 1992). This means that literacy in such languages is not perceived as having value in its own right but exists only as a precursor to a valued and usable capability – literacy in the official language. Such cases show that space in the curriculum is not the only issue facing some home languages. There is also an issue of how they are positioned within overall education goals and practices.

### ***Home languages as a subject in the curriculum***

The programs discussed above are all characterised by the use of the use of non-dominant languages as media of instruction. An alternative, and usually more peripheral, way of providing space in the curriculum for such languages is to provide the home language as a school subject. This approach is designed to give recognition to the language within the valued context of education, but in many cases the provision of the language may be quite limited in scope, with only a small time allocation being given to indigenous language classes. This leaves the basic curriculum as the monolingual preserve of official languages and creates a separate space for the student's home language outside the mainstream curriculum.

South Australia's First Language Maintenance and Development (FLMD) program is a case in point. This program has been in place since 1986 and funds teachers' salaries to enable schools to provide some teaching of the home language of students.<sup>3</sup> The program operates by withdrawing students from mainstream classes for teaching of the student's first language, with a focus on oral language and literacy development. The goals of the program are broadly based:

The purpose of the FLMD program salaries is to provide additional support for students from non-English speaking backgrounds to maintain and develop languages spoken at home; as well as to facilitate the resultant benefits to these students' well-being and literacy skills. (Curriculum Services, 2010)

The program therefore has a focus on student well-being as well as on the development of literacy, which in the Australian context means literacy in English (Liddicoat, 2013). The program consists of 15 full-time equivalent salaries that are distributed through an application process to schools throughout the state. The result is that the majority of school programs consist of a single day or less per week of a teacher's time so that students usually receive little more than 45 minutes per week of first language instruction. In reality, the program does not develop significant literacy abilities in the home language and there is little evidence in most cases that a student's home language is supported or developed through the program (Scarino, Curnow, Heugh, & Liddicoat, 2013). Such activities represent a policy provision to demonstrate support for students' language backgrounds and their educational significance, but have very little direct educational benefit because of the limitations on provision that result from minimal funding to the area. Because the program is funded on the basis of applications by schools, the offering of even such minimal programs in students' home languages is dependent on the willingness of school communities, especially school principals, to apply for funding, which in turn requires that key school leaders see value in offering something other than mainstream English language instruction (Scarino et al., 2013).

Another example of the introduction of non-official home languages into classrooms can be seen in France. The loi Deixonne of 1951 was the first attempt to provide a place for the regional languages of France in the education sector, and it focused on the limited provision of language subjects in primary schools. The loi Deixonne originally applied only to Basque, Breton, Catalan and Occitan, but was later modified to include Corsican (1974), Tahitian (1981) and four Melanesian languages of New Caledonia (1992).<sup>4</sup> Article 3 of the law authorised one hour per week of instruction in the language:

*... chaque semaine, une heure d'activités dirigées à l'enseignement de notions élémentaires de lecture et d'écriture du parler local et à l'étude de morceaux choisis de la littérature correspondante. [... each week, one hour of activities directed at the teaching of basic notions of reading and writing of the local variety and the study of selected extracts of the corresponding literature.] (République Française, 1951).*

The provisions of the loi Deixonne were tied to territories: that is the teaching of the language could only be undertaken in those regions where the language was traditionally spoken, meaning that those who had migrated out of that area had no access to the language. The provision of language classes was also made dependent firstly on the willingness of teachers to offer the classes — permission to teach was granted only to those teachers who

made an application to teach the language — and secondly on the willingness of students to study the language — the classes were optional for students (Gardin, 1975). In 1981, the provision of regional languages was widened to include certification for the *baccalauréate*; although restrictions were still in force as to where languages could be offered. Although not specifically mentioning students who use regional languages as home languages, the loi Deixonne seems to envisage such students as the normal recipients of such instruction because it ties the use of these languages to fostering the educational development of linguistic minorities and to furthering the teaching of French. This objective is stated in Article 2 as:

*... autoriser les maîtres à recourir aux parlers locaux dans les écoles primaires et maternelles chaque fois qu'ils pourront en tirer profit pour leur enseignement, notamment pour l'étude de la langue française* [to authorise teachers to resort to local varieties in primary schools and kindergartens each time they can draw profit from it for teaching, notably for the study of the French language].

Thus, the rationale for these language subjects was not specifically the development of capabilities in the languages themselves, but rather the furthering of the nation's educational agenda. The loi Deixonne simultaneously provided space in the curriculum for regional languages and restricted what that space could be by constraining the time permitted for the use of the students' home language and predicated offerings on teachers' willingness rather than on community needs or desires.

Policies that provide for students' home languages as subjects in the curriculum represent a more minimal form of inclusion than policies for media of instruction. In such policies the core areas of education remain the preserve of official languages and language subjects are usually allocated a minimal and peripheral place in the curriculum. In both the South Australian and French cases discussed here, the allocation of space is in fact minimal; the programs are highly constrained in terms of the time allocation to the language. Few other curriculum areas would be allocated such minimal curriculum space, which indicates that the subject itself is not valued.

In some cases, students' home languages may be even more explicitly marginalised as language subjects than just through minimal allocation of space within the curriculum. For example, when the Irish language was included in the national school curriculum after 1878, it was positioned as being of less value in the Intermediate examination than other languages, being assigned 600 marks compared to Greek, Latin and English, each with 1000 marks and

French and German, each with 700 marks. Similarly, the exclusion of regional languages from the French *baccalauréate* before 1981 marked a parallel marginalisation of these languages compared to other languages included in the examination. Knowledge of one's home language therefore contributes less to one's educational success than knowledge of other languages, reflecting the value imbalance between 'elite' bilingualism acquired through schooling and 'folk' bilingualism acquired through primary socialisation noted by Skutnabb-Kangas (1981).

### **Factors influencing the space for home languages in the curriculum**

Various factors conspire to ensure that the home languages that are not the dominant official language of a society do not form part of the curriculum, or are allocated only minor space within it. Here we discuss three factors: social cohesion, competition between languages, and the invisibility of non-dominant languages.

One of the primary factors working against the allocation of space to students' home languages in language-in-education policy is a perception that fostering such languages is contrary to social cohesion. The one nation – one language ideology has exerted an influence not only on the ways that nations are understood but also on ways of understanding national citizenship (see also Chiro, this volume). The ideology requires all citizens to be identical in certain ways, including language and 'allegiance' to language. Within a nation-building conceptualisation of the role of education and schools, then, linguistic diversity is more often seen as a problem to be resolved rather than as something that can contribute value to education. A clearly articulated example of this can be seen in the debate over the recent (re)focussing on mother tongue education in Kenya. The chairman of the Kenyan National Teachers Union, Mudzo Nzili, was quoted as saying that mother tongue education does not fit with the purpose of Kenyan education, social cohesion:

'As already indicated, the country is moving towards social integration and this cannot be achieved when at the same time we have policies with tribal references as mother tongue shall always prioritise tribes,' he [Nzili] said. 'Education in Kenya is to promote unity within the community'. (Waweru, 2014)

In this quotation, students' home languages are denied a space within the whole conceptualisation of education; that is, their inclusion would be contrary to the very aims of education itself.

In fact, many arguments for the inclusion of non-official languages in schools have implicitly or explicitly emphasised the contribution that such inclusion could make to national cohesion. For example, a 1907 report (*An Comunn Gàidhealach*, 1907) arguing for the value of Gaelic in education in Scotland not only pointed to educational advantages found in schools that used Gaelic informally, such as improved capabilities in core curriculum areas including English, but also argued against the idea that speaking the language was divisive, that instead such Scots were both strongly patriotic and loyal to the British monarchy (Ferguson, 2006). Such arguments in favour of the benefits for social cohesion of multilingualism in education are frequent in defences of the inclusion of students' home languages in the curriculum (for example, Agnihotri, this volume; Extra & Yağmur, 2004; Nuffield Languages Inquiry, 2002; Trudell & Klaas, 2010). This strong defence of the cohesive role of multilingualism in education is an explicit reaction to the pervading monolingual view of social cohesion.

A second factor constraining the allocation of space for students' home languages in the curriculum is a 'common sense' belief that more time spent on the learning of a particular language (i.e. the official language) is more likely to lead to better acquisition of that language (Ferris & Politzer, 1981). This is a view of language that denies the possibility of any inter-relationship between languages in the learning process and sees languages as fundamentally in competition. Moreover, this view often constructs a linguistic ability in a non-official language as a deficit to be overcome through education rather than as an educational resource, and thus sees little value in the development of that language itself as an educational goal.

As an example, this conceptualisation has influenced government policy in relation to bilingual programs for speakers of Aboriginal languages in Australia's Northern Territory. In 2008, the then Minister for Education introduced an educational reform which required that all schools in the Northern Territory teach in English for the first four hours of schooling. The goal of this policy was to promote English language literacy by increasing the time spent on English in bilingual schools for indigenous children. This reform thus restricted the amount of time that bilingual programs in the Northern Territory could allocate to students' home languages explicitly in order to defend curriculum space allocated specifically to English-only education. In her media release announcing the policy, the then Minister for Education, Marion Scrymgour, stated, 'I support preserving our Indigenous languages and culture – but our Indigenous children need to be given the best possible chance to learn English'

(Scrymgour, 2008). Here, the preservation of Aboriginal languages and cultures is seen as limiting the chances that students will have to acquire English. The maintenance of Aboriginal languages is perceived as a problem in education, because it conflicts with what Minister Scrymgour and others deem to be the main language goal of education in Australia – the development of English literacy.

This understanding of languages as being in competition in the education system has similarly emerged in the recent debates around Kenya's existing mother tongue education policy. In an opinion piece, Senator Martha Wangari argues that the policy is inherently contradictory, because it asks for both teaching through the mother tongue and adequate knowledge of other languages:

The Ministry has directed that children under eight years of age be instructed in their mother tongue ... It also instructs that in addition teachers must ensure that children get a good grasp of both English and Swahili. How contradictory. (Wangari, 2014)

When the teaching of one language is seen as presenting an impediment to the acquisition of another, such discourses normalise limited linguistic repertoires within education and preclude the possibility of conceptualising multilingualism as a normal form of human language use (cf. Agnihotri, this volume). Moreover, such discourses show that the monolingualism that Scarino (this volume) criticises also have their manifestations in environments that include more than one language in the education system. In fact, in many societies there is a perception that two languages is the maximum that can possibly be included in an education system – typically two official languages or an official language and an international language (Liddicoat, 2014). Such thinking does not so much open up space for languages as find different points at which to close space.

A third factor influencing the space that students' home languages receive in education is the invisibility of these languages in schools. Especially in contexts where the dominant group is monolingual in the official language and where students come from highly diverse linguistic backgrounds, there may be little recognition of students' languages. At a policy level, this may be reflected in how learners who use minority languages at home are named. In Australia, for example, these students have been termed Non-English-Speaking Background (NESB) students, which reduces their linguistic diversity to a single common linguistic profile identified in terms of a lack of English. Similarly, in the United States such learners are often termed Low English Proficiency (LEP) students, another term that constructs students' linguistic identity only in terms of their (lack of) ability in English,



ignoring their home language. Such naming practices render students' home languages invisible by focusing only on students' competence in an official language, thereby constructing their educational needs and accomplishments only in terms of the official language.

Such invisibility can also be found more locally among teachers and schools. For example, Shopen (2011) reports on a professional learning program introducing pedagogical practices for dealing with English language learners in mainstream English language classrooms in Australia. She reports that teachers were initially resistant to the need to develop and use such practices, as they believed that they did not have students who were second language speakers of English in their classrooms. However, when teachers actually surveyed their classrooms as part of the project, they often discovered significant numbers of such students in their classes whose language profile had been previously unknown, and whose behaviours resulting from their status as language learners had been explained by teachers in terms of personal characteristics, such as being a 'quiet' student, or not contributing, or being unengaged. Shopen argues that one of the reasons that students' language backgrounds are not attended to is that diversity has come to be seen as a private matter and its practice as something that happens outside public spaces, at least in Australia. A student's linguistic background is therefore backgrounded in the fullest sense of the word, and the home language emerges from that background only when it becomes a recognisable problem for policy or practice. Pauwels (this volume) identifies a similar lack of knowledge of students' linguistic backgrounds among university language teachers in Australia and the United Kingdom. In Pauwels' study, it is not only students' language background of that is invisible, but the perceived relevance of students' language backgrounds for teachers' work.

These constraints, which work against non-dominant home languages having space in the curriculum, can be seen as instances of a monolingual habitus (Gogolin, 1994) shaping educational decision-making and practice. This monolingual habitus has conflated the one nation – one language ideology with the perceived linguistic norms for individuals. Thus, in the process of the emergence of the nation state, 'a basic and deep-seated belief was created that monolingualism is the universal norm of an individual and a society' (Gogolin, 2009, p. 536). From the perspective of the monolingual habitus, the plurilingual individual is a deviation from the norm and this deviation is understood within the framework of other ideologies, notably those that equate language with national affiliation. By constructing monolingualism as a norm and plurilingualism as a (private) departure from the norm,

educational policy and educational practice marginalise the place of students' home languages in the ways that education debates are framed and educational decisions are made (see also Heugh, this volume). The lack of space for students' home languages in curricula is therefore a perceptual and ideological problem. The solution lies in what Scarino (this volume) calls 'unlearning monolingualism', a conscious challenging of the monolingual habitus of societies and educational systems; and in developing as a core component of educational thinking what Agnihotri (this volume) calls 'multilinguality', the recognition of the normality of the use of multiple languages in human life.

## Conclusion

The selective review of language-in-education policy above, although limited, reveals interesting patterns in the allocation of space in the curriculum to students' non-dominant home languages. Even in cases where such a language is allocated space in the curriculum, the presence of the language may be constrained in a variety of ways. The home language may have a very limited presence in terms of the number of hours it is taught as a subject; or the amount of the curriculum delivered through the home language may be limited; or there may be a limited number of years of schooling in which the home language is present in education.

All of these constraints have consequences for the outcomes of education. In many contexts of linguistic diversity, a language other than the students' home language is seen as the valued and legitimate outcome of schooling and this language is given precedence in educational policy and practice. Thus even where policy allows non-dominant home languages a presence in the education system, it continues to maintain a hierarchy of value in which the dominant official language has a more legitimate place in the curriculum. Even in those contexts where students' home language has co-official status with an exogenous language, an imbalance of prestige remains and the exogenous language is allocated greater space in the curriculum.

While it may have been axiomatic since 1953 that 'the best medium for teaching a child is his [sic] mother tongue' (UNESCO, 1953, p. 11), it remains clear that the way in which the mother tongue is positioned in the education system plays an important role; and the space for and the value of non-dominant home languages certainly are not equal to those of official languages. It also remains clear that language-in-education policy alone often does not go very far towards giving value to students' home languages in education even where policy explicitly opens up space for such languages in schools. This situation reveals an

impasse that is inherent in top-down language planning work undertaken by governments and policies derived from such work. Top-down policies are ultimately constrained by agendas that reinforce the role and perception of official languages and therefore are not usually contexts in which such agendas can be contested.

This means that creating space for students' home languages in education requires much more than top-down policy. Education that gives space to students' home languages must inevitably involve work that has been characterised as 'language planning in local contexts' (Liddicoat & Baldauf, 2008), 'micro-language planning' (Baldauf, 2005, 2008) or 'language planning from below' (Alexander, 1992) as only through such local interventions can prevailing norms be contested. This is because, given the ideologies that exist in relation to students' home languages in dominant discourses within nation states, gaining space for these languages is a counter-hegemonic practice of contestation that is unlikely to be realised through top-down processes. This is not to say that top-down policy is irrelevant in education. Any policy that allocates some space for students' home languages, no matter how constrained, creates possibilities for local action that may not be available where no such policy exists. Rather, we argue that top-down policy itself is not sufficient for addressing the needs and realities of all students in linguistically diverse communities.

### *Notes*

- <sup>1</sup> The naming of languages in this context is problematic. In many cases, the languages involved are minority languages of indigenous or immigrant groups. In some cases however these languages may be majority languages in nations where the official language is actually a minority language. This is especially the case where former colonial languages have been maintained as the sole official language (Liddicoat & Heugh, 2014). In this paper, we use the term 'home languages' in the sense of home languages other than the official languages of a polity.
- <sup>2</sup> The exceptions are the Chinese University of Hong Kong, which is a Chinese-medium university, although it increasingly uses English, and the Hong Kong Institute of Education, which has a bilingual medium of instruction policy.
- <sup>3</sup> These students are primarily students whose have migrated from another country, or those whose parents migrated, although funding is also available in this program for the teaching of Australian Aboriginal languages.
- <sup>4</sup> Regional languages such as German were already included in the French curriculum as a foreign language subject, and received a greater time allocation as a foreign language than they would have as a regional language.

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