This paper is concerned with decisions about which language(s) to use for education and to what degree such decisions represent a real choice from among thoughtfully considered options. Author Carol Benson draws examples mainly from multilingual African countries, but also from other parts of the world, to demonstrate the universal relevance of choosing appropriate languages for education. Her focus on language choice is informed by the work of Pierre Bourdieu, and interpretations of his work in the contexts of both post-colonial education in Nigeria and present-day education in European countries. Together, these interpretations demonstrate how assumptions about language and education are similar throughout the world and allow us to re-analyse current thinking to find a way forward. The paper concludes by proposing how more equitable decision-making might be fostered.

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Language "choice" in education

Carol Benson

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University of Cape Town

Private Bag Rondebosch 7701

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Tel: 021 650 4013/Fax: 021 650 3027

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Carol Benson, Ph.D, is based at the Centre for Teaching and Learning (UPC) at Stockholm University in Sweden. She is an active researcher and consultant in bi- and multilingual education in multilingual countries, with experience in teacher training, curriculum development and programme evaluation. She has collaborated closely with PRAESA on the TOTSA programme, and has recently been part of a team assessing Ethiopian educational language policy. She is currently helping UNICEF and the Ministry of Education and Training in Vietnam to design and implement a pilot bilingual programme in Khmer, Hmong and J'rai in combination with Vietnamese.
E-mail: carol.benson@upc.su.se

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Contents

Abstract

This paper is concerned with decisions about which language(s) will be used for education and to what degree such decisions represent a real choice from among thoughtfully considered options.[1] I will conclude by proposing how more equitable decision-making might be fostered. I mainly draw examples from multilingual African countries, for three reasons: first, their rich linguistic diversity requires choices to be made, especially regarding schooling and literacy; second, their colonial experiences left them a legacy of foreign "official" languages and thus enduring inequalities; and third, their exposure to economic and technical development aid adds a further dimension to present-day power relations. Where relevant, examples from other parts of the world are included, demonstrating the universal relevance of choosing appropriate languages for education.

The focus on language choice here is informed by some language-related theories of Pierre Bourdieu, and inspired by two particular interpretations of his work. The interpretation of Goke-Pariola (1993), who applies key concepts to post-colonial education in Nigeria, provides both historical background and practical examples of how power relations play out in schools in multilingual contexts. The interpretation of Gogolin (2002), who applies key concepts to present-day education in European countries, demonstrates how assumptions about language and education are similar throughout the world, and allows us to re-analyze current thinking to find a way forward.

Isishwankathelo

Eli phepha limalunga nolwimi oluzakusetyenziswa kwezemfundo kwaye lizakusetyenziswa ukuyakuthi ga phi kuba izigqibo ezinjalo zimela ukukhetha kokwenene kwamanye amalungelo okonyula acingicisisiweyo. Ndiza kuthi ndiququmbele ngoku cela ukuba zingathi zinyazeliswe njani na izigqibo ezizezona zilungileyo. Ikakhulu imizekelo yam isusela kumazwe alapha eAfrika alwimi ninzi, ngezizathu ezithathu: Okokuqala, Ubutyebi bentlobo ngentlobo zezilwimi zabo bunyazelisa ukuba kwenziwe izigqibo, ingakumbi xa kubhek-iselele ngasezikolweni nasekufundeni nokubhala, okwesibini, amava awao obukoloniyali abashiye nelifa lolwimi "laseburhulumenteni" elilelangaphandle-kuloko bekwazi ukumelana nokungalingani, kwaye okwesithathu ukubhenceka kwabo kwezoqoqosho noncedo kubugcisa bophuhliso kongeza ukongezeleleka kwelinye icalakubungangamsha banamhla kwezobudlelane. Apho kuyimfuneko, imizekelo kwezinye izintlu zehlabathi ithe yaqukwa, kubonakaliswa ukufaneleka ehlabathini jikelele kokukhethwa oolna lwimi lululo kwezemfundo.

Ingqwalasela ekukhethweni kolwimi apha ifumaneke kwimiba ethile enxu-lumene-nelwimi yengcamango zika Pierre Bourdiu, kwaye yathi yakhuthazwa yimisebenzi ethile emibini yakhe. Inguqulelo ka Goke-Pariola (1993), oseben-zisa ingqiqo ezibalulekileyo kwimfundo yaseNigeria emva-kobukoloniyali, ibonakalisa ngokubiniimbali yemvelaphi ndawonye nemizekelo ebambekayo yokuba ubungangamsha kwezonxibelelwano budlala yiphi indima kwizikolo ez-inabafundi abanalwimi ninzi. Inguqulelo kaGogolin (2002), osebenzisa ingqiqo esemqoka kwimfundo yanamhlanje kumazwe aseYurophu, ibonalalisa luqikelelo malunga nolwimi kunye nemfundo ziyelelelene kwilizwe jikelele, kwaye zi-yasivumela ukuba siphinde-siphonononge ingcinga ekhoyo ukuze zifuumane indlela eya phambili.

Opsomming

Hierdie referaat is gemoeid met besluite oor watter taal of tale vir die onderwys gebruik sal word, en tot hoe 'n mate sulke besluite 'n werklike keuse vanuit goed deurdagte opsies verteenwoordig. Ek sluit af deur 'n voorstel te maak oor hoe 'n meer redelike of regverdige besluitneming bevorder kan word. Ek gebruik hoofsaaklik voorbeelde van meertalige Afrika-lande, om drie redes: eerstens, hulle ryk linguïstiese verskeidenheid verlang dat keuses gemaak moet word, veral aangaande skoolgaan en geletterdheid; tweedens, hulle koloniale ervaring het hulle 'n erfenis van vreemde "amptelike" tale gelos, en daarmee voortdurende ongelykheid; en derdens, hulle blootstelling aan ekonomiese en tegniese ont-wikkelingshulp voeg tot hedendaagse magsverhoudinge 'n heel nuwe dimensie by. Waar van toepassing word voorbeelde vanaf ander wêrelddele ingesluit, wat die universele relevansie van die kies van 'n gepaste taal vir die onderwys demonstreer.

Hierdie fokus op taalkeuse is deur taalverwante teorië van Pierre Bourdieu beïnvloed, en deur twee spesifieke interpretasies van sy werk geïnspireer. Die vertolking van Goke-Pariola (1993), wat sleutelkonsepte tot die post-koloniale onderwys in Nigerië toepas, verskaf beide historiese agtergrond en praktiese voorbeelde van hoe magsverhoudinge hulself in skole in veeltalige kontekste manifesteer. Die vertolking van Gogolin (2002), wat sleutelkonsepte tot die onderwys in hedendaagse Europa toepas, wys hoe opvattings t.o.v. taal en die onderwys dwarsdeur die wêreld soortgelyk is, en laat ons toe om algemene denke te her-analiseer om die pad vorentoe te vind.

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1   I would like to acknowledge the important work of Clayton (2008) on the concept of "choice," which influenced me to adopt it as a central theme of this discussion.

Linguistic habitus, linguistic market and complicity in one's own oppression

[L]*inguistic theories which ignore the social-historical and practical character of languages do so at their own cost.* (Bourdieu 1991:4)

Bourdieu's seminal work on the social and economic aspects of language, *Language and Symbolic Power* (1991), has greatly influenced linguistic theory and investigation up to the present by demonstrating that language is not simply communication but also a means of flexing symbolic power. According to Bourdieu, human behaviour is determined by a combination of *habitus*, a set of sociocultural dispositions that often go unquestioned, and *market*, a particular space in which people interact. Language represents a type of *capital* in human interaction because it is socially constructed and can be used to maintain or change the degree of power people wield. While individuals are capable of acting consciously and critically, they are mostly conditioned by a *linguistic habitus*, a set of unquestioned dispositions related to thinking about, valuing and using language(s). Despite the fact that all human languages are essentially equal in terms of their ability to express the entire range of their speakers' thoughts and feelings, *linguistic markets* are inevitably hierarchical, giving different values to different languages and people's competence in them (Bourdieu 1991).

As Gogolin (2002) explains, Bourdieu's theory aims to describe human – in this case linguistic – behaviour as a complex and circular relationship between individual choice, routine thinking as a result of socialisation (*linguistic habitus*), and the structural conditions of life (*linguistic market*). New experiences are "stabilised" as they are integrated into the habitus, which means that a habitus can change as a result of new experiences, but always within the limits of one's self-conception.

Goke-Pariola (1993) finds Bourdieu's sociology of language particularly appropriate for the study of post-colonial countries because marked disparities between social groups can be traced to linguistic and cultural oppression. Using the example of Nigeria, Goke-Pariola demonstrates in detail how language, in this case English, was a critical tool in the historic acquisition and maintenance of colonial power. British domination gave English so much symbolic power that "the local person who understood the White man's language increased his [or her] own power dramatically," and the fact that it was incomprehensible to most Nigerians merely added to its superiority (Goke-Pariola 1993:223). During the colonisation process, which changed the rules of the previously existing linguistic market, people were forced to acquire a new linguistic habitus as they learned English and were taught to spurn their own languages. Employment and other valued aspects of life were now associated with English, which could be gained through formal education. Although British colonial education allowed for some mother tongue learning, many Nigerians resisted the effort because "it was perceived, and perhaps rightly so, as a means of denying them the linguistic capital that was necessary to their accumulation of both economic and political power" (Goke-Pariola 1993:224). Because of people's integration into the new habitus and market, their languages and cultures fell victim to their own conscious decision-making, their own "choice".

The phenomenon in which people comply with and even promote attitudes and practices that unfairly discriminate against them was explained by Paulo Freire (1970) as internalizing the consciousness of the oppressor, where becoming like the oppressor becomes a subconscious life's goal (see also Goke-Pariola 1993). According to Freire, for people to overcome oppression they "must first critically recognise its causes, so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity" (Freire 1970/1996:29). The implication is that for change to occur, people must become aware of aspects of both their linguistic habitus and the linguistic market in which they interact. They can then become agents of change, and may be able to influence others beyond their own perceived decision-making space.

To summarise the theoretical perspective on which this discussion of language choice in education will be based, there is a circular set of influences on people's attitudes and behaviour which are represented by linguistic habitus and linguistic market. Individual choice is highly constrained by both, because people are for the most part unaware of how complicit they are in the injustices inflicted upon them. However, transformative action can take place when individuals and groups gain awareness of the constraints of their linguistic habitus and linguistic market, and can make informed decisions that go beyond these constraints and potentially beyond the limitations of their social circumstances.

The devastation of colonisation

If you take away my right to speak my own language by mandating another language as the official language, you pull me out of circulation, you take me out of the dialogue.
(Kassahun Checole 2000, quoted in Omoniyi 2003:13)

The effects of colonisation on people's language attitudes and practices, and by implication their cultural beliefs, identity and self-esteem, cannot be underestimated. While the various colonial powers differed in their explicit policies and practices (assimilationist or separate-and-unequal development), length of time present in the region, and type of involvement (cultural, political, economic and so on), they strongly influenced the linguistic habitus and linguistic market of their colonised, who could simultaneously be considered both victims and co-conspirators. According to Goke-Pariola (1993:225), colonised Nigerians "behaved no differently from their counterparts in Africa and Asia" by complying neither passively nor critically with the symbolic domination of the colonial language and values. Bourdieu describes this as a result of "dispositions which are impalpably inculcated, through a long and slow process of acquisition, by the sanctions of the linguistic market", given the chances of material and symbolic profit for holders of a given linguistic capital (Bourdieu 1991:51 in Goke-Pariola 1993:225). Whether the "linguistic capital" was English, Portuguese, Spanish, French or another language such as German, Dutch or Italian, the major effect of the colonial change in habitus and market was to push people's own languages and cultures into the background, if they were considered to exist at all.

Where they were acknowledged to exist, people's own languages and indeed the linguistic diversity of whole regions were considered a great problem. Colonially imposed borders corresponded more to geographical features, natural resources and the routes of European exploration than to any existing social, ethnic or linguistic frontiers that would have been indigenously defined. The number of cross-border languages in Latin America and Africa today attest to the added diversity and divide-and-conquer results of arbitrary colonial borders. Although Ruiz (1984) was talking about present-day orientations toward language diversity in a North American context, he would readily identify the prevailing orientation of colonial times as *language as problem*.

Contrary to popular belief, indigenous languages were fully developed in relation to the needs of their speakers, and indeed many had writing systems that originated prior to and thrived independently of European languages. Colonisation is often associated with the spread of literacy, but as Wiley (2006) points out, colonisation constrained rather than developed literacy practices in non-European languages. For example, indigenous writing systems in Latin America, including scripts for Mayan languages dating from 200 BC, were viewed as work of the devil by Spanish colonists, who promptly institutionalised Spanish throughout Latin America. In African contexts prior to colonisation, there are many examples (see Alidou 2004) of how people used their own languages to socialise, initiate and educate their children. For example, the Tuareg people of Mali, Mauritania and Niger have long used their own writing system known as Tifinagh for writing Tamajeq, their language. Hausa speakers and their neighbours who also used Hausa as a language of wider communication, having been exposed to Islam, used Arabic transliteration (known as Ajama) to write Hausa. Thus Alidou (2004:197) concludes that "the [so-called] medium-of-instruction problem emerged in the late 1800s with the introduction of Western education in Africa".

Upon gaining political independence from the colonial powers, most nation-states chose to maintain the status quo in terms of official language(s) in public administration and schooling. According to Alidou (2004) there were more than a few forces favouring the retention of European languages as dominant ones: the view of multilingualism as destabilizing for fragile new states; the view of European languages as "neutral" in these contexts; the lack of corpus planning in indigenous languages (which Alexander 2000 attributes to their systematic underdevelopment during colonisation); and the need for "international" languages to communicate with the outer world, that is, the economically developed North. This may explain the otherwise surprising views of revolutionary leaders, who to a great extent became leaders because of their opposition to everything colonial. For example, Amilcar Cabral, after leading the fierce struggle of the Portuguese West African colonies for freedom, and having done so mainly through a contact language known as Kiriol (incidentally contributing to its spread as a lingua franca), proclaimed Portuguese as the language of development of an African national and scientific culture in Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau (Galli & Jones 1987).

There were some alternative choices made at independence, as Cabral himself would have known, though perhaps by that time they were not seen as successful. For example, neighbouring Guinea-Conakry rejected DeGaulle's proposal for compromise and claimed independence in 1958 (Gerente 2004). Sekou Touré's cultural revolution of 1968 stipulated that eight national languages – Pular, Soso, Mandinka, Kissié, Kpèlè, Loma, Wamey and Oneyan – would become languages of instruction in primary education (Camara 2006). Touré's reasons were political, and his methods heavy-handed; as a result, mother tongue-based schooling was imposed without sufficient planning and support. According to a number of leaders I interviewed in May 2007, mother

tongue education was in retrospect good for nationalism and facilitated learn-
ing, but it lost momentum and eventually came under attack. Parents criticised
the poorly trained teachers and lack of materials, as well as expressing doubts
about whether mother tongues were useful for their children's futures; there was
also pressure from "the outside", in this case the French. Following the death of
Touré, there was an abrupt change in political leadership, and a new all-French
system was introduced in the 1980s with full support of the donor community
(Gerente 2004).

Education for Self-Reliance in Tanzania under Julius Nyerere was another
anti-colonial approach to education, where Kiswahili, a significant lingua franca
in East Africa, was promoted throughout primary and community schooling.
According to Rubagumya (2003), even though Kisawhili is not the mother
tongue of most learners, it has had the effect of making education more attain-
able while expanding people's competence in this national language. However,
English is used at the secondary level, and the opening up of education to
private actors in 1995 has led to a rush for English-medium schooling. Ruba-
gumya fears that the government will cave in to pressure from influential mem-
bers of society and change the medium of instruction to English, which would
"be a retrogressive step, wiping out the gains of several decades of Kiswahili me-
dium primary education instead of building on them" (Rubagumya 2003:165).

Complicity of the neo-colonial elite as well as the donor community

*Those who have the power to name often have, by that very act of naming, the power to
structure reality, and this power increases significantly with the extent of recognition or
the authority.* (Goke-Pariola 1993:226)

The symbolic power of the colonial languages following independence
remained to a great extent in the hands (or rather mouths) of those who
had been most successful in the colonial systems, i.e. those whose command of
the exogenous language and culture, and the formal education offered through
these, was most advanced. Yet was it enough? As Goke-Pariola (1993) explains,
speaking the official language has been essential for the elite in Nigeria, but the
reference is to a European standard, the "Queen's English," not a more realistic
and accessible Nigerian variety of English. This means that teachers and other
scholars are co-opted into the business of speaking, teaching and evaluating
official language competence, virtually to the detriment of all other languages
and academic subjects. This sort of "blind" adherence to a European standard
is also consistently observed in so-called francophone and so-called lusophone
Africa, where people are unlikely to mention their competence in indigenous
languages unless prompted, in which case they will say they only speak Af-
rican "dialects". There is a huge investment of financial and human resources
at the governmental, societal and individual levels to gain European language
competence through living and studying abroad, attending private European
language-medium schools and language institutes, and hiring tutors, especially
foreign national teachers who are native speakers. Those who have the most suc-
cess in gaining and maintaining this type of symbolic capital are, of course, the
Westernised elite in each country, who hold a great deal of power over the non-
Westernised majority, including the power to make choices regarding languages
in education. As Alexander points out, even with legislative efforts to provide
national or even official status to indigenous languages, exogenous languages
have retained their dominance due to "debilitating language attitudes…[which]
could not have been sustained if they were not integral to, and reinforced by, the
political economy of the neo-colonial state" (Alexander 2000:10).

Goke-Pariola (1993) believes that in contrast to that very small elite
group, the educated middle class is actually the driving force behind various
language policies in Nigeria, including efforts to give national languages more
power through legislation. He questions whether "ordinary folk" actually feel

that language issues are important, but he also questions the motivations of the middle class: "After all, the goal is not to widen the class in which power resides, but to further narrow it" (Goke-Pariola 1993:227). Having worked a great deal with teachers and scholars myself, I wonder if the "educated middle class" lies somewhere between the ruling elite and the ordinary folk on the legitimated power scale, and may actually have an interest in widening the class in which power resides. These people may also have enough of a critical perspective to recognise some of the internal contradictions inherent in their societies. They have achieved success through exogenous languages, but may recognise that many of their classmates were not able to do so. They do not necessarily consider themselves members of the elite, as they are often struggling on meagre government salaries (with the occasional consultancy or other intellectual jobs if they are fortunate) to support themselves and their families. They still have ties to their villages of origin, and they may still speak African languages to their children. I would like to believe that these people are somewhat empowered because their eyes are intellectually open to at least some of the forces of their linguistic habitus and linguistic market. However, the choices that they make are likely to affect the children of their poorer brothers and sisters, because they are meanwhile doing everything in their power to get their own children the "best" education available, i.e. education in the exogenous language(s).

The linguistic market to which these people are responding appears to be supported and even promoted by the existence of development aid, including emergency aid from United Nations and such agencies, international cooperation entities, technical exchange institutions, donor agencies, governmental and non-governmental organisations and international development banks. Many of us work in this area, and I acknowledge that I myself am part of what will now be criticised.

First and foremost, we must recognise that people from economically developed countries continue to have a huge amount of symbolic capital, both as perceived native (or highly competent) speakers of high-status exogenous languages and as perceived givers of actual and symbolic capital: money, education, information, and other kinds of assistance that can improve receivers' opportunities. Development, refugee and other aid work generates a steady stream of foreign nationals into developing countries, and with them come their languages, cultures, ideas – in effect, their linguistic (and other kinds of) habitus. While many of us make efforts to learn official and (to an admittedly lesser extent) local languages, locals end up with the responsibility of learning to communicate with foreigners so that they have access to the actual and symbolic capital we bring. This creates new linguistic markets for locals, especially those with formal educations who are bi- or multilingual in local and foreign languages, and motivation is high because jobs with foreign agencies are remunerated at levels the national civil service can not hope to match.

There are other aspects of donor involvement that are more intentional. Clayton (forthcoming) traces the trajectory of English as a second/international language in Cambodia, showing how its displacement of French (a former colonial language) has not been a matter of linguistic Darwinism. Clayton provides evidence of a conscious, calculated effort, accompanied by unconscious but blameworthy complicity, on the part of foreign government agencies, NGOs, U.N. agencies – virtually the entire relief and development apparatus – to bring about English language hegemony (along with cultural/political sympathies directed toward English-speaking powers) in Cambodia and the region. While the state of general literacy was ignored, the discourse of Cambodian "reconstruction and development" centred around promotion of English language competence and translation skills, significantly altering the existing markets for Cambodians representing everyone from technicians to domestic labourers. This case exhibits many of the global mechanisms described by Phillipson (1992, 2000 and see 2008 for his concept of *linguistic neoimperialism*), and calls attention to the fact that Cambodians are for the most part unaware of the symbolic violence being inflicted on them. It appears that development agencies play a significant role in the re-colonisation or globalisation of the linguistic market, and pay little or no attention to localising it.

Pedagogical possibilities and impossibilities

It is abundantly clear that education in a language that few learners, and not all teachers, have mastered detracts from quality and compounds the other problems of economically impoverished contexts. (Williams & Cooke 2002:317)

The forces described above provide a background to the overall situation in which education systems in multilingual developing countries find themselves today. Despite growing recognition that people's mother tongues are essential for at least basic education and literacy, if not for developing higher-level cognitive skills, the existing conditions are subject to linguistic habitus and linguistic market, which overwhelmingly lean toward official exogenous languages. The following points illustrate how these forces play out in practice.

1. Submersion is less popular for rural poor, but more popular for elite learners

Skutnabb-Kangas (1981; see also 2000) was instrumental in giving a name to the cruel form of schooling that has degraded people's mother tongues in their own eyes and forced children to try to make sense of a foreign medium of instruction: *submersion*, the use of a non-native language for public education. Submersion is analogous to throwing learners into the water without teaching them to swim, while disempowering those who might have helped them, i.e. their teachers and their families. Submersion seems to have grown out of colonial practice for training local elites, but when applied to mass schooling has had the unforgivable effect of making already selective and exclusive school systems even more so. Submersion education is still alive and well in many parts of the world including the United States, where models for mother tongue-based schooling for both immigrant and indigenous minorities were expanded and diversified until recent political conservatism pushed them to the margins of the education system. Submersion schooling is known in many parts of Latin America as *castellanización* (literally the "Spanishizing" of indigenous populations) and is considered normal in places like Vietnam, where members of ethnic minority groups are "Vietnamicised" or exposed to Vietnamese language

and culture as early as possible, preferably at the preschool age 3 to 5 level (Kosonen 2004).

In light of international development efforts toward making Education for All a reality, along with growing recognition that submersion schooling is highly inefficient and exclusionary, recent years have witnessed an encouraging move away from submersion and toward using home languages in schools, at least in the lower levels of primary schooling and for beginning literacy of children and adults. In African countries, there have been a number of initiatives: large-scale pro-mother tongue education policies in countries like South Africa and Ethiopia; the widening (to additional mother tongues) and occasional deepening (to more than a couple of years of mother tongue use) in countries like Malawi that already had some experience of mother tongue education; the introduction of national languages in countries like Mozambique that have had only submersion in a colonial language until recently; and even the planned re-introduction of national languages in the case of Guinea-Conakry.

The other side of the coin, however, is what happens with the children of those mid-level decision makers and implementers who are busy extending mother tongue-based schooling to the masses. As mentioned above, many of these people are investing significant personal resources in sending their children to private schools that submerge learners in a European language. The language of choice is more and more often English, even in countries with other exogenous official languages. Underlying this practice is the largely unfounded assumption that the language is best learned by using it as a medium of instruction. Interestingly, in this context the term changes to *immersion*, even though the actual pedagogical practices involved are virtually identical to submersion. Immersion programmes are normally associated with elite bilingualism, an example of which is French immersion schooling for English speakers as developed in Canada in the 1970s and 80s. Some of the characteristics of African children in immersion programmes may be similar, as they tend to have well-educated parents who can support learning by offering help themselves or hiring tutors; these are the children that Mazrui & Mazrui (1998:137) have called "Afro Saxons". However, the rising demand for private schooling through "international" languages has caused private immersion schools to sprout up in cities all over the continent, creating a dual phenomenon: while more and more children of non-elite parents are entering such schools, the quality of teaching and learning is becoming more and more questionable. According to Rubagumya (2003) in the Tanzanian context, simply the act of calling itself an English immersion school gives a private institution selling power and a level of prestige that is mostly undeserved. He finds evidence to conclude is that equating English with education is not in any way justified, and parents are being short-changed.

2. Continued aim of native-like competence in foreign languages

Whether the schooling system begins with the mother tongue or goes straight for the exogenous language, the aspiration of everyone from policymakers to parents is that learners will acquire native-like competence in the European standard of that language. This is readily explained by Bourdieu as the domination of education by the linguistic market. It might be reasonable to believe that after 40 or more years of mass education through foreign languages, the general public would recognise two things: one, that native-like competence is unlikely, even for the cleverest of multilingual learners; and two, that only or mainly the elite benefit, due to their inherited cultural and linguistic capital and enhanced opportunities. However, it is apparent that despite evidence to the contrary, linguistic habitus continues to drive people to invest in any kind of education that promises access to linguistic capital, i.e. high competence in the legitimated language. Alexander (2000) refers to this phenomenon in South Africa with his aptly titled article, "English unassailable but unattainable".

Let us take the second point first, namely the issue of who benefits from the goal of exogenous language competence. As Bruthiaux (2002) notes, such linguistic capital often goes unquestioned despite its limited usefulness for the majority of the poor and marginalised, the majority of whom will work in the informal sector and rely on local languages. They are also least likely to gain access, never mind succeed, in an education system based on a foreign language. To "poor and marginalised" I would add ethnolinguistic minorities, ethnolinguistic majorities whose languages and cultures go unrecognized by the market, rural dwellers, and girls from all but the most elite backgrounds. All of these groups are the least likely to enrol in school, attend regularly, or stay in school long enough to get the linguistic capital necessary to gain access to the market (Goke-Pariola 1993). As Bourdieu explains:

> The combined effect of low cultural capital and the associated low propensity to increase it through educational investment condemns the least favoured classes to the negative sanctions of the scholastic market, i.e. exclusion or early self-exclusion induced by lack of success. (Bourdieu 1991:62)

Regarding the earlier point, that native-like competence in the European standard is unlikely, I must point out that based on language acquisition and learning theory it is virtually impossible. Native-like competence is rarely acquired by anyone who is not surrounded by native speakers. To achieve high-level competence in a second or foreign language, learners require input from highly competent speakers of that language along with regular and sustained practice through communicative interaction in different domains, usually in an environment where that language is used regularly, in addition to study of grammatical, phonetic and other linguistic features. Since none of these conditions is readily available to speakers of African languages in African contexts trying to learn international standard languages, the goal is completely unrealistic, except for the few who have a native speaker in the home or who can be sent abroad. This has nothing to do with African learners themselves; such a goal is also unreachable for Swedes learning English in Sweden, for example. Neither the "native-like" nor the "European standard" aspects of the goal are reasonable to expect in a non-native environment.[2]

This does not mean that African (or any other) learners can not gain functional levels of competence in a second or foreign language; indeed, many bi- and multilingual Africans are extremely motivated and talented language learners, given an enabling learning environment. There is a great deal of evidence (see e.g. Baker 2006; Cummins 1999; Heugh 2006; Thomas & Collier 2002) that the most enabling learning environment would rely on solid development of mother tongue literacy as well as instruction through the mother tongue, which contributes significantly to success in second language learning. Here I must acknowledge that those of us promoting mother tongue-based programmes may have inadvertently contributed to the prevailing linguistic habitus, i.e. the expectation of high levels of second/foreign language competence, by claiming that this can be accomplished. Whether or not the education system adopts a theoretically sound bilingual model based on home language development, it is still constrained by teacher competence in both/all languages along with limited pedagogical strategies, not to speak of health and other poverty-related issues faced by education personnel, students and their families. However, we can say that a sound model of bi- or multilingual schooling based on mother tongue development has the best potential to result in reasonable levels of language competence, literacy and learning.

3. Unscientific justifications for chosen bilingual schooling models

The field of bilingual education has long recognized a set of categories (see Skutnabb-Kangas 1981; Cummins 1999; Baker 2006) for practical as well as strategic reasons. These have allowed researchers and practitioners to identify and discuss submersion, immersion, transitional (early- and late-exit), and developmental maintenance models. We can further classify models as subtractive or additive by demonstrating how mother tongue use is constrained or developed, respectively, based on political ideology. Subtractive or additive approaches are related to the degree to which they follow theoretically sound principles

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2 There is a growing body of work recognizing and documenting linguistic differences between European standards and regional varieties such as Nigerian English (Blench 2007) or Mozambican Portuguese (Gonçalves & Stroud 1998).

of language and pedagogy, i.e. the need to develop the learner's first language and use it to scaffold further learning of languages and of academic content.

Despite the advanced state of research and development in the field of bilingual education, the type of bilingual schooling most often adopted in developing countries involves very short-term use of learners' mother tongue (Benson 2004; Heugh 2006). This may be due at least partially to the mistaken idea that programmers can choose from a range of acceptable bilingual models, in which case they choose what seems like the fastest route to learning the official language. Thus bilingual programmes are being adopted without full understanding of the pedagogical and linguistic principles underlying them and the approaches necessary to put them into practice. Further, they are being applied in situations for which they were not designed, yet they are expected to produce satisfactory results. As Rubagumya explains:

> Public policy regarding the medium of instruction is usually based on political expediency, [and justified by] "common sense" assumptions, dependency syndrome, pegging educational innovations on project money, and lack of a meaningful dialogue between policy makers and practitioners. (Rubagumya 2006:1)

Another frequent reason for choosing short-term use of local languages is the perceived cost involved. There are indeed costs incurred in any educational reform, especially for teacher education and materials development, and in the case of mother tongue-based programmes there is usually an additional need for linguistic work on orthography and terminology. However, recent analyses (see the very thorough review in Heugh 2006) balance start-up costs against the costs of *not* using learners' languages, i.e. the high per pupil expenditure of a system characterised by high rates of dropout, failure and repetition, and find that the benefits outweigh the costs after just a few years.

4. Backwash effect of testing and requirements of further education

The backwash (also known as the washback) effect in testing refers to the extent to which a test is valid, i.e. asks learners to perform what they have been taught to perform (see e.g. Hughes 2003). If students are asked to do one thing in class but expected to do something different on the test, there will be a negative backwash effect on their learning, limiting their cooperation in class because they will want to do only what is required on the test. By analogy, a negative backwash effect is created when there are inconsistencies between different levels of an education system. If learners are asked to do something in the early years that will have no bearing on their future education, they are likely to reject it in favour of practices that are more consistent with later expectations.

Heugh made this analogy in Ethiopia, where our four-member research team was recently commissioned to determine how the different semi-autono-

mous regions of the country have been implementing mother tongue-based schooling (see Heugh et al 2007). The theoretically sound national language policy for primary education that was established in 1994 calls for use of the mother tongue as medium of instruction for the full eight years of primary schooling. Amharic (as national language/lingua franca) and English (as foreign/international language) are to be taught as subjects, beginning at grades 3 or 5 and 1, respectively. Of the nine regions and two municipal administrations, three regions – Oromiya, Tigray and Somali – are in full compliance with national policy. Interestingly, these same regions, representing over 50 percent of the total population, have achieved the best overall results on the national examinations at grades 4 and 8 (Heugh et al 2007). Yet despite this strong evidence of the success of mother tongue-based schooling, other regions have not necessarily been convinced to follow suit. There is a lot of public discussion about adopting English-medium schooling, and private English-medium schools proliferate in all of the regional capitals. How can this be explained?

A look at the rest of the Ethiopian education system provides some insight. First, the national policy at the secondary level mandates English as the sole medium of instruction and testing in all regions. Nothing in primary English study has prepared students for learning content through the foreign language, and no Ethiopian language remains in the secondary curriculum except Amharic, a subject for which no academic credit is awarded. Further, speakers of Amharic as a first language are seen as having benefited more from primary education because they only need to learn one new language, English. Even more damagingly, the former Minister of Education made an extremely expensive decision in the name of "equality" to supply all secondary classrooms in the country with plasma televisions and broadcast pre-programmed distance courses developed in South Africa, which are delivered in incomprehensible South African English (Lemma 2006). Another large-scale initiative, supported by British and American consultants and a great deal of funding, has been to provide English language training to all primary teachers in the country. Primary English lessons are also facilitated by radio programming. There is no such effort to improve mother tongue education, nor in fact any mention of the local languages, and national teacher training curriculum materials are developed centrally in Amharic and English (Heugh et al 2007).

Even though our team found a great deal of evidence that English was still incomprehensible to most students (both primary and secondary) as well as most primary teachers,[3] the high cost and publicity generated by the primary

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3   For example, during an interview with practice teachers working in upper primary, Mekonnen switched to Tigrinya because we could not understand what they were saying in English, only to find that they were insisting that English should be the sole medium of instruction!

teacher English programme as well as the plasma television debacle has created a strong negative backwash effect that threatens Ethiopian mother tongue instruction (Heugh et al 2007). Coupled with the sometimes unethical and always opportunistic[4] "support" of international consultants in what Phillipson (1992, 2008) aptly calls the booming business of ELT (English language teaching), with global English as its project, it is easy to see how mother tongues get pushed out of the picture – and out of the dialogue.

This section has demonstrated that the linguistic habitus and linguistic market prevalent in contexts such as Ethiopia cause people at many different levels of decision-making to make educational language choices that are not necessarily in their own best interest. In making these choices, they may be aspiring to reach impossible goals for themselves, their children and their societies.

Attitudes toward education in a global linguistic market

For many ethnolinguistic minority groups…promises of incentives such as economic and social mobility are doled out as poor compensation for cultural subordination and language shift. In the process, paradoxically, the linguistic minority groups are driven to further poverty – culturally and economically – because their languages, as resources for educational achievement and, through it, for equal access to economic and other benefits in a competitive society, are rendered powerless. (Mohanty 1990:54)[5]

Using the concepts of linguistic habitus and linguistic market proposed by Bourdieu, Gogolin (1994, 2002) shows that many of the attitudes, behaviours and markets described above are also prevalent in European settings. This may explain why we hear so many of the same myths about language competence and language learning whether we are in Laos, Bolivia or Cameroon, and whether the "target" language is a European one or a dominant regional one as it is in many Asian countries. It appears that through continued economic domination of the North/West, and the accompanying linguistic and cultural domination, we may all be unwitting contributors to a set of global language attitudes that Gogolin calls a *monolingual habitus*.

As Gogolin (2002) explains, the prevailing linguistic habitus of Europeans, i.e. the linguistic self-conception that allows them to act routinely and unquestioningly, is essentially monolingual, building on the fundamental myth of uniformity of languages and cultures in a nation-state. This monolingual habitus, which she finds dysfunctional among teachers because it renders them incapable of understanding and appreciating their diverse students, is "built and secured by the traditions of the education system itself" (Gogolin 2002:133). Only certain official languages are considered legitimate; the role of illegitimate languages like regional, minority and immigrant languages and non-"standard" varieties is negligible. This habitus persists in the face of what is (and has always been) a feature of Europe as well as other parts of the world: linguistic and cultural diversity and a continuous process of border crossing.

It is easy to see that other parts of the North share this monolingual habitus, in particular the English-speaking powers. On a recent flight from Luanda to London, I overheard an American oil worker complain to his colleagues about

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4   Without mentioning names or organisations, it can be reported that specialists complied with the former Minister's proposals to extend English language training to all teachers, even though they knew that the program design was not adequate to raise teacher language competence. I recently ran into one of these so-called specialists in a hotel in Dhaka; he had just promoted the same type of large-scale, diluted effort to the Bangladeshi Minister of Education and received a positive response.

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5   This Indian perspective was brought to my attention by Kosonen et al 2007.

the "language problem". The problem, it turned out, was that when he spoke to his Angolan co-workers in English they did not understand him. The fact that this young man was so blissfully unaware of his own monolingualism underscores a further aspect of the monolingual habitus, which is that monolingualism is not seen as a problem when the language spoken is a dominant one.

A monolingual habitus appears to have infected and re-infected the highly diverse and multilingual nation-states of the South. Perhaps its least damaging effect is to make individuals take their bi- or multilingualism for granted, and their civil service jobs (representing the main linguistic market) probably reinforce this by focusing only on their competence in the official, legitimate language. However, a monolingual habitus is also capable of inflicting severe damage. In his forthcoming book, Djité (2008) refers to one damaging effect as the "pathologizing of multilingualism". People who are bi- or multilingual in the "wrong" languages are considered to be seriously handicapped.[6]

There have been efforts to combat a monolingual habitus. For example, the Bolivian Education Reform of 1994 did not stop at calling for countrywide implementation of bilingual intercultural education for speakers of Quechua, Aymara and Guaraní (and later a few other languages of the Bolivian Amazon). Indigenous people were not the only ones to be considered bilingual and intercultural; the policy included language instruction in an indigenous language for members of the dominant group, who are overwhelmingly monolingual in Spanish (Albó & Anaya 2003). Unfortunately, while some public and private schools have offered instruction in indigenous languages for Spanish speakers, these languages were never incorporated into the curriculum, nor was intercultural education for Spanish speakers ever fully operationalised (see also King & Benson 2004). This could be one reason why Evo Morales, the first indigenous president of Bolivia, is now intent on dismantling the reform; it can indeed be seen as discriminatory. However, it is more likely that despite his linguistic repertoire the president is suffering from a monolingual habitus of his own.

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6   Meanwhile, there is increasing evidence from scholarship in the North that bi- and multilingual individuals experience a number of benefits including high levels of metalinguistic awareness and cognitive flexibility, and even the delay of dementia among the elderly (Bialystock 2001).

Does educational reform have the power to transform?

Parents said: Why should my child learn in our language? It won't get her anywhere. Teachers said: Teaching in the local language is unprofessional. Governments said: This is too expensive! Elites said: Equality of access to education is simply not in our interests. (Trudell 2007:112)

The above discussion and examples demonstrate that Bourdieu's concepts of linguistic habitus and linguistic market are powerfully in place in multilingual developing countries. As these countries attempt to reform their education systems, they are responding to a dual challenge: first, the international expectation that they should extend education to the masses to reach EFA goals; and second, the need to transform low-quality, inefficient programmes into high-quality, efficient ones. More pedagogically appropriate choices such as the use and development of home languages and cultures are likely to improve both the quality and the efficiency of schooling, but can these choices actually be sustained under the existing habitus and market conditions?

Williams and Cooke (2002) believe there are contradictions inherent in education for development, in particular how it is defined. Some see development as increased prosperity, which involves strengthening official structures so that services will trickle down to all members of society. Others see development as the meeting of human needs, which involves distributing goods and services much more equitably and implies more democratic participation, higher levels of health and education, improvement in the status of women, the poor and the most marginalized. As I have pointed out previously (Benson 2004, 2006), most development workers would agree with the latter definition, while the actions of their organisations – also constrained by existing power structures – would cater to the former. Hornberger would agree; she believes that to "transform a standardizing education into a diversifying one" represents an ideological paradox that challenges implementation of linguistically and culturally appropriate schooling (Hornberger 2002:30). Callewaert (1998) commented on this very paradox as it played out in Namibia when he wrote under the expressive title, "Which way Namibia – to decolonize the colonized mind of the anticolonial teacher?"

Can transformation be brought about, and can linguistic habitus and linguistic markets be changed? Having had the opportunity to work in critical practitioner inquiry, a type of action research for educators developed by Dahl-

ström (see 2002, 2006) and working alongside Callewaert (1998, 1999, 2006), I believe as they do in reform, as long as it is designed to open people's eyes to where they have come from and give them the analytical capacity to make choices about where they are going. Knowledge can empower people to make informed choices even where the linguistic habitus and linguistic market have previously made those choices for them.

Alternative discourse and transformation

If you are not carrying out your own agenda, you are carrying out someone else's. (Dr Neville Alexander, University of Cape Town)

The very fact that colonisation was able to change people's linguistic habitus and linguistic market, given that it had a relatively long period of time to do so, indicates that transformation is possible. I believe that the key is to expand and apply our understanding of backwash – the degree to which learners are tested on what has been taught – to create a more consistent and coherent message through all three domains of Bourdieu's circular process. The message that needs to be generated in the domains of individual choice, linguistic habitus and linguistic market is an alternative discourse of *multilingualism*. This involves promoting what Ruiz (1984) calls a *language as resource* orientation.

1. Individual choice and living by example

Transformative action, according to Freire (1970), begins with each of us. If we are to generate an alternative discourse of multilingualism, we need to be practicing multilinguals ourselves. The "we" that I am using here can be interpreted narrowly as those of us foreigners who meddle in the educational development of other countries, in which case we need to recognize our own monolingual or Eurolingual habitus and reconstruct our identities as multilinguals with competence in the languages of our colleagues in the South. The "we" that I am using here can also be expanded to those of us already dealing with issues of language choice in education and society, in which case we need to recognize our own multilingual competencies, develop them and use them. According to Djité (2004:11), multilingualism opens up "a new horizon of cross-cultural communication. This has always been the main feature of multilingualism: once a multilingual, always a multilingual". Alexander (2007:7) adds that multilingual competencies include "a fifth dimension, i.e. the ability to translate or to interpret from one language into [an]other with more or less facility". By example, we will show monolinguals that they are at a disadvantage.

For those of us who are researchers, I suggest that we do a better job of publishing our results in the languages of the people in whose contexts we are working, as well as in languages other than English, and contest the global power relations of academic publishing. We have powerful models in people like

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1987:27) who began writing in Gĩkũyũ, his mother tongue, in 1977 after seventeen years of contributing to what he calls the "Afro-English literature". Publishing in lesser used languages should be part of our commitment to academic and professional life, whether or not this kind of publishing is "rewarded" in the current hierarchical structures.

We also need to empower ourselves and others to act in "parallel" with the constraints of linguistic habitus and linguistic market. For example, Professor Neville Alexander, a scholar, activist and leader in promoting African language issues in South Africa and across the continent, is empowered and an empowerer. With a group of talented colleagues he created PRAESA, a non-governmental organisation that functions within the University of Cape Town. Instead of waiting for governmental and university structures to pass what he calls "enabling legislation" (see e.g. Alexander 2000), PRAESA has experimented in schools with bilingual methods, bilingual testing, bilingual and mother tongue materials, and teacher training. Now that educational language policy requires provincial and district level implementation of mother tongue-based bilingual education, PRAESA provides sought-after resources. Another activity was an annual training of trainers in multilingual education that ran for a number of years and brought together linguists, educators and activists from all over Africa and internationally. This has created a network of individuals that are inspired by each other's work, even if they may feel alone in their own contexts. This is consistent with the task Alexander gives us as empowerers: "Formulate and implement counter-hegemonic strategies at all levels of our societies" (2007:15).

Finally, to really practise what we preach, we need to be willing to create multilingual opportunities for our own children, not only the children of other people. We need to incorporate multilingualism into our work and our lives, and show how it is valuable for the future of ourselves, our families, our societies and our world.

2. Creating a multilingual habitus

Many of us believe that the school has both the power and the responsibility to change the status quo. A number of scholars (e.g. Fishman 2001; Hornberger & King 2001) have shown that education can not be the only domain in which people's mother tongues are developed, but it can contribute significantly in many ways, including training language professionals, teachers, authors and other human resources; giving languages equitable treatment in the classroom, both aurally and visually; contributing to linguistic development through publishing learning materials and so on. I have discussed above some of the challenges of implementing mother tongue-based programmes, but it is also worthwhile mentioning the rewards. As I have observed in a variety of contexts (Benson 2004), the use of previously marginalised languages in schools and literacy programmes raises their status, especially when speakers see their languages in print, and this "valorisation" leads to other positive effects such as increased parent participation in school activities and greatly improved student self-esteem.

The universities may be the next appropriate site of engagement. Some time ago Mazrui (1997) warned that World Bank-imposed structural adjustments would make secondary and tertiary education even more "white-collar" than they already were, and that educational expenditure and African languages were necessary to make higher education more inclusive. Both Prah (2003) and Alexander (2007) agree on the dangers, and have called for the "intellectualisation" of African languages by promoting restoration of African scholarship into original languages, translation of world scholarship into African languages, and initiating university programmes taught completely or partially through African languages.[7] Use of previously excluded languages in elite higher education sends a signal that exogenous languages must share their academic space, and it meanwhile strongly increases the linguistic and professional capacity of graduates. These graduates can in turn train the human resources needed to implement other language-related reforms.

The public sector also has a serious role to play, and it needs to be prepared to play it. For example, in his discussion of "power differentials" in language planning in Ireland, MacDonnacha finds that there is a "constitutional and moral onus on Irish public sector organisations to deliver their services through the medium of Irish" (2002:6). Those whom he calls clients, in this case the Irish public, cannot reasonably be expected to demand services in the Irish language because English has long been the "default" language of these organisations, and in fact few deliverers of public service would currently have the language competence required to change the status quo. Indirectly referring to linguistic habitus and linguistic market, MacDonnacha says that for change to occur, people's "definition of the linguistic reality must be changed" (MacDonnacha 2002:6). By creating an awareness that services in Irish can be offered, the public sector signals that a new choice is open to clients, one they might not have reasonably expected or even dreamed of previously. In addition, this creates a market for service providers who have high competence in Irish, the traditionally marginalized language, and presumably are bilingual.

3. Creating a multilingual market

Both school and public sector activities are constrained if there are not enough human resources with the appropriate bi- or multilingual competence in combination with other training. There is a kind of chicken-and-egg effect created if the market does not call for certain skills because they are rare, and people do not aim to get certain skills because they are not called for by the market.

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7   See the website of ACALAN, the Academy of African Languages, at http://www.acalan.org/.

The following are two brief examples of ways that pro-multilingual markets have been created by policymakers focused on teacher education. One involved a policy decision by the Department of Education of the state of California, U.S.A. in the 1980s to include a course in multiculturalism in all teacher training curricula. Though some of us would say that this measure was not enough, and stopped short of providing adequate linguistic and cultural training, the action did demonstrate recognition of the fact that all teachers, not just those who showed personal interest, would need some preparation for working with students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The other example is of a concerted effort by the Education Department of the Basque Autonomous Region in Spain to provide appropriate language training for all teachers in the Basque Country (see e.g. Gardner & Zalbide 2005). Having decided to implement bilingual schooling models, the Education Department provided language training for all teachers in the system gradually over a 25-year period by putting them on paid study leave until they could reach the desired competence levels. Now teachers can only be employed if they are bilingual, and the training effort is being extended to raising Basque competence in subject-specific domains.

It does not appear that "open market" private schooling can be counted on to participate in the promotion of multilingualism. In Rubagumya's (2003:165) example from Tanzania, "within this 'open' market for education, wider educational discourse objectives are sacrificed at the altar of English" because it responds to linguistic habitus and linguistic market forces. Like capitalism itself, it can not be expected to have people's best interests at heart. The exception would be private schooling offered by faith-based groups that might be committed to promoting multilingualism. In the case of Bolivia as mentioned above, some private Catholic schools followed the national policy by offering indigenous language teaching to monolingual Spanish speakers, while public schools did not.

Regarding the linguistic market for other public sector jobs, Heller (2005) has been documenting the trends in Canada and says that linguistic variability and multilingualism are vital for "new language workers". She finds that the workplace is starting to recognise bi- and multilingual competence, though it still remains unremunerated. However, as global needs require more and more workers to be bi- and multilingual, their job-related language competence will need to be defined, requiring certain "training, certification and evaluation [which] will spawn a set of related professions" to manage it (Heller 2005:6). We can participate in creating this market by making our own multilingual skills, along with those of our colleagues, more visible to all.

Conclusion

We don't get discouraged promoting local languages. We have a saying: "Don't congratulate the cassava for growing roots." This is because it has to grow roots or it would die …We must work in our languages. (Dr Mohamed Lamine Sano, Institut de Recherche en Linguistique Appliquée, Conakry, personal communication on 16 May 2007, my translation)

This discussion has shown how a monolingual habitus and the limitations of hierarchical linguistic markets have constrained the choices people can make about the language(s) of education in multilingual contexts. It has been proposed that transformation can be brought about, fostering more equitable decision making, by generating an alternative discourse of multilingualism.

My optimistic view is that global trends may be on our side. Even if prevailing global power relations lean toward the hegemony of a certain Western language at this time, monolinguals are already at a disadvantage in terms of communication and cross-cultural understanding, both domestically and internationally. An alternative discourse is possible and, to quote a popular expression coined by Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, monolingualism is curable.

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