

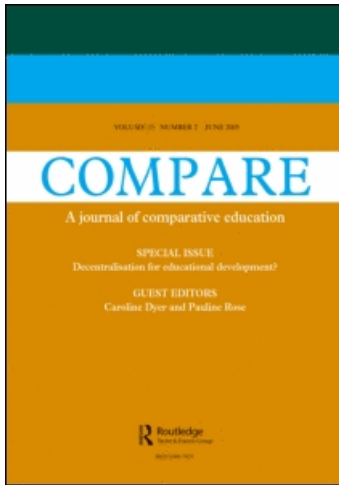
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### Multilingual language policy and school linguistic practice: globalization and English-language teaching in India, Singapore and South Africa

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## Multilingual language policy and school linguistic practice: globalization and English-language teaching in India, Singapore and South Africa

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This paper explores tensions in translating multilingual language policy to classroom linguistic practice, and especially the paradoxical role of and demand for English as a tool of decolonization for multilingual populations seeking equitable access to a globalizing economy. We take an ecological and sociolinguistic approach, depicting tensions between multilingualism and English across three national cases, at both policy and classroom level. Despite India's egalitarian Three Language Formula (TLF) of 1968, many Indian children are being educated in a language which is not their mother tongue. Singapore's bilingual education policy with English medium of instruction and mother tongues taught as second languages nevertheless leaves the linguistic capital of multilingual children who speak a pidginized variety of English called 'Singlish' out of the equation, since the school medium is standard English. South Africa's Constitution of 1993 embraces multilingualism as a national resource, raising nine major African languages to national official status alongside English and Afrikaans, yet with the freedom of movement accompanying the dismantling of apartheid, large numbers of African language-speaking parents seek to place their children in English-medium instructional contexts. Given the push for English and simultaneous official valuing of multilingualism in all three cases, we briefly consider illustrative classroom examples and argue that multilingual classroom practices can be a resource through which children access Standard English while also cultivating their own local languages.

**Keywords:** globalization; language in education policy; medium of instruction; continua of biliteracy

### Introduction: globalization and English-language teaching

One of the consequences of globalization processes is the spread of English as a medium of instruction in national school systems. Disadvantaged communities are increasingly demanding access to English so that their children can join a workforce that mandates knowledge of this language. In this paper, we focus on access to the linguistic capital of English and how multilingual classroom practice tries to meet the demands of the community for that access. We look at three cases, Singapore, India and South Africa, where English is a sought-after medium of instruction, while in none of the countries is it the most frequently spoken language of the home.

Sociologists like Ritzer (1993) see globalization as the McDonaldization or the homogenization worldwide of, particularly, American culture. Phillipson (1992), the sociolinguist, extends Ritzer's term 'McDonaldization' to the spread of global English which he thinks of as linguistic imperialism that culturally impoverishes the third world by

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eroding its linguistic ecology. Phillipson's view has been critiqued by Fishman (1998–9, 29), who does not see the spread of English as the only linguistic effect of globalization. He comments: 'For all the ... vitriol generated by grand-scale globalization, it is the growth of regional interactions ... that touches the widest array of regional languages. These interactions promote the spread of regional languages.'

In this paper we are focused on English as medium of instruction for non-English speakers and not so much on the spread of English creating language shift and death of indigenous or regional languages. Globalization and the changing medium of instruction is currently a key concern of sociolinguists (Tollefson and Tsui 2004; Block and Cameron 2002) as it impacts teacher education, curriculum planning, and in fact, demands a realignment of pedagogy. Despite this concern amongst sociolinguists, cross-national studies of English classes are rare. An exception is Bhattacharya et al. (2007), which analyzes grade 9 English classes in Delhi, Johannesburg and London with a focus on texts and multimodality. We here look at English as a medium of instruction, at policy and classroom levels, in each of three countries separately and comparatively.

In the case of Singapore, English medium education was supplied by the government because of overwhelming demand from Singaporeans. Gupta (1997) supports Singapore's media of instruction policy despite its emphasis on English over mother tongue, saying that 'the empowerment of individuals should have primacy over the development of an individual's mother tongue, and even over the preservation of a language' (Gupta 1997, 497).

Similarly in India, the demand for English is pressurizing the government school system to reform the Three Language Formula (TLF). The economist Jean Dreze writes of government schools (called public schools in the USA) in India that: 'in big cities, it's more or less over ... within 10 to 15 years government schools will be almost wiped out' (*International Herald Tribune* 2003). Dreze's pessimism about the government school system in India is based partly on the rise of low-cost private school education for the poor (Tooley and Dixon 2003). It is our observation that another reason government schools in India are facing attrition is because they offer English only in secondary school under the TLF (see below). However, many of them, like the Rajkiya Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya (RSKV) we look at here, now offer English medium instruction from the primary school itself and have thus staunchly resisted attrition.

The high status and linguistic capital of English are equally evident in South Africa, a case where the hegemony of the Western free-market economy influences a third-world country's economy not just in economics but also in the accompanying linguistic racism which gives high status to English (Heugh 1995, 329). Neville Alexander (2002, 92, citing Alexandre 1972, 86) reminds us that command of the former colonial language represents cultural capital for the black elite, opening the way to recruitment 'into the ruling class or, at the very least, to positions of power', a disturbing scenario wherein a policy of *de facto* English unilingualism excludes the vast majority and 'ultimately undermines the very democracy South Africans pride themselves on having attained' (Alexander 2002, 92). Along the same lines, Ridge suggests that thorough and detailed attention to making English as widely available as possible, but without undermining the other South African languages, is the best defence against elite closure – 'the use by an elite of a language as a means of excluding the rest of the population from participation in political and economic life' (Ridge 2004, 207, citing Myers-Scotton 1990; see also Webb 2004 on the case for using African languages as media of instruction).

All three countries are faced with a highly multilingual and ethnically diverse population and all of them have chosen a language policy based on a different idea of

nationalism from Euro-American models. Though in the Euro-American model of nation state formation, one language is considered the dominant national language, in the official policies of India, South Africa and Singapore, multiple languages are considered equally representative of the nation. South African language policy expert and advocate Alexander, taking inspiration from Anderson's work on imagined communities (1983, 133), puts it thus: 'community of language is not an essential attribute of the nation' (2002, 86, 88).

These three countries are at different stages in the inexorable processes of globalization that are affecting all countries. According to the fifth annual Foreign Policy Globalization Index in 2005, Singapore was the most globalized nation, South Africa ranked 48 and India 61 (Kearney 2005). The report makes these rankings on the basis of four main dimensions: economic integration, personal contact, technological connectivity and political engagement. Economic integration includes rankings for trade and foreign direct investment (FDI); personal contact includes phones, travel and remittances; technological connectivity shows rankings for internet users, internet hosts and screen servers; and political engagement includes international organizations, UN peacekeeping, treaties and government transfers. The three countries also differ markedly in measures of per capita GNP and literacy levels (see Table 1).

Finally, in the three countries under discussion, both English and mother tongue-language education carry colonial baggage. In South Africa and Singapore, the media of instruction for all but an elite minority during colonial rule were the mother tongues, a policy that channeled linguistic capital inequitably towards the colonizer and created conditions for the excluded majority populations to in turn demand access to the English language as resource. The 1976 Soweto riots in South Africa were exactly about 'the fight for the right to language' – access to English versus imposition of Afrikaans (Guma 2006; see also McLean 1999). In Singapore, Shepherd (2005) and Gopinathan (2003) document that by 1986, enrolment in schools offering Mandarin, Tamil and Malay as media of instruction was so low that the government had to close them down. Consequently, in 1987 English was made the dominant medium of instruction in the national school system to create a level playing field for all linguistic groups. This in turn created concern amongst the Chinese who felt that their language and culture were being threatened by the global spread of English. The annual Speak Mandarin Campaign launched in 1979 and the creation of Special Assistance Plan schools in 1980 (where English and Mandarin are learned as first languages by the Chinese elite) were moves to assuage the resentment of the Chinese community over the prioritization of English over the mother tongues. In British Colonial India, English was made the medium of instruction by the English Education Act of 1835, but only with the purpose of generating a cohort of clerks, peons and petty functionaries to oil the machinery of empire (Viswanathan 1989). Thus, ironically, both English and the mother tongues can play a divisive role in gatekeeping linguistic capital.

Table 1. A 1997 comparison of the three countries by GNP and illiteracy.

Country	Per capita GNP (US\$)	Illiteracy (%)
India	370	45.1
Singapore	32,180	8.5
South Africa	3210	15.8

Source: UNESCO (2000).

For each country, we provide an overview of the national language policy and consider one illustrative classroom vignette. From India, we present a transcript from the English medium class of the Rajkiya Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya (State Sarvodaya Girls School) located in a disadvantaged neighborhood of North East Delhi; this is a sliver of data from the project analyzed in Vaish (2008). The transcript from Singapore is from a primary school in an average income neighborhood; data are from the CORE project of the Centre for Research in Pedagogy and Practice in which 920 classes from primary and secondary school were observed and in which Vaish participated as coder (Luke et al. 2005). From South Africa, we consider a classroom in a formerly 'coloured' school in the Cape Town area, using an account taken from published research by South African investigators at PRAESA implementing Hornberger's continua of biliteracy framework in an innovative multilingual education effort (Bloch and Alexander 2003).<sup>1</sup>

Our analysis takes an ecological and sociolinguistic approach, in that we are interested in languages in relation to each other and to their social environment, and in particular language uses and practices and the degree to which they represent a healthy ecology of equity and development for all the languages and their speakers. We draw on Hornberger's continua of biliteracy framework (2003), an ecological heuristic that incorporates language evolution, language environment, and language endangerment themes of the ecology of language. The notion of bi (or multi)-literacy assumes that languages and literacies are not static but dynamic, ever developing and changing (language evolution); and the notion of continuum posits that this development occurs in scalar and incremental rather than dichotomous fashion. The 12 continua in the framework situate biliteracy development (whether in the individual, classroom, community, or society) in relation to the contexts, media, and content in and through which it occurs (i.e. language environment); and the framework provides a heuristic for addressing the unequal balance of power across languages and literacies (i.e. for both studying and counteracting language endangerment in relation to the spread of global languages like English). We conclude the paper with reflections on the paradox and potential for classroom practices that enable access to English alongside the valuing of multilingualism.

### **Multilingual language in education policies: an ecological perspective**

In all three countries, the formulation of multilingual language policies occurred at a time of great political change and renewal. For India and Singapore, it was their independence from British colonialism in the mid-twentieth century in 1947 and 1965, respectively, and for South Africa, it was the overthrow of the apartheid system in 1994 that ushered in the challenging task of formulating language policies and language in education policies that would provide equitable access to linguistic capital for the countries' diverse social groups.

Singapore has three main ethnic groups: Chinese who speak Mandarin or a dialect thereof like Teochew or Hokkien, Malay who speak mainly Malay though some speak dialects of Malay like Javanese and Boyanese, and finally Indians who speak mainly Tamil or other Indian languages like Hindi, Gujarati, Punjabi, Urdu and Bengali. Malay is the national language of Singapore while Mandarin, Malay, English and Tamil are co-official languages.

Currently the 8th Schedule of the Indian Constitution acknowledges 22 languages as regional standards.<sup>2</sup> The original Constitution of 1950 had fewer than 22 languages in the 8th Schedule; however since then language activists have mobilized themselves and had their languages included in this prestigious list through various amendments. For instance

in 1967 Sindhi was added to the then 14 languages of the 8th Schedule, making the total 15.<sup>3</sup> Hindi and English are co-official languages in India and there is no one language specified as the national language. The 22 languages in the 8th Schedule have funding from the central government and can be included in the TLF, India's language in education policy.

South Africa's Constitution of 1996 (and the earlier interim Constitution of 1993) recognizes 11 official languages, including nine African languages (listed here in decreasing order of number of speakers) – isiZulu, isiXhosa, sePedi, seTswana, seSotho, xiTsonga, siSwati, tshiVenda, and isiNdebele, alongside English and Afrikaans. Constitutional provision is also made for 'promoting respect for and development of German, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Portuguese, Tamil, Telegu, Urdu and other languages used by communities in South Africa, as well as Arabic and Hebrew and other languages used for religious purposes' (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1993, clause 3(10)(c), cited by Heugh and Siegrühn 1995, 95).

Language ideology of all three countries, at both official and popular levels, encompasses a view of multilingualism as resource (Ruiz 1984). Such an ideology entails the supposition that linguistic heterogeneity is not necessarily correlated with civil strife and low per capita GNP, a supposition that accords with research evidence as well. Fishman (1991/2003) finds, in a complex statistical analysis, that linguistic heterogeneity is a distinctly weak predictor variable in relation to civil strife or per capita GNP, and that other factors are far more powerful predictors. His essay was written with a view toward creating a positive attitude towards bilingualism in the USA, countering the prevailing monolingual ideology.

In contrast, since multilingualism is the norm in countries like India, Singapore and South Africa, it is perhaps not so surprising that they would choose a language policy that valorizes multiple languages. All of them pursued what Fishman (1969) calls a Type C model of language planning, where there are several competing great traditions and the country is unwilling to choose just one. Nevertheless, all three countries also face persistent and seemingly insurmountable tensions and contradictions in translating official multilingual language policy into actual classroom linguistic practice, in all of which English and globalization play complex roles. It is with this background that we now turn to specific language in education policies in each of the three countries under discussion, followed by illustrations from actual classrooms.

### **India**

Though India has had many Education Commission reports since 1947, the Kothari Commission Report (Ministry of Education 1964–6) is the key document for our purposes as it defines India's language in education policy. The final decision on how languages were to be represented in the school system came to be codified in 1968 with the acceptance of the TLF. 'The TLF was originally proposed by the Central Advisory Board of Education in 1957, accepted by the Conference of Chief Ministers in 1961, modified by the Education Commission headed by Kothari in 1966, voted by Parliament, and incorporated into the National Policy on Education in 1968' (Annamalai 2001, 44).

The TLF is a loose set of guidelines for each of the states to implement flexibly according to their resources and needs. It recommends that the media of instruction should be as shown in Table 2.

The TLF is deeply entrenched in the linguistic terrain of India and despite concerns that it provides the linguistic capital of English very late in the child's schooling, it has

Table 2. India's Three Language Formula.

Grades	Media
1–4	Only one language is recommended which should be the mother tongue. In case of a non-standardized mother tongue it should be the regional standard language.
5–7	The study of two languages is obligatory. The second language may be either the official language of the Union (Hindi) or the co-official language (English).
8–10	The study of three languages is obligatory. These can be the regional standard, Hindi and English in the non-Hindi-speaking states. In the Hindi-speaking states these usually are Hindi, English and either a modern Indian language (MIL) or a classical Indian language like Sanskrit or Arabic.
9–12	No language is obligatory. This decision is left to the schools.

Source: Based on Annamalai (2001), Aggarwal (1966) and Ministry of Education (1964–6).

stood the test of time. Aggarwal (2000, 141) reports that the 1990 Ramamurti Report, which was supposed to evaluate this language in education policy, came to the conclusion that whatever may be the shortcomings of the TLF, it has been acceptable to all linguistic groups and it is not prudent to reopen the formula.

Since 1991 when the Government of India embarked on changing the socialist model of India's economy to a market-based one and thereby ushered in an era of globalization, the TLF has undergone a fundamental change. Under the TLF, English was offered in grade 5 or even later. However, globalization has opened up many sectors of employment where knowledge of English is necessary and consequently there is a tremendous demand for English from primary school itself. Thus some schools like the chain of Rajkiya Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalayas (State Sarvodaya Girls Schools) are beginning to offer English as medium of instruction from grade 1 (Vaish 2005). This change in the TLF demands concomitant changes at the levels of teacher education, pedagogy and curriculum that India is struggling with.

### *Singapore*

In keeping with the spirit of the 1956 All Party Report on Chinese Education, schools in Singapore offered diverse media of instruction. This bilingual education policy was found inadequate by the Goh Report of 1978 because of low levels of biliteracy and large numbers of failures in the Primary School Leaving Exam (PSLE). The Goh report led to major structural changes, the main one being a system of streaming in which children are grouped by ability as early as grade 4 through national exams. In 1987 the national school system was made English medium with the mother tongue, decided on the basis of paternity, to be learned as a second language (Gopinathan 2003). Thus the mother tongue of the child is determined by the school based on the ethnicity of his/her father, a policy that has created problems for children of mixed marriages. The shift to English-medium education was a result of poor enrolment in mother tongue-medium schools, as mentioned in the introduction to this essay. The point here is that English in Singapore was not imposed by the government, rather it was a market-driven demand by the community.

Further changes were made to the national school system on the basis of the 1991 Report on Improving Primary School Education. According to the recommendations of this report, curriculum time from P1 to P2 (Primary 1 to Primary 2 or Grade 1 to Grade 2) was as follows: 33% English, 20% Mathematics, 20% other subjects and 27% for mother tongue and moral education. Also, there were to be three language streams in primary

school based on the ability of students: English and Mother Tongue taught as first language (EM1), English and Mother Tongue taught as second language in a simplified curriculum (EM2), and English and Mother Tongue Oral where weak students are placed to learn both languages only orally (EMO or EM3) (Gopinathan 2003). In 2004 acting education minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam announced that EM1 and EM2 can be merged if the school so desires. In a more far-reaching change announced on 28 September 2006 during Tharman Shanmugaratnam's Annual Work Plan Seminar speech, EM3 will be scrapped by 2008 (Ng 2006). Currently, though changes are being implemented even as we write this essay, the difference between the streams is as follows (Davie 2004; *The Straits Times* 2004):

- EM1: the children take 'higher' Mother Tongue. Here both English and Mother Tongue are taught at first-language level. Mother Tongue is taught for five to six hours per week. Topics considered difficult, like poetry, are included here and are examinable. Only children considered to be very good at language are allowed to take 'higher' Mother Tongue.
- EM2: they take regular Mother Tongue. Mother Tongue is taught at second-language level for four to five hours per week. All the other subjects are the same as EM1.
- EM3: all the subjects taught here are at a basic or 'foundation' level. Mother Tongue is at a basic proficiency level with more emphasis on oral rather than writing skills. EM3 students take different (simplified) national exams compared to EM1 and EM2.

Thus the bilingual education system of English as L1 and mother tongue as L2 is implemented differently according to ability groupings that Singaporeans experience from an early age. The ability groupings of EM1/2 and EM3 continue through secondary school under different names: Normal Academic and Normal Technical, respectively. Furthermore, there are Special Assistance Plan schools (SAPs), initiated in 1980 for the brightest in the Chinese community where English and Mandarin are learned at first-language level. The SAP schools of Singapore are an indication of the rising instrumental value of Mandarin as another global language along with English.

### ***South Africa***

Post-apartheid South Africa's new Constitution of 1993/1996 embraced language as a basic human right and multilingualism as a national resource, raising nine major African languages to national official status alongside English and Afrikaans. This, along with the dismantling of the apartheid educational system, led to the burgeoning of multilingual, multicultural student populations in classrooms, schools, and universities nationwide. Immediately after the 1994 elections, the national Department of Education (DOE) initiated changes in the education system, with the goal of achieving a more equitable school system. This included a new language in education policy, announced in July 1997, and 'intended to foreground the mother tongue/primary language of pupils in school while making adequate provision for the effective learning of at least one other language' (Heugh 2000, 26). Constitutional and legislative provisions buttressing the promotion of multilingualism and language rights, through education as well as other social sectors, included not only the official recognition of 11 languages, but also the establishment of

language planning agencies and institutions such as the Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB) and the National Language Service (NLS).

South African language policy scholar Kathleen Heugh has pointed out, however, that more fanfare and firmer implementation were accorded the DOE's Curriculum 2005 Reform, announced shortly before the language in education policy in 1997, and, regrettably, working at cross-purposes with it in an unstated premise that all students would 'somehow end up learning through the medium of English' (Heugh 1999, 308; also 2000, 27). Moreover, the Revised National K-12 Curriculum continues to come up short when measured against research understandings on second-language acquisition and biliteracy (Heugh 2004). The New South Africa's language in education policy has been characterized as having gotten off to an 'extremely problematic start' (Alexander 2003, 15), inadequate in addressing the role of African languages and flawed in both conceptualization and implementation (Heugh 1999, 301).

South African scholars have documented ideologies favoring English in Black African communities of South Africa. Zulu, Xhosa, or other Black African parental demands for English-medium instruction for their children are fueled by the perception and reality of English as language of power; parents are simultaneously drawn to English by its hegemonic status and away from mother tongue education by a deep suspicion born of apartheid. Banda considers what would be needed to implement a truly additive bilingual policy, in light of the paradox whereby black and coloured parents increasingly demand English-medium instruction even while research makes clear that English-medium instruction is largely responsible for 'the general lack of academic skills and intellectual growth among blacks at high school and tertiary levels' (2000, 51). Vivian de Klerk's survey and interview study in Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape Province, focusing on Xhosa-speaking parents' decisions to send their children to English-medium schools, found that among the reasons parents gave for choosing an English school for their children were the need for a better education, the recognition that English is an international language and the hope that English would open the door to more job opportunities for their children (2000, 204–5). In an ecologically informed study of language use and identity construction in urban townships of Gauteng Province, Slabbert and Finlayson documented the high status of English among black people, for whom use of English marks the speaker as 'educated, affluent, serious, or authoritative' (Slabbert and Finlayson 2000, 128); in related work, they note the ongoing threat to multilingual education posed by the common perception of English as language of access (Finlayson and Slabbert 2004).

Despite such ideological and implementational challenges, Neville Alexander (2004) affirms emphatically that what parents are choosing is NOT in fact the English medium of instruction, but rather the superior resourcing and academic preparation offered by the English-medium schools. In those cases where schools can offer a well-resourced multilingual program taught by adequately prepared teachers, he says, parents are just as ready to choose that school.<sup>4</sup> At least one provincial education department has recently announced a new plan to bend its resources toward exactly that end (Adkins 2006). Because of its explicit provisions for education via the medium of African languages, South Africa's multilingual language in education policy is recognized as providing an important 'democratic space for the legal and peaceful promotion of multilingualism and for mother tongue based bilingual education in South Africa' (Alexander 2003, 15). It is these kinds of spaces for multilingual classrooms and the promotion of multilingualism that we explore in the next section on school linguistic practices.

### School linguistic practices and the continua of biliteracy: a sociolinguistic perspective

We begin this section with brief vignettes from classrooms in the three countries and follow with comments on them in the light of the continua of biliteracy framework.

#### **India: 7 April 2004, Delhi**

It is a sweltering day outside Amarjeet's class in the Rajkiya Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalay. Amarjeet is teaching Mathematics to the 3rd Standard (grade 3). Yesterday she had asked them to write tables from 1 to 15. She is checking that today and I (Vaish) sit outside the class and help her. Amarjeet is an experienced primary school teacher and has taught all classes in the primary school, sometimes even class 6. While we are checking the copy books, she assigns a new task to a few children who have finished: write numbers from 100 to 200. A student comes up to Amarjeet and shows her the seven times table in a copy book.

Amarjeet: *Ye aap table likh rehe ho jahaan tak aapko aati hai. Kitne ki table hai ye?* 'You are writing tables till where you know. What times table is this?'

Student: Seven.

Amarjeet: *To isme kitne jodne chahien? Aapne kitne kiye? Thirteen kar rahe hain ye dekhiye. Jitne ki table hai utne ko hi aage plus karna hai.* 'So how much should you add? How many did you add? Look, he has got 13 here. You have to add as many as the table is for.'

Amarjeet: *Bolo isme koi galti hai?* 'Tell me is there a mistake in this?'

[Silence]

Amarjeet: *... Abhi yeh third me hain na, isliye inhe multiplication aur division nahin aata. To jod ke karte hain.* '... Right now they are in grade 3 that's why they don't know multiplication and division. So they add and do it.'

#### **Singapore: 28 September 2004, Singapore**

Mrs. L is teaching social studies to grade 5 in Singapore. She has a diverse class of Indian, Malay and Chinese children in a school which would be considered typical of Singaporean schools. It is the EM2 class, where children are taught through the medium of English and the mother tongue is the L2.

Mrs. L: A hut. Hut right? Some people, oh not, not in Singapore right now okay. All over the world, people from all over the world stays in, okay? Like a hut. Maybe some part of Malaysia people still stay in a hut. Remember? Okay. So you can get your answers from here or you may erm recall what you have learnt previously alright? I'll give you until 12.20. Okay, write it down now.

Student: Miss Lee, number one write what answer?

Mrs. L: Number one will write yes. Okay, the rest will contribute ... Go into your group now...

Male student: We stay here until what time?

Mrs. L: Until end of the day...

Male student: Miss Lee, last time one hor [a discourse particle in Singlish meant to get the attention of the listener] not now one hor?

Mrs. L: Depends. Whatever that you know of.

Male student: Any house also can ah?

#### **South Africa: February 2000, Cape Town**

At Battswood Primary School, a formerly 'coloured' school in Cape Town, 30 Xhosa and 19 English/Afrikaans bilingual children, now in their third year of primary school, have experienced bilingual-biliterate instruction from their first year. In grade 1, the teachers sang many songs and did rhymes with the whole class, typing up rhymes and songs and

putting them in plastic sleeves with an English one on one side and Xhosa on the other so that the children could serve as readers to each other. Now in their third year with the children, the teachers read daily stories in both Xhosa and English (and sometimes Afrikaans), and have collected an adequate selection of Xhosa and English picture storybooks, which they encourage the children to read in bilingual pairs. They use interactive writing and journal writing, with the English- and Xhosa-speaking teachers and PRAESA staff members writing back to the children in their respective languages, a strategy which has proved to provide powerful motivation for the children's use of both languages in their writing.

A journal extract from Zindi (using her original formulations and spellings), writing in Xhosa with teacher Ntombi Nkence:

Z: *Bendiye emaxhoseni ndaleqwa hinkom ndiyigezele. Ndacol iswazi ndaybetha ndangena endlini.* 'I was in the rural areas and a cow that I was teasing chased me. I picked up a stick and I hit the cow, chasing it away and I went in the house.'

N: *Ubusithini xa ubuyigezela? Yhu unesibindi. Mna bendizakubaleka qha.* 'How were you teasing it? Yhu, you are so brave. I would have just run away.' ...

Z: *Bendiyinyonyezele ndayisuzela ndayi jula nga maanzi ndabetha ithole.* 'I made funny faces and I farted at it and I threw water at it and I beat the cow's calf.'

N: *Uzoya nini ngoku emaxhoseni?* 'When are you going again?'

Z: *Ndizakuya ngeholidayi ezayo. Wena uzoyanini na wena?* 'I'm going in the next holidays. When are you going?'

N: *EMdantsane? Ngeholid kaDisemba.* 'To Mdantsane? During December holidays.'

Z: *Zikhona imoto apho. Zikhoma inkomo apho. Zingapi.* 'Are there cars there? Are there cows there? How many are they?'

N: *Azikhona iinkomo, kodwa zikhona iimoto. Zininzi andinokwazi ukuzibala.* 'There are no cows but there are cars. They are so many I wouldn't be able to count them.'

Z: *Baandi phazami utsho eziphi imoto. Zingaphi imoto zakho wenu. Zezo uzixelayo ezininzi zakowenu.* 'If I am not mistaken which cars are you talking about? How many cars [are there] at your house? Are these the many cars you are talking about at your house?'

N: *Akukho moto ekhaya. Kodwa iitshomi zam zinee moto. Ipolo, Toyota neGolf. Zintle. Xa ndinemali ndokuyithenga nam. Unayo umama wakho imoto?* 'There are no cars at home. But my friends have got cars. They have Polo, Toyota and Golf. They are beautiful. When I have money I'll also buy one. Does your mother have a car?'

Z: *Hayi akanayo imoto kodwa utata wam unayo imoto. Yitoyota. Iblue.* 'No she doesn't have a car but my father does have a car. It is a Toyota. It's blue.'

N: *Unethamsanqa.* 'You are lucky.'

(Bloch and Alexander 2003)

The central tension we see between the processes of globalization and school linguistic practice is the rising demand for the linguistic capital of English, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the challenge to bilingual programs to meet this demand by mobilizing the child's mother tongue as a resource. In other words: How can bilingual programs make sustainable additive bilingualism their main educational outcome? One way of doing this is pedagogic practice that explicitly valorizes all points along the continua of biliterate context, media, content, and development (Hornberger 2002, 2003). The classroom vignettes above illustrate what that might look like.

In the transcript from India, the teacher, Amarjeet, is teaching Mathematics in the English-medium stream. All literacy practices in her class are in English. However, Amarjeet uses Hindi to explain the concept of multiplication to the children. In the seven times table that the student brings to her, he has written  $7 \times 2 = 13$ . She tries to explain this mistake to him using code switching between English and Hindi:

*Jitne ki table hai utne ko hi aage plus karna hai.*

'You have to add only as many as the table is for.'

In terms of the continua of biliteracy, she draws simultaneously on both Hindi and English media of the learners' biliterate L1–L2 development, in the service of communicating and contextualizing the decontextualized curricular content they are working with.

In the case of Singapore, where there might be more than one ethnic group in the classroom, the teacher does not want to advantage one group by speaking in Tamil, Malay or Mandarin, so she uses English, consistent with the English-medium policy. The teacher is conducting group work in a social studies class on 'types of housing.' Though the teacher tries her best to use standard English the students ask her questions in Singlish, a colloquial dialect of standard English. For instance one of the students asks, 'Any house also can ah?', meaning 'can I write about any type of house?' The teacher does not correct the Singlish of the students because she is focused on getting the content of the lesson across to them. By entertaining questions in Singlish, the teacher invites and encourages questions, creating an interactive dialogic classroom. This is important in the Singaporean context as classes tend to be teacher fronted and it is difficult to elicit student participation. The teacher circumvents this problem by creating a space for Singlish in the classroom while trying her best to give the children as much input as possible in standard English.

In terms of the continua of biliteracy, the media on which the teacher again draws simultaneously are not different languages in this case, but varieties of the same language, English, which nevertheless reflect the multilingual context and local ways of knowing (content) in and through which the children's biliteracy is developing.

The classroom vignette from South Africa is about ways that teachers draw on and attend to developing and supporting their students' mother tongue, even in the face of the dominance and appeal of English. The interactive writing excerpt in Zindi's mother tongue Xhosa 'shows vividly how home life experiences (vernacular, contextualized content), in this case "rural areas", can both connect with, and have a place in the classroom as well as help a child to discover more about her world. It seems as if Zindi was comparing cows with cars as a guide for checking on just how rural Mdantsane actually is' (Bloch and Alexander 2003, 113).

In this case, the PRAESA group works with the teachers to encourage simultaneous exposure for the Xhosa- and English-speaking children to the media of biliteracy, concentrating on Xhosa and English (while not excluding Afrikaans). As regards the content of biliteracy, 'the teachers have had to move from the safety of the decontextualised content of a rigid phonics-based part-to-whole skills programme to face the real evidence of what their pupils actually know and can do, thereby drawing on contextualised, vernacular, minority (i.e. majority) knowledge' (Bloch and Alexander 2003, 100).

In each case above, teachers engage in pedagogic practice that explicitly valorizes all points along the continua of biliterate context, media, content, and development (Hornberger 2002, 2003). Such hybrid multilingual classroom practices, recently and eloquently theorized and documented as translanguaging practices (Baker 2003, Williams 1994 on Wales; Blackledge and Creese, forthcoming, Creese and Blackledge, forthcoming a, forthcoming b on Britain; García 2007, 2008 on the USA), or bilingual supportive scaffolding practices (Saxena 2008 on Brunei), offer the possibility for teachers and learners to access academic content through the linguistic resources they bring to the classroom while simultaneously acquiring new ones.

### **Conclusion: globalization and English-language teaching in ecological and sociolinguistic perspective**

While cognizant of the detrimental effects of globalization on the developing world, we agree with economists like Bhagwati (2004) and Nobel Laureate Sen (2002), themselves

from the developing world, that it is not globalization in itself that is the enemy but the inequitable distribution of its benefits. Here we have focused on the global spread of English and inequitable access to the linguistic capital it represents. Given the kinds of multilingual communities and policies we have considered here, what media of instruction would meet the demands of the community in terms of both access to the linguistic capital of English and dissemination of curriculum content through a language comprehensible to the children?

The current multilingual language in education policies of all three countries are still struggling to meet these demands. The TLF of India has been found lacking in that it offers English too late, beginning only in grade 6; recent changes in media of instruction in government schools like the RSKV provide new access to English for subaltern communities. We see the recent change in the TLF, then, as an egalitarian move intended to help the urban disadvantaged in India access the linguistic capital of English, while we are also acutely aware of the enormous challenges to teacher training, pedagogy and curriculum that must be met before this goal can be achieved.

As recently as 6 June 2006 the national newspaper of Singapore, *The Straits Times*, carried the headlines, 'Ministry to look into improving teaching of English language' (Huei and Almenoar 2006), indicating that despite being the medium of instruction since 1987, English standards are deteriorating. Polyspeak in newspapers is often about low standards of English as an outcome of the linguistic practice of speaking Singlish most of the time. Thus language ideology in Singapore tends not to value Singlish as a linguistic resource. However, Singaporeans feel that use of Singlish displays their identity as much if not more than their mother tongue.

In South Africa, there is evidence that the multilingual language in education policy opens up spaces for counter discourses of multiculturalism and usefulness of African mother tongues alongside the pervasive English-only discourse in schools and classrooms (Chick 2003). Such discourses and classrooms are working at the less powerful micro, oral, and multilingual ends of the context continua of biliteracy to challenge power relations at macro, literate, and monolingual English levels of the continua in the school and the wider society; at stake with the new policy is a gradual shift of power towards the languages of the majority of the people, who continue to be treated as a social minority (Bloch and Alexander 2003).

This essay does not pretend to offer a one-size-fits-all concrete solution to the ecological paradox of English as tool of decolonization for multilingual populations seeking equitable access to a globalizing economy. Instead, we offer various scenarios showing how ecologically and sociolinguistically informed pedagogies grounded in the continua of biliteracy framework offer approaches to meeting this seemingly paradoxical demand. Our main purpose has been to argue that use of mother tongue in the classroom, or as in the case of Singapore the judicious use of the quotidian register, can be a resource through which children can access Standard English while also continuing and indeed cultivating multilingual practices inclusive of their own local languages.

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## Notes

1. The multilingual education innovation at Battswood School described below is one aspect of the larger multilingual education initiative of PRAESA – the Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa, directed by Neville Alexander and based at the University of Cape Town. The Battswood classroom team included Carole Bloch, a PRAESA early literacy specialist, Ntombizanele Nkence, a Xhosa-speaking teacher employed by PRAESA, and Erica Fellies, a Battswood teacher (Bloch and Alexander 2003).
2. For an updated list, see Census of India 2001 at: [http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Census\\_Data\\_2001/Census\\_Data\\_Online/Language](http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/Census_Data_Online/Language).
3. See [http://lawmin.nic.in/8th Schedule](http://lawmin.nic.in/8th%20Schedule).
4. Comments from the floor at the 2004 Southern African Applied Linguistics Association (SAALA) Conference in Limpopo, whose theme ‘Ten years of multilingualism: fact or fantasy?’ focused on a review of South Africa’s Multilingual Language Policy.

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