Language Policy

Lisa J. McEntee-Atalianis
Humphrey Tonkin *Editors*

Language and Sustainable Development

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Language Policy

Volume 32

The last half century has witnessed an explosive shift in language diversity involving a rapid spread of global languages and an associated threat to small languages. The diffusion of global languages, the stampede towards English, the counter-pressures in the form of ethnic efforts to reverse or slow the process, the continued determination of nation-states to assert national identity through language, and, in an opposite direction, the greater tolerance shown to multilingualism and the increasing concern for language rights, all these are working to make the study of the nature and possibilities of language policy and planning a field of swift growth.

The series will publish empirical studies of general language policy or of language education policy, or monographs dealing with the theory and general nature of the field. We welcome detailed accounts of language policy-making - who is involved, what is done, how it develops, why it is attempted. We will publish research dealing with the development of policy under different conditions and the effect of implementation. We will be interested in accounts of policy development by governments and governmental agencies, by large international companies, foundations, and organizations, as well as the efforts of groups attempting to resist or modify governmental policies. We will also consider empirical studies that are relevant to policy of a general nature, e.g. the local effects of the developing European policy of starting language teaching earlier, the numbers of hours of instruction needed to achieve competence, selection and training of language teachers, the language effects of the Internet. Other possible topics include the legal basis for language policy, the role of social identity in policy development, the influence of political ideology on language policy, the role of economic factors, policy as a reflection of social change.

The series is intended for scholars in the field of language policy and others interested in the topic, including sociolinguists, educational and applied linguists, language planners, language educators, sociologists, political scientists, and comparative educationalists.

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Language and Sustainable Development

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Series Editor's Foreword

LANGUAGE POLICY BOOK SERIES: OUR AIMS AND APPROACH

Recent decades have witnessed a rapid expansion of interest in language policy studies as transcultural connections deepen and expand all across the globe. Whether it is to facilitate more democratic forms of participation, or to respond to demands for increased educational opportunity from marginalised communities, or to better understand the technologization of communication, language policy and planning has come to the fore as a practice and a field of study. In all parts of the world, the push for language policy is a reflection of such rapid and deep globalisation, undertaken by governments to facilitate or diversify trade, to design and deliver multilingual public services, to teach less-commonly taught languages and to revitalise endangered languages. There is also interest in forms of language policy to bolster new and more inclusive kinds of language-based and literate citizenship.

Real world language developments have pushed scholars to generate new theory on language policy and to explore new empirical accounts of language policy processes. At the heart of these endeavours is the search for the resolution of communication problems between ethnic groups, nations, individuals, authorities and citizens, educators and learners. Key research concerns have been the rapid spread of global languages, especially English and more recently Chinese, and the economic, social and identity repercussions that follow, linked to concerns about the accelerating threat to the vitality of small languages across the world. Other topics that have attracted research attention have been persisting communication inequalities, the changing language situation in different parts of the world, and how language and literacy abilities affect social opportunity, employment and identity.

In the very recent past, language diversity itself has been a popular field of study, to explore particular ways to classify and understand multilingualism, the fate of particular groups of languages or individual languages, and questions of literacy, script and orthography. In this complex landscape of language change, efforts of sub-national groups, and national, to reverse or slow language shift have dominated concerns of policy makers as well as scholars. While there is a discernible trend towards greater openness to multilingualism and increasing concern for language rights, we can also note the continued determination of nation-states to assert a singular identity through language, sometimes through repressive measures.

For all these reasons, systematic, careful and critical study of the nature and possibilities of language policy and planning is a topic of growing global significance.

In response to this dynamic environment of change and complexity, this series publishes empirical research of general language policy in diverse domains, such as education, or monographs dealing with the theory and general nature of the field. We welcome detailed accounts of language policy-making which explore the key actors, their modes of conceiving their activity and the perspective of scholars reflecting on the processes and outcomes of policy.

Our series aims to understand how language policy develops, why it is attempted, how it is critiqued, defended and elaborated or changed. We are interested in publishing research dealing with the development of policy under different conditions and the effect of its implementation.

We are interested in accounts of policy undertaken by governments but also by non-governmental bodies, by international corporations, foundations, and the like, as well as the efforts of groups attempting to resist or modify governmental policies.

We will also consider empirical studies that are relevant to policy of a general nature, e.g. the local effects of transnational policy influence, such as the United Nations, the European Union or regional bodies in Africa, Asia and the Americas. We encourage proposals dealing with practical questions of when to commence language teaching, the numbers of hours of instruction needed to achieve set levels of competence, selection and training of language teachers, the language effects of the Internet, issues of program design and innovation.

Other possible topics include non-education domains such as legal and health interpreting, community- and family-based language planning, and language policy from bottom-up advocacy, and language change that arises from traditional forms of power alongside influence and modelling of alternatives to established forms of communication.

Contemporary language policy studies can examine the legal basis for language policy, the role of social identity in policy development, the influence of political ideology on language policy formulation, the role of economic factors in success or failure of language plans or studies of policy as a reflection of social change.

We do not wish to limit or define the limits of what language policy research can encompass, and our primary interest is to solicit serious book-length examinations, whether the format is for a single-authored or multi-authored volume or a coherent edited work with multiple contributors.

The series is intended for scholars in the field of language policy and others interested in the topic, including sociolinguists, educational and applied linguists, language planners, language educators, sociologists, political scientists, and comparative educationalists. We welcome your submissions or an enquiry from you about ideas for work in our series that opens new directions for the field of language policy.

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Contents

Introduction: Diversity of Language, Unity of Purpose

Humphrey Tonkin

Abstract The term "sustainability" has a 40-year history, going back to the Brundtland Commission of 1982–1983 and its later report. The UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) grew out of the Brundtland Report and in turn led to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Language is largely absent as an issue in both the MDGs and the SDGs, but it affects all aspects of sustainability and development, and is a key issue in the United Nations and its outreach to civil society. It affects human rights, equality (and quality) of education, political participation – in fact human development in general, and its relation to economic development.

Keywords Language · Sustainability · Education · Peacekeeping · Language policy · United Nations

In 1982–1983 the United Nations established the World Commission on Environment and Development under the leadership of Gro Harlem Brundtland, prime minister of Norway. It was largely thanks to the Norwegian prime minister and her team that the term "sustainability" gained currency in international development circles and beyond. The report of the Commission, *Our Common Future*, published in 1987, defined sustainability as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs." The report's inclusive title (the future is common to all of us: we are all included in what happens to the planet) implies that this is no ordinary matter, no isolated campaign or programme of the United Nations or any other body, but something of importance to us all. While the United Nations may be an organisation of governments, of individual sovereign states, the implication behind the Brundtland Report is that all of society, at every level, has a common stake in the future, and needs to be included. Not only was the

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report an outcome of the international governmental organisation called the United Nations but it implied a far more comprehensive role for that body and a changed sense of itself. Thirty and more years later, the UN is still only part way towards this new sense of self, even as the planet is threatened as never before. Bogged down in rivalries and hostilities, in seemingly intractable political and economic disagreements, the UN, despite good intentions (see, for example, the Secretary-General's Report: United Nations, 2019), has yet to mobilise the world community to the degree required for so massive a project. Indeed, it sometimes seems that the UN is a reflection of the state of the world rather than an attempt to rise above that condition.

This book is an attempt to address one aspect of sustainability: language. If we wish to unite humanity around a common goal, we must first address the need for effective and inclusive communication: talking is of no avail if it is not accompanied by understanding – and understanding will not lead to action if it is unaccompanied by persuasion. Persuasion implies listening, because our common future requires consensus. Language is also a form of identity, and is all too frequently used to mark some people as inferior to others, or as an indicator of superiority. It is a cross-cutting indicator that has an effect on everything we do, and it is often hierarchical in nature.

When international policymakers meet to plan and negotiate, they must first decide what language or languages they will use for their deliberations. The decision is important because it will determine the relative ease or difficulty with which the various parties will carry on discussion, even if professional interpretation is provided. Some people will have a vested interest in one way of proceeding; others will have another. The outcome will balance the appearance of fairness with the gaining of rhetorical advantage: any student of pragmatics knows that skill in self-expression (in large part a learned skill) helps the person who possesses it. But once the prevailing language practice is decided upon, the procedural issue of language will generally be put aside and matters of substance addressed. Under such circumstances, language is seen not as a "matter of substance" but as a matter of procedure. Language will likely not be mentioned again, at least not in the context of policymaking.

Yet language is *both* procedural *and* substantive. The language or languages that one speaks will have a significant effect on the way that one lives one's life and on the policy envelope in which one lives it. Virtually every international policy decision has its linguistic aspect, indeed is arrived at through the medium of language and affects those who express themselves in language – and that is all of us. Language can be used to include or exclude, to mark people as belonging to a particular group, to give one group an advantage over another. In multilingual societies, the language used in a classroom is not just a matter of convenience but will give the children for whom it is the mother tongue (L1/Lx) significant, and long-term, advantage over the others. As they grow beyond childhood, what language they use and speak may determine whether they get to vote, whether they stay out of jail, whether they contribute fully in the workplace, where they get to live, whether they can enjoy their own culture. Individuals who do not speak the prevailing language(s) (often the language(s) of government) may become wholly invisible to the policy-makers who decide their fate. Such policymakers, even if they are favourably disposed to inclusion, may make decisions that exclude – simply because they do not see, or sufficiently appreciate, how important the language that one speaks really is, and because national cohesion trumps diversity.[1]

And to leave language out of the sustainability debate is a failure to acknowledge a basic characteristic of human society.

It is true that language is fluid in the sense that one can acquire additional languages without rejecting those one already has. Languages can be learned: they are at least partially additive. But the language they are born into (generally just one language, sometimes more), the L1/Lx, the so-called (as the UN references it) mother language, tends to be the language through which young children gain their early knowledge. The use of this language in the school they attend will help them with this vital early learning: too many children attend schools that use languages they do not, at least initially, understand. They are disadvantaged from the start.

And what is true of schools is true of language policy in so many other areas: in politics, in the economy, in everyday life. In short, language issues don't just go away once a decision is made about what language to use in a given context: choice of language determines the substance of much that follows. Language difference is a reality that will not go away completely and needs to be taken into account. In this sense language is bound up with issues of linguistic justice, of fair treatment of all, and of political and social inclusion (or exclusion).

This book, then, addresses the importance of considering language in matters of sustainability, where decisions on language determine the effectiveness of outcomes. It begins with consideration of language in the implementation of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but goes beyond that to look at linguistic phenomena that impede or promote sustainability in general.

The 17 SDGs, approved by the United Nations General Assembly for the period 2015–2030, replaced and went beyond the eight Millennium Development Goals (2000–2015), which were themselves an outcome of the consideration of sustainability by the Brundtland Commission. With the SDGs, the UN's aim was to engage not only governments, but "all people, everywhere," at all levels of civil society. The UN recognises, or at least appears to recognise, that implementing these goals will require active, bi- and multilateral democratic communication, in a multiplicity of languages. Several of the Goals imply, although (surprisingly and somewhat alarmingly) none makes direct reference to, issues of language, but always merely as one indicator, among many, of bias or discrimination, never for its own sake. The truth is, however, that there are numerous linguistic obstacles standing in the way of the

[1] The absence of concern for language in policy debates is puzzling – and by no means confined to the debate over sustainability. See, for example, Ives (2015) who cites Benedict Anderson's (1983) idea of "imagined communities" and its linkage of the development of standard languages and the nation state – a concern among linguists and political scientists at precisely the time that the idea of sustainability was first emerging.

successful realization of the Goals and of sustainability in general. It is these that this book seeks to uncover.

The volume includes seminal work by leading scholars from three continents; many of whom first presented their work at symposia organized by the Study Group on Language and the United Nations, an informal grouping of scholars, UN personnel and diplomats who for the past several years have been meeting annually to discuss some topic relating to language and international affairs.[2] The current series goes back to 1999 and was preceded by a series of conferences on language and communication sponsored by what was then the UN Department of Conference Services. This earlier series began in 1983. A prominent participant in many of these events was the late Kurt Müller, who edited two of the volumes of proceedings published in the 1990s[3] and who did the initial work on assembling the present volume, primarily from papers delivered in recent symposia. This volume is dedicated to Kurt's memory.

The various chapters, although their scope is wider than the SDGs, cover themes that cut across many of the Sustainable Development Goals, while also providing examples of language dimensions within specific SDGs. Chapters address such issues and topics as language and economics, the role of UN agencies and actors (such as UNESCO) in promoting multilingualism for sustainability, language use in peacekeeping and stabilization operations, and sustainability in relation to language teaching in various communities and settings (migrants, workers, vulnerable populations). The book addresses not only the benefits but also the challenges of supporting multilingualism in organisations and in other sites of international co-operation across different sectors and communities.

The book makes a case for prioritizing linguistic issues in matters of sustainability. Most importantly it stresses the need for communication to take place in languages and via media that recipients and stakeholders can access and understand. It suggests that support should be given to facilitate such linguistic communication. In the case of the SDGs themselves, the book argues that there has been limited consideration or explicit incorporation of language in their development by the UN. It suggests that language issues need urgent consideration even at this late stage in the UN's Agenda 2030.

We begin, then, with the rather startling discovery that languages are barely mentioned in the SDGs themselves, nor are they given more than passing attention in the targets that accompany the goals.[4] Mark Fettes points out that the SDGs, existing as they do in a world of Realpolitik in which some issues are easier to address than others, are based on what their authors considered realistic, if aspirational,

[2] See, for example, the collection of papers on linguistic equality, published as a special issue of *Language Problems and Language Planning* (2015, vol. 39, no. 3).

[3] *Language as Barrier and Bridge* (1992), and *Language Status in the Post-Cold-War Era* (1996), both published in Lanham, MD, by University Press of America.

[4] See the report of the Symposium on Language, the Sustainable Development Goals, and Vulnerable Populations: João Pedro Marinotti (Ed.) (2016), at https://www.cal.org/resource-center/publications-products/language-sdg

expectations of what could be achieved given the state of international co-operation. He points to the relative lack of attention to questions of ethnicity, a difficult topic in a world of nation states, to which language would naturally be connected. The Millennium Development Goals that preceded the Sustainable Development Goals were also deficient in their lack of attention to language, as Suzanne Romaine (2013) observed some years ago – and perhaps for similar reasons. The problem is all the more acute in that the SDGs, couched in the generalities that must inevitably prevail in a relatively short document intended for the enlightenment and inspiration of all, take on a different picture when they are translated into goals and targets. In a recent article, Gloria Novovic (2021) has referred to this process as "policy shrinking" – the selective measurement of progress along quite specific (and measurable) lines. It is not that the whole is the sum of its parts but that the parts are apt to serve as a substitute for the whole. And of course the SDGs were always "goals" – a combination of extrapolation and inspiration. However, these goals fall short as far as issues of language are concerned.

Fettes traces the origins of the SDGs not to the Millennium Development Goals but to the Brundtland Report of 1987, where, as we have noted, the idea of sustainable development was first mooted. Utterly central to the idea of sustainability is the reduction or elimination of inequalities – and achieving that objective necessitates looking beyond the particular constitutional arrangements of individual states to the people themselves. As Lisa J. McEntee-Atalianis reminds us, the idea of "leaving no one behind" was a central feature of the rhetoric surrounding the launching of the SDGs. This is a bold departure from the notion of the United Nations as a club of sovereign states. It involves engagement of so-called civil society, indeed the creation of a partnership of multiple stakeholders which may on occasion run counter to the individual workings of individual states. But, if the United Nations bureaucracy is subtly shifting to engage a broader public, its language policies are essentially static.

In our third chapter, Lisa J. McEntee-Atalianis explores the nature of these language arrangements, which, while they have shifted over the 77 years since the UN's founding, still reflect the balance of power prevailing after the defeat of the Axis powers in the mid-1940s. They have little to do with public opinion, except to the extent that it influences the actions of individual states, nor with civil society. There is a certain irony in the declarations, no doubt sincere, of the present Secretary-General, António Guterres, that we must listen to the voices of the populations that the United Nations serves – when half the world's population has little or no command of any of the six official and working languages. Indeed, if the various stakeholders are to be adequately included, a great deal must be done to open channels of information – but information sharing is both costly (underfunding is a constant UN problem, as is pre-emptive earmarking of funds for particular purposes by member-states) and potentially problematic for the governments concerned. McEntee-Atalianis documents significant progress in recent years in the management and expansion of multilingualism at the UN (see the Secretary-General's Reports on Multilingualism of 2019, 2021), but we must still note that the stance of the UN has more to do with talking than with listening. Listening, when all is said and done, is more difficult: it requires stronger engagement with civil society and it involves not only the languages that the UN speaks but also the languages spoken by its constituents.

An area of particular concern to the contributors to this volume is the matter of education and Goal 4 of the SDGs: to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all." Behind this goal is the conviction that education is the key to social mobility and to the most effective use of human capital. Traditionally it is the particular concern of UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, though it intersects with the work of almost all the components of the United Nations. In Chap. 4, Francis Hult traces the history and current implications of UNESCO's programmes in education and particularly multilingual education. Almost from the first, UNESCO has been interested in the promotion of mother tongue education – giving as many children as possible the opportunity to learn in their own languages, while at the same time giving them access to the full cultural and economic life of society. This interest continues today. Hult quotes from a recent UNESCO document: "UNESCO's work on languages and sustainable development is based on a Human Rights approach, and guided by Sustainable Development Goal 4, which aims to ensure quality education to enable every woman and man to acquire the skills, knowledge and values they need to participate fully in the peaceful development of their societies." Less clear, however, is the extent to which such thinking informs sustainability planning by other UN agencies and international bodies.

Nor can we be entirely sure whether there is general agreement on the meaning of the "human rights approach" adopted by UNESCO. The seminal document in this regard is of course the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. Though it has been reinterpreted and expanded between the year of its adoption and today in a host of international agreements, the precise import of its reference to language is unclear, in part because its drafters tended to focus on individual rather than collective rights (Glendon, 2001). Yet language and culture imply both individual access and collective practice. Article 2, for example, stresses the individual's right to non-discrimination and is quite clear that the individual cannot be discriminated against on grounds of language: "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status."

But what does that mean? Does it mean that language, like race, is a characteristic of the individual that should be set aside, i.e. not used as grounds for discrimination, or does it imply affirmative policies on the part of the state to allow the individual to use his or her language, and in what circumstances and contexts? Article 26 declares that everyone has the right to education, but does that right extend to education in the mother tongue/L1? Article 27 states that "everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community," but to what extent does that imply recognition of minority groups and the provision of services to such groups – and what is meant by "*the* community" (Morsink, 1999).

Christine Hélot's contribution to the discussion brings the issue of multilingual education down to the practical level by addressing the question of multilingual development among small children. If the ability to cross linguistic boundaries through multilingualism can be regarded as an asset, and if such multilingualism can help to integrate families in an environment, such as Europe, where families are increasingly mobile, both within the confines of Europe and beyond, what can be done to encourage such multilingualism? The issue, she suggests, is not simply integration of children who speak other languages into the mainstream school system, but language maintenance as well, so that their family language(s) can be maintained and so that they can grow up as multilingual contributors to our mobile society. She links these issues to not only SDG 4 (on quality education) but also SDG 10 (reducing inequalities), SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities), and SDG 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions). Sustainability depends upon the harmonious integration of disparate populations – and that points to the ability to cross linguistic boundaries through multilingualism and other means.

Chapters 6 and 7 carry the question of education further, in two settings where providing linguistic opportunity to all presents special challenges. Colleen du Plessis and Theo du Plessis explore the question of inclusive education in one particular setting – South Africa – a country where language policy has been both contentious and divisive. Their contribution both stresses the importance of mother tongue education in a multilingual setting and emphasizes the still unequal standing of the various South African languages. Can the state provide adequate resources to serve the educational needs of so multilingual a population, and can it prevent the development of a hierarchy of languages in which some languages are valued more than others and the speakers of those languages enjoy educational advantages denied the others? While policy documents mostly favour the equitable treatment of all official languages and all sections of the population, the reality on the ground, with its financial and political pressures, may be very different.

If social cohesion and opportunities for human development are essential for sustainable countries in a sustainable world, South Africa, with its ambitious constitutional goals but often divisive political forces, may offer a test case. Will its official languages be adequately developed to play a full and complete role in all aspects of the modern state? Will multilingualism find the support needed from both the powerful and the less powerful elements in society? Will its diverse voices be brought together to develop practical and sustainable answers to social and environmental challenges? Anything less may be insufficient to address the goals of the SDGs and the future of the planet.

Rosemary Salomone turns our attention to the Philippines, where the relationship between the English language (increasingly the dominant economic and intellectual force in that country, but also a major educational barrier for many less privileged students) and other languages plays out in a somewhat similar way. Successive governments have seen English as a path to integration into the global economy, and some have sought to unify the country around versions of the most widely spoken language, Tagalog. But Tagalog, or Filipino, is but one of many other languages spoken in this geographically dispersed country (170 of them, in fact), and educational resources are insufficient to create a robust educational system in those areas away from the capital. The stress on English favours the well-to-do, but (in the language of the SDGs) leaves altogether too many people behind. The multilingual policies, based on mother tongue education, that the country needs are lacking, nor is there the political will to change the situation. Perhaps more strongly than any of the other chapters in this collection, Salomone's contribution makes it abundantly clear that, unless poverty is reduced (SDG 1) and inequalities diminished (SDG 10), and unless strong democratic institutions are established (SDG 16), the country will continue to follow the erratic political path that it has followed since the American occupation a century and a quarter ago. A key element in any possible recovery is a multilingual educational environment providing opportunity for all.

We are, of course, very aware that education is only one field where language is an important, indeed essential, issue. We are likewise aware that lack of attention to language issues will hobble the effort at inclusiveness and opportunity that underlies all of the SDGs in various ways. SDG 1 (eliminating poverty) means not only providing economic support but creating sustainable jobs and harnessing the language competences of the entire population in supportive ways. As Fettes reminds us, the field of language policy and planning was born of decolonization and the need to create sustainable linguistic arrangements in highly diverse but newly independent states. Current needs are not dissimilar – but now the need for inclusive language policies is global in scope.

And what applies to SDG 1 applies to each of the SDGs: essential to sustainable development is full participation – and full participation involves making maximal use of the existing language skills of all people and integrating these skills into a multilingual and self-reinforcing network.

We complete the volume with two chapters that feed into the debate on sustainability, but from somewhat different directions. Our first excursion – towards language and peacekeeping – takes us to countries and regions that are in turmoil. Without peace, sustainability is little more than a dream – and sustainability planning is made all the more difficult for the neighbours and allies of warring parties. With peace and trust much can be achieved. We tend not to think of military action, or even action by military forces seconded for peacekeeping purposes, in terms of language, yet language is essential to the de-escalation of tension and the building of trust – what the United Nations calls peacebuilding.[5] The UN's record in this area has been spotty: too often the UN's peacekeepers and peacebuilders do not speak the languages of those countries and regions they are seeking to pacify. The UN

[5] Contributions to this still insufficiently examined field include Hilary Footitt and Michael Kelly, (Eds.) (2012), *Languages at War: Policies and Practices of Language Contacts in Conflict* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), and Michael Kelly and Catherine Baker (2013), *Interpreting the Peace: Peace Operations, Conflict and Language in Bosnia-Herzegovina* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan). Recent commendable efforts by Red T and other organisations to draw attention to the lack of protection for language workers (interpreters and translators) in conflict zones only underline the lack of understanding of the role of language.

often has no choice: it must make use of forces of those countries willing to help. Kurt Müller's own experience with multilingualism in military contexts goes beyond the primary use of language in military situations, such as intelligence-gathering, and covers informal interactions among allied forces and, above all, relations between military forces and local civilians in which communication is on the latter's terms and is intended to de-escalate tensions. A worldwide effort at sustainability cannot afford to ignore those parts of the world that are least ready.

In his chapter on UNESCO, Francis Hult points to an increased interest in mother tongue education on the part of the World Bank. It is a hopeful sign: human development and economic development go hand in hand. François Grin's chapter rounds out our excursion into language and sustainable development by pointing out some of the pitfalls on either side of the dividing line between economics and linguistics. He points out that linguistic diversity and linguistic fragmentation are not necessarily the same thing, and that linguistic diversity implies very different things if we are discussing societies or discussing individuals: individual ability to cross languages is obviously an advantage, whereas societal division, where part of a community speaks one language and another part speaks another and there is little *individual* bridging of the two, is a disadvantage. Linguistic and cultural diversity are not always the same. On the other side of the line, Grin cites the tendency of linguists to misunderstand the nature of language use in the workplace, failing to take into consideration economic factors and processes.

There is a more general conclusion here. Sustainable development is a lot more than simply those things that are easy to measure, easy to quantify, easy to describe. And goals and targets depend upon measurability. Thus the "policy shrinking" that we referred to earlier afflicts all aspects of the quest for sustainability. And, if there is one thing that is more difficult to measure than others, it is surely language – not least because we need it to talk about it, and because it is the very essence of our humanity.

In this collection, we touch on only a few of the many linguistic issues surrounding the sustainability debate. It is time to look at the entire enterprise through the prism of language and to work linguistic issues into that debate. If the field of language policy and planning had its immediate origins in decolonization and newly independent states, it is time now, half a century or more later, for the field to turn to global concerns and to the sustainability of the world as a whole.

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Language and the Sustainable Development Goals: Challenges to Language Policy and Planning

Mark Fettes

Abstract Language is not mentioned in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), nor was it seriously considered as an important dimension of social and economic development in the UN planning process that preceded them. Nonetheless, a close examination of some key ideas put forth in that process challenges us to rethink some long-standing assumptions in mainstream language policy and planning (LPP). The analysis focuses on the concepts of (in)equality, agency, and capability as central to the sustainable development agenda. In each case, the UN's neglect of language is shown to be connected to its reliance on state-centric and rationalist social imaginaries that have also been central to the field of LPP, but that undermine the viability of the SDGs as a sustainable development paradigm. A case is made for moving LPP away from its original concern with "the language problems of developing nations" towards a new focus on "language solutions for a sustainable world."

Keywords Agency · Capabilities theory · Language equality · Language policy and planning · Sustainable development · United Nations

The field of language planning was originally and primarily conceived as a means of addressing "the language problems of developing nations" (Baldauf, 2005; Fettes, 1997; Fishman et al., 1968). Among the "problems" most widely recognized at the time, in the context of decolonization, were (a) establishing and maintaining a sense of national unity, (b) making education accessible to all of a country's citizens and (c) cultivating language varieties capable of handling the technical and cultural demands of modernization. While differing in their views on the value of multilingualism, language planners were united as to the value of selecting,

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developing, standardizing and promoting one or more languages of any given "developing nation" as an integral part of a common pathway towards national sovereignty.

Independent nation states, of course, constitute the membership of the United Nations (UN), and decision making at the UN is in the hands of the representatives of national governments. The UN as it exists today is primarily an organisation dedicated to the social and economic development of its member states, particularly the large majority who are not part of the elite "club" of industrialized democracies, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). It is not surprising, then, that the UN's development agenda reflects the same global social imaginary that informed the invention of language planning as a discipline. This agenda has broadened since the 1960s; it now encompasses not only economic growth and resilience, but also security and stability, health, human rights and the rule of law, environmental protection and resource management, and adequately responsive and capable governance. Yet it remains the case that all of these goals entail the purposeful deployment of linguistic resources to inform, persuade, mobilize, organize and regulate national populations and thus we might see the mainstream language planning tradition as relying on an underlying state-centred conception of development for its rationale.

Yet there has always been a strong element of idealism in the notion of a world of sovereign nations working together on an equal footing – an idealism at odds with the global distribution of power and wealth. This tension is reflected in the UN's own structure, in which the inclusivity of the General Assembly (one country, one vote) is counterpoised by the Realpolitik of the Security Council and especially the latter's Permanent Members. And it must be said that the UN's approach to language issues has been tilted towards the Realpolitik side of the scales, with the official and working languages being determined by political and economic clout above any other consideration, and English assuming an increasingly dominant role in informal, administrative and technical settings (Corrêa d'Almeida & Otcu-Grillman, 2013; McEntee-Atalianis, 2010, 2015, 2017). One might say that a different global imaginary is at work here, continuous in many respects with the imperial and mercantilist visions that shaped the early phases of globalization (Lemberg, 2018; Phillipson, 1992, 1996). This imaginary is rarely articulated or justified; rather, it forms the tacit backdrop to what McEntee-Atalianis (2017, p. 220) calls "a dominant ideology and situation of efficiency at low cost" with respect to multilingualism. Perhaps the best way to picture languages in this paradigm is as systems of invested and accumulated capital (financial, military, technological, symbolic). The inertia of these systems constrains policy: rather than purposeful national agency tailoring language to its needs, as the language planners would have it, it is the constraints and affordances of language regimes inherited from the past that shape the possibilities of both national and transnational agency in the present and the future.

With the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, the UN committed itself to "a supremely ambitious and transformational vision" (*Agenda 2030*, para. 7) to guide the development of all of its member states over the next 15 years. Language is not referred to in the 17 goals, yet inevitably, as governments and agencies pursue those goals, language decisions need to be made in a vast range of contexts. This chapter examines the potential consequences of this neglect of linguistic issues in the context of the SDGs, the arguments for a more substantive approach to the role of language in sustainable development, the challenges posed by (and for) the global imaginaries described above, and the implications for language policy and planning.

1 The Invisibility of Language in UN Discourse

In 2014, before the SDGs had been announced or even named as such, I conducted a small study (Fettes, 2015) of the process the UN had put in place to define the "post-2015 development agenda" once the 15-year period shaped by the Millennium Development Goals had run its course. Seeking to get a sense of how the UN was thinking about language issues in the development context, I examined a series of 18 "think pieces" authored by the UN System Task Team, a group of senior experts from over 50 UN entities and international organisations appointed by the Secretary-General, on key issues to be considered in the formulation of the post-2015 agenda. Together the think pieces tackled an impressively wide range of issues, and it seemed reasonable to consider them as a representative cross-section of UN thinking on development at the time.[1]

A reading of these reports and a systematic search for the terms "language" and "linguistic" revealed that in all 18 reports, language issues were mentioned a total of four times. The two references in Think Piece 4 (2012), Education, referred to language as one factor in the marginalization of certain groups, along with "gender and urban/rural residence… income… minority status, HIV and AIDS, age… and disability". Think Piece 9 (2012), on human rights, called for "proactive positive measures to dismantle entrenched patterns of discrimination, particularly on the grounds of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status." And, on a more positive note, Think Piece 7 (2012), on governance, argued that countries should "strengthen the environment for an independent and pluralistic media, and ensure that the media serve the needs of society by reflecting a diversity of political views, cultures, languages and beliefs."

Four mentions – and in every case, language was listed as one among several indicators of diversity, inequality or discrimination. Nowhere were the unique characteristics and challenges of language management identified or discussed. There are interesting parallels with the analyses conducted by McEntee-Atalianis & Vessey (2020, 2021) on the UN General Debate Corpus and a corpus of Annual Statements by the UN Secretary-General to the General Assembly over a 46-year

[1] All 18 Think Pieces are available at: https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/un-task-team-thematic-think-pieces/. Think Pieces 7, 9, 10, 16, 17 and 18, which are specifically referred to in the text, are cited in full in the list of references.

period (1970–2016). These researchers found a pervasive pattern of "benign neglect" of language issues, with the most frequent references to language echoing the non-discrimination guarantees of the Charter (Chapter IX, Article 55, paragraph c). In their words, "it is arguably silence (identified through absence in large corpora of data covering 46 years) that has… agentive weight within the context of the General Assembly in which the Member States engage, since silence effectively results in no change at all" (McEntee-Atalianis & Vessey, 2021, p. 12). On the evidence, this culture of silence and formulaic reference was also prevalent among the UN officials and agencies involved in authoring the Think Pieces.

It is also noteworthy that the Think Pieces were available exclusively in English, even though several were clearly written by non-native speakers. This in itself is not surprising; English has always been the dominant language at the UN's New York headquarters, and its increasing prevalence in other agencies has been noted, e.g. at the International Maritime Organization (McEntee-Atalianis, 2010). The authors of the Think Pieces were successful, privileged insiders of the UN system, and this exclusive use of English can be read as a signal to that effect. At the same time, it is telling that the few mentions of language diversity noted above associate it with vulnerability, marginalization and exclusion. It is easy to see how these aspects of UN culture might be mutually reinforcing; in some discursive contexts, at least, language diversity may be framed unconsciously as *the opposite of English*, a marker of the unruliness and backwardness of the "developing world".

And yet the relevance of language diversity to the UN's development agenda can hardly be doubted. Take for instance the issue of equality, which surfaced again and again in the Think Pieces as a fundamental concern, a way of encapsulating a whole range of forms of social exclusion. Think Piece 10 (2012) was titled "Addressing inequalities: The heart of the post-2015 agenda and the future we want for all", while Think Piece 9, on human rights, bluntly declared: "So important is the removal of inequalities to sustainable development, that achieving equality should be both a self-standing goal for the post-2015 agenda, and explicitly integrated across all other goals" (2012, p. 6). Where, then, was a recognition of the scale and complexity of linguistic inequality, or its entwining with other kinds of inequality mentioned in the UN documents? It seems extraordinary that such a fundamental aspect of human societies could be systematically overlooked in a review of strategies to distribute security, wealth and opportunities more fairly.

Language issues were, in fact, never more than a step or two away from the topics singled out for attention. Think Piece 10, for example, listed "potential policy instruments to address structural factors and produce greater equality of outcomes," including those which would promote:

- **[a]ccess to information and knowledge** to overcome barriers to political and social participation and to accessing services and proactive policies, and
- **sustained social communication** to influence social norms that perpetuate discrimination and exclusion [my emphasis]. (2012, p. 9)

Evidently such goals must be realized through particular languages, singly or in clusters; yet the language policy implications, here as in the other Think Pieces, were left undefined. There are several possible strategies to consider: states might seek to ensure equal access to an indigenous national language, to maximize the reach of former imperial and colonial languages, or to develop information and communication resources in local languages; in many cases, they might employ some mixture of the three approaches. What factors should influence those choices? How should such decisions be coordinated with other efforts to "produce greater equality of outcomes"? These are important practical questions, and it was not at all clear, from scanning the Think Pieces, that the UN agencies had good answers to them, or had even thought about them at all.

Yet the Think Pieces also offered valuable insights for thinking about the role of language in development. Here, for instance, is Think Piece 10 on inequality as a structural issue:

> Focusing only on the symptoms and manifestations of poverty or exclusion (e.g. lack of income, education or health), rather than their structural causes (e.g. discrimination, lack of access to resources, lack of representation), has often led to narrow, discretionary measures aimed at addressing short-term needs. Without attention to the underlying economic, social, cultural and spatial causes of poverty and inequality, the post-2015 development agenda will not help level the playing field or achieve lasting inclusive progress. (2012, p. 8)

This seems like a good angle from which to investigate the relationship between language and the SDGs. Language barriers might, in some circumstances, be merely "a symptom and manifestation" of more fundamental forms of inequality; in others, however, they might be part of the "structural causes" of the suffering, injustice and devastation that the SDGs seek to address.

2 Ethnicity and Indigeneity: Avoiding Accountability

The Sustainable Development Goals were adopted by UN member states in September 2015, in the form of Agenda 2030, a comprehensive integrated vision for global development. Despite references to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that preceded them, the SDGs are far more wide-ranging; their principal ancestry is not the MDGs but the Brundtland report (Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987), which introduced the notion of sustainable development, and a series of conferences on that theme that began with the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 (Think Piece 17, 2012; Spangenberg, 2017). However, the focus on inequality evident in the Think Pieces is also reflected in the SDGs – not only in Goal 10, which addresses economic inequality within and between countries, and Goal 5, which addresses gender gaps, but in measures intended to protect and support a variety of vulnerable groups and sectors across many other goals (Winkler & Satterthwaite, 2017). As these authors note, the flagship promise of the SDGs, articulated by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at their launch in 2014, is to "leave no one behind" (see also McEntee-Atalianis, 2017).

On closer examination, however, the SDGs are selective in the inequalities they choose to name and focus on. This becomes more and more apparent as one drills down from the level of "goals" through the identification of "targets" to the indicators used to measure progress towards the SDGs. Winkler and Satterthwaite (2017) conducted an analysis of all 230 indicators across the 17 SDGs, and found some telling omissions at the level of data collection. While many indicators require countries to disaggregate data by gender or by age, and some require collection of data on disabilities, none call for the documentation of race and ethnicity as factors in sustainable development. This renders this ubiquitous dimension of human culture invisible as far as the SDGs are concerned. For example, where Target 10.2 speaks boldly of "the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status," the associated indicator singles out *only* age, sex and disability as characteristics to be measured alongside income (Winkler & Satterthwaite, 2017, p. 1080). The concepts of social and political inclusion are rendered largely toothless by the exclusion of measures of "race, ethnicity, origin, religion or… other status" from the monitoring process.

There is, of course, a close association between language and ethnicity. There is surely a common thread linking the neglect of language in the context of the Think Pieces with the avoidance of ethnicity as a measurable factor in social exclusion. Plausibly, this is a product of the global social imaginaries mentioned earlier: in the vision of a world of equal nation states, linguistic and ethnic diversity is a messy and unwelcome complication for national governments; in the Realpolitik of global English and a mobile, multilingual international elite, it is small potatoes, with little impact on decision-making and capital flows. And yet, at the same time, it may be unconsciously perceived as a threat: if all minorities gained effective access to social and political power, these imaginaries might well prove impossible to sustain.

This is one clue, then, to the structural significance of language for sustainable development. Language shapes affiliation and identity; it provides ethnic groups with means of interpreting the world from their own point of view, and it allows truths and beliefs to be spoken that are grounded in particular ways of life. If sustainable development means anything, it has to be hospitable to a diversity of lifeways adapted to ecology and place. Ethnicity is how this diversity is realized in human culture, and the languages of ethnicity are integral to sustaining that diversity.

This is most apparent in the case of indigenous peoples. Indeed, the attention given to the latter in sustainability discourse constitutes the main exception to this avoidance of ethnicity as a substantive theme. Ever since Agenda 21 (1992), the sustainable development agenda has emphasized the important contribution of indigenous stewardship to the protection of biodiversity – a principle enshrined in Article 8(j) of the Convention on Biological Diversity signed that same year (1992; cf. Fettes, 2019). Yet despite regular references to indigenous knowledge, values, education, and so on, in the major declarations and reports since then, indigenous languages are rarely mentioned, except occasionally as proxy indicators for the health of indigenous knowledge systems. The idea that the languages themselves might be the focus of policy making, not simply on human rights grounds but as an integral and essential part of a comprehensive approach to sustainable development, is nowhere to be found.

In a recent study on indigenous language policy in the Canadian context (Fettes, 2019), I argued:

> The stewardship of Indigenous languages… requires us to see them bound up with a complex web of relationships involving speakers, communities, land (including plants and animals), subsistence practices, and so on. This web of relationships is what sustains the languages and gives them the particular meaning they hold for their speakers. Indigenous language *preservation* and *revitalization*, to use more familiar terms, are not really focused on language in the Western sense, as an abstract system of words and meanings; at their heart they are about maintaining this web of relationships, "Aboriginal traditional knowledge" in the fullest and most dynamic sense of the words (p. 273).

This extends the previous point about the structural role of language in sustainable development. At least where indigenous peoples are concerned, language is not exclusively a human concern; it is one of the ways in which the land communicates with humans (Fettes, 2017, 2022b). To treat language and land as separate issues is a symptom of the dysfunctional relationship between people and planet that sustainable development is supposed to heal. When indigenous communities are afforded the space and opportunity to plan their own development, they tend to treat land, culture and language as a complex whole (Fettes, 2019; Schreyer, 2011). Māori land planner Hirini Matunga (2013, p. 22) suggests that, ultimately, such indigenous planning "needs to strive for balance" across five complementary dimensions of community well-being: improved environmental quality and quantity, political economy and advocacy, social cohesion and well-being, economic growth and distribution, and cultural protection and enhancement. Rather than being relegated to just one of these dimensions, language is integral to all of them.

3 Devolved Agency in Sustainable Language Planning

The case of indigenous peoples demonstrates that the theory and practice of sustainable development depends crucially on who is in charge – on who has agency with respect to interpreting and implementing the SDGs. In fact, the UN's traditional reliance on national governments as the principal policy actors on the global stage has been gradually shifting over recent decades, with increasingly frequent shout-outs to so-called civil society, taken to include NGOs, businesses, trade unions, churches, municipalities and other social institutions. This changing perspective was welcomed and emphasized in Think Piece 10, which in a section on "addressing inequalities through transformational change" emphasized the value of devolving resource allocation and decision-making to the local level where people can participate directly:

> Federal governments often struggle to set national development policies that promote social justice, as there is often less political capital to be gained in investing in marginalized, remote and poor districts of provinces. Strengthening the capacity of local and municipal governments to provide essential services and commodities and apply local solutions has the merit of not only bringing international goals to local people, but also fostering their

> participation and shared responsibility and ability to exercise accountability in goalsetting and achievement. It may be a particularly useful solution in contexts where data at the national level may be missing or incomplete. This self-determination, and the participation of all groups in political processes is not only a key principle of a human rights-based approach, it may also be a key factor in helping to make the post-2015 framework more relevant at the local, municipal or sub-national level. (2012, p. 14)

Spangenberg (2017), however, in a comprehensive analysis of implied agency in the SDGs, found that "people as citizens, as active political agents, do not occur in Agenda 2030" (p. 316). Observing that lip service has been paid to a wide range of policy actors in sustainability discourse for the last 30 years ("alphabetically, business and industry, children and youth, farmers, indigenous peoples and their communities, local authorities, non-governmental organisations, the scientific and technological community, women, and workers and trade unions"), he points out that they invariably go missing whenever the focus shifts to specific actions to be taken. The one notable shift in Agenda 2030 is to invoke an enhanced role for business; unfortunately, "the objectives and targets include no criteria to distinguish between a positive and a negative role of business for sustainable development (the fact that many sustainability problems have been caused by business activities is not mentioned at all)" (p. 316).

In Spangenberg's view, addressing this "policy gap" would involve a realistic appraisal of the agentive impacts of particular political environments. Two crucial priorities, in his view, are to encourage and support sustainable consumption choices by individuals, and to stimulate socio-environmental innovations and investment by businesses. That is, national governments must play an enabling, regulating and incentivizing role in order for agency on the part of various social actors to align itself with the SDGs. Such "decisive political action" is missing from Agenda 2030, and with it effective measures to address what Spangenberg calls the *pressures* and *drivers* of climate change and ecological collapse. "Without new goals based on a new paradigm, pressures will not be addressed, and drivers will continue pushing the global system in an unsustainable direction. Politics will be restricted to curing symptoms, and the targets will remain empty shells with no means to accomplish them" (2017, p. 319).

Returning, then, to our concern with language policy and planning, we might question whether it too, in its mainstream versions, has been helping to prop up the dominant, catastrophic development paradigm. Concerns about a state-centred approach to agency in LPP have been expressed since the 1990s, while recent scholarship has helped highlight the agency of a diversity of social actors in such areas as multilingual schooling, language revitalization, and the management of multilingual societies (e.g. Bouchard & Glasgow, 2018; Liddicoat & Taylor-Leech, 2021). Inspired by Think Piece 10, we can imagine sustainability-oriented LPP helping catalyse a shift in national language policy-making towards *the creation of enabling environments for local language policies*, designed to address people's practical needs and build relationships and networks across all kinds of social divides. (For an interesting prospective application of this principle within a specific national context, Botswana, see Monaka & Mutula, 2010.)

Such an approach implies going beyond the replication of national language planning frameworks at the subnational level of provinces, regions, and federated states, and giving serious consideration to *cities* as a locus of language management. More than half the world's population lives in cities, which are almost inevitably more multilingual and cosmopolitan than their respective national population as a whole (e.g. Chik et al., 2019, on Sydney; García & Fishman, 2011, on New York; Spolsky & Cooper, 1991, on Jerusalem). This is giving rise to a growing comparative literature (e.g. Carson et al., 2020; Siemund & Leimgruber, 2020), but scholarly work on urban multilingual policies and planning is still hard to find. Contrast this lacuna with the vision outlined in Think Piece 18 (2012), "Sustainable urbanization":

> Cities represent a framework – flexible, creative, and operational – to deal pragmatically and efficiently with regional and global challenges. They are coherent entities to promote growth and prosperity and to fight off decline, or prospects of decline. They can also be effective agents contributing to repair the crisis of trust by working at the local level in actions that involve collective efforts. They offer more opportunities for direct connections with different actors, bringing various stakeholders and sectors to the 'table of discussion' in order to forge broadly supported agendas. Cities are 'arenas to build relations and trust – respect, inclusiveness – in stark contrast with the divisive partisanship and ideologies that easily paralyze decision-making at the level of states and nations'. (pp. 6–7)

We can see here that it is not just *language* that can play a structural role in fostering inequitable development; language *policy* also helps establish who has agency and who does not. The mainstream language planning tradition has helped bring about a situation in which language choices "at the level of states and nations" limit the capacity of cities and other sub-national actors to respond to local needs and opportunities. This means that the complex, ever-shifting positionalities and relationships of the modern city can be studied by sociolinguists, but measures for effective linguistic inclusion often run aground on issues of ideology, resourcing, and legislation (Fettes, 2022a). In the absence of "decisive political action" as called for by Spangenberg (above), local agency is often reduced to an unpalatable choice between imposing inappropriate, overly simplistic policy models in a complex and rapidly changing landscape, or leaving the situation to be sorted out through the forces of the market. This suggests that language management, as might be expected, is caught up in the same vicious cycle of vested interests and policy capture as the development agenda writ large.

If we take agency seriously as a driver of sustainability, nations are not the right scale (or at least not the only scale) at which to engage in sustainable language planning. National policies are better regarded as the backdrop to more local and dynamic planning processes –not involving language alone, of course, but a variety of other important social goods such as housing, income, education, and health services. These are the areas where the SDGs intersect with people's daily lives and wellbeing, and language certainly plays a role in structuring access to resources and opportunities across these domains.

4 Language, Capabilities and Social Protection Floors

Equality of access and opportunity is of course central to the human rights frameworks that constitute one of the UN's major achievements over its 75-year history. In the discussions leading to the SDGs, the scene was set by the UN High Commission on Human Rights (UNHCR) in Think Piece 9:

> The post-2015 agenda must be designed to advance the three closely-related concepts of equity (fairness in distribution of benefits and opportunities), equality (substantive equality, of both opportunity and results, with full protection under law), and non-discrimination (prohibition of distinctions that are based on impermissible grounds and that have the effect or purpose of impairing the enjoyment of rights). (2012, p. 6)

As noted earlier, to the extent that language was addressed at all in the Think Pieces, it was primarily in terms of non-discrimination, which is only one of the three aspects highlighted by the UNHCR. Expanding this narrow focus to include considerations of equality and equity is not a trivial matter. A moment's reflection suggests that discrimination on the basis of language is inevitable in complex societies where individual linguistic capital (and capacity) is limited and unequally distributed. Simply put, societies cannot make equal use of all languages for all purposes, and individuals cannot develop competence in an unlimited range of language varieties. The question must therefore be how much discrimination is permissible? Or, to sharpen the point further: given the urgency of the challenges outlined in Agenda 2030, can a minimalist approach to language equality be justified?

Theories of environmental justice offer powerful conceptual tools for addressing such questions in the context of sustainable development. Growing rapidly in recent decades, the field defies easy summary. However, four key aspects have emerged as fundamental, as summarized by Svarstad and Benjaminsen (2020):

> *Distributive justice* refers to the distribution of burdens and benefits related to environmental interventions. *Justice as recognition* concerns who is given respect (or not) and whose interests, values and views are recognized and taken into account. *Procedural justice* is about who is involved and has influence in terms of decision-making, while *capabilities theory* focuses on the extent to which people are able to live the lives they consider to be valuable (p. 1).

The most fundamental of these four aspects is arguably capabilities theory, as it focuses on what the realization of justice should mean in practice (Nussbaum, 2011; Sen, 2012; for a comparison and synthesis, see Alexander, 2016). For example, in Nussbaum's framework, core capabilities required for a meaningful human life include *sense, imagination and thought* (SIT), *practical reason*, *affiliation* and *control over one's environment*; approaching environmental justice from this standpoint helps to clarify what aspects of local agency need protection and support. As Sen (2012) aptly notes, the capabilities approach helps extend the focus of human rights discourse beyond its traditional limits, precisely so that it can engage with new areas of policy making and social action:

> The understanding that some rights are not fully realized, and may not even be fully realizable under present circumstances, does not, in itself, entail anything like the conclusion that these are, therefore, not rights at all. Rather, that understanding suggests the need to work towards changing the prevailing circumstances to make the unrealized rights realizable, and ultimately, realized. (p. 348)

In the context of the arguments developed so far in this chapter, capabilities theory has been hailed as an approach to human development that is more responsive to the particulars of culture and context than traditional liberal theories – "a broad and integrative way of understanding how varied… demands for equity, participation, dignity, autonomy, rights, and recognition can undergird a quest for the basic functioning of communities, the integrity of cultures, and the defense of local, inherited links between culture and nature" (Schlosberg & Carruthers, 2010, p. 30). As such it is well suited to addressing the intertwined demands of ethnicity and agency, and what they imply for language policy and planning.

While the treatment of language in capabilities theory is still in its early stages, a fundamental question is whether language has purely instrumental value (as a means of achieving other ends) or whether its value is to some extent intrinsic (that is, as a constituent aspect of what it means to live a fulfilling life) (Brando & Morales-Gálvez, 2021). The neglect of language in Agenda 2030 is broadly compatible with a narrowly instrumental approach: since what matters is achieving the goals themselves, the choice of linguistic means for bringing this about is purely pragmatic. If, however, language is part and parcel of the capabilities that underlie all measures of human wellbeing, then instrumental arguments miss the point that language decisions *in and of themselves* affect what people are able to do and to be. Capabilities theory, in other words, gets at the heart of what it means for language to be a "structural cause" of poverty and inequality, or, conversely, an essential aspect of efforts "to free the human race from the tyranny of poverty and want and to heal and secure our planet" (*Agenda 2030,* Preamble, 2015).

A strong argument can be made that language has intrinsic value with respect to every one of the four core capabilities from Nussbaum's framework listed above (Brando & Morales-Gálvez, 2021). This means that a "language-blind" approach to sustainable development is necessarily *unjust,* because it doesn't guarantee (or even strive for) the same measures of wellbeing for all individuals and groups irrespective of the languages they use and value. While capabilities theory does not dictate particular policy responses, it does suggest that sustainable development frameworks must incorporate some version of a flexible, locally responsive multilingualism if they are to meet the criteria of environmental justice. Relying on national languages, or intensively capitalized languages of wider communication, or on other externally defined and imposed linguistic means runs counter to the principles underlying the sustainable development agenda as a whole.

If the mainstream tradition of language policy and planning offers little guidance in responding to this challenge, we might draw new inspiration from development thinking at the UN. Think Piece 16 (2012), for example, made a case for the wider use of so-called "social protection floors" as a way of moving complex systems of human services towards greater equality of access and outcomes. The core approach is to define what constitutes an essential, minimally acceptable level of a given social service (health care, education and so on), and to focus on providing universal access to this basic standard of provision. In part, this entails a certain minimal income level for identified vulnerable groups, such as older people no longer able to work; but it also involves the design of services to maximize accessibility.

This, then, might be one important direction for sustainable language planning: to design health, education, legal and other services to be accessible in multiple languages in low-cost, efficient and effective ways. There is a small existing literature on such topics, which tends to focus on the industrialized countries; these studies, on the one hand, note laudable efforts being made in specific settings (e.g. Pomeroy & Nonaka, 2013, on social work, or Thomas & Lee, 2010, on health care), but, on the other, draw attention to enormous systemic gaps or deficiencies (e.g. Chand, 2005, on social work; Partida, 2012, and Weiss et al., 2007, on health care,). Overall, the research confirms that modern social safety nets tend to be monolingual by default. The aim would be to reverse this assumption: language is such a basic means of access to recognition and services at all levels of society that effective, flexible multilingualism needs to be a cornerstone of all social guarantees (Deumert et al., 2005).

In themselves, such measures would not fully meet the challenge posed by capabilities theory. However, by involving minority communities in the design and evaluation of such multilingual systems (see Witcher, 2013, on the design of inclusive policy processes), engaged language planners would be helping build capacity and agency in those communities for other kinds of linguistic intervention (Davis, 2014). It seems obvious that sustainable language planning must involve changes not only in goals and methods, but in who is in charge (compare the indigenous critique of the SDGs in Yap & Watene, 2019).

5 Conclusion

The UN's half-hearted approach to multilingualism is problematic simply on the grounds of effective communication of the SDGs (Alamu, 2017; Lwara & Ndalama, 2020; McEntee-Atalianis, 2017 and see McEntee-Atalianis, Chapter "Language, Digital Resources and the Sustainable Development Goals", this volume). My goal in this chapter has been to show that the problems run much deeper. Stated briefly, the UN's language blindness justifies a laissez-faire approach that inevitably favours the most mobile and intensively capitalized languages above those that are rooted in specific places and ways of life. The silence on linguistic issues in Agenda 2030 reflects a particular state-centred and essentially rationalist view of the world, according to which language operates as a neutral instrument of national and global governance. The implication is that the choice of language for various social domains really doesn't matter very much; development is development in whatever language it takes place. But this stance is clearly aligned with an outdated development paradigm – one deeply implicated in creating and perpetuating the problems that the SDGs are intended to solve.

Sustainable development implies a much more radical language agenda than has been articulated up until now. If what is needed are language policies that help maintain and develop close ties between people and the places where they live, a concerted effort is needed to invest in robust *systems of language diversity* rather than in linguistic monocultures of the kind we are familiar with. Sustainable language planning demands greater collaboration between language planners and experts in other fields, such as multilingual knowledge and information systems, ecosystem health, ecological anthropology, or ecolinguistic discourse analysis, as well as with leaders and thinkers in minority and indigenous communities and movements for environmental justice. Cross-fertilization from these various domains of theory and practice could result in a greatly enriched and revitalized field.

The anthropocentric and state-centred biases of mainstream language policy and planning are not unusual; indeed, they have characterized most work in the human and social sciences. Even from the modest literature cited here, it will be clear that the UN, too, is mired in old ways of thinking, even while some expert voices call for radical change. Yet the tensions and contradictions of the sustainable development agenda are at the same time a wake-up call. For language planners, we might hear it as a call to give more consistent, well-informed and purposeful attention to language as a global development issue, to rethink some of our habitual assumptions, and to seek new forms of engagement. From "the language problems of developing nations", our focus could and should become "language solutions for a sustainable world".

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Language, Digital Resources and the Sustainable Development Goals

Lisa J. McEntee-Atalianis

Abstract In September 2015 the United Nations (UN) adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offering an internationally agreed blueprint for economic, environmental and social development. However, those people most in need and specifically targeted by the SDGs face significant barriers in accessing information and knowledge about the goals and about sustainability in a language or medium that they can understand. Drawing on previous research on the UN's language policy and practice in general, and on analyses of UN reports and resolutions on multilingualism, information policy and practice in relation to the SDGs, this chapter examines the current status of multilingualism and information transfer within and outside the Organisation. It identifies significant linguistic and digital/media barriers, arguing that the UN and its member states must plan in linguistically more plural and inclusive ways by developing a *tri-sectoral communication network strategy*. This strategy should involve civil society and the public and private sectors to facilitate knowledge transfer and increase participation, thereby ensuring that "no one is left behind".

Keywords Information technology · Language policy · Multilingualism · Sustainable development goals · United Nations

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The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)[1] agreed by an intergovernmental Open Working Group in 2014 and adopted by 193 Member States in September 2015 at the UN General Assembly (United Nations, 2015e) build on and extend the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set out in the Millennium Declaration in 2000. They serve as an internationally agreed blueprint for development actors pressing for a global agenda, with targets for the assessment of their implementation over a period of 15 years "to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all" (http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/). The SDGs seek to rectify the weaknesses of the MDGs, in particular their marginal focus on developing countries and difficult-to-reach groups, and their preference for a universal, "one-size-fits-all" approach to sustainability. The new agenda is ambitious in its scope, more than doubling the number of previous goals and incorporating 169 targets. It promotes a rights-based approach to sustainability, emphasising the importance of participation by all in policy making and in the development of democratic societies. Thus, while Goal 9 calls for building a resilient infrastructure, Goal 16 stresses that institutions should be accountable and inclusive (including, presumably, the UN itself), and Goal 17 calls for knowledge sharing "on mutually agreed terms", as documented in Table 1.

Table 1 Sustainable development goals 9, 16 and 17

Goal 9 **Build a resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation** **9.c** Significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020
Goal 16 **Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels** Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements
Goal 17 **Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development** Enhance North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation on and access to science, technology and innovation and enhance knowledge sharing on mutually agreed terms, including through improved coordination among existing mechanisms, in particular at the United Nations level, and through a global technology facilitation mechanism Fully operationalize the technology bank and science, technology and innovation capacity-building mechanism for least developed countries by 2017 and enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology

[1] See https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300 for a list of all goals and targets.

In setting out his stall for the new objectives at the 69th Session of the General Assembly in December 2014, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon asserted that "[a]ll voices demanded that *we leave no one behind*, ensuring equality, non-discrimination, equity and inclusion at all levels" and that in achieving dignity and justice "we must pay special attention to the people, groups and countries most in need: women, youth, minorities, indigenous peoples…[and] persons with disabilities" (United Nations, 2014c, paras. 51 and 68). Further, in order to ensure "effective governance of the SDGs" (para. 77), long-term investment in information and communication technology within and between countries should be achieved, especially for the poor and developing countries, via multi-party partnerships involving a variety of actors. He claimed (para. 123), ambitiously (and sadly prematurely), that the development of "concrete initiatives, including leveraging technology" should be ready at the outset of the SDGs and that he and the UN would facilitate cooperation, record technological initiatives, target "fragmentation" within and outside the Organisation and encourage networks, the sharing of information, technical expertise and knowledge transfer.

Some headway has been made, nationally and within the UN; but in recent decades, numerous committee deliberations, reports and studies (see McEntee-Atalianis, 2006, 2015; Tonkin, 1996a, b, 2011) have shown that such initiatives are either not in place in the UN, or only partially so, noting particularly that delegates and stakeholders experience difficulties in gaining access to information about sustainability in a linguistic form or medium that is timely and easily understood. Indeed, the issue of "language" in the goals themselves is conspicuous by its absence (Fettes, 2015 and see Fettes, Chapter "Language and the Sustainable Development Goals: Challenges to Language Policy and Planning", this volume). This chapter argues that success in achieving the SDGs is contingent on developing global and multi-sectoral partnerships to engender an internationally enabling environment placing language and media of communication at its centre.

1 Aims

In a 2013 article, Suzanne Romaine points to the centrality of language in achieving the MDGs. Language, she suggests, is "at the very heart … of the development process" and present at its "major fault-lines" (Romaine, 2013, p. 2).[2] In many nations, she notes, ethnic and language minority groups constitute a significant proportion of the bottom fifth of the population who fail to profit from poverty reduction efforts. Pressing particularly for changes to language policy and planning in education, and the engagement of applied linguists in development work (p. 3), she argues that addressing linguistic and socio-cultural obstacles is essential for poverty

[2] See also Phillipson's (1996) earlier account of the role of language in the UN's development agenda.

reduction and sustainable development. "Because there can be no true development without linguistic development … keeping the promise of the MDGs requires reconciling development with linguistic diversity."

Taking Romaine's comments as a starting point, in the present chapter, drawing on data garnered from prior desk research, ethnographic investigation, interviews and discussions with the Secretariat and membership of the UN (McEntee-Atalianis 2006, 2016; McEntee-Atalianis & Hult, 2020), in addition to virtual and interpretive policy analysis of UN documents, and current statistics of digital access/divides, I will focus on linguistic and communication barriers within the Organisation itself and among the groups the SDGs specifically target. I will discuss the operational and participatory constraints on understanding and transferring information on sustainability to diverse multilingual/multicultural and technologically disparate environments, both internationally and within regional, national and local contexts. I will argue that the language and medium of information transfer are inextricably linked, acting as inter-related enablers and/or barriers in the dissemination and implementation of the SDGs and the subsequent creation of strong participatory societies and communities.

In the following, it will become apparent that an ideology of efficiency at low or neutral cost has prevailed at the UN for many years, leading to restrictions in multilingual provision that undermine the achievement of the Goals by favouring monolingualism/restricted language regimes and the use of digital (rather than traditional) media. I argue that if the goals and the work of the Organisation in general are to achieve impact, the UN must actively involve delegates and stakeholders in the languages they speak and via media they can access. Failure to involve them will almost certainly lead to policy failure. There are signs that the UN is moving in the right direction, especially under the current Secretary-General António Guterres[3] and successive Co-ordinators of Multilingualism, who have championed multilingualism as a "core value" (United Nations, 2019, 2021). Yet there is still much work to be done to mainstream multilingualism by ensuring parity among languages and by expanding linguistic provision on- and off-line for communication within the Organisation and outwards to its various stakeholders.

Delegates, particularly (although not exclusively) from developing nations, have called for attention not just to ensuring parity in the Organisation's multilingual provision but to the growing digital divide – the unequal access to digital information and services – between developed and developing nations[4] and the

[3] See, as an example, the "cross-cutting measures" documented in the SG's Report on Multilingualism (United Nations, 2019, p. 18ff) in which he documents his personal multilingual endeavours, e.g. delivering speeches and messages in multiple languages and engaging bilaterally in the language of his interlocutor. He details his plans and support for a multilingual Secretariat, e.g. mainstreaming multilingualism in senior leader's compacts and appointment notices; encouraging language learning, etc.

[4] It must be noted that the "digital divide" does not correlate neatly with the division between the local v. global, or developed v. developing countries nor a North/South divide. Reinicke et al. (2000, p. 88) assert that many living in industrialized nations still have limited if any access to the internet, whilst Governments and NGOs in developing nations do. On balance, the global South is

need for maintenance of traditional media in the dissemination and implementation of its work. It is clear that those most in need and specifically targeted by the SDGs still face significant barriers in accessing information, knowledge and support for sustainability. The consequences of not prioritising language and communication are serious and cannot be divorced from socioeconomic or sociopolitical development.

Therefore, in the following I argue that linguistic and media support for the dissemination, implementation and monitoring of the SDGs at national and local levels must involve the contributions and expertise of multiple actors within three sectors – public, private and civil society. Required is a robust coordinated strategy, as previously developed in other successful UN endeavours[5] – a *tri-sectoral communication network strategy* – in order to initiate and nurture collaborative linguistic and media ventures that facilitate participation by stakeholder communities and societies internationally – especially those acknowledged to have been "left behind" at the end of the MDGs. First, however, some background.

2 The Global Public Sphere, Civil Society and the Private Sector

Political and social theory asserts that there is an ever-increasing divide between the spaces and places where world issues are raised (e.g. international organisations) and where they are managed (at the level of the nation state and at regional or local levels) (Castells, 2008). The present capitalist global system depends on a network of unequal interstate relationships (Blommaert, 2009, 2010), which has led, some argue, to "political crises" of "efficiency", "equity", "identity" and "legitimacy" (Castells, 2008, p. 82), also inequity in matters of digital and multilingual provision (Gazarian, 1992).

While the political elite, among them intergovernmental organisations (e.g. the International Monetary Fund), influence national policy directly through their policies and conditions and indirectly via information spread, networked societies and global governance have become a matter not just for this elite but also for non-state actors: civil society (NGOs and pressure groups) and the for-profit private sector (international businesses and corporations). These non-state actors are positioned to bring about change in state[6] functions and conditions through direct and indirect

less able to access information technology, however. Also see Zaugg et al. (2022, p.3). They note that while many endangered, Indigenous, oral, minority and signed languages are 'digitally disadvantaged', so too are widely spoken and thriving national languages.

[5] E.g. The "Roll Back Malaria" campaign (see Reinicke et al., 2000).

[6] Blommaert (2009, p. 240) suggests that the term "state" now extends to sub-state actors/institutions (e.g. unions, civil society groups, regional/local governments); the nation-state and super-state institutions (e.g. the EU or UN).

contact with local communities and ordinary people (see, for example, Ibeh, 2020). Their work is facilitated by global and local traditional and digital (media) outlets. The UN and other intergovernmental institutions have long recognized that they must engage with the general public (see, for example, United Nations, 2020) not just through national representations and the mechanisms and instruments they create, but also through such channels as the media and local organisations and businesses.

However, research on language policy and the digital divide has revealed a diverse and multifarious picture across and within sub-state, state and super-state ecologies (Blommaert, 2009). The global public sphere is acknowledged to favour and extend to some more than others, with advances in technology widening the knowledge gap between the haves and have-nots: rich and poor; private and public sectors; developed, developing and undeveloped states (Graham, 2011; Ibeh, 2020; Zaugg, 2020; Zaugg et al., 2022).[7]

As former Secretary-General Kofi Annan acknowledged in his address to the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum in 1999, "The United Nations once dealt only with governments. By now we know that peace and prosperity cannot be achieved without partnerships involving governments, international organisations, the business community, and civil society." Such partners have "successfully politicized many global issues and have accumulated significant financial, ideological and bargaining resources" (Reinicke et al., 2000, p. 3) over recent decades. Yet changes in global governance and an exponential growth in information technology have proven challenging for the UN, which finds itself excluding, either intentionally or unintentionally, key stakeholders from its debate and operations, while recognising that they are fundamental to long-term sustainability. In short, as noted some 20 years ago, the UN's "formal institutional structures lack the scope, speed, [finances], and informational capacity to keep up with the global agenda and [communication/linguistic demands]" (Reinicke et al., 2000, p. 91).

Efforts have since been made to nurture partnerships, and some recent examples illustrate their success (see ESCAP, 2020b).[8] Likewise, attempts to draw up guidelines for inclusive technology and innovation policies for sustainable development (ESCAP, 2020a) have been largely successful. But, all things considered, it is clear that there is still much work to be done.

[7] Zaugg (2020) and Zaugg et al. (2022) assert that disparities of access are only one element of the digital divide. Zaugg et al. (2022, p. 2) claim that digitally disadvantaged language communities confront three obstacles: lack of 'equitable access'; inadequate digital tools for the 'integrity of their languages, scripts and writing systems, and knowledge systems'; and, 'vulnerability to harm through digital surveillance and under-moderation of language content'.

[8] For example, in 2020, the UN secretariat supported Myanmar in the development of a national science, technology and innovation policy and strategy. Also, the secretariat, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and the Ministry of Science and Technology of China jointly developed a capacity-building workshop on science, technology and innovation for sustainable development (ESCAP, 2020b).

3 Linguistic and Digital Challenges Facing the United Nations in its Public Information and Outreach Work

The UN has experienced an increasing work load and decreasing budgets for decades now, which have, along with a tolerance for lingua franca usage within its Organisation over many years, led to a marked quantifiable reduction in multilingual provision and use, both internally within the functioning of the Organisation and externally in its public information and outreach work (McEntee-Atalianis, 2015, forthcoming; Pearl, 1996; Wyzner, 1992). The effects of the economic crisis in recent years, coupled with increases in departments' mandates, have led to decreases in resources and a euphemistic push within the Organisation for "cost-neutrality" and the need to devise "creative solutions" (United Nations, 2015a, 2019) to the problem of supporting multilingualism for political and public diplomacy and for operations. Stagnant and reduced budgets have led to a culture of parsimony in which English has become dominant over all other official and working languages[9] and digital dissemination of information is seen as cost-effective and efficient (see discussion below where this is contested). Member states and observers have raised concerns (e.g. United Nations, 2014a, 2020) about the lack of, or reductions in, multilingual provision, particularly in the UN's outreach work and its global communications.[10] Recently, delegates in the Committee on Information urged the Department of Global Communications "to produce content in the six languages … rather than simply translating from one language to another" (United Nations, 2020, p. 8, para. 14) and requested the Department to continue to invest resources in traditional as well as social media, given the digital divide. Indeed, the committee ambitiously urged the Department "to take steps within its means to secure Internet connectivity for all, so that developing countries would be in a position to use it for their social and economic development" (p. 9, para. 16), noting that the digital divide has only widened during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In recent years the DPI/DGC has prioritized the development of multilingual websites and social media in order to reduce the disparity between material in English and the other official languages of the Organisation. In February–March 2015 it launched a sustainable development website in all official languages (United Nations, 2015b, p. 16). Unlike other departments in the Organisation, the DGC

[9] The UN supports six official languages – Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish – and a varied number of (working) languages across its Headquarters and agencies. See McEntee-Atalianis (2015, forthcoming) for details.

[10] Formerly, the Department of Public Information (DPI), now known as the "Department of Global Communications" (DGC) (since 2019) is the conduit for the dissemination of information about the UN to global audiences. It consists of three main divisions: Strategic Communications (key responsibilities include the development and implementation of strategies for communicating UN information and managing Information Centres); News and Media (news services – print, radio, television and internet) and Outreach Division (conveys information and encourages exchange of ideas and knowledge in support of the UN agenda).

webpages are in strict compliance with the UN's multilingual policy[11] and live multilingual coverage of the General Assembly is available online. The most recently available statistics on website traffic revealed an increase in the number of new sessions developed across all languages; however, a preference for English was evident, with over half (53%) of users downloading English text, in comparison to Spanish (23%), French (8%), Chinese (6%), Russian (6%) and Arabic (3%). The number of pages viewed reveal an even stronger preference for English – 60% (United Nations, 2014a, p.16).

The Secretary-General's 2019 report on multilingualism (United Nations, 2019, para. 75ff) documents continued variability in the status of multilingualism on UN websites. It notes that whilst the Department of Global Communications hosts 94% of websites (a total of 213) in all official languages, other Secretariat entities have continued to find it challenging to do so. Some 48 entities contributing to the SG's report declared that they made all content available in English whereas other language content was significantly limited. Figures documented and illustrated in Table 2 and Fig. 1 show the continued prevalence of English.

Substantial resources have been devoted to developing social media platforms in all official languages and "several [unspecified] other languages". UN messages were reported to be viewed in 2014 regularly by nine million people across different platforms (Facebook; Twitter; Vkontakte and the UN Weibo site) with a steady increase registered across all official languages. The DPI also rolled out new audio channels in the six official languages and Kiswahili and Portuguese for Android and iOS, in addition to two other mobile applications – UN news reader and Calendar of Observances; the latter also available in Bahasa Indonesia and Kazakh (United Nations, 2015a, p. 15, para. 65). Contact with NGOs by the DPI's Non-Governmental Organisation Resource Centre increased its linguistic capacity to respond to queries – extending its capability in 2014 to German, Italian, Portuguese and Ukrainian. The DPI also reported in 2019 (United Nations, 2019, p. 20, para. 76) that it had continued to pursue partnerships with universities to provide translations of "some public information materials on a pro bono basis". During the previous 2 years, four such agreements had been signed to increase capacity in Arabic, Kiswahili, French and Russian.

Table 2 Estimated percentage (by Secretariat entities) of external website content available by language (as of 30 September 2018, United Nations, 2019, p. 20)

Arabic	36%
Chinese	30%
English	99%
French	44%
Russian	30%
Spanish	32%

[11] See United Nations, 2015d.

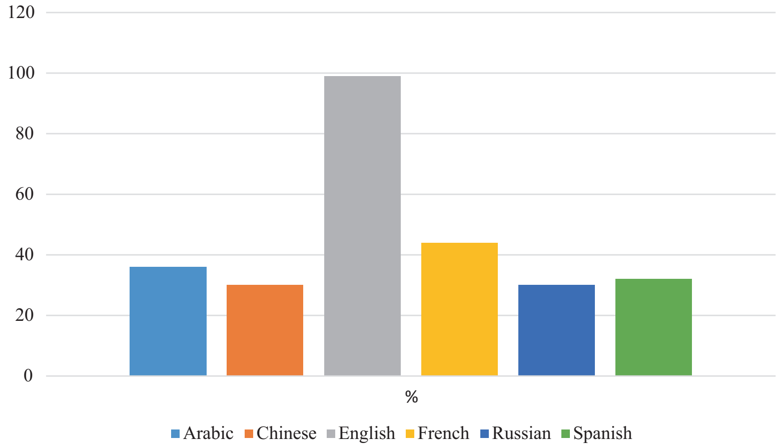

Fig. 1 Estimated percentage of external website content, by language by Secretariat entities (United Nations, 2019, p. 20)

Departments and offices with a field presence (e.g. the Department of Peacekeeping Operations) reported expansion of multilingual provision online via websites and social media, with some using the official languages of their host countries (United Nations, 2019, p. 20).

In contrast to concerted efforts to support online resources, traditional media outlets are given comparatively scant reference in recent SG reports on Multilingualism to the General Assembly, reflecting the Organisation's focus on new media (United Nations, 2014a, paras 77, 80, 2019).[12] It should be noted nonetheless that 100 programmes were available in 2014 in all of the Organisation's official languages and brief (2-min) "UN stories" were developed in recent years. The news magazine programme *21st Century* also extended its coverage to French and Chinese, the latter enabled by a partnership with the Chinese Business Network in Shanghai. UN radio and News Centre cover "breaking news, reports and feature stories" (United Nations, 2015a, p. 15) in all six official languages with some additional programmes produced in Bangla, Hindi, Kiswahili, Portuguese, Urdu. In 2018, the DPI also introduced a multilingual website entitled "UN News", noted to be "the most frequently downloaded United Nations application" (United Nations, 2019, p. 21, para 78), available in the six official languages of the Organisation, in addition to Hindi, Kiswahili and Portuguese.

The 63 Information Centres (ICs) operating in the regions of Africa, the Arab States, the Americas, Asia and Pacific, and Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States work (in total) in five out of the six official languages (with the exception of Chinese), and an additional 97 local languages, as needed. Statistics from 2013 revealed promotional (print and multi-media) material was produced in

[12] Also see calls by member states in 2020 to allocate resources to new media (United Nations, 2020).

40 languages and websites were maintained in 30 local languages.[13] In 2019 this number had not increased significantly, however – social media channels and websites operated in 34 languages (United Nations, 2019, p. 24).

The latter account appears promising; however, an analysis of websites[14] revealed an uneven picture of local language provision which somewhat masks a marked disparity in languages available on the internet across the centres. For example, UNRIC Brussels (Belgium) supported 13 languages, in contrast to UNIC Accra (Ghana), which supported only English. A significant difference is apparent in local language provision in the region of Europe and the Commonwealth, in contrast to all other regions. Only two Centres (out of 16) in Africa – a continent with the most diverse linguistic ecology – supported a local language – Kiswahili (UNIC Dar es Salaam and UNIC Nairobi); only one additional local language (other than English), i.e. Portuguese, was maintained in the Americas by UNIC Rio de Janeiro; six local languages (Bahasa Indonesia, Bengali/Bangla; Hindi; Japanese; Persian and Urdu) were maintained on a few websites in Asia and Pacific (across 11 ICs); whilst 24 languages appeared on websites in Europe and the Commonwealth (14 ICs), where the greatest number of websites and languages were supported by UNRIC Brussels (Belgium) and UNIS Vienna (Austria).

Alongside the use of traditional media (television and radio programmes), concerted efforts have been made within ICs to enhance digital tools, including websites, social media platforms and mobile telephones "to reach a wider and younger audience in a timely and effective manner" (United Nations, 2015a, p. 11, para 48).[15] As reported in 2015, 76% (48/63) of ICs had Facebook accounts and 63% (40/63) hosted Twitter accounts. Less than half of these (a total of 17) were in languages other than English, however – and 29 (46%) were reputed to have YouTube accounts in 12 languages (including English).

Information Centres, as other arms of the UN, face resource constraints and have been forced to explore ad hoc "cost-neutral" alternatives to providing multilingual information. These have included: the IC in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil working in collaboration with the UN headquarters to support the provision of Facebook and Twitter pages in Portuguese; the IC in Islamabad in 2014 signing a memorandum of understanding with a Pakistani[16] network (PTV World) in order to translate news and campaigns into Urdu and 23 regional languages (United Nations, 2015a, pp.11,

[13] These included: Armenian, Bahasa Indonesia, Bangla, Belarusian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Finnish, Georgian, German, Greek, Hindi, Hungarian, Icelandic, Italian, Japanese, Kazakh, Kiswahili, Malagasy, Norwegian, Persian, Polish, Portuguese, Slovak, Slovene, Swedish, Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu and Uzbek. Materials ranged from brochures to video and audio press kits.

[14] Undertaken by the author in 2017, see http://unic.un.org/aroundworld/unics/en/whoWeAre/index.asp for raw data.

[15] Examples of ad hoc campaigns are listed; however, an exhaustive listing is not provided.

[16] A research study undertaken by the UN Pakistan "Communication Group" determined that 61% of Pakistanis had no opinion about the UN. This prompted the development of the "One UN Programme" to engage multiple sectors and agents, e.g. media, government institutions (federal and provincial), civil society, the general public and donors.

12 para. 49, 52); and ad hoc partnerships with educational institutions and local UN teams or the UN Communications Group. For example, UNRIC in Brussels partnered with universities to provide "virtual interns" (United Nations, 2015c, p. 19, para. 95) for the translation of UN documents.

A total of 41 ICs produced their own newsletters either in print or electronic form informing interested parties about conferences, special and current events. These were produced in 16 local languages. They also "prepare[d], reissue[d] and often translate[d]" fact sheets, press releases and other information into 43 local languages (United Nations, 2015a, p. 12 para 51).

In disseminating information about sustainable development in particular, some increase in multilingual provision is evident. The combined translations of some ICs of the Secretary-General's document, "A global movement for change", peaked at 22 languages, reportedly reaching "64 outlets in 42 countries" (United Nations, 2015a, p. 19 para 94). The strategic communications service of the DPI developed a magazine: *Africa Renewal-Afrique Renouveau* in order to report on its 'New Partnership for Africa's Development' and an accompanying online website in English and French. The syndicated feature service of the magazine meant that articles were republished in Africa and elsewhere, in English and French (632 times in 164 media outlets). And in 2019 it was reported that translations of the SDGs were available in 66 local languages (United Nations, 2019, p. 24).

Despite these efforts, as is clear, many initiatives have been piecemeal and ad hoc, and many stakeholders still cannot access vital information on sustainability (beyond the SDGs themselves) in a language or via a media that is easily accessible. An independent report commissioned by UN DESA (2013, p. 1) discussed the means of "strengthening public participation … for sustainable development" noting with respect to public engagement "a lack of local language use" (p. 15) and the need to reach people in their local languages. This report highlighted the patchy nature of multilingual provision and stressed the dominance of English within the work of the UN calling for greater language diversity, and noting that many UN documents relating to sustainability remain untranslated into the UN's official languages, "let alone unofficial languages" (p. 20) hampering the participation of many. The report called for funding to be allocated to increase "multilingual capacity" (p. 20). Some 7 years later (at the time of writing) whilst there have been some developments, there is still significant room for improvement.

4 Critical Review

A shift to digital media has been a policy and strategic focus and practical endeavour at the UN, seen as a cost-effective and an efficient means of information transfer. However, the figures and analysis above, along with reports from UN personnel (United Nations, 2014a, 2015a, 2020), demonstrate that this is not a panacea. Many representatives attending the Committee on Information (United Nations, 2015a, 2020) have recently expressed deep concern with the widening gap between developed and developing nations and emphasized that priority must be given to ensuring that information on the post-2015 SD agenda is disseminated in the first instance in all of the UN's six official languages (as stated in United Nations, 2015d, Resolution 69/324) to ensure "accountability, transparency, ownership and sustainability" and that daily press releases are made in all of the UN's languages and in a traditional format[17] enabling public and private sectors, as well as individuals, who do not have access to the internet or cannot read (but have access to radio), to engage with the work of the Organisation and express their views and values through "endogenous cultural" (p. 13) products. The report "notes with concern" (para 88) that many services provided for outreach and knowledge transfer are not available in all six official languages, with English dominating over all others.[18]

A minority of nations – the United States of America, Japan and South Africa – while agreeing with the sentiment of multilingualism, have pushed for "cost neutrality", noting that an unexpected request by the Organisation for an additional $13.8 million to expand multilingual provision at the 69th Session of the General Assembly (2014) must not be replicated. Delegates unanimously praised the work of the UN Information Centres, recognising their function and potential as important sites of information transfer in local languages. Calls were made for capacity building within these sites and for allocating financial resources to support their work.[19] Moreover, special attention to the development of communication capabilities and infrastructure in developing nations to eliminate current disparities in information flows was mapped as a priority, with co-operation encouraged within and across nations and regions. Overall, the need to engage with "a new world information and communication order, seen as an evolving and continuous process" (p. 13), was recognized as fundamental to the successful dissemination and implementation of UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The reality is, however, that in responding to an ever-increasing workload and reduced budgets the actions proposed in recent Resolutions on Multilingualism entertain the continuation of linguistic parsimony and the mainstreaming of digital media – a continuation of what some may see as a "digital apartheid" (Graham, 2011). Networked communication technology is inaccessible to many, and/or material posted on sites is in a language or in cyberspaces that are not accessible to all[20] – especially those nations, vulnerable communities and individuals specifically targeted by the SDGs. Where measures have been taken to increase translation into

[17] In contrast to the limited availability of e-resources, 75% of households are reported to have radios (UNESCO, 2014). Arguably the use of traditional media should be prioritized in the Department's planning.

[18] As documented by Zaugg et al. (2022), UNESCO – following the UN's declaration of 'The International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022–2032) – has asserted that they will attempt to focus efforts on expanding digital support for Indigenous languages.

[19] Some report a decline in materials available in the official (let alone local) languages, e.g. Belarus reports a decline in Russian material, only receiving information in English which they claim to be "of no use". Moreover, the budget has remained at the same level since 1995.

[20] See Graham's (2011) discussion of physical and "existential" divides.

official and local languages using cost-effective and cost-neutral means, problems persist. For example, whilst the use of voluntary services such as partnerships with universities is beneficial, it is neither free nor efficient. Interns' work is comparatively slower than that of professional translators and has to be supervised and checked to ensure it meets the editorial consistency and standards of quality expected by the UN. Moreover, many of these agreements have been forged in developed nations. Information and news material in the source language (most notably English) frequently precede those in other languages and not all languages are translated. Russian and Chinese representatives in particular lodged objections to the unfair representation of the official languages on the UN sites.[21] Further, while a move towards recycling texts previously translated for other purposes has meant a reduction in translation costs, arguably their reproduction does not fully service the needs of their new context of use, nor carry the same pragmatic force.

The DGC's dissemination of the SDGs and information related to sustainability is constrained by, and rooted in, the Organisation's policy and practice. The reality for the Department (as for other departments of the UN) is that mandates have expanded; expectations by delegates and stakeholders have grown, yet resources have shrunk. This situation has led to operational and participatory gaps. Staff and member states at the UN find themselves working within an increasingly technologically-oriented organisational culture which favours a minority of the Organisation's languages and imposes developed-country norms of communication. Some delegates report feeling excluded or disadvantaged, receiving information at a slower rate or not in the officially recognized organisational language that they would prefer to work in. Transference of information to the outside world is also limited by these operational constraints and the work of individual Information Centres is forced to rely on ad hoc partnerships with external agencies.

Bridging the digital divide is far from easy and still would not solve the myriad barriers to access to information about sustainable development for key stakeholders. Statistics garnered in recent years shows that the reality is that approximately half of the world's population still remains off-line. The top 20 countries (with the greatest number of users) constitute approximately 70% of total world usage. National penetration rates (i.e. percentage of the population with access to the internet) vary considerably. The difference between developed and developing nations and geographic regions is particularly marked, as shown in Table 3 and Fig. 2.

A continuing linguistic divide exists: English remains dominant as the content language on the internet,[22] far outstripping the presence of other languages internationally, as shown in Table 4 and Fig. 3.

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[21] It is interesting to note that the Division of Sustainable Development (Department of Economic and Social Affairs) conducted on-line consultations in English, Spanish and Chinese (only) to support the preparation of the Global Sustainability Report.

[22] Zaugg et al. (2022) note that linguistic digital marginalisation reflects wider power dynamics, particularly due to digital technologies being developed in the (English-speaking countries of the) UK and USA. Although see Danet and Herring (2007) for examples of other languages (including code-switching) on the internet.

Table 3 Penetration rates per country with highest number of users with UN Economic Categorisation (June 2020) (https://www.internetworldstats.com/top20.htm)

Number	Country or Region	Penetration (% population)	Economies
1	China	62.8%	Developing (E Asia)
2	India	40.6%	Developing (S Asia)
3	USA	89.8%	Major developed
4	Indonesia	64.1%	Developing (E Asia)
5	Brazil	70.8%	Developing (S America)
6	Nigeria	61.2%	Developing (W Africa)
7	Japan	93.5%	Major developed
8	Russia	79.7%	Economy in transition
9	Bangladesh	54.8%	Developing (S Asia)
10	Mexico	69.5%	Developing
11	Germany	96%	Major developed
12	Philippines	72.1%	Developing (E Asia)
13	Turkey	81.9%	Developing (W Asia)
14	Viet Nam	70.4%	Developing (E Asia)
15	United Kingdom	93.6%	Major developed
16	Iran	80.5%	Developing (S Asia)
17	France	92.3%	Major developed
18	Thailand	81.7%	Developing (E Asia)
19	Italy	92.5%	Developed (EU)
20	Egypt	48.1%	Developing (N Africa)

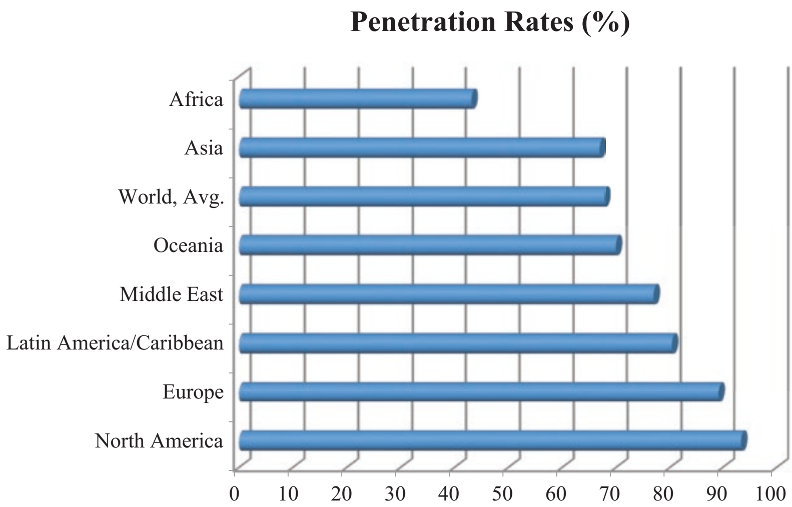

Fig. 2 Penetration rates (%) by geographic region (June 2022). (www.internetworldststs.com/stats.htm)

Table 4 Top 10 Languages on the internet (in millions of users). (www.internetworldstats.com/stats7.htm) March 31 2020

Country	Millions of users
English	1186
Chinese	888
Spanish	363
Arabic	237
Portuguese	171
Indonesian	198
French	151
Japanese	118
Russian	116
German	92
Other languages	1060

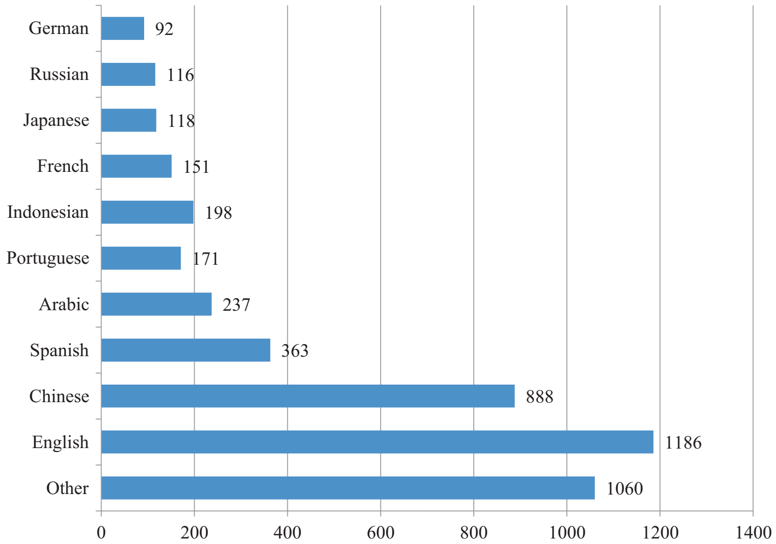

Fig. 3 Top 10 languages in the internet (in millions of users) March 31 2020. (https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats7.htm)

Many languages use a non-Latin script; many others use an elaborated version of the Latin alphabet which is not catered for in current technology. For the internet to function globally it must be able to accommodate multilingual scripts and alphabets.

Nations most in need, particularly those recognized as most "vulnerable" in the "Report of the Open Working Group on the General Assembly on the SDGs Agenda" (United Nations, 2014b, Items 14, 19 (a) and 118): African states; least developed countries; small island states, and developing land-locked states, middle-income countries and countries in conflict often have the most diverse multilingual populations to address and service. At national levels they experience problems of infrastructure, finance, technology and capacity-building, not to mention social and political barriers to information transfer, such as educational, ethnic, gender, and socioeconomic disparities. Indigenous communities,[23] the poor, disabled, and women (to name but a few groups) remain excluded. Nations with the highest linguistic diversity are reported to have the highest percentage of children (over 70% of the world's population) not in education globally (Pinnock, 2009). Indeed, statistics on adult and youth literacy reveal that, among young illiterates, 59% are female (UNESCO, 2015; https://data.unicef.org/topic/education/literacy/ downloaded January 2020). Most of these girls are from sub-Saharan Africa, East and South Asia, and the Pacific – and from minority communities (ethnic, linguistic, religious) (Romaine, 2013, p. 7; UNESCO, 2010). And where internet facilities are available and accessible to literate girls in telecentres or internet cafes, these may be highly masculinized spaces closed to women.

The availability of Wi-Fi connection is limited to the rich. Internet access in many African states is below 5%, with electricity functioning intermittently and for a few hours each day. Fixed broadband is still not accessible for most Africans and adoption of digital skills is reported by the World Bank to be 50% of the global average (Ibeh, 2020; Madden & Kanos, 2020). In Ghana, for example, internet access can cost almost all of the average income (Schuppan, 2009). In rural Africa approximately 70% of the population speak a local language and English is mainly inaccessible. Zaugg (2020) notes that support for African languages and scripts online fall behind others and therefore those with digital access often use colonial languages or the Latin script, creating additional barriers for those who do not have command of these codes. Indeed, the majority of Africans find their official language difficult to understand (Mackey, 1989 in Romaine, 2013) and a minority of African languages are supported in higher education (Ouane & Glanz, 2010 in Romaine, 2013. p. 10). Romaine (2013, p. 7) notes that "a third (30.5%, N = 2,110) of the world's languages and a third of the world's poor" live in Africa, with greatest poverty and under-development existing in the linguistically diverse countries of sub-Saharan Africa. Africa continues to struggle with development, experiencing difficulties in accessing information and knowledge and, as a consequence, remains cut off from contributing to knowledge creation and development. Without the ability to engage in discussions about development in their local languages key stakeholders will remain isolated from the global development agenda. This situation applies as much to nations in Africa as minority communities in comparatively wealthy nations.

These linguistic and technological barriers hamper policy transfer[24] from all sources, beginning top-down from the UN itself, since national representatives and key stakeholders have insufficient information about the SDGs, and sustainability in general, to share and impart to their governments and people. Transfer of

[23] Indigenous populations constitute around 15% of the world's poorest peoples and speak 60% of the world's languages (Nettle and Romaine, 2000; United Nations, 2018).

[24] See Dolowitz and Marsh's (2000) discussion of factors leading to failure in policy transfer. Also see Flammia and Saunders' (2007) discussion of "language as power" on the internet.

information and knowledge is often incomplete, and, as a consequence, transfer of policy or programmes may be inappropriate. Information and the way in which it is communicated play a vital role in popularising the SDGs and in nurturing ownership among governments and stakeholders.

So how might the UN attempt to remedy the situation?

4.1 A Tri-Sectoral Communication Network Strategy for Information Transfer

Policies and practices must be directed to ensuring greater linguistic and media equity and inclusion, first at the organisational level (including key departments, agencies, programmes and funds – among them ICs) in order for member states to be able to debate and take action; and then at regional, national and local levels to facilitate universal access to information about sustainability.[25] Mainstreaming digital media is not a panacea. The realities of the "digital divide" must be one of the main policy issues addressed by the UN, with priority given to ensuring that the dissemination of information about the SDGs and sustainability is not only digitally transferred but also conveyed using traditional media (radio, television, newspapers, printed documents) in local languages. Given the UN's capacity constraints, this work will demand systematic and reliable network building and multisector collaboration between civil society (e.g. NGOs), the public sector (states and international/national organisations) and the "for-profit" private sector, to establish regulatory frameworks, infrastructure, funding, education and research. Such "tri-sectoral" networks (Reinicke et al., 2000, p. 28) will bring local partners and the general public, knowledgeable about social and cultural norms and restrictions, into the global debate and mission.

In networked collaboration there is always a danger that responsibility will become diffuse. However, it is the role of the UN to develop and support these networks by establishing guidance, frameworks, and indicators of success, thereby facilitating collaboration and providing advice on identifying key actors and organisations that can provide linguistic and technological support at global, regional and local levels. In short, the UN should support the development and maintenance of these networks, and contribute to and monitor their effective operation. As in any of the UN's projects, networks have been acknowledged as "not just a policy choice but an operational imperative if [the UN] is to meet its goals effectively and efficiently". Such networks, if properly established, will ensure the inclusion of "the

[25] UNESCO already recognizes that developments in information and communication technology are imperative for economic and social development. They are understood as fundamental to the eradication of poverty in developing countries. But UNESCO also recognizes major disparities between and within developed and developing countries. The first international forum focussing on 'Multilingualism in Cyberspace for Inclusive Sustainable Development' (co-hosted by UN IITE) took place in June 2017.

disempowered and marginalised constituencies" (Reinicke et al., 2000, p. 92) such as indigenous communities, women and the poor. Moreover, networks may be initiated and managed bottom-up (e.g. see Zaugg et al. (2022) on grassroots endeavours), facilitating the adaptation of global policies to local situations.

In conveying the goals for sustainable development and in ensuring their successful implementation, the UN needs therefore to develop an effective system-wide communication and information policy and *programme*[26] based on a network approach as proposed above. A typical network would include voluntary contributions from interest groups and civil society, including national and transnational NGOs[27]; financial and technical support from local and/or global businesses, banks and corporations in targeted settings; and co-ordination, legislation, advice, research and training from institutions and bodies within states and within the UN.

In developing a communication and information policy and programme, consideration needs to be given to a number of issues. These may include, e.g.:

(i) The reception of the *goals* of the programme – whether or not these will be voluntarily taken up or involve coercion in particular settings.
(ii) *Agents, institutions and organisations* necessary for knowledge, for information transfer and for training at global, regional and local levels (e.g. UN personnel, elected officials, civil servants, academics, NGOs, communication and technology businesses and transnational corporations, consultants, language specialists – including interpreters and translators).
(iii) *The management of the path* of transfer and consideration of the *sectors and communities* involved – from UN to State to local authorities, contexts and communities, including a consideration of the linguistic and technological and media needs at each level.
(iv) *Investments and resource requirements* in infrastructure and capacity building for information and communication transfer, including funding (public/private donors), staffing, training and equipment (financial and otherwise, e.g. material, personnel).
(v) The t*ype* of transfer and *sharing* of resources globally/regionally/nationally – linguistic and media (traditional/Internet). Whether innovating materials and media or using those produced elsewhere, in global, national or regional contexts.
(vi) *Barriers* which may impede multilingual transfer of information at national or local levels. These may be structural or arise from a host of other factors – political, institutional, socio-economic, socio-cultural, technological, linguistic, attitudinal, etc.

[26] A distinction is made between policy (meaning a statement of intent and broad plan of action) and programme (meaning the actions necessary in order to effectively implement policy).

[27] The civil society sector is now quite large and has direct access to sources of international funding. Donor organisations (particularly those supporting projects in developing nations) often prefer to provide funds through NGOs and other civil society groups rather than government organisations (Reinicke et al., 2000).

(vii) *Targets* – minimum and maximum targets, nuanced for different contexts. Common but differentiated responsibilities[28] should be determined including consideration of speed of progress and stages of delivery.

(viii) Planning for a r*eview* of progress at local/national, regional and global levels. At local level such a review should involve: Government representatives, officials, civil society, business, language specialists, etc. At regional level countries can share experiences and address common issues and problems. At global level political fora on SDGs and information will monitor progress, identify difficulties, recommend and support action.

Examples of successful ad hoc public–private collaborations are already available, particularly in the work carried out by some Information Centres (as discussed above) which have experienced decreasing or stable budgets and have drawn on the expertise and assistance of multiple agencies within and outside the UN to produce materials, traditional media products and internet resources. Some, as noted above, have formed partnerships with broadcasting stations. To date, however, there is insufficient information about such partnerships and the impact on their potential audiences.[29] Other successful partnerships in enacting sustainability have been reported in Reinicke et al. (2000) and by the UN itself.[30]

5 Conclusion

Access to knowledge is one of the UN's indices for human development, but to achieve development and to find long-term sustainable solutions to global challenges a collective effort must be made. These efforts must prioritize the development of networks of support involving multiple partners across various ecologies, prioritising the involvement of local stakeholder communities, in the languages of those communities, in order to ensure take-up and support of policy goals. Knowledge cannot be transferred without access to media and sources of information that can be easily accessed and understood. Inequity in information transfer

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[28] The notion of "common but differentiated rights" was proposed by the Center for Economic and Social Rights (2015). They argue that some countries, particularly developed countries, bear greater responsibility for sustainable development given the impact they have had on the global environment and their command of superior resources (financial and technological): "These differentiated responsibilities should be reflected and concretely captured when States are crafting targets, commitments and indicators regarding the means of implementation for the post-2015 agendas" (p. 1). They assert that their contributions should not only focus on aid but also on co-operating in mobilising resources for universal cultural, economic and social rights.

[29] Information about those partnerships and their "multiplying impact" was requested at the 37th session of the Committee on Information (United Nations, 2015a, p. 26, paras 62, 63).

[30] For example, they report on training provided by Deloitte on the UN Compact on Global Management which was delivered in five local networks using local languages (see https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/partnership/?p=1035).

will only lead to persistent problems in tackling global issues of (for example) poverty, hunger, gender equality and literacy.

Whilst acknowledging some positive developments, we have to conclude that the current information and language policy and practice at the UN is too limited to support the effective transfer of the SDGs and information on sustainability to diverse multilingual and technologically supported settings. The problem is not simply economic but also social, cultural and political. There are many reasons for lack of access to information at the organisational level and even more complicated reasons within the field, as noted above (e.g. age, gender, social status differences within national and local settings, political barriers). The UN has for reasons of economics and efficiency prioritized digital work streams and the use of lingua franca and these factors have impacted negatively on information transfer. They have engendered practices which exclude and/or discriminate against those whose preference is for a language other than English and who do not have easy access to digital media. Under such circumstances national representatives and stakeholders find themselves without the information and knowledge to engage with and respond to issues initiated at the interstate level.

The Report of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on the SDGs (United Nations, 2014b) called aspirationally for the Organisation to "strive to increase access to information and communication technology … to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020" so that by 2030 "people everywhere [should] have the information and awareness of sustainable development" ensuring "public access to information" (paras 12.8, 16.10). Attempting to bridge the "digital divide" within and outside the Organisation must not, as argued above, be seen as a panacea: information technology cannot combat structural and social pressures of discrimination and inequality. Attention to traditional modes of information transfer must also be considered in order to reach the widest possible audience. Nuanced plans and networks are needed to meet the needs of diverse contexts. It is incontestable that information societies can address global problems more easily; however, the efforts needed to reach "people everywhere" will demand more than the provisions and plans currently in place. Co-ordinated and strategic support from a multitude of agents, communities and organisations will be essential. Bringing these together in networks of super-state, state and sub-state partnerships to facilitate access to multilingual information and to enable engagement in debate and problem-solving for the successful transference and implementation of the SDGs should be prioritized as a goal in itself. Without it, sustainability cannot take root.

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Sustainable Multilingual Education

Francis M. Hult

Abstract In 2015, the Member States of the United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Among the 17 goals is Quality Education (SDG 4). A major criticism of the SDGs, including the area of education, is the dearth of explicit attention to the role of language in general and multilingualism in particular in mediating efforts to advance sustainable development. The importance of multilingualism has not been ignored in initiatives by UN organisations, however, even if it is minimally explicit in the SDGs themselves. The present chapter focuses on the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and how it has positioned multilingualism in relation to education vis-à-vis SDG 4. Drawing upon interpretive policy analysis in conjunction with virtual language policy studies, UNESCO guidelines, publications and web materials are analysed to examine how multilingualism is indexed with SDG 4 through entextualization within documents and intertextual and interdiscursive connections across documents and the broader landscape of UN policy. Findings are situated in the context of UNESCO's legacy of promoting multilingualism in education. Future directions are discussed for centring multilingualism in sustainable development work in the domain of education and beyond, and a definition for sustainable multilingualism is proposed.

Keywords Interpretive policy analysis · SDG4 · UNESCO · Virtual language policy studies

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Multilingualism is part and parcel of the United Nations (UN) and has been since its founding (Tonkin, 2011).[1] Advocacy for multilingualism in education, in particular, has had a long legacy at the UN, especially for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) where it has continued to be in focus since its early days (e.g., UNESCO, 1953, 1999, 2003). Moreover, rights to language in education for all, including Indigenous and migrant minorities, are enshrined in a range of international instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, the Declaration on the Human Rights of Individuals Who Are Not Nationals of the Country in Which They Live, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, among others (UNESCO, 2003).

Nonetheless, the UN is not a paragon of multilingual virtue. Like other multinational organisations, it struggles with the implementation of its multilingual aspirations and ideals. Deliberate language management has often been neglected in high-level discussions[2] (Fettes, 2015; McEntee-Atalianis & Vessey, 2020, 2021), and UN actors experience practical challenges with both inwards and outwards facing multilingual communicative practices (McEntee-Atalianis, 2006a, 2016, 2017). The neglect of language management has been particularly salient in the major development initiatives of the UN, most notably the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals. To the dismay of language specialists, neither of these major initiatives to drive economic, social and environmental development globally has included planning for the role of language in mediating efforts to meet development goals and targets or for the advancement of linguistic justice and equality as an agenda for development in and of itself (Bamgbose, 2014; Fettes, 2015; Romaine, 2013; Taylor-Leech & Benson, 2017). As a result, raising awareness and providing guidance about the intersection of language with development work have been left to complementary efforts by a constellation of civil society organisations,[3] scholars, experts, and UN entities. With the absence of language

[1] Today, for instance, the General Assembly and Security Council operate with six official and working languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish), and the Economic and Social Council recognizes the same six official languages and uses three working languages (English, French and Spanish). The Secretariat, the UN's executive branch, has French and English as working languages. The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, whose under-secretary-general also serves as the UN Coordinator for Multilingualism, provides internal language services and support for multilingualism while the Department of Global Communications engages externally through outreach to Member States and their inhabitants in up to 80 different languages.

[2] This situation has changed somewhat in recent years with Secretary General António Guterres emphasizing multilingualism as a priority across the United Nations. See, for example, UN (2021) and UN (2020).

[3] As an example, the NGO Committee on Language and Languages (CoLL), a substantive committee of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CoNGO), was formed on September 9, 2021. CoLL brings together non-govern-

topics and issues from the core steering documents, this complementary work takes on a particularly crucial role in spotlighting language and multilingualism on the global development stage.

In this chapter, I consider examples of work by UN entities to foreground multilingual perspectives on development, with a particular focus on UNESCO and the domain of education in the Sustainable Development Goals. In the tradition of interpretive policy analysis (Moore & Wiley, 2015; Yanow, 2000) and virtual language policy studies (Kelly-Holmes, 2015), I examine an assemblage of texts and materials sourced from the online repositories and websites of the UN, selected and interpreted in light of my situated experience from long-term involvement with the UN and its entities through, for example, my work as a visiting scholar at the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, active involvement with the Study Group on Language and the United Nations, consulting on multilingualism and language planning for the Secretariat (together with Lisa McEntee-Atalianis), and regular participation at a variety of UN meetings and events. Informed by discursive approaches to language policy (e.g., Barakos & Unger, 2016; Hult, 2015, 2017; Johnson, 2015), I map how language and multilingualism are entextualized within documents and also trace intertextual and interdiscursive connections across documents, showing how issues and topics are reinforced by being situated in the broader landscape and legacy of UN policy.

I begin by providing brief background information about language and development in the context of the UN, with attention to the legacy of language planning for multilingualism and education by UNESCO and the role (or absence) of language in the development initiatives of the UN. Next, I turn to the complementary work undertaken by UN entities to provide multilingual perspectives and guidance on the domain of education in the Sustainable Development Goals. I provide an in-depth treatment of the Education 2030 Framework for Action, which has played a significant role in providing a multilingual lens on the targets for education. I then offer a series of examples from a selection of UN entities and activities that have used this multilingual lens to magnify language issues around educational development. Finally, I conclude with a discussion about multilingualism and sustainable development along with implications for future UN initiatives.

1 Language and Development

The UN has a substantial history of promoting multilingualism in education, with the 1953 publication of *The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education* as an early example (UNESCO, 1953). The product of a November 1951 meeting of experts at UNESCO in Paris, the text was a watershed moment in UN history, itself founded

mental organisations in consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and other stakeholders to address, raise awareness and engage on language issues pertaining to the work of the UN and its multilateral relations.

only a few years earlier in 1945, that laid the groundwork for what would become a consistent platform of advocacy for multilingual education, with attention to mother tongue-based education at its core:

> The use of the mother tongue will promote better understanding between the home and the school when the child is taught in the language of the home … Moreover, the parents will be in a better position to understand the problems of the school and in some measure to help the school in the education of the child. (p. 48)

The notion of inclusion, explicit today in the Sustainable Development Goals, is latent here in recognizing the potential for mother tongue-based education to foster continuity between home and school through inclusive participation, both for students themselves and for parents. The report goes on to advocate for mother tongue-medium instruction as a foundation for additive multilingual education that would include the learning of national/official languages and world languages to maximize students' social, cultural and economic opportunities (UNESCO, 1953, p. 55–57). The following year, at its General Conference in Montevideo, Uruguay, UNESCO endorsed Esperanto, a constructed international language, noting "the results attained by Esperanto in the field of international intellectual relations and the rapprochement of the peoples of the world" and that "these results correspond with the aims and ideals of UNESCO" (UNESCO, 1954, p. 36).

Almost half a century later, at its 30th session in 1999, UNESCO adopted Resolution 12 (30 C/Res. 12), Implementation of a Language Policy for the World Based on Multilingualism, which notes in part "that democratic access to knowledge depends on a command of several languages" (p. 35). Among the specific points in the resolution are recommendations that Member States:

> promote, through multilingual education, democratic access to knowledge for all citizens, whatever their mother tongue, and build linguistic pluralism; strategies to achieve these goals could include:
>
> (i). the early acquisition (in kindergartens and nursery schools) of a second language in addition to the mother tongue, offering alternatives;
> (ii). further education in this second language at primary-school level based on its use as a medium of instruction, thus using two languages for the acquisition of knowledge throughout the school course up to university level;
> (iii). intensive and transdisciplinary learning of at least a third modern language in secondary school, so that when pupils leave school they have a working knowledge of three languages – which should represent the normal range of practical linguistic skills in the twenty-first century; […]
> (vi). due attention in education, vocational training and industry to the potential represented by regional languages, minority languages, where they exist, and migrants' languages of origin. (UNESCO, 1999, p. 35–36)

The core theme of an education built upon the foundation of the mother tongue which, in turn, facilitates the development of a robust multilingual repertoire resounds from the 1953 text to the 1999 resolution. Resolution 12 also latently reflects a relationship between multilingualism and inclusion in affirming multilingual education as a mechanism for "democratic access to knowledge for all citizens". Thus, mother tongue-based multilingual education is a long-held policy priority of UNESCO, the tenets of which are summarized in the position paper *Education in a Multilingual World*:

1. UNESCO supports mother tongue instruction as a means of improving educational quality by building upon the knowledge and experience of the learners and teachers.
2. UNESCO supports bilingual and/or multilingual education at all levels of education as a means of promoting both social and gender equality and as a key element of linguistically diverse societies.
3. UNESCO supports language as an essential component of inter-cultural education in order to encourage understanding between different population groups and ensure respect for fundamental rights (UNESCO, 2003, p. 30).

Despite the legacy of the UN with respect to promoting multilingualism for social and educational development, language has been conspicuously absent in recent major global development initiatives of the UN, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

2 Language and Development Goals

The MDGs constituted an ambitious agenda in the areas of poverty and hunger, education, gender equality, child mortality, maternal health, disease and public health, environment, and global partnership. They were adopted by the UN in September 2000 as a set of eight goals with a variety of targets to be achieved by 2015 (Saith, 2006; UN, 2015). Romaine (2013) and Bamgbose (2014) document how the role of language in mediating these eight social and economic development goals was taken for granted and contributed to challenges that limited their impact and success. Language was missing from the goal related to education, in particular – an omission that, as Romaine (2013, p. 6) points out, was of special concern because language "is the pivot on which education and therefore on which all development depends. As long as education is delivered mainly in international languages at the expense of local vernaculars, education will reproduce rather than reduce inequality of access."

The MDGs concluded in 2015, paving the way for an even more ambitious development agenda through the year 2030 in the form of SDGs that encompass a number of areas that were included among the MDGs while also adding new ones. The seeds for the SDGs were planted in 2011 as part of the lead-up to the UN's Rio + 20 Conference (held in June 2012), in nascent proposals from the Director of Economic, Social and Environmental Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Colombia. These proposals later led to the formation at the conference of a working group of 30 government representatives to begin the process of drafting goals to be presented to the General Assembly (Dodds et al., 2017). An extensive process of meetings and consultations with member states, various UN agencies and other stakeholders followed, with the final set of SDGs being adopted by the General

Assembly in September 2015 and taking effect in January 2016 (Dodds et al., 2017). In all, there are 17 goals spanning areas of social, economic and environmental development, each of which are broken down further into targets (169 in all) to be measured by specific indicators.[4]

The SDGs might be the most successful public relations campaign in UN history. The colourful icons representing each goal and the multicoloured wheel logo (UN Department of Global Communications, 2020) have been highly popular, displayed throughout the world in offices and lobbies of UN agencies, NGOs, public and private sector organisations, and educational institutions. SDG merchandise sells briskly at the UN headquarters bookshop in New York and UN gift shops in other locations. The wheel logo lapel pin is ubiquitous at UN meetings and events. Like the MDGs, but even more so, the SDGs and their framing of issues have come to dominate the global discourse about development, both substantively and semiotically (cf. Romaine, 2013; Saith, 2006). Thus, if anything, the SDGs have had a substantial awareness-raising impact.

Among the preparatory work for the SDGs were a series of 18 thematic think pieces on the spectrum of domain areas to be included among the goals.[5] In light of the issues raised about the MDGs by language researchers (e.g., Bamgbose, 2014; Norton, 2014; Romaine, 2013), one might have expected to see the role of language foregrounded in planning for the SDGs. In his analysis of the thematic think pieces, however, Fettes (2015, and Chapter "Language and the Sustainable Development Goals: Challenges to Language Policy and Planning", this volume) found that language-related topics were presented only four times across all 18 of them: "[f]our mentions – and in every case, language is listed as one among several indicators of diversity, inequality or discrimination. Nowhere are the unique characteristics of language and challenges of language management identified or discussed" (Fettes, 2015, p. 300). As with the MDGs, language and multilingualism are not explicitly included in the SDGs nor are they reflected in any of the targets or the core global indicators for those targets (Taylor-Leech & Benson, 2017).

The domain of education is the focus of the fourth goal (SDG 4), which is to "ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes", and expressed shorthand as *quality education* (UNESCO, 2021a). Its targets and global indicators are shown in Table 1 (with emphasis added).

As with the MDG goal related to education, neither language nor multilingualism appears explicitly with respect to SDG 4. Reading is mentioned once in the global indicator for target 4.1. Literacy appears twice, in target 4.6 itself and in its global indicator. Communication is included but narrowly related to information and communications technology (ICT). Despite the UN's history with multilingualism and UNESCO's long-established prioritization of mother tongue-based multilingual education, no mention is made of the role of the mother tongue.

[4]The complete list of SDGs and their targets can be found on the SDG portal: https://sdgs.un.org/goals

[5]The collection of think pieces is available at https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/untaskteam_undf/them_tp.shtml

Table 1 Targets and global indicators for sustainable development goal 4: quality education

Target	Global indicator(s)
Target 4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes	4.1.1 Proportion of children and young people (a) in grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) *reading* [emphasis added] and (ii) mathematics, by sex
Target 4.2 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education	4.2.1 Proportion of children aged 24–59 months who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being, by sex 4.2.2 Participation rate in organized learning (1 year before the official primary entry age), by sex
Target 4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university	4.3.1 Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex
Target 4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship	4.4.1 Proportion of youth and adults with information and *communications technology* [emphasis added] (ICT) skills, by type of skill
Target 4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations	4.5.1 Parity indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous peoples and conflict-affected, as data become available) for all education indicators on this list that can be disaggregated
Target 4.6 By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve *literacy* [emphasis added] and numeracy	4.6.1 Proportion of population in a given age group achieving at least a fixed level of proficiency in functional (a) *literacy* [emphasis added] and (b) numeracy skills, by sex

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Target	Global indicator(s)
Target 4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and nonviolence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development	4.7.1 Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development are mainstreamed in (a) national education policies, (b) curricula, (c) teacher education and (d) student assessment
Target 4.a Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all	4.a.1 Proportion of schools offering basic services, by type of service
Target 4.b By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries	4.b.1 Volume of official development assistance flows for scholarships by sector and type of study
Target 4.c By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States	4.c.1 Proportion of teachers with the minimum required qualifications, by education level

The targets and global indicators are reported from UNESCO (2021a) with emphasis added. The targets and global indicators also appear on the UN SDG portal at https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4

A detailed imagining of the multiple ways that language and multilingualism *could* and *should* be considered in relation to SDG 4 is beyond the scope of this paper (see Romaine, 2013 for such a discussion with respect to the MDGs); however, it is well established in the field of education, and educational linguistics in particular, that language mediates the learning of all subjects and skills (e.g., Carrasquillo & Rodríguez, 2002; Hult & King, 2011). Accordingly, the absence of language as an area of focus in the SDGs itself has potential policy implications. As Fishman pointed out, "'no policy' leaves whatever language is 'in control' still in the 'driver's seat' and, therefore, a 'no policy' policy … is always a silent vote for the continuation of the status quo and of those who benefit thereby" (2006, p. 125).

Paradoxically, then, SDG 4 seems to have the potential to undermine its own purpose: a narrow reading of the SDG 4 targets and global indicators as written could easily lead educators and educational policymakers to interpret literacy to mean literacy in the dominant national language and, more broadly, to conclude that the spectrum of knowledge and skills encompassed within SDG 4 or even the main goal of equitable, quality education can be achieved through a dominant national language only. As Romaine (2013, p. 10) explains, "[p]oor school achievement of speakers of languages other than the official and national languages recognized for instructional purposes is well documented in virtually all nations … The groups most impacted by injustices in language policy and planning in education are women and girls, the poor, and those speaking languages not represented in formal structures."

The absence of explicit attention to language in SDG 4 itself, however, does not mean that multilingualism has been ignored in and around the UN's work on quality education as part of the overall SDG agenda. In the following sections, I explore different ways in which SDG 4 has been aligned with multilingualism within the UN community. I begin with the Education 2030 Framework for Action, which has been foundational in providing a multilingual interpretation of elements of SDG 4. I then turn to a number of examples of how the alignment of multilingualism and SDG 4 has taken shape across a range of UN entities and activities.

3 Education 2030 Framework for Action

The Education 2030 Framework for Action emerged from the World Education Forum (WEF), which met in Incheon, South Korea, in May 2015. WEF 2015 was convened by UNESCO, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), UN Women and the World Bank, with participants including representatives of UN member states, civil society, the field of education, youth and the private sector. Its purpose was, first, to review the outcomes of the global Education for All initiative launched 15 years earlier and, second, to develop a vision for achieving SDG 4 by 2030 (UNESCO, 2015). An outcome of the forum was the Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2015), agreed upon by the delegates at the end of the forum in anticipation of the formal adoption of the SDGs by the UN General Assembly the following September. The Declaration and Framework was formally adopted by the 184 Member States of UNESCO on November 4, 2015.

The Framework for Action offers interpretations of SDG 4 generally and of individual targets specifically, with the aim of guiding the "international education community … on a new all-encompassing approach to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for children … [and] to accomplish all of the education targets" (UNESCO, 2015, p. 71). While language in general and multilingualism in particular received scant attention in the preparatory documents that were the foundation for the SDGs (Fettes, 2015), the Framework for Action is noteworthy for drawing attention to ways in which language and multilingualism are relevant for SDG 4. Among recommendations for approaching the overarching goal of SDG 4 with respect to equity and inclusion, it is advised that

> Cross-sector policies and plans should be developed or improved, consistent with the overall 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to address the social, cultural and economic barriers that deprive millions of children, youth and adults of education and quality learning … Evidence-based policies and strategies to address exclusion may include … *language policies to address exclusion* [emphasis added]. (UNESCO, 2015, p. 32)

This statement acknowledges the area of language as a pillar of public policy as well as its role in mediating individuals' "social, cultural, and economic" opportunities, and it highlights the potential for language policy to codify structural support for minoritized populations who experience language-based exclusion from such opportunities (cf. Benson & Kosonen, 2021; Hornberger, 2009; Hult & Hornberger, 2016; Johnson, 2013; Shoba & Chimbutane, 2013; Skutnabb-Kangas et al., 2009). Language policy is also aligned, albeit softly by use of the modal verb *may*, with a core focus of SDG 4: inclusive education.

The Framework for Action goes on to offer guidance on specific SDG 4 targets. With respect to achieving target 4.1 ("ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes"), it reads:

> Addressing inequality and ensuring inclusion in provision and in quality education outcomes requires deepening the understanding of teaching and learning in a given learning environment. In multilingual contexts, where possible and taking into account differing national and subnational realities, capacities and policies, *teaching and learning in the first or home language should be encouraged* [emphasis added]. Given the increased global social, environmental and economic interdependence, it is *also recommended that at least one foreign language is offered as a subject* [emphasis added]. (UNESCO, 2015, p. 37)

> In multilingual contexts foster bi- and multilingual education, starting with early learning in the first or home language of children. (UNESCO, 2015, p. 38)

These recommendations reverberate with the principles set forth in *The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education* (UNESCO, 1953) and the more recent Resolution 12 (UNESCO, 1999), both of which emphasize mother tongue-medium education coupled with additive language learning and serve to place multilingual education within the frame of SDG 4.

Further, in its guidance on target 4.6 ("ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy"), the following is noted:

> By 2030, all young people and adults across the world should have achieved relevant and recognized proficiency levels in functional literacy and numeracy skills that are equivalent to levels achieved at successful completion of basic education … *Particular attention should be paid to the role of learners' first language in becoming literate and in learning* [emphasis added]. (UNESCO, 2015, p. 47)

> Ensure that literacy and numeracy programmes are of high quality according to national evaluation mechanisms, tailored to learners' needs and based on their previous knowledge and experience. This requires paying close attention to culture, *language* [emphasis added], social and political relationships and economic activity, (UNESCO, 2015, p. 48)

These statements are noteworthy in offering an interpretation of literacy in SDG 4 through the lens of language, which is otherwise not evident in the global targets and indicators themselves, where literacy alone is specified. Here, by highlighting the role of the first language in literacy development, the Framework for Action aligns target 4.6 with UNESCO's long-held policy priority on mother tongue-based education (e.g., UNESCO, 1953, 1999). It also echoes a rich intellectual history of literacy research that shows how literacy is sociopolitically contextualized as well as intimately intertwined with particular languages, social knowledge and cultural practices (e.g., Benson & Kosonen, 2013; García et al., 2006; Heath, 1983; Hornberger, 2003; Martin-Jones & Jones, 2001; Skutnabb-Kangas & Heugh, 2012). The lens of language offered here facilitates a multilingual interpretation of literacy in SDG 4, which is crucial because reading SDG 4 in the absence of this perspective could allow literacy to be construed as mainly or only literacy in the dominant language of a country.

Another noteworthy outcome of WEF 2015 and the Framework for Action was the consideration and inclusion of thematic indicators for SDG 4 targets. These thematic indicators serve to guide the collection of additional data in specific topic areas as a complement to the broader global indicators. The thematic indicators were developed by the Technical Advisory Group (TAG), a set of experts chaired by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and including representatives from multiple global regions, civil society organisations, UNESCO, the Education for All Global Monitoring Report, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), UNICEF and the World Bank (UNESCO, 2018). A finalized proposal for thematic indicators was included in the Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2015, 2018).

Despite the explicit connection made between language and targets 4.1 and 4.6 in the Framework for Action (see above), no language-related thematic indicators for those targets were proposed. However, a salient thematic indicator pertaining to medium of instruction was proposed in relation to target 4.5:

> Percentage of students in primary education whose first or home language is the language of instruction. (UNESCO, 2015, p. 78)

By 2021,[6] this thematic indicator had become expanded to include a broader spectrum of grade levels, reading:

> Percentage of students in a) early grades, b) at the end of primary, and c) at the end of lower secondary education who have their first or home language as language of instruction. (UNESCO, 2021b, p. 1)[7]

The thematic indicators, while included on the Official List of SDG 4 Indicators (UNESCO, 2021a), do not appear on the main SDG 4 web portal, however. The portal is the primary point of information for the general public, including members

[6] To date, I have not been able to ascertain the process through which this indicator was expanded or when the expansion took effect, although it was sometime between 2018 and 2021.

[7] See also UNESCO (2021b).

of the global educational professional community. It is unclear, therefore, how aware educators and policymakers generally are of this one and only thematic indicator focused on language.

It also remains to be seen how useful the data related to this indicator will be. At the time of writing, data are available from only 55 polities and mainly for the year 2015, with 10 reporting retroactive data for 2014 and one reporting data from 2016 (see Table 2 in the appendix). Overall, UIS points out that countries are reporting less than half of the necessary data to monitor progress on SDG 4 (UNESCO, 2020a). Thus, it is not yet possible to see comparable data for all Member States, or change over time within a given Member State.

In addition, as specified in the most recent metadata guide, the data for measuring this indicator come primarily from major international educational assessment instruments such as El Laboratorio Latinoamericano de Evaluación de la Calidad de la Educación (LLECE), Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Programme d'analyse des systèmes éducatifs de la CONFEMEN (PASEC), among others, with the rationale that "the indicator provides the percent of students whose test language of test [sic] and language spoken at home are the same. This provides a proxy to measure the percent of students learning in their home language as the language of the test is generally the language of instruction" (UNESCO, 2021b, p. 1–2).

While this information might provide a rudimentary estimate, it belies the practical complexities of instruction and assessment in multilingual contexts (cf. Gorter, 2017; Shohamy, 2011). UIS acknowledges that "it is not possible to verify (empirically) the actual language of instruction using learning assessments in this metadata as this data was not collected by these assessments" (UNESCO, 2021b, p. 2) and that "[e]ven if pupils are taught in their first or home language the quality of the teaching may not always be sufficient to ensure that good progress in learning takes place" (UNESCO, 2018, p. 52).

Furthermore, as UIS operationalizes it, "[f]irst or home language is defined as the student's main language of communication outside the school environment. It is usually either the first language students learn or the language of their family or local community" (UNESCO, 2019a, p. 60).[8] As the body of work in sociolinguistics and the sociology of language has shown, multilingualism among individuals and societies is often not unambiguously sequential or discrete (e.g., Blackledge & Creese, 2014; Horner & Weber, 2018; Martin-Jones et al., 2012). Indeed, for many multilinguals, "home language" and "language of communication outside the

[8] The UIS glossary conflates multiple terms, defining home language as a "language learned in childhood in the home environment, also referred to as mother tongue, first language, or native language" (UNESCO, 2021c, home language). As a number of scholars have pointed out, these concepts do not always neatly coincide, as in cases where families experience tensions between dominant and minority languages; the concepts of first and native language have also been problematized, especially among bi−/multilinguals (see, for example, Bonfiglio, 2010; Davies, 2003; Rampton, 1990; Silver, 2005; Singh, 1998; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000).

school" are different or may involve a multilingual repertoire rather than a single, easily identifiable language (e.g., Coulmas, 2018; Douglas Fir Group, 2016).

One might also query the preferred interpretation of the indicator offered by UIS: that a high value indicates that "a large number of primary pupils are being taught in a language in which they are proficient, thus making it easier for them to adapt to the school learning environment" (UNESCO, 2019a, p. 60). Assuming a valid accounting of alignment between home language and medium of instruction, this interpretation seems rational at first blush; however, one might ask if it follows in the spirit of *inclusive and equitable* education at the heart of SDG 4. A low value would certainly indicate a potentially problematic educational context, one in which a small percentage of students are educated through the medium of a home language. At the same time, a high value does not necessarily suggest an inclusive or equitable educational system. One would expect to see a high value in a context where the dominant language of the majority is also the medium of instruction. These are often contexts where minoritized students experience educational exclusion and inequity.

Let us take two contexts with which I am familiar as examples. As shown in Table 2 in the appendix, both Finland (88.9%) and the United States of America (78.9%) have what might be considered relatively high values for this thematic indicator. While these figures (with the aforementioned caveats) could be said to indicate that a majority of students receive education in the medium of a home language, the 11.1% and 21.1% respectively who do not represent historically situated educational injustices that minoritized students (Sámi, Swedish and Russian speakers among others in Finland [e.g. Hult & Pietikäinen, 2014] and Spanish speakers among others in the United States [e.g. Moore, 2021]) continue to experience. Data indicating that the (linguistic) majority in a country receives instruction in the medium of their home languages would not suggest meaningful inclusiveness or equity. Accordingly, a useful analytical focus for data related to this thematic indicator would be the gap between the current value and 100%, with attention to whether, how and why it narrows (e.g., because of the implementation of effective mother tongue-based multilingual education or because of language shift to a dominant language on the part of linguistic minority communities).

These points notwithstanding, one should perhaps not let the perfect be the enemy of the good. As Gazzola et al. explain (2021, p. 9), "access to formal schooling in one's first language(s), along with effective educational access to dominant or national languages, are clearly important dimensions of linguistic justice, but pose theoretical and methodological challenges in indicator design," so some difficulties are to be expected. Nonetheless, given the minimal attention to language in the foundational documents that resulted in the SDGs (Fettes, 2015) and the invisibility of language or multilingualism in the targets and global indicators for SDG 4, the construction of a thematic indicator focused on medium of instruction serves a key awareness-raising purpose even if one might have also wished for additional thematic indicators related to additive language learning (target 4.1) or biliteracy (target 4.6). More generally, there is evidence for uptake within the UN community of the kind of multilingual reading of SDG 4 proffered in the Education 2030 Framework for Action, examples of which I present in the following section.

4 Examples of Multilingual Perspectives on Quality Education

With the historically situated prioritization of multilingualism in education by UNESCO and the framing of a multilingual perspective on SDG 4 in the Education 2030 Framework for Action as a backdrop, a range of initiatives by various UN entities and agencies have sought to foreground language issues that are relevant for making progress towards inclusive, quality education. The examples presented here are not comprehensive but rather serve as illustrations of the ways in which multilingualism has been proactively emphasized in relation to SDG 4 by the UN community.

4.1 Global Education Monitoring Report

One of the major resources for taking stock of challenges and progress towards the targets of SDG 4 is the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report. In its own words, "[t]he GEM Report is an editorially independent, evidence-based publication that serves as an indispensable tool to promote informed dialogue and increase awareness about progress and challenges in education … with a new mandate to monitor education progress in the SDGs" (UNESCO, 2016, p. 596).

The 2016 GEM Report was particularly noteworthy in its attention to multilingualism in education.[9] Among the documents released that year was a GEM Report policy paper titled succinctly, "If you don't understand, how can you learn?" (UNESCO, 2016). Referencing a publication by Walter and Benson (2012), the report proclaims that "as much as 40% of the global population does not have access to an education in a language they speak or understand" (UNESCO, 2016, p. 1). This became an often-cited statistic[10] by UN officials to reinforce the importance of attending to the matter of language in education. The full GEM Report for that year (UNESCO, 2016) explicitly cites the statistic as a threat to educational equity and the achievement of target 4.5. A section of the report is devoted to an exposition of issues in language and education (UNESCO, 2016, p. 267–270) and makes specific

[9] This work was informed by a background paper written by Carolyn Benson titled, "Addressing Language of Instruction Issues in Education: Recommendations for Documenting Progress" (UNESCO, 2016, p. 573).

[10] This figure was recently corroborated by the World Bank (2021) in its independent investigation: "37 percent of students in low- and middle-income countries are not being taught in the language they speak and understand best" (p. 9).

mention of the thematic indicator presented in the Framework for Action, acknowledging both the challenges of measuring it, as well why it matters nonetheless:

> One proposed thematic indicator under target 4.5 is the percentage of primary education students whose first or home language is used as language of instruction. Collecting reliable information on this is not easy or straightforward. (p. 267)

> The continuing neglect of mother tongue-based multilingual education in linguistically diverse countries helps explain large disparities in education outcomes. While tracking language of instruction is fraught with technical and possibly political challenges, it is a key issue that countries and regions need to tackle head-on if no one is to be left behind. (p. 270)

The 2016 GEM Report also provides numerous examples from a range of contexts, especially in Africa and Asia, of both effective and problematic educational language policies along with a discussion of best practices for gathering data on this issue through both country-level statistics and fieldwork. In addition, the report provides examples of effective medium of instruction practices, noting for instance that "[o]ne crucial way to incorporate traditional knowledge into schools is using the local language as the language of instruction" (UNESCO, 2016, p. 28) and that rural education programmes for farmers that "follow a locally relevant curriculum and use the local language obtain the best results" (p. 46). In sum, GEM documents from 2016 further develop a multilingual perspective on SDG 4.

4.2 UN Entities

Several UN entities have also produced resource materials related to multilingual education and SDG 4. Here I offer two examples, one from the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) and another from UNESCO Bangkok.

UIL[11] is an institute of research-based practice, situated in Hamburg, Germany, whose focus is adult learning as well as continuing and informal education. It produces and publishes research-based materials to inform educational practice in these areas and its staff offers field-based training and consultations to Member States. UIL houses the Effective Literacy and Numeracy Practices Database (LitBase), a repository of youth and adult programmes throughout regions of the world that demonstrate best practices in literacy education. The case studies included in LitBase are examples of programmes that provide instruction situated in local language ecologies (cf. Hornberger, 2003; Hult, 2013). UIL published a volume featuring cases from LitBase, indexing the relationship between multilingualism and SDG4: *Literacy in Multilingual and Multicultural Contexts: Effective Approaches to Adult Learning and Education* (Hanemann & Scarpino, 2016). The introduction explicitly frames the volume and its focus in relation to the Framework for Action and the multilingual perspective it offers on SDG 4:

[11] For more information visit https://uil.unesco.org/unesco-institute/mandate

> The *Education 2030 Framework for Action* [emphasis added], unanimously adopted by member states at the November 2015 UNESCO General Conference, provides guidance for the implementation of *Sustainable Development Goal* [emphasis added] *(SDG) 4* over the next fifteen years … No education target can be considered to be met unless it is met for all. *Language* [emphasis added], ethnicity, gender and poverty can interact to produce complex patterns of compounded disadvantage and increased risk of being left behind. (Hanemann, 2016, p. 12)

> [T]he success of *multilingual* [emphasis added] and multicultural approaches to literacy depends on consultative, participatory and democratic decision making, as well as optimal use of existing skills and resources … In short, good practice reflects the respect accorded to the cultural and *linguistic rights* [emphasis added] of all groups, uses a participatory approach to mediate among different needs and aspirations, and draws on culture and *language* [emphasis added] as resources that enrich the teaching and learning process. (Hanemann, 2016, p. 12)

The volume features case studies from 20 different countries and all regions of the world, showcasing different approaches and foci from among programmes offered by governments as well as non-governmental organisations, programmes that support local language and culture development and programmes that support migrants and refugees. In all, the volume provides a series of programmes that can serve as exemplars of a multilingual approach to SDG 4.

UNESCO Bangkok[12] is a regional bureau for education and serves as a UNESCO hub in Asia and the Pacific. It supports and delivers UNESCO programmes in a number of countries in the region. As a bureau for education, like UIL, it provides research-based materials and consultation to Member States in the region. UNESCO Bangkok has been particularly active in the area of multilingual education, a recent salient example being the production of a *Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB MLE) Resource Kit: Including the Excluded, Promoting Multilingual Education* (Malone, 2018). The resource is designed for direct use by educators and policymakers to guide the implementation of mother tongue-based education, and it is explicitly framed in relation to the Education 2030 Framework for Action and SDG 4. In his foreword to the *Resource Kit*, UNESCO Bangkok director Gwang-Jo Kim writes:

> There is much to share about MTB MLE. The adoption of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)* [emphasis added] provides us with the ideal opportunity to do so. The original Advocacy Kit has been updated to reflect the new agenda and to make it more relevant to country efforts in planning, integrating and implementing *SDG4-Education 2030* [emphasis added] and other relevant SDGs within existing national plans and strategies. (p. vi)

The *Resource Kit* is also positioned along the trajectory of UNESCO's historical focus on multilingual education, including an allusion to the landmark UNESCO (1953) report:

> For thousands of years, parents have used their mother tongue to communicate with and teach their young children at home and in the community. However, it was not until the

[12] For more information, visit https://bangkok.unesco.org/content/unesco-bangkok

> middle of the twentieth century, with UNESCO's publication of ***The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education*** [emphasis added], that the benefits of mother tongue-based education were recognized internationally. (Malone, 2018, p. 1)

As a set of materials aimed at practitioners and policymakers, the *Resource Kit* is written in mostly non-technical language and provides guidance for those new to mother tongue-based education such as a glossary of key terms and concepts; research-based answers to common questions about mother tongue-based education aimed respectively at readers who are policymakers, programme implementers and community members; and a collection of case studies illustrating successful implementation in five different national contexts. In all, the Resource Kit provides a roadmap for multiple stakeholders to facilitate the design and implementation of educational programmes that follow a multilingual perspective on progress towards SDG 4.

4.3 International Mother Language Day

In addition to material resources, the UN engages in a variety of initiatives to raise public awareness, among them the observance of international days and weeks.[13] One of the most prominent of those related to multilingualism is International Mother Language Day (IMLD), celebrated on February 21st each year since 2000. Since the SDGs were adopted in September 2015, the themes of IMLD have been explicitly indexed to SDG 4 on three occasions, as reflected in the themes "quality education" (2016), "sustainable futures through multilingual education" (2017) and "multilingualism for inclusion in education" (2021) shown in bold:

> **Quality Education**, Language(s) of Instruction and Learning Outcomes (2016)[14]
> Towards **Sustainable Futures through Multilingual Education** (2017)[15]
> Acting Together for Linguistic Diversity and Multilingualism (2018)[16]
> Indigenous Languages Matter for Development, Peace Building and Reconciliation (2019)[17]
> Languages without Borders (2020)[18]
> Fostering **Multilingualism for Inclusion in Education and Society** (2021)[19]

Even in those years when the overall theme did not index SDG 4, the connection was made explicit in other ways. For instance, on the main webpage for IMLD 2018, the following is noted:

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[13] For a complete list see https://www.un.org/en/observances/international-days-and-weeks

[14] https://en.unesco.org/events/international-mother-language-day-2016

[15] http://www.unesco.org/new/en/international-mother-language-day/

[16] https://en.unesco.org/commemorations/motherlanguageday/2018

[17] https://webarchive.unesco.org/20200115134943/https://en.unesco.org/commemorations/motherlanguageday

[18] https://webarchive.unesco.org/20201206102252/https://en.unesco.org/commemorations/motherlanguageday

[19] https://en.unesco.org/commemorations/motherlanguageday

> UNESCO also uses the day to focus on linguistic diversity and multilingualism as an integral part of sustainable development, and **in particular to realize targets 4.6 and 4.7 of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) on education**.
>
> The **SDGs depend on linguistic diversity and multilingualism** as a vital contribution to global citizenship education as they promote intercultural connections and better ways of living together.

In the concept note for IMLD 2020, the programmatic text outlining the aims and purposes of the event affirms that:

> The celebration of this International Day has become an important occasion to promote the right to Mother Tongue-based Multilingual Education *(30 C/Res. 12)* [emphasis added], which UNESCO defines as the use of at least three languages in the classroom: the mother tongue(s), a regional or national language and an international language in schools. (UNESCO, 2020b, p. 1)
>
> The UNESCO *Global Education Monitoring Report's 2016 policy paper, If you don't understand, how can you learn?* [emphasis added] is among research that supports this statement. The need for governments to implement Mother Tongue Instruction is an urgent one. The paper cited research from 2012 showing that *40% of the world's children did not have access to education in a language they understood* [emphasis added]. This figure helps to explain the scale of the global learning crisis. (UNESCO, 2020b, p. 1)
>
> UNESCO's work on languages and sustainable development is based on a Human Rights approach, and guided by Sustainable Development Goal 4, which aims to ensure quality education to enable every woman and man to acquire the skills, knowledge and values they need to participate fully in the peaceful development of their societies. Mother tongue education is a key component of quality education, as reflected in UNESCO's *Education 2030 Framework for Action* [emphasis added], the global road map to implement the Education 2030 Agenda. (UNESCO, 2020b, p. 2)

These excerpts demonstrate the contextualization of IMLD within the UNESCO policy landscape, alluding here to both the UNESCO (1999) Resolution 12 on multilingual education and to the Framework for Action with its multilingual perspective on SDG 4. There is also an intertextual reference to the 40% statistic about education and linguistic accessibility discussed earlier and the GEM 2016 policy paper that emphasized it.

5 Discussion and Conclusion: Towards Sustainable Multilingual Education[20]

UNESCO has a long history of advancing multilingual education as reflected by a series of resolutions, position papers and resource materials produced during its over 75-year history. Even though language and multilingualism are not explicitly

[20] Portions of an earlier draft of this discussion section were included in my response to a UNESCO Futures of Education survey: https://en.unesco.org/futuresofeducation/submission/francis-m-hult-united-states

included in the SDGs, save for the one thematic indicator on medium of instruction, SDG 4 in particular must be contextualized within this wider historical legacy of multilingual education. As the present examination has shown, that is precisely what is happening through the complementary work being done by entities within the UN community. Nonetheless, the SDGs, in their role as a monumental public awareness raising campaign, have captured the imagination of a wide range of development stakeholders on local, national, regional and global scales in public and private sectors alike. In this respect, the absence of language issues at its core was a major missed opportunity for broad consciousness-raising about multilingualism in general and multilingual education in particular.

In the decade or so remaining for the SDGs, the complementary work by UN entities and others on the relationship between multilingualism and the SDG targets and indicators will continue to be crucial for keeping language in focus, not least in the domain of education. In 2019, at the High-Level Political Forum, an annual event to monitor progress towards the SDGs, an alarm was raised that the world is substantially behind on progress towards SDG 4 (a situation further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic), with the caveat that "[i]f we do not achieve the education goal, the other global goals will not be achieved either" (UNESCO, 2019b, p. 1). Education is the bedrock of sustainable development. As Fettes writes in the Universal Esperanto Association's guidebook on the Sustainable Development Goals:

> Education is a powerful resource for social improvement; it is also a powerful means of preventing the development of minorities, girls, disabled persons and other groups that do not conform to the governing standards of a particular society. That is why the UN emphasizes that education should be inclusive and equal – for all to receive similar opportunities to be educated and to develop their own skills. (2020, p. 34; translation mine)

A recent World Bank policy paper (2021) further emphasizes that "human capital accumulation is largely a language-based endeavor. It is the basis of wealth in modern societies and is primarily acquired through schooling" (p. 8). Thus, the work of centring language issues with respect to SDG 4 is crucial not just for fostering equitable educational opportunities *per se* but for the benefit of sustainable development more broadly. On this front, there is certainly more to be done.

Increased attention needs to be paid to the languages of migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers, to ensure that their language resources are maximized in education to promote inclusiveness, integration, and the educational success and life chances that will facilitate gender equality (SDG 5), decent work (SDG 8), reduced inequalities (SDG 10) and sustainable cities (SDG 11). The text *Teaching about Refugees: Language Acquisition Guide* developed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is an example of the kind of practical resource in this area that UN agencies can provide for Member States and stakeholders.

Greater awareness also needs to be raised about the multilingual education needs of students who are deaf (Compton & Hult, 2014; Reagan, 2010). Most children who are born deaf are born into hearing families and, with a sign language as their first/preferred language which is not a language shared with their families, face unique challenges with literacy development (SDG target 4.6) in the dominant national languages which are often used as the medium of instruction at school, as well as wider language development challenges when mainstreamed in hearing classrooms (Compton, 2014). The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities calls for provisions to support full access to education for students who are deaf, yet many countries fall short of offering them fully inclusive education, often viewing deafness through a medical rather than a linguistic minority lens and increasingly favouring cochlear implants over linguistic rights as a remedy (cf. McEntee-Atalianis, 2006b, 2019; Reagan, 2010; Siegel, 2008). It would be useful for UNESCO to develop practical guides, like the UNESCO Bangkok *MTB MLE Resource Kit* or the UNHCR (2019) *Teaching about Refugees: Language Acquisition Guide,* focused on best educational practices when the first/preferred language is a sign language, as such guides could support progress towards educational equity for students who are d/Deaf (SDG target 4.5).

Similarly, as we enter the Decade of Indigenous Languages, special attention should be paid to advocacy and support for Indigenous mother tongues in education, both as a medium of instruction for Indigenous students and as a subject for language awareness and language learning for all students. The role of Indigenous languages in education is especially salient for SDG target 4.5. The Decade of Indigenous Languages, beginning in 2021, is a golden opportunity for UNESCO to develop resources for the integration of Indigenous languages in education.

More broadly, the development of plurilingualism among all students worldwide should be extensively promoted. While many school systems across the world continue to emphasize English as a gateway to social, economic and cultural opportunities, only about 20% of the world's population uses English as a first, second or additional language (Lyons, 2021). Inclusive, international communication calls for the development of multilingual resources to include, among others, mother tongues, Indigenous languages, major world languages, international languages like Esperanto, and national and regional languages. The capacity for inclusive communication through plurilingualism, in turn, relates to a number of SDG foci including sustainable tourism (SDG 8); scientific research and development (SDG 9); economic, social, and political inclusion (SDG 10); urban integration (SDG 11); participatory representation in decision-making; public access to information, and international cooperation and capacity building (SDG 16).

Finally, if past is prologue, discussions about what will follow the SDGs are already beginning, much as they did in the transition from the MDGs to the SDGs (Dodds et al., 2017). Looking ahead, it will be essential for conversations about language to be part of a conceptualization process for whatever succeeds the SDGs to ensure that it is not left out once again but becomes the key focal area for development that it deserves to be. UN actors, such as those who produced the texts examined here, can play a substantial role in bringing language into the foreground and to the attention of high-level individuals responsible for leading development planning efforts. Scholars and members of civil society can also play an important role by continuing to raise issues and questions and by advocating for attention to language issues in development planning. Multilingualism must become axiomatically indexed with sustainable development. In the World Commission on Environment and Development's (1987) definition, sustainable development is "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (p. 41). Adapting this definition, we might view sustainable multilingualism as linguistic practices that meet the needs of the present, without compromising the linguistic diversity future generations will require to meet their needs. This spirit is already present in the multilingual perspective that complementary work has brought to the interpretation and implementation of SDG 4. It must be carried forward more centrally in future development work because truly accessible and inclusive social, economic and cultural development requires the cultivation of robust multilingual repertoires.

Appendix

Table 2 Percentage of students in (a) early grades, (b) at the end of primary, and (c) at the end of lower secondary education who have their first or home language as language of instruction

	Year		
Country	2014	2015	2016
Armenia			88.3
Australia		84.9	
Bahrain		67.9	
Belgium		78.6	
Benin	1.4		
Bulgaria		76.1	
Burkina Faso	0.4		
Burundi	93.7		
Cameroon	15.5		
Canada		75.3	
Chad	0.9		
Chile		89.7	
China, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region		70.5	
Congo	12.2		
Côte d'Ivoire	7.0		
Croatia		92.2	
Cyprus		75.2	
Czechia		91.5	
Denmark		88.4	
Finland		88.9	
France		83.4	

(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

Country	Year		
	2014	2015	2016
Georgia		87.5	
Germany		80.6	
Hungary		97.6	
Indonesia		43.8	
Iran (Islamic Republic of)		66.7	
Ireland		87.5	
Italy		84.0	
Japan		98.4	
Kazakhstan		87.4	
Kuwait		27.8	
Lithuania		90.8	
Morocco		46.7	
Netherlands		80.1	
New Zealand		84.0	
Niger	0.5		
Norway		83.8	
Oman		62.9	
Poland		96.1	
Portugal		91.2	
Qatar		53.0	
Republic of Korea		91.7	
Russian Federation		90.6	
Saudi Arabia		79.1	
Senegal	1.2		
Serbia		94.6	
Singapore		48.6	
Slovakia		84.6	
Slovenia		86.1	
Spain		73.3	
Sweden		83.6	
Togo	1.2		
Turkey		84.7	
United Arab Emirates		53.5	
United States of America		78.9	

Percentages are rounded to the nearest tenth
Source: http://data.uis.unesco.org

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The Sustainability of Multilingualism from Home to Pre-school Contexts: Three Case Studies from Europe

Christine Hélot

Abstract Today, because of increased migration, more and more children are growing up in plurilingual families and attending educational settings where the language used differs from their family language(s). This chapter addresses the question of multilingual language development in the family through the intergenerational transmission of languages, and its relative sustainability for plurilingual children socialized in early childhood and care institutions, i.e. before formal schooling. While there has been extensive research on bilingual development in the family and bilingual education in school contexts, the early childhood education and care sector (which concerns children aged up to three or four, or up to six, depending on the country) remains under-researched regarding language policy and the implementation of multilingualism. The OECD Pisa evaluations of 2001, 2006 and 2011 have repeatedly pointed out the strong impact of quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) on the future success of learners at school, and these conclusions have been used to argue for migrant children to attend ECEC structures as early as possible in order to acquire the dominant societal language.

Keywords Early childhood education · Family multilingualism · Language transmission

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In 2015, building on the Millennium Development Goals, 193 countries of the United Nations launched a unified set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to transform the world by 2030. The driving principles of these SDGs relate to reducing poverty, improving health and wellbeing and creating sustainable production and consumption patterns. The 17 SDGs and their 169 targets address social, economic, ecological, legal and infrastructural issues, both in the developing world and in the world's most prosperous countries (Dodds et al., 2017). It is somewhat surprising that none of these goals and targets mentions language or multilingualism given that, as argued by the Study Group on Language and the United Nations (2017), an informal group of international scholars, diplomats and UN personnel, "none of the goals can be realized without attention to the means of communication between advocates of this agenda and the societies that are party to it" (cf. Fettes, 2015). It is also well known that the various language regimes in place in most countries participate in the reproduction of social inequality and produce many forms of discrimination as well as linguistic racism that are most often linked to issues of poverty (Romaine, 2013; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000).

In Europe, for example, multilingualism is argued to be a factor in the economic growth of the European Union and language education policies support the teaching of at least two languages beyond the dominant language(s) of the country of residence, and also early foreign language teaching and bilingual education. Yet not all languages assume the same value in the language regimes of different European states; English, for example, has much more power than any other European language everywhere (Hult 2012a; Linn et al., 2015; Sherman & Nekvapil, 2018). Regional European minority languages are supported from the point of view of the rights of their speakers. Yet, despite the fact that linguistic diversity in Europe is due, in part, to the many languages spoken by migrants, these languages remain marginalized in education and their speakers are often discriminated against both in schools and in society (Caliendo et al., 2020; Levin & Mallows, 2021; Robinson & Diaz, 2006).

Paradoxically, migrants are people who, because of their experience of mobility, are often plurilingual and competent in many diverse languages and in negotiating different cultures. The lack of recognition and support for these competences is most striking in the educational sphere where parents' efforts to pass on their languages to their children are often met with reticence on the part of educational actors who insist on the priority of acquiring the dominant language of the country of residence for the purpose of integration (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). There is no reason why individuals should lose their language when they migrate (Piccardo et al., 2022). Transnational migrants of high socio-economic status who choose to migrate are usually well served when their children are schooled, but it is rarely the case for non-dominant ethno-linguistic groups (Hélot, 2007). Thus, the role of language should be considered when talking about power relationships and reducing inequality (SDG 10), and a better understanding of multilingualism as an individual, social, cultural and economic resource – whatever the social status of the languages concerned – is highly relevant to SDG 1 (reducing poverty), SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth) and SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions).

These sustainable goals also bring to the fore the meaning of the notion of sustainability as applied to language and language transmission. Throughout the twentieth century, the main notion used to refer to the intergenerational transmission of languages was the notion of language maintenance (Fishman, 1991) and the main research question involved understanding the role of social factors in the continuation of bilingual or multilingual practices in families and communities across time. In the twenty-first century, sociolinguists working within the paradigm of the multilingual turn (Conteh & Meier, 2014; May, 2014) offer a new perspective focused on what multilingual speakers do with their languages rather than on the languages themselves, and how they negotiate their multiple identities across languages and cultures (Douglas Fir Group, 2016; Hult, 2019; McEntee-Atalianis, 2019). Within this frame of thought, the notion of sustainability was used by Bastardas-Boada (2014) to question the glottophagic expansion of the English language and to put forward the comparison between the sustainability of multilingualism and the sustainability of the species and the natural environment. There is no denying that because of the differential power of languages, some people favour knowing global languages as a source of economic and cultural capital and are prepared to abandon their heritage languages; others, however, struggle to preserve linguistic diversity and the maintenance of distinct collective identities as a way of protecting the knowledge and wisdom produced by each culture.

In 2011, García explained her preference for the term sustainability to the former one of maintenance in the following terms: “The concept of sustainability is dynamic and future-oriented, rather than static and past-oriented. Language sustainability refers to renewing past language practices to meet the need of the present while not compromising those of future generations” (page 7). The focus is clearly on speakers rather than on languages as a fixed body of knowledge: it no longer means bringing languages back from the past but giving power to future generations of speakers to use language according to their needs in the twenty-first century.

The UN SDGs for 2030 and their conceptualization suggest to researchers interested in language the following two questions:

1. Is it possible to develop a system that would be respectful of linguistic sustainability and that would support multilingual speakers in the transmission of their languages to the next generation while accepting that language practices change in multilingual contexts?
2. How can educational institutions be supported to transform their monolingual habitus and to welcome the multiple multimodal multilingual practices of children in the twenty-first century?

This chapter will pursue these questions through the analysis of the sustainability of multilingualism from the family to the first educational structures frequented today by many young children before they enter formal schooling, i.e. early childhood education and care (ECEC) institutions. ECEC structures usually cater for children aged from three months to four years in some countries and in others from three months to six years. They are either managed privately or at state level by the Ministry of Education or its equivalent (e.g. in France by the Ministry of Families and Social Affairs), although they are unequally subsidized depending on state ECEC policies.

Data on language education policy for the ECEC sector gathered from research in three European countries will be analysed: The Basque Autonomous Community (BAC) in Spain, Ireland, and Luxembourg. These three contexts offer different examples of language regimes, from bilingual in the BAC in Spain and in Ireland, to multilingual in Luxembourg, with different kinds of policies to support national minority languages. The comparison of the three contexts will allow for a deeper understanding of the sustainability of multilingualism in different language ecologies and why it relates to some of the UN SDGs mentioned above.

1 The Early Childhood Education and Care Sector in Europe

The ECEC sector in Europe is a rapidly growing sector, developing either inside or outside the formal education systems. This expansion is the result of EU policies encouraging more women to join the labour market for increased economic growth. In 2009, the EU Education Ministers set the target that by 2020 at least 95% of the children between the ages of 4 and 6 (the start of compulsory primary education) should participate in ECEC (See Report of the Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care under the auspices of the European Commission, 2009). In 2014, the European Commission published a proposal for key principles of a Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care[1] in which it is stated that:

> The early years from birth to compulsory school age are the most formative in children's lives and set the foundations for children's lifelong development and patterns for their lives. In this context, high quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) is an essential foundation for all children's successful lifelong learning, social integration, personal development and later employability. Improving the quality and effectiveness of ECEC systems across the EU is essential to securing smart, sustainable and inclusive economic growth. Good quality and accessible ECEC systems are equally important for empowering all individuals to have successful lives. Consequently, the availability of high quality, affordable early childhood education and care for young children continues to be an important priority for Member States and for the European Union. (p. 1)

In July 2011, the European Commission also released a Staff Working Paper within the Strategic Framework for Education and Training (ET 2020) entitled *Language learning at pre-primary school level: Making it efficient and sustainable. A policy*

[1] Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/experts-groups/2011-2013/ecec/ecec-quality-framework_en.pdf. Report of the Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care under the auspices of the European Commission.

handbook (SEC (2011) 928).[2] At the heart of the paper (page 9 in the handbook) it is explained that the concepts of equity, quality, consistency and continuity should be applied to smaller state languages and regional and minority languages as well as immigrant languages. The paper clearly favours the support of multilingualism and the notion of "continuity" of minority and minoritized languages. By "continuity" is meant sustained practices of languages that have less state support than dominant European languages. But as we will show below, it is in fact quite complex to implement these concepts when immigrant languages are concerned. It is also difficult for vulnerable people and marginalized communities to advocate for more social justice (Piller, 2016) in education or in society in general.

Additional influential factors to take into account regarding ECEC are the 2001, 2006 and 2011 OECD PISA evaluations (OECD, 2001a, b, 2006, 2011) and the 2009 OECD report "Doing better for Children".[3] They showed the strong impact of quality ECEC on future achievement at school, because, at a higher level, minoritized speakers consistently showed lower evaluation results than their autochthonous peers. Thus, ECEC is envisaged as a way for a more efficient integration of migrant children in the mainstream education system, and as a means of giving more opportunities for the early acquisition of the language of instruction. Within such ideological discourses on integration, the belief that migrant parents should stop speaking their home languages is still quite commonly shared, the argument being that the dominant societal language will be acquired more efficiently if the home language is dropped. Attention to language practices in ECEC institutions needs to be taken seriously because recent research has shown that, even before they start obligatory schooling, young children are subject to linguistic discrimination and assimilation policies.

2 Research on Multilingualism in the ECEC Sector

Indeed, negative discourse on the language practices of multilingual individuals and their wish to transmit their language to their children is considered today as discriminatory. In the first instance, it does not respect the rights of children as stated in the UN Convention (1989), Article 29, which says: "The education of the child shall be directed to the development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values."[4] In Finland, for example, the ECEC curriculum is based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and specifically on Article 20, points c and d, which insist on multilingualism as a matter of language rights.

[2] Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/languages/policy/language-policy/documents/early-language-learning-handbook_en.pdf

[3] Available at: https://www.oecd.org/els/family/doingbetterforchildren.htm

[4] http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx

Recent research in France, Germany, Luxembourg and the UK has revealed how linguistic discrimination affects very young children in ECEC structures: the studies show how children refuse to speak their home languages after a few months in nursery school (Bradbury, 2013; Thompson, 2000), and how minoritized language speakers are othered (Thomauske, 2014), or silenced (Hamurcu, 2015). Seele (2016) analysed the role of young children in negotiating language education policies and how they adjust or resist the monolingual norms from the youngest age, as well as how some of them already hide their translanguaging practices. All these authors explain how young children in ECEC settings acquire knowledge of a language as well as the complex practical knowledge of the rules governing appropriate uses of language, that is to say they are able very early on to differentiate between legitimate and illegitimate practices. In other words, from the youngest age, children interiorize the fact that their languages are not legitimate in pre-school and they stop using them in favour of the dominant language or they prefer to remain silent (Hamurcu, 2015). This puts their bi/plurilingualism at risk and challenges their parents' efforts to sustain their culture. Other research in Sweden and Luxembourg has shown that older children are active agents in family language policies and that they can make their own languaging choices that do not always correspond to their parents' expectations (Kheirkhah, 2016; Made, 2016). But what is striking in the ECEC sector is how children are subject from the earliest age to discriminatory language practices that affect language sustainability, not only in the family, but in society as well (Rayna & Brougère, 2014). As explained above, more and more ECEC structures are offering bilingualism or multilingualism as part of their educational objectives, but with a marketable language like English mostly for non-English speaking families. Meanwhile, the actual languages spoken in many families are neglected. Other interesting research relating to the reproduction of patterns of inequality in the early years is Bradbury's (2013) analysis of the huge impact of assessment policies on classrooms and teachers, and the potentially damaging effects for very young children, particularly those from minoritized and economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Other research focuses on the crucial issue of language development in ECEC and the need to understand bi- or multilingual language acquisition in relation to the sustainability of family language policies in educational settings (Drury, 2007; Hélot & Rubio, 2013; Vandenbroeck, 2005). The main question concerns the continuity or lack of continuity in language use at an age when children are acquiring language and should be exposed to a very rich language environment. García (2009) in her book on bilingual education insists that the break between home and school should be as small as possible, and that children should continue to hear or use their mother tongue because it is the language they understand best. What, then, are the best pedagogical models for continuous multilingual development, what kind of language policies should be implemented in ECEC structures, and how should early childhood professionals be educated?

Since 1996, the Mercator Network[5] has included a chapter on pre-school education in its regional dossiers. In 2011, Mercator also published a report (Bangma & Riemersma, 2011) on the promotion of multilingual early transmission in day care structures and pre-schools in four European regions: the Netherlands, France, the UK and Sweden. The four minority languages concerned were regional languages: Frisian, Breton, Welsh and Finnish. The report[6] pointed out two important conclusions: first, that some pre-schools have no explicit or conscious language policy and, secondly, that some parents and ECEC professionals have no knowledge of the benefits of multilingualism and minority language pre-school education. These are surprising conclusions in regions where specific language policies are supported for the sustainability of regional minority languages. They indicate that multilingualism has not been conceptualized as an integrated objective in these early education settings and that professionals and families lack proper information. It also exemplifies the fact that a language of power like English can transform a monolingual ECEC structure into a bilingual one very easily and there will be no hesitation about the benefits of bilingualism either from parents or from professionals. But integrating minority languages, whether regional or migrant, will not necessarily be met with the same enthusiasm (Hélot, 2007). In the case of regional minority languages, it is all the more crucial that they be part of bilingual programmes in ECEC because their situation and future prospects are often critical today. In Spain, policies in the BAC, which will be presented below, provide an example of the way a national minority language can be supported from the earliest ECEC structures. The new plurilingual plan in Luxembourg will exemplify how migrant minority languages have been integrated in the new curriculum.

3 Sustaining Multilingualism in the Family: An Example from the Basque Autonomous Country (BAC)

Research on multilingual early language transmission in the family shows that many factors are involved at both the individual and societal level. De Houwer (2011) for example argues that in bilingual settings where a majority language and a minority language are involved, only one child in four will become bilingual.

[5] The Mercator Network or Multilingual Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning in Europe (https://www.mercator-research.eu/en/) was created in 1987 to support the needs of speakers of less widely spoken languages in Europe, mainly regional minority languages. It publishes Regional Dossiers (https://www.mercator-research.eu/en/knowledge-base/regional-dossiers/), which focus on the educational systems in European regions that have a lesser-used autochthonous language, and on how the lesser-used language is embedded in these systems. The dossiers provide information on educational statistics, policies regarding education of the lesser-used language, the structure of the educational system in the area, numbers of speakers of the lesser-used language and institutions supporting the lesser-used language.

[6] Full text available at: http://www.gaelscoileanna.ie/files/MELT-research-paper.pdf

In other words, it is very difficult to prevent the majority language from invading the communicative space and it takes specific strategies to ensure enough exposure to the minority language, particularly if it is not supported outside the family and at school (Leonet et al., 2017). Indeed, research in the Basque country has shown that when both parents are speakers of Basque, the language is almost always transmitted to children. But what happens in multilingual families wishing to transmit other languages as well as Basque?

An analysis of the language policies implemented in a multilingual family in the Basque Autonomous Region will serve to illustrate the complexity involved in sustaining several languages of different status in the home context.

The family under study lives in a predominantly Basque-speaking village near Bilbao, and uses four languages: Basque, Spanish, French and English, although not all its members actually speak the four languages. The four-year-old child is a third generation multilingual because his grandparents on both sides were at least bilingual and his parents are both multilingual, speaking the four languages and using them in their everyday life. The child is attending a Basque Model D school, which means that the language of instruction in the school is Basque and only Basque. He speaks Basque with his father and grandmother, Spanish with his grandfather, French with his mother and also with his French grandparents (who live in France). He has a childminder from Senegal who is a Wolof speaker but who speaks French with him. The parents had to decide before he was born which of their four languages they wanted to pass on to their son and decided on Basque and French. The family lives in a Basque-speaking environment, so he has acquired Basque simultaneously with French, although French is not present in the community. He has acquired Spanish from one grandfather, and by hearing his grandparents communicate in Spanish. The language is also used extensively in the community, alongside Basque. The child has not acquired English yet but hears it spoken between his parents and whenever they visit family in the UK and in Ireland.

Such intergenerational transmission illustrates the complex language planning that has to be implemented by the parents (who communicate together mostly in English and Spanish) and also the parents' agency in sustaining French alongside Basque. Interestingly, no special planning was taken regarding Spanish. In the case of Basque, a minority language in the BAC,[7] one can make the hypothesis that it will be sustained both in the family and in society because of the central role of schooling, and because of the model of bilingual education (total immersion) in place throughout all education levels in the BAC (including university programmes). French will be more difficult to sustain because it is not taught at primary level, but family in France will extend the network of social relations in French. English on

[7] The Basque Autonomous Community (BAC) counts 2.1 million people, out of which 32% aged 16 and over are bilingual (2012). The BAC government has a high degree of autonomy from Madrid and invests a lot in education, and notably in bilingual education (Cenoz, 2009). The first modern Basque-medium schools started in the 1960s under the name of Ikastola. The BAC obtained its autonomy statute in 1979 and Basque was made an official language. In 1982, the law governing the normalization of the use of Basque in the BAC was passed.

the other hand is taught in the school from grade one and is integrated in the Basque bilingual programme. The hypothesis regarding English is that it will be acquired at school and reinforced by contacts with the family in the UK and Ireland.

The language ecology in this family is no different from that of many multilingual families in other parts of the globe and exemplifies the complex nexus between family, neighbourhood, community and education in the continued intergenerational transmission of a language (Fishman, 1991; King & Fogle, 2013). It also illustrates several points relating to language policy in education in Europe: the power of English as the main foreign language taught in pre-schools (and at continuing levels) throughout Europe, the demise of French in education in Spain and the support for Basque through bilingual education (Cenoz, 2009; Leonet et al., 2017). Bilingual education in the BAC started in 1983[8] and has become very popular because it is linked to a strong sense of national identity. Education in the BAC is free from age three, and highly subsidized in many ECEC structures where Basque is used as the language of communication.

As part of the research in this community, I interviewed the kindergarten teacher of the local school about the languages spoken by the children in his class and his language practices with them. Out of the 11 children, eight were Basque speakers at home (with one Basque and French), two Spanish speakers and one Guarani speaker. Asked about including the children's home languages in class, the teacher answered, "Normally it is not an option, because unfortunately Basque is a minority language and all the children are able to speak Spanish quite well. For these reasons, we try to support and strengthen Basque at least when the children are in the school."

Clearly the teacher is aware of the status of Basque and follows the institutional language policy of not mixing Basque with Spanish, as far as possible, for the sustainability of Basque. Equally clearly, he does not mention languages other than Basque and Spanish – which is surprising because out of the language ecology of the classroom, another language emerges, Guarani, spoken by one child, in one family in the community. Although Guarani is an official language in Paraguay and spoken by approximately five million people in Latin America, its sustainability in the BAC will depend entirely on the efforts of the parents. While the child will grow up bilingual in Basque and Spanish and through Basque become an integrated member of the community, his heritage language will inevitably become more difficult to sustain unless he regularly goes back to Paraguay.

This situation poses pedagogical questions for language education. How can ECEC professionals (and, later on, teachers) support in their settings languages they do not speak? How can they integrate their students' home languages in classroom activities and within bilingual programmes? Language education in the BAC is informed by an impressive body of research, which has shown how early teaching

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[8] There are three models of bilingual education which parents can choose from: A, B and D. 73% of parents choose the D model (Cenoz et al., 2014). In the D model Basque is the language of instruction and Spanish is taught as a subject for 3–5 h a week. The A model is a Spanish-medium model where Basque is taught as a second language for 3–5 h a week; in the B model each of the two languages is used during approximately half of the school time (Cenoz & Etxague, 2011).

of English has been integrated in the bilingual model with no negative effects on the acquisition of Basque, Spanish and content learning (Cenoz & Etxague, 2011). Indeed, research has also shown that students in the model D score higher in English than other students (Cenoz & Jessner, 2007; Cenoz, 2013), which would be an argument for the integration of languages other than English in multilingual education. But on minoritized languages such as Guarani or Romanian, Arabic, and even Portuguese, the research is sparse because these languages are not yet seen as part of the language ecology of the region. Therefore, their support in schools remains rare (Etxeberria & Elosegi, 2011).

The BAC provides a clear example of the complexity involved in the sustainability of multilingualism in the family and in society. Despite a very robust language policy to sustain Basque, plus multilingual education through the integration of English, Basque remains a vulnerable language in the BAC according to the UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger.[9] Therefore, high quality free bilingual education is indeed offered widely throughout the BAC and includes English as well, allowing for the sustainability of bilingualism from the home to the school contexts; but the minoritized languages of migrants remain marginalized, as in most other European countries. The linguistic diversity brought into the region by migrant languages is not necessarily viewed as sustainable alongside the local minority language. This situation means that the onus is on families to pass on these languages. Such transmission is all the more difficult when these languages are devalued in society.

4 Maintenance of a Regional Minority Language Versus Sustainability of Bi/Multilingualism in the Home and in Pre-schools: The Case of Irish

In 1988, I carried out a study of two trilingual families living in Ireland and bringing up their children with Irish and French at home (Hélot, 1988). In both cases, the parents chose to implement the one-language-one-person policy for the transmission of Irish (by the fathers) and French (by the mothers). The difference, however, between the two families was that in one case the parents chose an Irish-speaking playgroup for their child and the other chose an English-speaking pre-school structure. The first family decided to exclude English from the family languaging practices through various strategies such as never using English, not owning a television set and schooling the children in an Irish *Naíonraí*.[10] The second family made different choices, particularly concerning the educational setting, which was an

[9] http://www.unesco.org/languages-atlas/

[10] A Naíonraí is a pre-school setting run through Irish for children aged from three to five, and only Irish (see Early Childhood Ireland at https://www.earlychildhoodireland.ie/work/information-parents/choosing-childcare/childcare-options/naionrai/)

English-medium pre-school. This meant that the children grew up in one case with two languages (English being excluded to protect Irish and French), and in the other with three (English becoming a socializing language in the ECEC setting). In the family, only two languages were used, Irish and French, and the parents' declared language policy was to pass on these two languages and not English.

The language ecology in these two families exemplifies the role of schools in sustaining parents' choices of intergenerational language transmission (Hult, 2012b). It also shows that when minority languages are in contact with a language of power like English, schools can play a central role in the sustainability of languages at risk. In other words, for the second family, it was far more difficult to sustain Irish at home without the support of the school and in the face of the dominance of English as a societal language. Romaine (2006) takes issue with Fishman's (1991) stages for reversing language shift which stress the primary importance of home-based trans-generational transmission of a language. Indeed, as the Basque case shows, a high-quality bilingual programme starting from a very young age not only sustains Basque-speaking parents' efforts to pass on their language but also works for children living in Spanish-speaking homes, thus sustaining the minority language at societal level.

In Ireland, as explained by Hickey (2013), the level of contact between English and Irish is very high,[11] and the two languages have very unequal status; thus, the policy of revitalization has met with limited success (O'Laoire, 2005). As in the BAC, the school system is viewed as the primary vehicle for the revival of Irish but the policy has not been supported to the same degree as in the BAC. The 2016 Mercator report on ECEC in Ireland gives the figure of 4339 children attending 182 *Naíonraí* with 424 staff, but most of the children attending these pre-schools (which are free from age three) come from English-speaking homes. The same is true of the students attending bilingual programmes in primary and secondary education. The main issue here, as analysed by Hickey (2013), is that children attending ECEC structures through the medium of Irish are mixed together whether they speak Irish at home or not. This affects the language development of children for whom Irish is a first language. This said, Hickey's 1997 survey of 2000 children in 25 Irish-medium pre-schools showed that children frequenting *Naíonraí* increased the use of Irish by their parents at home, which therefore means that the *Naíonraí* offered a certain degree of sustainability to the minority language in society.

Research in the BAC does not address the question of different levels of competence between children in Basque-speaking homes and non-Basque-speaking homes, perhaps because ECEC settings start from age one as opposed to age three in Ireland. But the reason could also be a difference in policy assumptions conceptualized in Ireland in terms of maintenance, and in the BAC in terms of sustainability. As García (2009) argues, sustaining languages that are at risk does not mean

[11] The first official Language Census of the Republic of Ireland dates from 2011. It revealed that 1.77 million people said they could speak Irish (41.4%) but 60% declared they did not use the language. Only 4% used it daily. In the Irish-speaking Gaeltacht areas, 69.6% of people said they spoke Irish.

bringing them back to an idealized past state, but thinking about the future and how children learning the language will become bi- or multilinguals, languaging in their own specific way through their plurilingual repertoires and constructing anew their own identities. She explains that because bilingualism is dynamic and varies greatly from one family to the next, all bilingual classrooms are heteroglossic; therefore, the model of bilingual education should no longer be a maintenance or an enrichment model, but a recursive model where the different language experiences, needs and aspirations of learners should be negotiated by the teachers. Thinking in terms of a recursive model of bilingual education in ECEC structures opens the door to new pedagogical practices based on the experiences of the children and their families with languages and to a focus on multilingualism (Aronin & Vetter, 2021; Cenoz & Gorter, 2011) rather than on one language only. A focus on multilingualism questions the monolingual bias of bilingual education with the native speaker as the norm: it provides a vision of the complexity of the relationships between the languages and it argues against language separation and instead encourages translanguaging (Blackledge & Creese, 2014). As McPake (2016) explains, this demands rethinking of the initial and professional education of bilingual teachers and professionals to encourage children, their families and the minority language community to negotiate in a dynamic way the present and future relationships between the minority language and the other languages present in the environment. In McPake's words (2016, p. 637), "children should, on the one hand, gain the greatest pedagogical and linguistic benefits from their emergent bilingualism and, on the other hand, have the possibility to engage critically in the creation of a sustainable future for the minority language". Again, the point here is informed by research that focuses on speakers, their languaging needs and choices, and their agency to make sense of their multilingual environment, rather than on a structural conceptualization of language that stresses language competence based on monolingual norms (Jaspaert, 2015).

5 The New Plurilingual Plan for ECEC in Luxembourg

Luxembourg is a small European state counting 576,249 inhabitants in 2016, of whom 47% are foreigners (the highest percentage in Europe), including 10,000 international civil servants. Another 155,000 people cross the border every day from France, Belgium and, to a lesser extent, Germany, for their employment. The language law of 1984 declared three official languages, Luxembourgish, French and German; English is widely spoken, but 60% of people in Luxembourg use Luxembourgish at work, 68% use French and 34% German, and many other languages are used as well, including English (28.5%) (STATEC 2017). In other words, everybody in Luxembourg uses at least two languages and many use three or more, and translanguaging practices are widely heard in the street. Luxembourgish as the national language holds a high status and has been growing in prestige (Horner & Weber, 2008; Weber, 2009) as it is the symbol of integration and social cohesion; it exists within a multilingual regime which has been the norm in this superdiverse context for many years.

Since 1984 the three official languages are successive languages of instruction in formal schooling; 52.7% of children attending schools are multilingual, and among them 28% are Portuguese speakers (MENJE, 2015). The multilingual education system of Luxembourg has been widely researched (Horner & Weber, 2008; Weber, 2009) and is known for its below EU average scores in the PISA assessments[12] and for the challenge facing Portuguese-speaking children who must be educated through Luxembourgish first and then German before they are educated through French. Gómez-Fernández (2014), for example, in his doctoral thesis, analysed the decapitalization of a young Brazilian child attending a first-grade class who had to learn through Luxembourgish and German on his arrival in Luxembourg with no support in his home language.

As far as ECEC is concerned, 90% of children in Luxembourg frequent these settings, which are part of a very elaborate policy of non-formal education (MENJE, 2016a, b)[13] (covering children and youth from birth to 29), as well as formal education (non-compulsory *précoce* classes for three-year-olds and pre-schools for four-year-olds). The non-formal ECEC settings include crèches and *maisons relais* for children (i.e. after-school programmes). As explained by Kirsch (2018), until the new law of 2017, Luxembourgish was considered the language of integration at ECEC level, despite many children and professionals being multilinguals.

The law of 27 August 2017[14] changed the policy on multilingualism for children up to five years old attending either non-formal or formal educational settings. The law was designed to improve the pedagogical quality of all non-formal educational settings by insisting, among other things, on the development of young children's linguistic competence, the acknowledgment and promotion of all family languages, and the development of linguistic and intercultural awareness. Pedagogues are now encouraged to solicit and give positive attention to the first languages of all children

[12] MENJE. (2015). *Statistiques globales et analyse des résultats scolaires: Enseignement fondamental: Cycles 1 à 4 – Éducation différenciée -Année scolaire 2013/2014*. Luxembourg. Retrieved [January, 2017] from http://www.men.public.lu/catalogue-publications/themes-transversaux/statistiques-analyses/enseignement-chiffres/2013-2014-depliant/en.pdf

Underperformance can also be explained mainly by difficulties encountered by students who are socio-economically disadvantaged, but socioeconomic status is often correlated with migrant background.

[13] See the policy at: https://www.enfancejeunesse.lu/fr/educational_practice_subs/downloads

Non-formal education has been conceptualized differently from informal education. It means learning in out-of-school contexts. It includes seven domains of action: creativity and the arts; language communication and media; movement, body awareness and health; values participation and democracy; emotions and social relations; sciences and technical knowledge; transition towards adulthood. In January 2018, nearly 50,000 children aged from 0 to 12 frequented a non-formal education structure, either a crèche or pre-school or a *maison relais*, an after-school structure attended by children before they go home after school. The Luxembourgish government has declared the quality of welcoming children in these non-formal education settings a national priority. See: http://www.men.public.lu/fr/enfance/index.html

[14] http://legilux.public.lu/eli/etat/leg/loi/2017/08/29/a791/jo

in order to support the development of their personality and identity. Multilingual education is also meant to develop intercultural competence, to support self-esteem and to combat ethnocentrism. In 2018, the Ministry of Education, Childhood and Youth published the national framework of reference for non-formal education: it is based on general educational principles, such as diversity and inclusion, and it insists that multilingualism be considered as an important societal resource. Furthermore, multilingualism is conceptualized in terms of experience, meaning that it should be both lived and learnt throughout non-formal education, starting in ECEC settings. The centrality of plurilingualism is outlined in the framework (pp. 101–113) and in a plurilingual plan (MENJE & SNJ, 2017), which states outright that it is important for pedagogues to recognize several languages as an equal means of communication throughout the life of the ECEC structure.

Before the 2017 law, most ECEC settings functioned monolingually, using either French or Luxembourgish as the main language of communication; now they must ensure that children are exposed to both French and Luxembourgish and that family languages are supported as well. The presence of family languages is not an easy issue in view of the wide variety of languages spoken in Luxembourg and the fact that professionals do not speak many of them; it is being addressed through the development of parental engagement and the implementation of language awareness activities. The focus is therefore on two of the societal and school languages (French and Luxembourgish) and on the inclusion of the home languages of the children. Professionals speaking these heritage languages are encouraged to communicate with children who share the same languages. The objective is to replace a previously common policy of discouraging children from using their family language in the ECEC setting (Neuman, 2015; Seele, 2016). Language awareness, a language education approach which differs from language learning (Hélot et al., 2018), entails a first introduction to multilingual education through which children are made aware of the multiplicity of languages in their environment and learn (at that level) to share songs, nursery rhymes and stories, and to hear different sound systems. The aim of the new policy is to familiarize children with the languages (in the plural) they will speak in the future; in other words, the plurilingual plan aims at implementing multilingualism in the first socializing settings children encounter, to help them to be better prepared for their formal education and to give more prominence to multilingualism as a societal resource in Luxembourg (MENJE, 2016b).

From the point of view of research on language policy and therefore in this case on the sustainability of a multilingualism that integrates languages of different societal status, the implementation of the new plurilingual plan offers an interesting example of the way monolingual ECEC settings are being transformed into multilingual ones. The plan is based on an extensive professional development programme[15] that has been designed to support all professionals in elaborating a coherent and deliberate bottom-up policy for their own settings, describing how they intend to manage all the children's and staff's languages and cultures in the

[15] Eighty million euros is devoted to the professional development of ECEC educators.

everyday life of the crèche (Kirsch, 2018). In other words, this is an example of a language policy that challenges a classic hierarchical organisational structure by including the full collaborative participation of all the stakeholders and thereby making it more likely to succeed in its implementation.

Indeed, the first policy documents, written by ECEC professionals and sent to the Ministry in 2018, show clearly that the flexibility of the plan has opened up very diverse spaces for innovation. These are always contextualized locally according to the social environment of each setting. They also illustrate that giving quality training and agency to professionals has helped them to understand what is at stake in multilingual education, namely supporting the language development of each child, while valuing her linguistic repertoire whatever the languages concerned. These documents sent by ECEC settings will be evaluated by regional pedagogical agents who have been recruited and trained specifically to assess the approach chosen by each setting to formulate their own multilingual policy and its implementation in the local socioeconomic context.

As a final point on the multilingual ECEC policy in Luxembourg, as compared to Ireland and the Basque Autonomous Country, it should be made clear that the language ecology is different: in Luxembourg, the Luxembourgish language is not a minority language in danger; on the contrary, it is the language of everyday communication. Even if it is used as a language of instruction only during the first two years of formal schooling, it does not need school support to be sustained in families or in the community at large. German and French as school languages (and neighbouring languages) coexist with English (as an international language) and as in the BAC and Ireland, the main issue relates to the integration in formal education of the minoritized languages of many migrant children.

Therefore, the plurilingual plan for ECEC in Luxembourg is an interesting example of a policy that has started to transform a monolingual regime into a truly multilingual one and of an innovative approach to professional development for pedagogues which could provide new data on teacher cognition relating to multilingualism (Kirsch, 2018). As argued by Weber (2014), although the Luxembourgish education system is often seen as multilingual, the successive and separate use of the three languages of instruction (Luxembourgish, German then French since the 1984 educational law) no longer meets the learning needs of most children. In other words, if the sustainability of multilingualism from the home to the ECEC context can be conceptualized anew, the language policy for formal education also needs to integrate the latest research on multilingual pedagogy and teachers should be offered professional development courses that give them agency and motivation to understand the new ecologies of contemporary classrooms. For multilingual education to help reduce linguistic inequalities and discrimination in schools and in society, teachers should be made aware that learners need to be empowered to express themselves using all their plurilingual resources and that no child, monolingual or bi/plurilingual, should feel linguistically insecure or ashamed of their home languages and cultures (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021).

6 Conclusion: Multilingualism and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Many factors impact the sociolinguistic context: politics, migration, economics, education, new media, etc. Therefore, it is difficult to imagine working on the UN SDGs without including the issue of languages in the plural, i.e. multilingualism. Among the 17 UN SDGs, I would argue that at least four are directly concerned with linguistic issues. Obviously, Goal 4 dealing with inclusive equitable and quality education can no longer be conceptualized without taking into account today's multilingualism. Research in the last 20 or 30 years has amply described the change in school populations as far as languages are concerned. Today, the ideology of the nation state based on the idea of one nation one language is no longer viable, when so many people migrate and more and more languages come into contact and create multilingual situations. In other words, all classrooms today should be considered multilingual because they are frequented by a growing number of children who speak different languages (Hult, 2012b). It no longer makes sense to insist on teaching children through one dominant language of instruction only and to ignore their plurilingual repertoires, given that multilingualism is conceived as an economic, societal and cultural resource. In the globalized world of the twenty-first century, we need plurilingual individuals who can participate in complex multilingual multimodal communicative networks, who can cross linguistic and cultural borders and negotiate difference (Aronin & Vetter, 2021). Furthermore, it should also be acknowledged that for displaced minority groups, their languages are a precious link to their past and hence part of an issue of linguistic justice (Skutnabb-Kangas et al., 2009). For education to contribute to more peaceful and tolerant societies (SDG 16), linguistic justice must be a priority in schools and before formal schooling begins. Linguistic justice means not only including all the languages of learners but also valuing their languaging practices and acknowledging their plurilingualism as a learning resource for all.

Thus, quality inclusive equitable education means sustaining multilingualism developed in the home and making sure children acquire high levels of linguistic competence to act on their life and their environment, but also to develop their self-esteem and a strong sense of identity. Quality inclusive education for the twenty-first century means that children should have access to education in their home language(s) because they are the languages they understand best, and they should also have access to bilingual education because, as argued by García (2009, p. 5), "bilingual education is *the only way* to educate children in the 21st century" and it "has the potential to transform the lives of children and adults throughout the world".

However, García (2009, p. 9) explains that, "bilingual education in the twenty first century must be reimagined and expanded, as it takes its rightful place as a meaningful way to educate *all* [emphasis added] children and language learners in the world today". We know that schools worldwide exclude the home languages of 40% of the global population (DeGraff, 2016; UNESCO, 2016). It therefore behoves policy makers and educational actors to inform themselves about the feasibility and affordances of multilingual education in highly diverse linguistic contexts. Indeed, research has shown convincingly that the dominant monolingual mindset can be overcome through language education policy thanks to recent theories of language such as translanguaging, codemeshing, translingual practices, and languages as creative plurilingual multimodal communication resources (García, 2009; Ndhlovu, 2017).

These contemporary understandings of language and multilingualism also advocate for the inclusion of local contextual particularities and cultural specificities in language policy frameworks for development. For example, Makalela (2016), in South Africa, proposes a reorientation of multilingual and bilingual education towards the African value system of *Ubuntu*, and argues that such an approach will be a catalyst for restoring social justice for those people whose languages were historically denigrated and reduced to the lowest social status. His research illustrates how to rethink the South African multilingual space to accommodate fluid discursive resources where interdependence is more highly valued than the independence of language systems. Such a reconceptualization of language education makes multilingual education possible in highly linguistically diverse classrooms, refuting the often-used argument that teachers cannot manage languages they do not know in their classrooms.

Furthermore, the numerous recent publications on translanguaging pedagogy (Blackledge & Creese, 2014; García & Leiva, 2014; García & Li Wei, 2014; García & Kleyn, 2016; García et al., 2017) offer enough theoretical and empirical evidence that not only do children learn more efficiently when they are allowed to language creatively using their whole linguistic repertoire, but that this new approach to language education is an issue of social justice. In this sense, SDG goals 10 and 16 are relevant. The above research on language education in ECEC settings has shown that inequality and discrimination start very early on when children are denied their own languages and assimilated into dominant languages only. Reducing inequalities is indeed crucial when in highly developed countries like France and Germany, for example, one child out of five lives below the poverty line. And social inequalities also include linguistic inequality. If ECEC settings can work towards more equity in education, such equity cannot be achieved without taking into account language issues. Research on the BAC in Spain and in Ireland has shown that minority languages can be sustained in ECEC settings but that the policy of bilingual education needs to be expanded to include the marginalized minority languages of immigrants (Hélot & Erfurt, 2016).

For peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16) to exist, our education systems must shift ideologically to integrate the languages of all children as learning languages. In other words, monolingual and bilingual education must extend to multilingual education, and multilingual education means understanding that in the twenty-first century languages are no longer indexed to time and space, and that languaging practices are complex and in a sense incomplete without the co-existence of different languages. Such a change will be a challenge for our education systems, but how much longer can they remain bastions of monolingualism in a globalized world? Multilingual homes, schools and cities are the new norm. The example of

Luxembourg shows that multilingualism is sustainable in the city, the state and the community (SDG 11) but that it takes a new conceptualization of language policy to embrace social justice and equity in the educational sphere, formal and non-formal. Accordingly, the new culturally contextualized multilingual language policy for ECEC in Luxembourg is an interesting case study to follow.

Another example of the way multilingualism must be seen as an integral part of sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11) can be found in a European project funded by the European Commission from 2011 to 2014. Entitled LUCIDE (*Languages in Urban Communities: Integration and Diversity for Europe*), the project included university and civic partners from 13 European cities,[16] along with research teams from Ottawa and Melbourne. It resulted in a publication edited by King and Carson (2016).[17] The network explored how communication occurs in multilingual cities; they developed ideas about how to manage multilingual citizen communities, and documented the real-life complexities faced by individuals in various spheres and aspects of city life. Five overarching topics were explored in each city: (1) Good practice in the provision of language learning opportunities for immigrants and how they are helped to maintain their own languages; (2) How cities support social inclusion through linguistic support in social services, health and the kind(s) of training desirable in these areas; (3) How cities provided for communication and cultural exchange with "neighbouring languages"; (4) How culture and intercultural dialogue are understood in a multilingual city and how community cultures are celebrated in common spaces; (5) The impact of new migration patterns on civil society and how multilingual cities respond to this new phenomenon. Five key spheres were delineated to provide comprehensive and systematic exploration of how languages are encountered, used and learned in city life. They included the public sphere, economic life, the private lives of citizens, urban spaces or the "cityscape", and education. The publication and the 19 city reports[18] give fascinating insights into the history and contemporary perspectives on multilingualism in each of the partner cities.

The reports also show why and how serious consideration should be given to cities as a locus of language policy (Hult, 2018). Available in ten languages,[19] some toolkits provide ideas, guidance and examples of best practice for people from different walks of life who are thinking about the positive contribution multilingualism can make for them and for society in general. These are concrete examples of targets for SDG 11, i.e. sustainable cities and communities, and specifically for vulnerable populations, such as recently arrived immigrants.

To conclude, I would like to return to the issue of how best to support sustainable languaging in the home, in educational contexts and in our work and social

[16] London, Osijek, Athens, Sofia, Dublin, Madrid, Hamburg, Utrecht, Rome, Limassol, Strasbourg, Oslo, Varna.

[17] *The Multilingual City: Vitality, Conflict and Change*, published by Multilingual Matters.

[18] They can be found at: http://www.urbanlanguages.eu/cityreports

[19] Available at http://www.urbanlanguages.eu/

environments and why it is relevant to the United Nations' SDGs. Research on multilingualism has emphasized the fluidity of language practices and the erasure of traditional language boundaries by multilingual speakers, who show unbounded and versatile use of more than one language at the same time, to make sense of the world around them and establish their own identity. If we acknowledge such a conceptualization of language, we should question the link between language majority and language minority identities. We should also deconstruct the processes that keep a language like English dominant, other languages as heritage languages focused on the past, and others again as marginalized because they are the languages of migrants. Thus, the problem no longer concerns sustaining separate languages like Irish or Basque on their own but sustaining languaging. This means neither separating nor excluding some languages at the expense of others but supporting the flexible and fluid language practices of learners. In other words, we should put children's languaging needs first, rather than imposing national agendas that discriminate against the very citizens we need to build the sustainable societies of the future.

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Realising Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education in South Africa: Achievements and Obstacles on the Language in Education Front

Colleen du Plessis and Theo du Plessis

Abstract Preconceived ideas in South Africa about the unsuitability of languages other than English to ensure equitable and quality school education continue to elicit reluctance to apply policies dealing with language in education in a way that benefits the majority of learners. This observation derives from a critical appraisal of documentation related to comprehensive studies on language in education commissioned by government and educational planning initiatives over the past two decades. The appraisal includes the 2019 voluntary national review that South Africa submitted to the United Nations (UN) as part of the global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Government efforts to address literacy dilemmas through strengthening English as the language of learning and teaching have taken education on a detour away from the collaborative and progressive work put into the Language-in-Education Policy (LiEP) adopted in 1997 and the ideal to foster cultural diversity and multilingualism. After considering achievements and obstacles noted in the appraised documentation, we conclude that a return to the spirit and aims of the LiEP would be an appropriate starting point, together with a more nuanced implementation of policy in accordance with the unique socioeconomic and multilingual context of each school.

Keywords Inclusive education · Language policy · Post-apartheid education · SDG 4

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Against the background of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (UN) and education reforms since 1994, this chapter presents an overview of language in education in South Africa and highlights some of the major achievements and challenges. As one of the former anti-apartheid struggle sites, education has been transformed over the past three decades. Previously it was a highly exclusive system devised along racial and ethno-linguistic lines with variable curricula and standards across different communities; today it can be described as unified and far more inclusive, with altruistic objectives of redress, equality and social cohesion. However, access to education of comparable quality across the system remains difficult to achieve.

Infrastructural backlogs at institutions of learning and technological constraints continue to preclude many students from benefiting from quality education and the affordances of the digital era of learning. The abrupt switch of schools to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 excluded students from continuing their education in poorly resourced areas. Furthermore, a long-standing problem relating to preconceived ideas about English as the path to academic success at all levels has resulted in reluctance to apply policies dealing with language in education in a way that benefits the majority of learners. The result is a youth inadequately prepared to cope with the demands of a rapidly changing world. It is this matter in particular that concerns us as we believe that more focused implementation of language in education policy according to the unique context of each school could make a real difference to attaining some of the SDGs.

The 2019 voluntary national review submitted to the United Nations by the office of the Presidency (RSA, 2019) shows the South African government's commitment to implementing the 2030 Agenda through various initiatives. We are encouraged by the many references in the review to addressing literacy issues in the early years of learning, but we remain concerned about the neglect of the benefits of additive bilingualism/multilingualism in the subsequent phases of education. Although the review expresses a commitment to increased use of the Sintu languages[1] in primary school education (RSA, 2019, pp. 13, 49) and greater availability of literature and materials in these languages (the languages of more than 75% of South Africans), paradoxically, it reverts to ongoing "efforts to strengthen English as a subject and as a medium of instruction" (ibid. p. 49). Other than the two brief references to language issues cited above, and a third scant mention of communicating in "indigenous languages" in a section dealing with urban planning (ibid. p. 88), the voluntary review does not address how epistemological access and cognitive development can be facilitated through the choice of language of learning and teaching (LoLT), or the role that language proficiency plays in economic development. The review dryly sums up the current state of education: "… completion rates in the upper secondary grades and enrolment rates in tertiary education are low. Inadequate skill levels severely constrain growth." (ibid. p. 12). Notably, the review is based on the findings

[1] The Bantu languages of Southern Africa (see Herbert, 1992, p. 7). Political correctness dictates the use of the inaccurate and rather nonsensical term *African languages*, as in fact one finds in government documents, some of them referred to in this chapter.

of studies and educational planning initiatives spanning more than two decades. These studies and initiatives require a critical examination and therefore form the basis of the discussion in the rest of the chapter.

Our deliberations on inclusive and equitable education are framed by the guiding principles of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996* (RSA, 1996a), the *South African Schools Act, 1996* (RSA, 1996b) and the *National Education Policy Act*, *1996* (RSA, 1996c), a progressive document aimed at, among other things, advancing and protecting the rights of citizens to receive basic education, enjoy equal access to education, and receive instruction in the language of choice where practicably feasible (section 4(a)). Of particular relevance is the *Language-in-Education Policy* (LiEP) adopted in 1997 in terms of the *National Education Policy Act* (Department of Education, 1997) and further expounded in the national school curriculum known as CAPS (Curriculum and Policy Statement). Given the diverse and complex nature of the fourth SDG, our chapter will focus only on language in basic education (Grades 1–12). Separate scrutiny is required to deal with developments pertaining to early childhood education (Grade R) and higher education (post-Grade 12), although the former now also falls within the ambit of basic education.

1 Inclusivity, Equitability and Quality as SDG Goals

The fourth SDG calls for quality education that is inclusive and equitable. These notions feature strongly throughout the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, but they are multi-faceted concepts that are open to variable interpretation. Although the roots of inclusive education lie largely in special education research in the 1960s, aimed at accommodating the needs of persons with disabilities (Florian, 2014), the term has a broad reach and cuts across different communities of practice. In a general sense it can be understood as a philosophical stance on what should be achieved, namely "meeting the social/academic needs of all pupils" (Göransson & Nilholm, 2014, pp. 268–269). South Africa has made considerable strides in terms of disability accommodation (see Dube, 2006; Van der Byl, 2014), but when inclusivity is considered from the perspective of linguistic access, there has been little progress. Florian (2014) considers two principles to be important when adopting an inclusive approach: (1) teaching practices that allow all children to participate in "classroom life", and (2) the use of language in the classroom that "expresses the value of all children" (Florian, 2014, p. 290). Although Florian refers to language in the sense of ensuring conducive teacher–student discourse and respectful communication, it would be difficult to support the first principle without adequately addressing the matter of the language of learning and teaching (LoLT). Language used in the classroom affirms both the value of the language itself and the cultural identity of the learner, but it is also the key to epistemological access. Haug (2017, p. 207) reminds us that inclusion is "strongly value- and ideology-driven" and associated with concepts such as "participation, democratization, benefit, equal access, quality, equity and justice" (ibid. p. 206). It is easily included in policy and curricula documents as an intention, but practical implementation is far more complicated.

The concept of equitability is closely related to the notions of fairness and equity or the state of being treated equally. Jordan (2010) argues against attempting to define concepts such as "equity" or "equitability" with a unitary instrument since learning itself cannot be measured with the same yardstick in diverse contexts. He explains as follows:

> Equity is not about providing the same education to all students regardless of race, social class, or gender. In fact, because of increasing cultural and linguistic diversity it is advantageous to define educational equity in terms of providing knowledge, skills, and worldviews which would enable social mobility … contexts shape our views of equity, and it takes on different meanings among different populations. (p. 148)

What complicates matters in South Africa is the need to use education to achieve desirable social mobility for the *majority* of learners, as opposed to efforts in other countries to improve the lot of minority or immigrant groups. For the purposes of our discussion on language in education, equitability will be addressed from the point of view of creating learning opportunities to provide comparable kinds of knowledge and skills that support Jordan's ideal of "social mobility", as cited above. This relates directly to another objective of SDG 4, namely the matter of quality of education.

Apart from the complexities of providing inclusive and equitable learning opportunities, education should adhere to a particular standard that, internationally speaking, could be considered as *quality* instruction. In our view, education may be considered to have quality when its effects are manifest in tangible and desirable ways in the different spheres of society, once again Jordan's (2010) notion of social mobility. In the South African context, this would mean that on reaching adulthood (i.e. the age of maturity as a citizen and the right to vote), the majority of citizens are able to contribute to society by mobilising vocational or professional career choices in such a way that their participation and involvement in such career choices can be described as competent and rewarding. Evidence of a lack of access to quality education would then be apparent in the inability of individuals to perform with relative ease and proficiency those tasks, roles and duties traditionally expected of citizens in the private and public spheres. Obviously, a good standard of education does not always guarantee success. Personal attributes and affective variables relating to wellness and psychological mobility may obstruct social mobility. These fall beyond the scope of the chapter.

We will evaluate the extent to which education in South Africa can be considered inclusive, equitable and of quality, through a comprehensive document review of developments related to language issues in school education over the past 25 years. First, we will summarise how schooling has been made more inclusive and accessible through the formation of a unified national education department, language policy and the adoption of a new school curriculum. We will then turn our attention to how the Department of Basic Education (DBE) monitors and evaluates education progress through a series of reports, surveys and research projects. We will focus on findings and recommendations relating specifically to language and literacy issues.

2 Policy and Curriculum Initiatives

On the education front, the main objective of government shortly after assuming power in 1994 was to consolidate disparate structures by reducing the number of education departments and creating a unified system of education. The amalgamation of 18 education departments into one national department, the increased spending on education, redistribution of funds to poorly resourced schools, and the establishment of quality control organisations have all been lauded as among the most noteworthy achievements of the South African government on the education front (Jansen & Taylor, 2003, p. 2). To mention one positive outcome, the changed policy on how schools are funded (RSA, 2014) currently enables over nine million children to attend schools for free (RSA, 2019, p. 6). Many more poor children thus have access to school and the chance of an education.

The DBE is also to be commended on its sustained efforts to revise the school curriculum and to introduce new school subjects in order to prepare learners for new occupations and professions. Despite these milestones, the goal of ensuring that learning is taking place through quality schooling remains unfulfilled to a large degree, as we will see. The low status of the Sintu languages as languages of intellect and economic force has not changed much since the emergence of democracy in 1994, despite their official status. English has retained its historically hegemonic position, while the number of Afrikaans-medium schools continues to decline with the prevailing perception that, to succeed in South Africa, proficiency in English is needed above proficiency in any other language (Louw, 2004; Postma & Postma, 2011; Webb, 2013). Yet, proficiency in English appears to be problematic for both teachers and learners: students' academic literacy levels remain low, as universities and training institutions have discovered.

The bias towards English can be seen as a continuation of the initial campaign for English as the only official language advocated by many in the ANC leadership prior to the adoption of the Constitution (see Crawhall, 1993; Heugh, 1986). It is thus not surprising to note the tendency today of more affluent parents from diverse cultural groups (in the urban areas in particular) to enrol their children at English-medium schools where their children's first languages are not offered at all, making the envisaged national policy of additive bilingualism difficult to implement in such schools. The policy advocates that learners should continue to learn their "home" (i.e. first) languages, while learning one or more additional languages (DoE, 1997). A similar problem exists in schools where learners represent multiple language groups and the decision is taken to adopt English as the medium of instruction from Grade 1, as though this is a neutral choice and without regard to how this may have adverse effects on the children concerned. Whereas learning through an additional language is not necessarily problematic for children from middle- and upper-class families who attend good schools, it can be detrimental for children from poor families and under-resourced schools located in areas where English is barely used outside the school gates (see Heugh, 2002).

It should be acknowledged that the LiEP adopted in 1997 was a collaborative and progressive effort developed over more than 15 years. It was informed by the work of local scholars and included conceptualisations of the notions of multilingualism and "critical pedagogy" (Heugh, 2015, p. 283), as well as comments from the public. Although the term "additive bilingualism" was adopted from North America, it remains an appropriate response for the South African context when understood as follows:

> A wide spectrum of opinions exists as to the locally viable approaches towards multilingual education . . .. Whichever route is followed, the underlying principle is to maintain home language(s)[2] while providing access to and the effective acquisition of additional language(s) …
>
> The main aims of the Ministry of Education's policy for language in education are … to pursue the language policy most supportive of general conceptual growth amongst learners, and hence to establish additive multilingualism as an approach to language in education … to counter disadvantages resulting from different kinds of mismatches between home languages and languages of learning and teaching … (DoE, 1997, pp. 1–2)

We believe the reason why we still see enormous mismatches and conceptual and literacy challenges across all spheres of public education is related to the fact that the LiEP is understood and applied differently by the DBE and School Governing Boards (SGBs). We will provide a fuller explanation later in this chapter. Suffice it to say at this point that the LiEP is not the problem, but the prescribed Curriculum and Policy Statement (CAPS) deviates from the LiEP by encouraging an early switch to English. This has negatively affected the status and development of the Sintu languages for educational purposes and entrenched subtractive bilingualism/multilingualism. It is interesting to note that the phrase "additive bilingualism" is explained in the curriculum document for the Foundation Phase (Grades 1–3), whereas in CAPS for the higher grades, "additive multilingualism" is mentioned only very briefly, in a glossary towards the end of the document. Another peculiarity we see in CAPS is the assumption that "children come to school knowing their home language. They can speak it fluently, and already know several thousand words" (DBE, 2011a, p. 8). We know this is not true: much has been published on the limited vocabulary of learners (Pretorius & Murray, 2019; Pretorius & Stoffelsma, 2017; Wilsenach, 2015). A second error is to advocate – both in schools where English is used as the medium of instruction from Grade 4 and where it is used as the LoLT from Grade 1 – that "a substantial amount of time" be "devoted to learning English in the Foundation Phase" because this develops "a strong literacy foundation in the Home Language" (DBE, 2011a, p. 9). This kind of distorted reasoning is further compounded by the following admission in the mentioned CAPS documents for the rest of the school grades:

[2] The government curriculum defines "Home Language" both as the language that is acquired first and as the language that is offered at the highest proficiency level. "First Additional Language" is used to refer to a language that is not the mother tongue but one that is used for communicative purposes, and in the case of English, as the medium of instruction (DBE, 2011b, p. 8). The terms are usually capitalized in government documentation.

> In South Africa, many children start using their additional language, which is often English, as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) in Grade 4. This means that they must reach a high level of competence in English by the end of Grade 3 … In the Intermediate and Senior Phases … the majority of children are learning through the medium of … English …Greater emphasis is therefore placed on using the First Additional Language for the purposes of thinking and reasoning … By the time learners enter Senior Phase, they should be reasonably proficient in their First Additional Language with regard to both interpersonal and cognitive academic skills. However, the reality is that many learners still cannot communicate well in their Additional Language at this stage … (DBE, 2011b, pp. 8–9)

It is clear that the use of English as the medium of instruction is not working well since a large number of learners in the Senior Phase (Grades 7–9) remain unable to express themselves in English, despite their early exposure to the language in the Foundation Phase (Grades 1–3) and Intermediate Phase (Grades 4–6). At the same time, the Home Languages – the languages that children first acquire – have been overlooked as useful languages for teaching and learning purposes. SGBs and parents also have a say in the matter and are allowed to decide the language policy of a school. In the majority of cases, the preference for using English as the LoLT as early as possible dominates, regardless of the above confession in the curriculum document. By this stage, it is clear that there is still confusion as to the application of the LiEP and insufficient evidence that the preference for English is contributing to successful education outcomes.

3 How the Department of Basic Education Monitors Progress

It is common knowledge that public-school education in South Africa still has its limitations. The quality of schooling varies vastly between urban and rural settings and along socioeconomic lines. The matter of school-leavers' competency and preparedness to participate in the economy – part of the social mobility referred to earlier – remains questionable (Chisholm, 2005; RSA, 2019; Solidarity Research Institute, 2015). School graduates' abilities serve as independent external indicators that inadequate learning is taking place in public school education. To obtain an overall picture of school education and developments on the language in education front, we now turn our attention to how the DBE monitors progress in public schooling through a series of projects, surveys and reports.

The website of the DBE[3] provides a plethora of documentation. Duplication of content across the different categories necessitates a selection of items considered to be most relevant for the purposes of the current discussion. The following documents were selected owing to their comprehensive nature and currency:

[3] Available: https://www.education.gov.za/Resources/Reports.aspx

2010: The Status of the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) in South African Public Schools: A Quantitative Overview (2010), in conjunction with the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD)
2011: Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa 2011–2025
2014/17: National Education and Evaluation Development Unit (NEEDU) Reports
2018: Teacher Professional Development Master Plan 2017–2020
2018: Teachers and Principals as Lifelong Learners (TALIS): South Africa Country Report Volume I
2019: National Senior Certificate (NSC) Grade 12 exit-level examination and diagnostic reports
2019: A 25-year Review of Progress in the Basic Education Sector
2020: Action Plan to 2024: Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2030

We will discuss each of the documents in the sections that follow.

3.1 The Status of the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) in South African Public Schools: A Quantitative Overview (DBE, 2010)

As mentioned in the introduction, decisions about the LoLT are supposed to be aligned with the Constitution and Bill of Rights, *South African Schools Act, 1996* and the LiEP. It was thus fitting for the DBE to undertake a study on the status of the LoLT, even if only a little more than a decade into the new political dispensation. Of primary importance in the report on the LoLTs is the question of what languages are used in the classroom, as well as the number of single-medium schools in existence. The first part of the document reiterates the constitutional right to be educated in the official language of choice where “reasonably practicable” (DBE, 2010, p. 6) and the obligation on the state to attempt at all costs to “promote the exercising of this right, including the establishment of single medium institutions” (ibid. p. 6). Further to this, the right of SGBs to decide the language policy of their schools is affirmed. The connection between mother-tongue education and academic success is foregrounded, and a caveat issued against a situation in which the first or “home language” is rejected as a language of learning and teaching, leading to the stagnation of the development of that language and the undermining of a student’s “personal and conceptual foundation for learning” (ibid. p. 5). These are significant statements that should continue to steer education planning. Unfortunately, the opposite has happened, hence the current struggle to attain academic language proficiency and the stagnation of the Sintu languages as intellectual tools.

The rest of the overview provides information obtained from an Annual Schools Survey and data provided by the Educational Policy Unit of the University of the Witwatersrand in 2007. From the information reported, we already see an alarming discrepancy between first/home language and LoLT in the early grades. Whereas there were only 5.6% Grade 1 learners with English as first or home language in 2007, as many as 21.8% of Grade 1 learners had English as the LoLT that same year (Table 1).

We can see that the number of HL Afrikaans students corresponds well with the number of students who had Afrikaans as the LoLT in Grade 1. However, there is a discrepancy between the number of HL English learners and those using English as the LoLT in this important foundational year of schooling. As far as the medium of instruction in Grades 2 and 3 is concerned, English features most prominently, despite the mismatch with Home Language demographics (DBE, 2010, p. 16). Table 2 illustrates the dominant LoLT in all school grades in 2007.

The sudden change to English from Grade 4 as the LoLT is evident. A particularly alarming finding mentioned in the report is that although English and (to a lesser extent) Afrikaans were the dominant LoLTs from Grade 4, the majority of learners did not actually study English or Afrikaans as a school subject in Grades 1–3 before transitioning to these languages (DBE, 2010, p. 29).

Unfortunately, there are no subsequent reports on the status of the LoLT in order to compare the current situation. The Annual Schools Survey report covering the years 2010 and 2011 only mentions the total number of learners and their preferred LoLT; this is not helpful for the purposes of making comparisons and detecting trends.

There were 6000 single-medium schools in 2007 (Table 3) and 13,000 parallel-medium schools. The remainder (about 6532) offered different combinations of LoLT, especially in the Foundation Phase (DBE, 2010, p. 28).

Although the document cites the Annual School Survey (ASS) as the source of the above statistics, no further ASS reports could be found after that for 2010/2011, published in 2013 (DBE, 2013, p. 17). We do find some more recent data on Grade 6 learners from a study by the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) in 2017.

It is clear from Table 4 that most Grade 6 students do not receive adequate exposure to English at home for the purposes of using it as the LoLT, since around 75.8% use English at home only occasionally or never. Furthermore, even if learners are exposed to English at home, the level or quality of the language cannot be verified.

From the information available on the LoLT, we can see how the preference for English as the medium of instruction was already firmly entrenched in 2007, despite the demographics of the student population. However, the competency of teachers to use the LoLT is also intimately connected to the quality and success of schooling. This is another worrying aspect. The first comprehensive document on the matter of teacher development appears to be the 2011 strategic planning framework published jointly by the DBE and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). This document will be reviewed next.

Table 1 Percentage of Grade 1 learners by Home Language (HL) and LoLT in 2007 (DBE, 2010, pp. 12, 14)

	Afrikaans	English	isiNdebele	isiXhosa	isiZulu	Sepedi	Sesotho	Setswana	Siswati	Tshivenda	Xitsonga	Total
HL/L1	9.2	5.6	1.5	23.5	27.1	8.9	6.4	8.0	3.0	2.3	4.5	100
LoLT	9.5	21.8	0.7	16.5	23.4	8.3	4.7	7.5	2.1	2.2	3.1	100

Table 2 Percentage of learners by LoLT in 2007 (DBE, 2010, p. 16)

LOLT	Gr 1	Gr 2	Gr 3	Gr 4	Gr 5	Gr 6	Gr 7	Gr 8	Gr 9	Gr 10	Gr 11	Gr 12	SA
Afrikaans	9.5	9.6	9.9	12.3	12.2	12.2	13.2	13.1	14.0	12.7	12.1	12.8	11.9
English	21.8	23.8	27.7	79.1	81.1	81.6	80.6	80.9	80.0	81.2	82.0	81.4	65.3
isiNdebele	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.4
isiXhosa	16.5	15.0	14.0	3.1	2.5	2.0	1.9	1.6	1.4	1.3	1.2	1.5	5.5
isiZulu	23.4	21.7	20.1	1.5	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	6.8
Sepedi	8.3	9.1	9.2	1.1	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.0	3.1
Sesotho	4.7	4.8	4.4	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.3	1.6
Setswana	7.5	7.4	6.8	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.3	2.4
Siswati	2.1	2.1	1.7	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.7
Tshivenda	2.2	2.4	2.4	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.9
Xitsonga	3.1	3.3	3.1	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.8	1.4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 3 Number of single-medium schools by LoLT: 1998–2007; 2010–2011

LoLT	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2010	2011
Afrikaans	1227	1252	1218	1199	1210	1189	1160	1171	1173	1174	1543	1550
English	2991	3821	3046	3752	3444	3906	3975	4033	4122	4342	8432	8677

Table 4 Distribution of Grade 6 learners according to the frequency of speaking English at home in 2017 (DBE, 2017a, p. 18)

How often learners speak English at home (%)				
Province	Never	Sometimes	Most of the time	All the time
Eastern Cape	18.2	61.0	10.4	10.4
Free State	7.3	82.1	6.3	4.3
Gauteng	7.4	62.5	15.7	14.4
Kwazulu-Natal	13.4	67.3	7.7	11.5
Limpopo	17.8	71.4	7.4	3.4
Mpumalanga	10.9	76.0	8.4	4.6
Northern Cape	7.0	27.3	11.0	54.7
North West	12.2	72.3	7.8	7.7
Western Cape	1.9	30.7	22.2	45.3
South Africa	**11.8**	**64.0**	**10.7**	**13.4**

3.2 Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa: 2011–2025 (DBE & DHET, 2011)

The objectives of the planning framework are to address the failure of the education system "to achieve dramatic improvement in the quality of teaching and learning in schools" by 2025 (DBE & DHET, 2011, p. 1). This admission by the DBE and DHET that current educational policies are not having the desired effect of ensuring quality of teaching is a positive step on the road to providing opportunities for further teacher development. The planning framework foregrounds "teachers' poor subject matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge" (DBE & DHET, 2011, p. 4). The framework also refers to the "poor public image of teachers, and the status currently ascribed to the teaching profession" (DBE & DHET, 2011, p. 11). We believe this is partly related to the language proficiency of the teachers and the extent to which they can be considered articulate for teaching purposes in more than one language.

A search for language or linguistic variables in the strategic plan revealed only a few references. Referring to the NSC examination results and Annual National Assessments (ANA), the authors of the document state that priority should be given to short developmental courses for teachers of African Languages [read: Sintu languages] as Home Languages and also of English (as First Additional Language), but only for those teaching in the Foundation Phase (DBE & DHET, 2011, p. 10). This provision does not include the training of teachers in higher grades or those who teach Afrikaans as Home or Additional Language. Once again, the emphasis falls on English and those who teach it as an additional language. There is a vague reference to possibly including teachers of other subjects later. In any event, it is questionable whether the proposed short language courses will have the desired effect as language development is not a matter that can be attended to quickly or easily.

The two education departments responsible for the planning framework appear to have overlooked the role that language plays in the teaching and learning of all subject matter; by improving English L2 teaching, in their opinion, the quality of teaching across all other school subjects will improve simultaneously. We know this is inaccurate: there have been numerous reports of teachers' inadequate English language skills (CDE, 2015; Du Plessis, 2020; Du Plessis & Els, 2019; Grosser & Nel, 2013; Nkosi, 2015). It is also strange that the DBE does not mention the teaching of Afrikaans and whether this is of a satisfactory standard.

The proposed framework for teacher development does refer to the policy on the "Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications" – commonly referred to as MRTEQ. This document sets minimum standards for education qualifications to guide training institutions on the knowledge and practical skills that teachers need in order to be professional and effective (DBE & DHET, 2011, p. 15; also see RSA, 2015). Regarding minimum language requirements, section 8.2 of MRTEQ attempts to cover the matter of language proficiency:

> All teachers who successfully complete an initial professional qualification should be proficient in the use of *at least one* official South African language as a language of learning and teaching (LoLT), and partially proficient (i.e. sufficient for purposes of basic conversation) in *at least one* other official African language [*sic*], or in South African Sign Language, as language of conversational competence (LoCC). If the LoLT is English or Afrikaans, then the LoCC must be an African Language [*sic*] or South African Sign Language. All new certificates are to be endorsed to indicate the holder's level of competence in specific languages … (RSA, 2015, p. 13)

The matter of "proficient" is left to individual interpretation. "Partially proficient" can even be described as an oxymoron. Other countries use comprehensive frameworks such as the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)[4] to articulate in detail what kinds of knowledge and levels of ability would constitute "proficient". Another problem is the required pass mark of 50% set for university language courses: can we honestly consider that mark as "proficient"? The question can also be raised whether there are any long-term benefits to be gained from a basic conversational knowledge of a language, as stipulated in MRTEQ. Usually such language courses are offered for a single semester or year. It is unlikely that students will remember much by the time they graduate if the conversational language is a new language. One year of study would definitely be insufficient to attain a working proficiency in the language.

MRTEQ does acknowledge the importance of multilingualism and the role of teachers in facilitating multilingualism. However, here too the bias towards English is clear. All Foundation and Intermediate Phase teachers have to be able to teach English as a First Additional Language (RSA, 2015, pp. 24–25).

There is also little sense in prioritising the teaching of Sintu languages for just the first 3 years of schooling – as the strategic planning framework on teacher development does – and then neglecting this important matter in the subsequent grades. This may be unintentional and related to the fact that there is a shortage of teachers of Sintu languages in the Foundation Phase, but this approach will not do much to improve the standard of language teaching in the higher grades. Our experience of university education students is that they have oral proficiency in the Sintu languages but not written or L1 proficiency, although this is the goal of the national school curriculum. This reflects poorly on the language levels of the teachers.

A subsequent document covering a master plan for teacher professional development, published by the DBE in 2019, shows that the department has no shortage of plans and good intentions. As is typical of DBE documents, this more recent publication foregrounds "literacy/English first additional language for all phases" (DBE, 2019a, p. 6) and a plan to assess teachers' mastery of English. It mentions that practice standards need to be developed for languages in primary education in general and claims that "extensive" programmes in languages have already been implemented in all of the provinces (ibid. p. 9). Despite all of these master plans, not much appears to have changed. We return to this matter later. Apart from policy and planning documents, the DBE also relies on evaluation reports to monitor progress, especially through the work of the National Education and Evaluation Development Unit (NEEDU).

[4] Available: https://www.coe.int/en/web/language-policy/home

3.3 National Education and Evaluation Development Unit (NEEDU) Reports

NEEDU was established in 2009 (DoE, 2009; DBE, 2011c) with the remit to function as an independent unit to facilitate school improvement through a system of performance reviews based on empirical research studies. It focuses on all aspects of schooling and not only matters pertaining to language in education. Although it is to function independently, it reports to the Minister of Basic Education (MBE) and is monitored by the Planning and Delivery Oversight Unit (PDOU) of the DBE (Taylor et al., 2014).

Through its empirical research, NEEDU can potentially fulfil a crucial role in reducing inequality in education. The first important finding that we report relates to the promotion of learners from one grade to the next as recorded for the period 2006–2014. Throughput, which refers to the "percentage of learners in any one grade progressing to the next (higher) grade the following year" (Taylor et al., 2014, p. 20), is particularly problematic in Grades 10–12. This is disturbing since promotion requirements in South Africa are extremely low, requiring a pass mark of only "40% in three subjects, one of which is an official language at Home Language level" and 30% in the remaining three school subjects (DBE, 2009, p. 9). Despite the low promotion criteria, around 40% of learners have to repeat grades (Taylor et al., 2014, p. 89). The 2014 NEEDU report also points out that almost half of the learners who enter South African public schools in Grade 1 do not matriculate.

The drop in the number of students from Grade 1 to 12 and troubling throughput rates are indicative of a system that is not performing well. There are numerous reasons why students drop out of school, most of which fall beyond the scope of this chapter. However, the NEEDU report contains several references to the matter of language in education.

Section 3.2 of the 2014 report deals specifically with the LoLT. The prescribed school curriculum, CAPS, makes provision for either English or Afrikaans to be used as the LoLT and for the NSC school-leaving examination. However, teachers are reported "to resort to other languages where the learner, or both learner and teacher, have a better command" (Taylor et al., 2014, p. 41). At least 80% of secondary school learners study English as an additional language and do not come from backgrounds where English is used; teachers, too, are not L1 users of English (ibid., p. 41). The authors express their concern that the code-switching used in classes does not support the mastery of English and that high levels of language proficiency are needed in order to engage higher cognitive processing. In fact, "poor levels of English proficiency are undoubtedly a major – if not the largest single – cause of learners dropping out before reaching Grade 12, failing to pass the NSC, and of not completing their tertiary studies" (ibid. p. 23). Strangely, NEEDU supports the decision to introduce English in the Foundation Phase to address this problem, together with "training in English" for teachers by the British Council. A pilot project called LEAP (Learn English Audio Pilot) is being rolled out in some schools in order to improve listening and speaking skills in English. We remain dubious that this will rectify matters since a similar project using radio broadcasting was not sustainable after 2009 (see Potter & Naidoo, 2012).

A later NEEDU report, on high-performing schools located in poor areas, found that the positive culture of learning in such schools assisted them to attain good results. An interesting point mentioned in this particular study is that teachers believed the “discrepancy between language spoken at home and the language of teaching and learning at school” had a negative effect on learners’ “socio-emotional characteristics” and consequently also on their academic success (DBE, 2017b, p. 70). This is why an appropriate response to language in education demands careful consideration of multiple factors, rather than simply reaching for English as the answer. The same NEEDU study also identified the need to communicate with parents “in the language they understand” (ibid. p. 86); one of the reasons for lack of parental involvement in schools was parents’ inability to access the language of meetings and correspondence. Parental support was highlighted in the study as being another determinant of academic success (ibid. p. 170). However, if there is a clash between the parents’ language in the home and that of the school, this potential valuable support is lost.

The next document we examine involves international benchmarking of teaching and learning through participation in a survey initiated by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

3.4 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2018: South Africa Country Report (DBE, 2018)

TALIS, the largest survey of its kind, investigates aspects such as sociodemographics of the teaching profession, instructional practices, teacher development, motivation and fears, which if overlooked “can lead to tensions and policy discord, which can undermine education reform” (DBE, 2018, p. 2). The DBE is to be commended for being the only African country to participate in this global initiative of the OECD which “affords teachers and principals a voice on educational policy analysis and development in key areas” (DBE, 2018, p. 11).

Amongst the key findings of the 2018 survey was that on average about 60% of South African teachers worked in schools in which more than 10% of the learners received instruction in an additional language, a much higher share than in other OECD countries participating in the study (ibid. p. 21). Closely related to linguistic and literacy challenges was the finding that 70% of South African participants in the survey reported a shortage of library materials, as compared to the OECD average of 16%, and that 71% of teachers worked in schools in which more than 30% of the learners were from poor socioeconomic backgrounds; the OECD average was 20% of teachers (ibid. p. 17). Here too we see the dire consequences of poverty.

A disturbing finding of TALIS was that around 56% of the teachers in South Africa had only completed a short tertiary programme (the OECD average was 3%

for short programmes); a quarter of teachers had no tertiary qualifications as compared to the OECD average of 2% (DBE, 2018, p. 18). The practice of appointing teachers who are not appropriately qualified – and then attempting to remedy matters along the way – cannot be condoned. Consideration should be given to evaluating the standard of work of unqualified teachers and their suitability for further training to obtain the necessary qualifications within a stipulated period of time. Incentives for training in other careers could be investigated to allow gradual transition to alternative employment opportunities. South Africa cannot afford to keep unsuitable teachers in the classroom.

One surprising finding of TALIS was that only around 20% of South African teachers believed that they needed professional development to teach in multicultural/multilingual settings (ibid. p. 55). We would argue differently: too many teachers' language skills are inadequate to assist their students and they do not serve as good language role models in the classroom, even though they may be of the opinion that they are fluent in more than one language and capable of handling multilingual teaching modes. We base our view on analyses of education students' performance in language programmes at various training institutions (Du Plessis & Els, 2019; Grosser & Nel, 2013; Mhlongo, 2019 Van der Merwe, 2018).

An important point raised in the TALIS report is the consensus amongst researchers that "teachers and school leaders shape the quality of instruction, which strongly affects students' learning and outcomes" (DBE, 2018, p. 25). This means that it is not enough to rely on monitoring units and programmes to ensure quality education: principals and teachers must have the required qualifications and competence before being appointed. The same of course could be said about officials in the DBE tasked with various monitoring and education responsibilities and the extent to which they have suitable linguistic and other qualifications.

The next part of the document appraisal covers learner performance trends in the annual school-leaving examination and what we can learn from the diagnostic reports.

3.5 National Senior Certificate (NSC) Examination Results and Diagnostic Reports

The DBE places a high premium on the annual results of the Grade 12 NSC examination as a means of tracking learner performance over subsequent years. Figure 1 charts education progress through examination results over the period 2008 (when the new school curriculum was introduced) to 2019.

There appears to have been an improvement in the overall results since 2008. However, the 2008 and 2009 results were based on the previous school curriculum, not CAPS, and the respective examination papers are not necessarily of the same degree of difficulty across the different years. It is therefore difficult to make a case for education improvement based on the NSC results alone. Moreover, the low

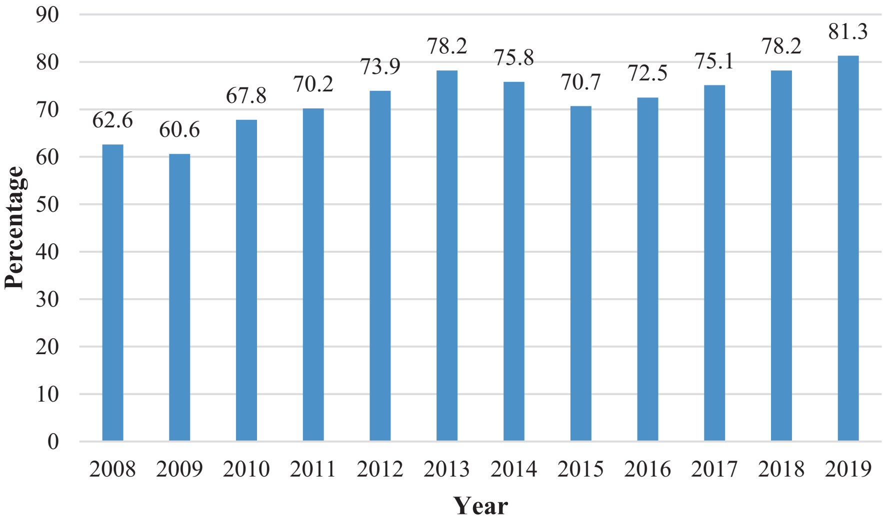

Fig. 1 National pass rates in the annual NSC school-leaving examination. (DBE, 2019b, p. 6)

requisite pass mark of 30% obfuscates matters. There is furthermore the problem of highly unreliable school-based continuous assessment marks (37.5% of the overall mark) that contribute a substantial proportion of the NSC examination pass marks.

The 2019 NSC examination report highlights the "vacation school programmes" offered during the three periods of school holidays as the main programme to support learning in Grade 12:

> The programme targets a diverse set of learners including progressed learners, learners at risk of not achieving the NSC and learners that have the potential to achieve distinctions in various subjects in an effort to focus on quality improvement. (DBE, 2019b, p. 21)

As many as 40% of the 2019 Grade 12 intake attended the vacation classes (offered through direct contact teaching or other platforms). Although this programme appears to have assisted many learners, it should not become a replacement for quality classroom teaching during the school term (teacher absenteeism averages at around 10% per day). Of particular interest to us is the fact that only English as First Additional Language was included in the vacation programme; the report contains a vague reference to extra tuition being expanded for the home languages, but no details are provided. There is still no indication of any support for the "African language" subjects (confusingly including Afrikaans, which is the language with the third most speakers in the country, most of them not Caucasian), either as L1 or L2. The bias towards English and definite lack of equivalence of standard across the different school language subjects remains, despite the disparities identified in numerous research studies (Du Plessis & Du Plessis, 2015; Weideman et al., 2017). It is not surprising to note the following "areas of concern" and recommendation in the 2019 NSC diagnostic report:

- In most home languages, the vast majority of candidates either misinterpreted or gave limited responses to higher order questions … There is therefore a need to enhance thinking in an abstract context in languages.
- In most languages, candidates did not understand the vocabulary used in comprehension texts … Vocabulary exercises and reading need to be promoted in schools.
- A large percentage of candidates displayed a limited understanding of subject matter.
- More emphasis needs to be placed on language competence since candidates often can respond correctly to questions but lack the language skills to do so. (DBE, 2019c, pp. 13–14)

The roots of these problems go back to the Foundation and Intermediate Phases and the issue of the LoLT. Despite having had at least 10 years of exposure to English, both as a school subject and as the medium of instruction, by Grade 12 many students still cannot express themselves in English. This is a recurring refrain in our discussions on education progress in this chapter. It is clear from the 2019 diagnostic report that the same concerns about learners' English language mastery were of relevance to the remaining school language subjects. It seems that the emphasis on English has not done much to improve the students' English and, in addition, has had a detrimental effect on the students' competence in their first or home languages.

The next two documents we will discuss provide an overview of progress over a lengthy period and serve as a means of correlating findings and problematic aspects already identified so far.

3.6 A 25-Year Review of Progress in the Basic Education Sector (DBE, 2019d)

This report was published to mark the 25th anniversary of the democratic dispensation. Amongst the achievements hailed are the gradual increases in completion of primary and secondary schooling over the period 2002–2017 (Fig. 2).

It can hardly be considered an achievement when the completion rates over a 15-year period have only increased by around 10%. Moreover, the completion ages of learners are alarming: 16–18 for Grade 7 and 22–25 for Grade 12. The normal completion age for Grade 7 is 12 years and that for Grade 12 is 18–19 years. This is the same tendency we see in higher education where many students take on average 6 years to complete a basic 3-year degree programme (Du Plessis, 2020). Here too, we believe that the way the LiEP is being applied in schools to determine the LoLT is part of the problem.

The 25-year review applauds the following achievements, but acknowledges "the absolute levels of learning achieved are still substantially below desirable levels" (DBE, 2019d, p. 8):

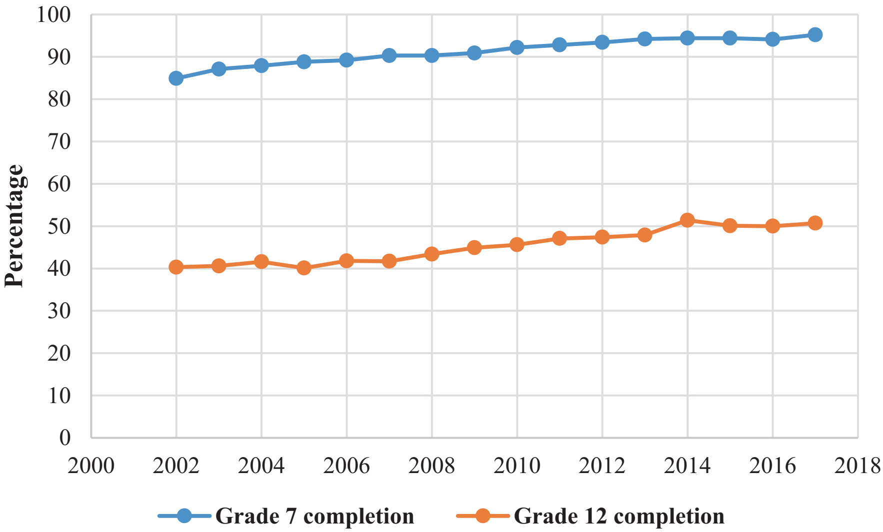

Fig. 2 National primary and secondary schooling completion rates. (DBE, 2019d, p. 4)

> The good news is that in recent rounds of TIMSS, PIRLS and SEACMEQ[5] we have observed that the country's levels of learning have been on an improving trend. In the TIMSS assessment (grade 9 mathematics and science), South Africa has been the fastest improving country between the surveys of 2002, 2011 and 2015. There appears to have been a significant improvement in the country's PIRLS results between 2006 and 2011, although no significant change between 2011 and 2016. In SEACMEQ, a large improvement at the grade 6 level was noted between 2007 and 2013 in both mathematics and reading.

It is a pity that more recent data was not included. The current performance levels in the mentioned external tests are thus uncertain, but the reported improvements up to 2016 are worth noting. On the matter of learning and teaching support materials (LTSM), the review states that almost 100% of schools have been provided with textbooks and workbooks for each learner (DBE, 2019d, p. 33). This does not, however, include graded readers in home languages (ibid. p. 37). The quality of books is said to need further attention, especially in the Foundation Phase. Of concern to us is the fact that no mention is made in the 25-year review of how many schools have libraries. In 2010, only about 40% of public schools had some form of a library (ibid. p. 23). A mobile library system in 2013/14 had assisted about half a million learners, but this is not the best solution, especially in view of the promulgated minimum norms and standards for public school infrastructure which state that all schools must have libraries (ibid. p. 24). Very little progress appears to have been made here. Without well-equipped libraries and regular access to reading materials in printed and electronic format, students stand little chance of improving their

[5] Southern and East Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality.

language proficiency and skills, and the SDG goal of inclusive education in an increasingly digital era cannot be attained.

Notwithstanding our concerns, the DBE should be commended for participating in projects such as PIRLS, TIMMS and SEACMEQ. These serve as credible national and international benchmarks that help to identify trends in learner achievement in the areas of literacy and mathematics and are valuable tools to monitor education quality in respect of SDG 4.

3.7 Action Plan to 2024: Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2030 (DBE, 2020)

This voluminous document incorporates key elements from the National Development Plan (NDP) and consolidates the commitment of the South African government to the United Nations' SDGs. It provides a summary of the historical origins of inequality in education and reports on planning to improve the quality of education through five priorities pertaining to early childhood development and foundational literacy, teaching professionalism, learning materials, school management, and school monitoring and support (DBE, 2020, pp. vii–viii). Much of the content of previous reports already discussed in this chapter forms part of the action plan and will not be repeated here.

We applaud the strides taken to ensure uniform access to education at all levels, improve the school curriculum, and introduce innovative assessment initiatives such as the planned comprehensive Systemic Evaluation Programme. When fully operational, the programme will enable the assessment of proficiency levels of Grade 3, 6 and 9 learners in language and mathematics every year (DBE, 2020, p. 25) in the place of the Annual National Assessments (ANA). This system could provide reliable data on trends at both provincial and national level, and also relate achievement of learning outcomes to socioeconomic realities, an important contextual element (ibid. p. 49). If the DBE manages to implement the Systemic Evaluation Programme – with the support of teachers' unions – it would place South Africa on par with other Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries that already have international competency benchmarking tests in place.

Inasmuch as the action plan shares a vision for a "modern and decolonised schooling system" (DBE, 2020, p. v), we can see that there is still reluctance to change the ruling party's position on the colonial language of English. What we find troublesome in the action plan is the wording used in the following statement: "Apartheid brought with it prolonged segregation by race, but also language, with a ferociousness not seen in any other country during the twentieth century" (ibid. p. 4). This is a highly subjective statement in which language, together with race, is blamed for segregating people. It is the same argument used to justify English as the dominant LoLT in schools and universities: it is perceived to be the language that can "enhance diversity in classrooms" and help to obtain "higher paid jobs, particularly in postcolonial countries where government jobs require the colonial language" (Eriksson, 2014, p. 2).

The ideological bias of government is also evident in the misapplication of research findings that effective language instruction in the first or home language in the early grades supports the learning of English and development of literacies later (Taylor & Coetzee, 2013; Wildsmith-Cromarty & Balfour, 2019). This important point, which would be applicable to the learning of any additional language, is misconstrued by the DBE as "the switch, between grades 3 and 4, from an African language [read: Sintu language] to English across most of the system remains supported by research" (DBE, 2020, p. 24). This bizarre conclusion comes directly after a series of comments in the action plan on the disadvantage of learners who have to "begin learning in an unfamiliar language in Grade 4, mostly English" (ibid. p. 24). The following extract from page 6 of the action plan is almost schizophrenic:

> Around the world, much of the legacy of colonialism persists through the dominance of colonial languages. In South Africa, English, though only spoken by about 4% of public school learners as a home language, is the predominant language of the textbooks used in classrooms, as well as in the system's policy documents. The history of marginalisation of the remaining official languages and, in particular, of the country's nine African languages [*sic*] continues, despite the official position of equality between the languages as enshrined in the 1996 Constitution. The schooling system needs to pay special attention to the promotion of all official languages. Compelling research indicating that young children learn best if, during the first few years of their schooling, key concepts are taught in their home language, informs South Africa's education policies. But beyond these pedagogical considerations, **promoting all languages in the education system is a matter of national pride and of liberation** [emphasis provided in original text]. (DBE, 2020, p. 6)

With regard to those schools who opted to use English as the LoLT from Grade 1 when it was not the first or home language of the students, Taylor and Von Fintel (2016, p. 77) found "a negative effect on English performance in grades 4, 5 and 6". Based on our analysis of language and literacy issues mentioned in the documentation studied, we see little commitment to promoting languages other than English in education. Furthermore, we note a two-pronged stance in another section of the action plan that elaborates on the notion of social cohesion:

> The plan envisions a South Africa where everyone feels free yet bounded [*sic*] to others; where everyone embraces their full potential, a country where opportunity is determined not by birth, but by ability, education and hard work. (DBE, 2020, p. 10)

The reference to birth serves as a proxy for race and language. When read on its own, the above statement may appear laudable. However, section 3.4 of the action plan deals with curriculum innovation in order to achieve "radical economic transformation" (DBE, 2020, p. 16) and advocates broad-based black economic empowerment (BBBEE). In these terms, Black persons are given preferential treatment for government funding initiatives and employment opportunities. This goes directly against the ideals of inclusivity and equality and ignores persons of other population groups and mixed descent who also suffered under apartheid, for example citizens who are classified "Coloured" in terms of the current government's affirmative action policies. So far the BBBEE policy has done very little to uplift the majority of Black persons in the country; they continue to struggle with poverty. No wonder the "BEE" is now referred to by critics as Black Elitist Empowerment.[6]

In a study on the effect of the LoLT used in primary school on labour market outcomes, Eriksson (2014) shows how language in education could potentially be used for economic advancement – in a way that in our opinion would not prejudice persons on the basis of race as in BEE. She correlates "long run effects" of language policy changes on income and educational outcomes by using "difference-in-difference estimation strategy" (ibid. p. 4) based on years of instruction in the mother tongue. Eriksson (ibid. p. 3) reports that when education in the mother tongue for Black students was increased from 4 to 6 years (in accordance with a change in policy in 1955), the effects on wages were positive, resulting in more educational achievement and "higher labour market outcomes" (ibid. p. 23). She also found evidence of higher English speaking proficiency owing to the policy, but "only in predominantly English parts of the country" (ibid. p. 3). This evidence illustrates the importance of taking the immediate community context into consideration when determining the LoLT of a school. Although Eriksson's study used data from the Bantu Education era and the 1980 census, it highlights the importance of careful consideration of the choice of LoLT in primary school education. It also suggests that a differentiated approach to applying the LiEP in schools is needed. We discuss this possibility in our concluding comments.

4 Conclusions

Our review shows ongoing efforts on the part of the DBE to provide South African learners with quality education that indeed is inclusive and equitable. The attention devoted by the department to the monitoring of education progress through various programmes is also commendable. Unfortunately, such endeavours have not led to substantial gains. In this regard, the work of NEEDU is of crucial importance, both because of the relative independence of the unit, and also in terms of the solid empirical basis of its research.

The finding of the TALIS survey (DBE, 2018) that only about 56% of teachers had completed a short tertiary programme, and about 25% had no tertiary training at all, in effect means that it will take a long time to improve the quality of teaching. We would like to commend the DBE on its planned Systemic Evaluation Programme and for participating in projects such as PIRLS, TIMMS and SACMEQ to identify trends in learner achievement with a view to the attainment of SDG 4. However, it is clear from the voluntary review submitted to the UN that government remains perturbed about the fact that South African learners who attend public schools are not acquiring adequate skills, and that far too many youths do not complete their

[6] Statement made by Member of Parliament, Mr. M. Hlengwa of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), in a meeting of the National Assembly on 21 February 2017. Source: Hansard minutes. Available: https://pmg.org.za/hansard/24732/ (17 February 2021).

basic schooling. Although the DBE has reported an upward trend in national pass rates in the NSC school-leaving examination since 2008, we cannot attach much value to a system where the pass mark is 30%, and we hence cannot regard the NSC as a reliable indicator of education progress.

Given the findings of our review, we believe that by applying a differentiated approach to language in education, the social mobility and future prospects of many school students can be improved significantly. There is still insufficient recognition of our multilingual and multicultural context in education planning. Linguistic diversity should be a prominent feature of our curriculum and schooling system. The encouragement of the DBE to transition to English in Grade 4 (or even earlier) has derailed the learning of many, both in the crucial foundation phase of schooling and beyond. The repercussions are felt at tertiary level. The report from the National Benchmark Tests (NBTs) Project for the 2018 intake year shows that students who study in their first or home languages at school, such as Afrikaans first language learners, are more adequately prepared for university and tend to perform better in placement tests (CETAP, 2018, p. 39). This finding is asserted repeatedly in consecutive annual reports.

Clearly, the bias for English on the part of the DBE and governing bodies of schools cannot be deemed suitable for all school contexts, especially in areas where English is hardly used in the community. By promoting English as the LoLT in the majority of public schools irrespective of context, the DBE ignores the close connection between learners' identity and culture, first language and conceptual growth. Inasmuch as we support the right of schools to determine their own language policies, a framework should be devised to assist SGBs to do this in a way that supports learners' cognitive and language development. School language policies cannot be determined on the basis of popular, preconceived ideas and historical prejudices. The fact that learners are still not proficient in English by the time that they commence the senior phase of school, despite English having served as the LoLT for 5–7 years (and that has been the case since 1994), shows that a different dispensation is (desperately) needed for both learners and teachers.

It is significant that the position of Afrikaans as LoLT does not feature prominently in the reports and publications of the DBE (if at all). We believe the reason for this is the good performance of Afrikaans-medium schools owing to the close alignment of teachers and learners' first language, the language of the community and home, and the medium of instruction – elements that facilitate the development of essential literacies and language mastery. The annual overview of matric results by the Solidarity Schools Support Centre reports that not only did Afrikaans schools contribute to a higher pass rate for the 2020 examination and perform proportionally far better in mathematics when compared to the majority of schools using English as LoLT, 12 of them are among the 20 schools with the most distinctions in the country (SOS [Solidariteit Skoleondersteuningsentrum], 2020, pp. 14–16). As in the case of the NBT reports, this finding is also of a recurring nature.

In order to ensure that the LoLT is beneficial for learners, multiple factors should thus be taken into account as part of a framework to determine a suitable language policy for schools. These include aligning the LoLT with the languages to which learners are frequently exposed in their homes and communities, adopting multilingual approaches to teaching, cognisance of the availability of literature and resources in the home, school and community, and the socio-demographics of learners, teachers and parents.

By this stage, it is clear that the LiEP is not being applied as intended in schools. The mammoth initiative of the UN SDG Agenda 30 rests on fundamental principles of international law and human rights conventions. If anything, the past months of the COVID-19 pandemic have foregrounded disparities and inequalities in societies, confirming that other measures are needed to spur governments into action to attain the SDGs. Without some form of accountability on the part of member states, it is doubtful that countries such as South Africa will start doing things differently, other than submitting reports that do not necessarily interpret correctly some of the studies they are based on. In order to pursue the language policy most supportive of general conceptual growth amongst South African learners, additive multilingualism as envisaged in the LiEP must be employed. It is unacceptable to suggest, as the country's 2019 report to the UN states, that sectoral initiatives "*should be considered*" to increase "the use of African languages [read: Sintu languages] in lower school grades" (p. 13). There has been enough "consideration" over the past 25 years; we could have achieved far more had government and schools actually implemented the original policy of additive multilingualism, and had universities ensured that teachers had high proficiency levels to handle multilingual classroom contexts in the interests of inclusive, equitable and quality education.

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In Pursuit of Sustainable Educational Development: The Philippines and the English Dilemma

Rosemary Salomone

Abstract The English language poses a dilemma in meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially for education in countries with high multilingualism, high poverty and unequal schooling, such as the Philippines. This chapter considers Goal 1 (reducing poverty), Goal 4 (promoting educational quality) and Goal 10 (reducing inequalities) in relation to what has become an array of executive orders, regulations and laws that have shifted in the political winds, even as the judiciary has tried to navigate a measured course. It underscores how the primacy of English in the national consciousness, tied to global markets, undercuts multilingual policies based in empirical findings that children learn best in a language that they understand. The current MTB-MLE policy, moving instruction into English and Filipino beyond grade 3, and the pro-English message it conveys, falls short of providing the large and linguistically diverse population of less-privileged Filipino children with the multilingual skills they need to participate in the local, national and global economies. In the end, the policy fails to fully realize the promise of the SDGs in promoting educational quality essential to reducing poverty and inequalities.

Keywords Filipino · Philippines · Mother-tongue instruction

English is now the dominant lingua franca. As it moves across the world, it drives globalization, the knowledge economy and a view of both language and education as valuable commodities in the global marketplace. At the same time, it confronts compelling evidence that children learn best in a language that they understand. That language may be the national language, a local or indigenous language, or an immigrant language. These competing forces offer opportunities and challenges in meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aimed at reducing poverty

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(Goal 1), promoting educational quality (Goal 4) and reducing inequalities (Goal 10). The problem is especially striking in the Philippines where high multilingualism, unequal schooling and over 600 million people living in extreme poverty have slowed the country's progress towards meeting the targets within each of these goals. Like many of the SDGs, these three goals are mutually supportive. Goal 4 in particular is foundational to Goals 1 and 10. Quality education is the engine for reducing poverty and inequalities by providing "equal rights to economic resources" (Target 1.4) and "empower[ing] and promot[ing] the social, economic and political inclusion of all" (Target 10.2). Meanwhile, reducing poverty and inequalities leads to "relevant and effective learning outcomes" (Target 4.1).

For the Philippines, the task at hand demands an education that reflects the multilingual reality in which many children live. Yet despite the intuitive appeal of mother-tongue-based multilingual schooling, even seven decades after the country's independence from American occupation, English still plays a conflicted role in weighing sound empirically based pedagogy against the demands of the global economy. Added to the English dilemma is the European model of "one nation, one language", which recurring turns towards nationalism, like the present one, inevitably fall back upon. The underlying ideology has privileged Filipino, the national language, as an adjunct to English and at the expense of other local and regional languages. Meanwhile, the economic dominance of English has limited those languages to the early stages of schooling and denied many students adequate instruction in the mother tongue, with consequent inequities in the quality of schooling. The end result has been high rates of academic failure amidst a dizzying array of executive orders, regulations and laws bouncing to and fro in the political winds with the judiciary intermittently trying to navigate a measured course.

1 Americanisation

To best understand the place of English in the Philippines' sustainable development matrix, we have to start with the country's unusual geography, its wide linguistic diversity and its layered colonial history. An archipelago stretching across more than 7000 islands, the Philippines is home to more than 170 languages. Most of those languages belong to one of eight linguistic groups generally considered the major regional indigenous languages of the country. Multilingualism is the rule rather than the exception. Most Filipinos switch between their various languages depending on the social context or the functional setting. This rich linguistic mosaic, grounded partially in social class, combined with ambivalent attitudes towards English and its association with American occupation, has had lasting impact on language policies in the schools.

Through four centuries of foreign rule, successive regimes used language and education to transmit their world-view and way of life. From 1565 to 1898, the country was part of the Spanish Empire. High rates of intermarriage among the Spanish settlers, the Malayan natives and a large in-migration of

Chinese – especially in urban areas – created what is now considered the Filipino people. The Spanish colonizers introduced a centralized government and Catholicism that together helped shape a national identity, leaving behind them schools, hospitals, orphanages, roads and bridges. The American presence during the Spanish colonial period was largely through business ownership in the sugar industry. Subsequent American occupation added another language and culture to the mix. It is said that the Filipinos "look Asian, think Spanish and act American".

In 1898, under the Treaty of Paris, Spain ceded sovereignty over the Philippines to the United States for 20 million dollars, thereby ending the Spanish–American War. For the next 3 years, a revolutionary government fought a fruitless war against American forces, the details of which lie deeply repressed in the national memory. In 1900, the First Philippine Commission – a group of American officials sent by US President William McKinley – recommended establishing English as the official language. That recommendation triggered the education of an entire country in a second language. It has since come under scrutiny as the product of colonial power combined with the collusion of elites who wanted to preserve the social status and economic benefits they had gained under Spanish rule (Tupas, 2008b, pp. 47–67). McKinley subsequently ordered a Second Commission to systematize the schools and to initiate English teaching. At that point, military-run schools were key to the American military strategy. In 1901, 500 educators called "Thomasites" arrived from San Francisco on the US Army Transport *Thomas*, replacing the American soldiers who were serving as teachers. By 1921, a total of 2000 US teachers had served under the programme. The American occupiers believed that the English language and universal education were essential to promote democracy and unify the country. In sharp contrast, the Spanish Crown had previously educated only a minute fraction of the population in Spanish for fear that mass education might lead the people to revolt against the colonial government. Schooling was left to the Spanish friars who used the native languages to instil Christianity (Isidro, 1949, pp. 2–5).

For the Americans, English was a tool for cultural as well as political conditioning. In the words of President McKinley, the aim was "to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them" (Rusling, 1903, p. 17). William Howard Taft, the first governor of the Philippines, who later became President of the United States and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, told the US Congress that "knowledge of the dialects only and of no common language, … would prevent [the Filipinos from] taking in modern ideas of popular government and individual liberty. One of our great hopes in elevating those people is to give them a common language and that language is English, because through the English language … they will breathe in the spirit of Anglo-Saxon individualism" (Graff, 1969, p. 42). In his 1903 Report, the third Superintendent of Instruction, David P. Barrows, called English the "*lingua franca* of the Far East … It is the common language of business and social intercourse between the different nations from America westward to the Levant. It is without rival the most useful language which a man can know" (Barros, 1903, p. 701).

As the Americans won the hearts and minds of the Filipino people by imparting Western values and thinking through English, they also degraded what remained of indigenous culture, tradition and knowledge, stifling a true sense of nationalism and heightening social and economic inequalities. At the core of what historian Renato Constantino, in his seminal essay, called the "mis-education of the Filipino" is the "institutionalization of forgetting," namely, forgetting how English was brought to the country through "bloodshed" and despite struggle against colonial domination, an "amnesiac mindset" manifest in the way that Filipinos revere the language to this day. English, Constantino argues, "separated the Filipinos from their past and later was to separate educated Filipinos from the masses of their countrymen" (Constantino, 1970, p. 24; Tupas, 2016, pp. 53–54). For Constantino, English had "fatal consequences" for the nation. Using the language as a "weapon of colonial conquest," he maintained, gave it the power to influence thinking and limit dissent (Constantino, 1970, pp. 21–22). Constantino's essay, originally written in 1959, waited 5 years to be published. Reprinted in numerous venues and still widely read, it has become a template for critiquing shades of neocolonialism.

Despite this questionable beginning, for the majority of the population English came to symbolize "progressive" American ideals of enlightenment and democracy. Most Filipinos also came to feel positively towards Americans who incentivized learning English for the career opportunities it offered (Tupas & Lorente, 2014, p. 169). Nevertheless, as the years wore on, it became evident that the English-only policy in the schools was not serving all children well. The 1925 Monroe Survey Commission Report addressing "The Language Problem" acknowledged that instruction solely in English was contributing to widespread low achievement among Filipino students. Yet, in the end, the report still reaffirmed the policy to maintain a common language. Using multiple "dialects" for instruction, it warned, would be "divisive" except perhaps for teaching "manners and morals" (Monroe, 1925, pp. 25–27). Under the guise of promoting national cohesion, the report promoted American supremacy and control.

In the 1930s, as cries to break free from the United States became increasingly loud, the need for an official common language, other than English, became more apparent. In 1934, a Constitutional Convention was called to chart a governmental structure in the event of gaining independence. Though delegates spoke in English or Spanish, an impassioned statement in Tagalog – an ethnic language spoken at that time in Manila and the surrounding provinces – was both jolting to the delegates and universally evocative. Felipe R. Jose, from the Mountain Province, stood up and declared that: "We have to let the world know today that we are a people no longer under the Flag of Spain, nor under the shadow of the American Flag …. We can only deserve freedom if we can defend the sacred soul of the nation, our own language" (Almario, 2014, p. 23). The speech moved the delegates to form a Committee on Official Language that held public hearings and received petitions. Even the American experts agreed that English should not continue as the sole language for teaching. After intense debate, the push to choose Tagalog, a language with long literary and anticolonial traditions, failed (Almario, 2014, pp. 25–29). With the signing of the Philippine Independence Act in 1934, the Constitution adopted the following year called on Congress to "take steps toward the development of a common national language based on one of the existing native languages". In the meantime, English and Spanish would continue as official languages (Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines, 1935).

In 1936, the legislature established the National Language Institute, whose recommendation fell back on Tagalog (Act to Establish a National Language Institute, 1936, p. 88). The president of the transitional government, Manuel Quezon, cautiously signed an executive order declaring that Tagalog would be the basis for adopting a "national language" while instruction in the public schools would remain primarily in English (Proclaiming the National Language of the Philippines, 1937). In a speech delivered on the day of the signing, Quezon underscored the singular importance of each language. It was essential, he said, for the Philippines to have "one language" because "the national thought takes its roots in a common language …. We need its power more completely to weld us into one strong nation…. English, the great language of democracy, will bind us forever to the people of the United States and place within our reach the wealth of knowledge treasured in this language" (Speech of President Quezon on Filipino National Language, 1937). The "ideal citizen" would gain a sense of national allegiance from one language and democratic values from the other. There seemed to be no official role left for mother tongues except for Tagalog, though it would take years for the people to embrace it widely. The Commonwealth Act No. 570, adopted in 1940, declared Tagalog as one of the official languages together with English beginning July 4, 1946 (Act Making the Filipino National Language, 1940). That same year, an executive order required that Tagalog be taught as a subject in the schools, yet English still remained the language of instruction (Authorizing the Printing of the Dictionary and Grammar, 1940).

Save for a brief World War II interlude under Japanese occupation, the long American military presence and early use of American textbooks and curricula imprinted American English and American values on Philippine society. When the Americans liberated the Philippines from the Japanese, the schools once again taught through English while Tagalog was a required subject in primary and secondary schools. The government maintained that course when the country gained independence in 1946. Education became a prototype of the American system. Though the fact that children were learning in a language that they rarely heard until they entered school generated debate among Filipinos, the debate had marginal impact on policy given the benefits of English instruction particularly from the American perspective. That said, during the 1940s and 1950s, innovatively minded school superintendents experimented with using local languages for instruction. The Aguilar study in Iloilo from 1948 to 1954, as well as others, found that children learned more effectively when taught in the vernacular language (Sibayan, 1967, pp. 126–89). UNESCO's 1953 landmark monograph affirming the importance of using the child's mother tongue from the beginning of schooling gave added weight to those findings (UNESCO, 1953).

In 1957, the Revised Philippine Education Program allowed for instruction in the vernacular in the first two grades in all public and private primary schools, with

English taught as a subject. From grade 3 through college, instruction was in English with the vernacular used as an auxiliary language in grades 3 and 4, and Pilipino (a standardized version of the spoken Tagalog language of Manila) in grades 5 and 6 (Bureau of Public Schools, 1957). English no longer was the sole language for teaching and learning. In 1959, a Department of Education memorandum officially renamed Tagalog as Pilipino to de-ethnicise it and give it a more national image.

Through the post-war years, these gradual moves towards vernacular languages challenged the primacy of English and reflected a cultural re-awakening and "fight for memory" that led to the Constitution of 1973. Article XV called on the National Assembly to "take steps towards the development and formal adoption of a common national language to be known as Filipino", a final step on the evolutionary road from Tagalog. In the meantime, English and Pilipino would be the official languages, "until otherwise provided by law" (Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines, 1973, § 3.2–3.3). That year, President Ferdinand Marcos issued a decree recognizing Spanish as one of the official languages since many government documents, originally in Spanish, had not been translated into English or Pilipino (Recognizing the Spanish Language, 1973). The country technically was left with no national language until the Constitution of 1987 was adopted.

2 Wavering Policies

Nationalist resistance to the dominance of English, along with anti-American sentiments, ran high in the late 1960s and early 1970s when activist scholars, like Renato Constantino, voiced opposition to teaching through English (Constantino, 1975, pp. 316–18). The 1973 Constitution was both progressive in opening the way to bilingual education and "pragmatic" in capturing the rise of global English (Tupas, 2009, p. 26). It declared Pilipino and English the official languages. Under the 1974 Bilingual Education Policy (BEP), English language arts, science and mathematics would be taught in English and all other subjects in Pilipino. English would be the language of international communication, science and technology, while Pilipino would be the language of social and cultural life. In the end, students would become proficient in both languages. For the first time since American occupation, English would not dominate education (Implementing Guidelines, 1974).

The policy was a compromise between the forces of internationalism and nationalism – English as a bridge to the outside world and Pilipino to secure a national identity. Yet it ignored the findings of earlier studies, including the Iloilo experiment, which supported instruction in local languages. Local languages would only be used when necessary to help students understand concepts taught in either English or Pilipino. The policy proved ineffective. Ten years later, it still had not been implemented in a significant number of schools. Even where employed, students' proficiency in English had declined. The lack of trained teachers, materials and financial support were all contributing factors (Sibayan & Gonzalez, 1988, p. 144).

Resistance to English was more firmly ignored during the government of Ferdinand Marcos, who ruled the country between 1965 and 1986, much of the time as a dictator and under a cloud of corruption. Marcos placed high priority on English to meet the country's labour needs. A series of presidential decrees restructured the education system with an emphasis on vocational and technical training that went hand in hand with English and export-oriented labour funded with foreign capital. The idea was to develop a skill-oriented hierarchy of workers with English proficiency. For most students, it meant preparation for low-paying jobs that demanded merely a basic level of English. In the 1970s, the country sent the first group of government-sponsored contract workers to the Middle East where rising oil prices were opening opportunities for young men left unemployed in the stagnant Philippine economy. The course of these developments signalled, at least for the time, that the search for a national symbol in a common language was being eclipsed by the country's entry into the global economy (Lorente, 2012b, p. 192).

That signal blurred somewhat in the sweep of nationalist sentiment following the People Power Revolution of 1986 and the end of martial law under Marcos. The 1987 Constitution declared that for "purposes of communication and instruction", the official languages would be "Filipino, and until otherwise provided by law, English". The regional languages would be "auxiliary official languages in the regions", and would serve as "auxiliary media of instruction" (Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines, 1987, art. XIV, §VII). Filipino would also be the national language. The government had to "take steps to initiate and sustain the use of Filipino as a medium of official communication and as a language of instruction in the educational system" (Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines, 1987, art. XIV, § VI). Prior to that point, no language had definitively carried constitutional status.

Filipino is essentially the standardized Tagalog of Manila (i.e., Pilipino) but open to influences from other local languages as well as nativized words from the English and Spanish languages. It is a language defined by political compromise and adopted for constitutional purposes while spoken as a first language by only a third of the population. Distinguishing between Filipino and Tagalog supported the argument that Filipino deserved to be the national language and medium of instruction in the schools (Tupas, personal communication, 2018). Filipino would presumably engender national identity and unity. Whether parents, students and school personnel might see it that way remains uncertain even today. The implication was that English was needed to fulfil purposes that Filipino may not have been able to cover (Young & Igcalinos, 2019, p. 168). Following the Constitution, the revised Bilingual Education Policy adopted in 1987 replaced Pilipino with Filipino (Implementing Guidelines, 1987).

The effect on student achievement proved disappointing. A 1991 report prepared by a Congressional Commission on Education, popularly known as EDCOM, found some of the same problems reported by the Monroe Commission back in 1925. Low achievement, high dropout rates and large gaps based on family income were still rampant. The Commission recommended using the mother language for learning from grades 1 to 3, with a gradual shift to instruction in Filipino in basic education, while limiting English as a subsidiary medium of instruction in later years. Though vigorously debated, the recommendations never got off the ground (Villenes, 1991). That same year, Congress created the Commission on the Filipino Language (Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino) to advance Filipino as the "national language of the Philippines on the basis of the existing Philippine and other languages" (Act Creating the Commission on the Filipino Language, 1991). The success of the Commission in achieving its purposes is still hotly contested, while promoting the national language remains highly controversial. Various administrations have tried to put the mandate on Filipino into action within government offices and agencies, but with mixed results.

With the election of economist Gloria Macapagal Arroyo to the presidency in 2001, the role of English in the schools shifted again. At that time, the call-centre industry and other forms of business process outsourcing were taking off. Like Marcos, Arroyo set her sights on riding the wave of the overseas labour market. In her first State of the Union address, she underscored that English was important to job growth and particularly to the information and communications technology sector. "Our English literacy, our aptitude, our skills," she said, "give us a competitive edge in ICT" ("State of the Nation Address 2001", 2015). In 2003, Arroyo issued an executive order aimed at preparing students for jobs in the "new, technology-driven sectors of the economy". It required that English be taught as a second language beginning in grade 1; that it be used as the medium of instruction for mathematics and science from at least grade 3; and that all public and private secondary schools teach primarily in English (Establishing the Policy, 2003). The Department of Education followed up with Order No. 36, which laid out rules and regulations for implementing Arroyo's policy directive (Republic of the Philippines, Department of Education, 2006).

In 2007, a group of professors and language experts, Wika ng Kultura at Agham Incorporated (Language of Culture and Science Incorporated), challenged the executive order and the regulations in the Philippine Supreme Court. They claimed that the title "Strengthen the Use of the English Language as a Medium of Instruction in the Educational System" was deceptive. While it "purport[ed] to strengthen the use of English as a second language", the petition stated, the executive order "actually strengthen[ed] English as the primary language of instruction" in secondary schools. It subverted the status of Filipino in non-Tagalog areas, violated the Constitution's mandate that regional languages "shall serve as auxiliary media of instruction" and defied the government's obligation under the Constitution to "initiate and sustain the use of the Filipino language" in education (Wiki ng Kultura at Agham, Inc. et al., 2007). English in the schools, the petitioners argued, would work to the disadvantage of poor students who did not study in private schools where English was more regularly spoken and the quality of education was higher. It would make them "functional illiterates" and "alienate children from their own heritage" (Torres, 2007; Santos, 2008). Though the merits of the case were compelling, the Court dismissed the petition three times on procedural grounds, leaving the constitutional question unanswered. The Court effectively left open the door to legislative action.

In 2008, the English-only question emerged once again in the Philippine legislature. With a title strikingly similar to the Arroyo 2003 executive order, "An Act to Strengthen and Enhance the Use of English as Medium of Instruction in Philippine Schools", the bill proposed teaching through English and either Filipino or the regional/native language from preschool to grade 3, teaching English and Filipino as separate subjects at all levels and shifting completely to English instruction in grade 4 through secondary school (Act to Strengthen and Enhance the Use, 2013). Notwithstanding 205 co-authors, the bill elicited sharp criticism from educators and language experts. It ran counter to the weight of the evidence, they argued, that children learn more efficiently and effectively when first taught in their mother tongue. Lack of English proficiency among students, they maintained, was not the result of Filipino being the language of instruction in the early grades. The problem was that some students were being taught in a language they "could hardly speak or understand". Similar bills were introduced in 2010 and 2013. Each time supporters noted, to no avail, that English had suffered a setback as a result of defects in the 1974 Bilingual Education Policy.

Opponents of English instruction had history, an impressive list of supporters and research findings on their side. Associating the proposal with colonial power gave their claims wider political appeal. Going back to the 1925 Monroe Report, it was evident even then that learning through English had damaging effects on student achievement (Monroe, 1925, pp. 25–27). With the Commission at the time glossing over that fact, American education officials continued the English-only policy in public schools until 1940–1941 when, under Japanese rule, Tagalog was introduced into the national curriculum. With this new bill promoting English now on the legislative floor for discussion, it seemed as though the country had yet again become "trapped in the past sins of its leaders" (Martin, 2008).

Prominent stakeholders joined the chorus opposing English instruction. Included among them were the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino (KWF) (Commission on the Filipino Language), the Linguistic Society of the Philippines, the Nakem Conference (an advocacy group of educators, writers and linguists), the Philippine Business for Education (a non-profit founded by the country's leading CEOs) and the National Economic Development Authority. The Linguistic Society, whose members came from the English departments of private and public schools and universities, was especially noteworthy. The mother tongue advocacy group, 170+ Talaytayan MLE, issued *A Manifesto for Mother Tongue Learning*, invoking Article 29-c of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which guarantees respect for the child's own cultural identity and language (UNCRC, 1989, art. 29-c). Noting the "basic truth" that "language embodies a person's cultural identity and heritage", the group called on interested parties, including the Department of Education, the legislature, educators, local school boards and all concerned citizens to "collectively reflect and act now" ("Education for All", 2008).

Giving added support were findings from upwards of 11 major international research projects over the latter half of the twentieth century attesting to the advantages of mother tongue instruction in the early grades and through primary school

(Ramirez et al., 1991; Dutcher & Tucker, 1997; Thomas & Collier, 1997; Alidou et al., 2006). Closer to home, the 1948–1954 Iloilo "Experiment in Education Through the Vernacular" had shown the benefits from learning in the first language, as had a 5-year study by the Summer Institute of Linguistics in the Lubuagan District Public Schools north of Manila, where students performed significantly better on mathematics, science, English and Filipino achievement tests (Dekker et al., 2008).

3 The Multilingual Pivot

Reality revealed itself in 2009 when the Department of Education recognized the multilingual character of the country. The explicit justification for mother tongue instruction focused on the educational benefits, while sidelining the more contentious identity or cultural argument (Tupas & Martin, 2017, p. 253). The order mandated that regional directors and superintendents include in their school improvement plans the "gradual integration" of "Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE)" in "all subject areas and at all grade levels beginning in preschool and adding a grade each year" (Institutionalizing Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education [MLE], 2009). In 2011, the government initiated a pilot project in 921 schools in 17 regions using 12 official mother languages. The project led to the development of a basic orthography in all 12 languages, the training of over 2000 grade 1 teachers, and the creation of teacher guides and instructional materials (Young & Igcalinos, 2019, p. 176).

In 2013, the legislature reshuffled the language mix more definitively. The Enhanced Basic Education Act required primary schools to use a regional or native language for teaching and assessment in kindergarten and grades 1 through 3. Filipino and English would be introduced gradually as languages of instruction in grades 4 through 6 until they both became the primary languages in secondary school. The Act spoke of delivering "basic education" in "languages understood by the learners as language plays a strategic role in shaping [their] formative years" (Enhanced Basic Education Act, 2013). Department of Education regulations spoke of "start[ing] from where the learners are and from what they already know, proceeding from the known to the unknown". The regulations broadly defined "mother tongue or first language" as "the language or languages first learned by a child, which he/she identifies with, is identified as a native language user of by others, which he/she knows best, or uses most", including Filipino sign language (Implementing Rules and Regulations, 2013, Rule II, § 10.2(f)). The Department explained that the programme would "help students understand their lessons better", infuse "a sense of nationalism … lacking among the youth", and reduce the dropout rate (Sy-Kho, 2012).

The MTB-MLE policy was significant on several counts. By integrating local languages into language policy, it shifted the public discourse from bilingualism to multilingualism. It further injected empirical findings on the benefits of mother tongue instruction into what had been, for years, an ideologically driven debate caught in the English versus Filipino binary with all its cultural and political baggage. By including the needs of local communities and the value of local knowledge, it promised to expand the focus of Philippine education beyond simply meeting the demands of an external labour market through English (Lorente, 2012a, pp. 187–204). Yet it still conveyed the message that the country's diverse languages were of a lesser order and would only be used temporarily as "scaffolding" to support the more permanent transition to Filipino and English.

Supporters hailed the legislation as a victory for mother tongue education. In the end, however, it was not as great a victory as they had hoped. Under government guidelines, only 19 of the more than 170 local languages came to be taught and then only from kindergarten through the first 3 years of schooling. Managing three languages in the classroom was difficult and required teacher training that the government had not provided. It also demanded appropriate learning materials and teachers proficient in local languages. Most textbooks were printed in English and only rarely in Filipino. Many languages lacked a standard orthography (Stone, 2013, pp. 173–174). To this day, English and Filipino are still often the only languages used, while regional languages have lagged behind. In some cases, the regional language is used when it is not the language that children speak at home. The overall achievement outcomes have been discouraging. In 2018, the Philippines scored the lowest (on a par with the Dominican Republic) in reading comprehension and the second lowest in mathematics among 79 participating countries and economies in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), a triennial assessment of 15-year-old students. Over 80% of students in the country did not reach a minimum level of proficiency in reading or in mathematics (Programme for International Student Assessment, 2018). Failing to develop basic skills on such a large scale clearly signals a problem in educational quality with serious consequences for sustainable development. Low quality basic education leaves children unprepared for higher education or for meaningful employment.

The ongoing discussion promoting the value of English in the labour market has further undermined the MTB-MLE policy's very purposes. English dominates notwithstanding the annual nationwide celebration of "Lingo ng Wika" (Language Week) in the schools and despite the constitutional mandate that the government "take steps to initiate and sustain the use of Filipino as [the] language of instruction". Students are still punished for speaking their home language or Filipino in the "English zones" of their schools. Teachers are quick to remind students that English is the language of the "real world". That assertion depends on how one defines "real" in any given context. For many Filipinos, English is not the language of local personal and business interactions or civic life, which goes to the heart of sustainable development and democratic participation. Neither is Filipino. Meanwhile, the government further reinforces the gap between policy on the one hand and practice and politics on the other by outwardly promoting Filipino as a symbol of national identity and unity.

4 The War on Filipino

As history has shown, the language question in the Philippines never reaches a stable conclusion. Opposing forces are always waiting in the background to upend any changes in the current status quo while supporters remain primed to fight back. And so it has been with the 2013 Enhanced Basic Education Act. In addition to mother tongue instruction, the Act reaffirmed mandatory kindergarten adopted in the Kindergarten Education Act of 2012, and extended the 10-year basic education cycle to kindergarten through grade 12. By adding grades 11 and 12 to the secondary school programme, the Act allowed the government to trim the core college curriculum and shift certain basic courses down to the high school level (Enhanced Basic Education Act, 2013). Given the legislative green light, the Commission on Higher Education issued a Memorandum Order removing Filipino language and Filipino literature (the latter known as "Panitikan") as required courses (Commission on Higher Education, 2013). The changes were scheduled to take effect in the 2018–2019 academic year.

In 2015, coalitions of schools, teachers, professors and legislators filed separate lawsuits in the Philippine Supreme Court challenging on constitutional grounds various provisions of the Kindergarten Education Act and the Enhanced Basic Education Act, as well as their implementing rules, guidelines and orders. Among the claims, the petitioners invoked the right of parents to raise and prepare their children and the right of teachers to choose a profession and enjoy academic freedom, reminiscent of landmark decisions by the United States Supreme Court upholding similar constitutional rights (Meyer v. Nebraska, 1923; Pierce v. Society of Sisters, 1925).

One coalition played a particularly critical role in addressing the struggle to preserve the Filipino language against the onslaught of English. In response to the Commission on Higher Education's Memorandum Order, a group of educators from more than 40 colleges and universities, along with students, writers and cultural activists, formed the Tanggol Wika ("Alliance of Defenders of Filipino") to take legal action against what it called "attacks against the national language". Two provisions in the Filipino Constitution were especially salient. The first, Article XIV, Section 6, declares Filipino as the "national language" and mandates that the government "take steps to initiate and sustain the use of Filipino … as language of instruction". The second, Section 7, provides that, "For purposes of communication and instruction, the official languages of the Philippines are Filipino and, until otherwise provided by law, English." The group argued that the Order would reduce Filipino to basic language skills taught in secondary school while college programmes that foster the language and its literature would fall by the wayside. They warned that upwards of 10,000 full-time and 20,000 part-time teachers would lose their jobs in higher education and the academic freedom those positions granted. Most emphatically, they brought to the surface enduring concerns related to living in the shadow of colonialism. Lamenting the "inferiority complex" the education system had fostered, Bienvenido Lumbera, the renowned poet and National Artist of the Philippines, explained, "We need to understand that the primary reason why we have this problem is because of our colonial history." He went on to say, "[O]ur life as a country depends on having one language which will be used to shape the minds of people, young and old" (Geronimo, 2014).

In April 2015, the Supreme Court issued a temporary restraining order enjoining implementation of the Memorandum Order until the Court decided the claims on the merits, to the extent that it excluded from the college curriculum Filipino and Panitikan as core courses. In March 2016, the Court refused to issue a similar temporary restraining order on the implementation of the K to 12 Law, the Kindergarten Education Act and any relevant regulations or other administrative interpretations. In 2018, the full Court membership, sitting *en banc*, upheld the validity of the K to 12 Law, the Kindergarten Education Act and the Minister's Order in a 94-page unanimous opinion citing United States Supreme Court decisions upholding the authority of the state to adopt "reasonable" regulations (Council of Teachers and Staff of Colleges and Universities, 2018; Wisconsin v. Yoder, 1972; Meyer v. Nebraska, 1923; Pierce v. Society of Sisters, 1925). The Tanggol Wika petitioners, calling the ruling on Filipino a "blow to nationhood and Filipino identity", asked the Court to reconsider its decision. Critics of the policy, prominent writers among them, branded the justices as "anti-Filipino" and questioned their sense of national commitment. Supporters, on the other hand, pragmatically pointed to Filipino as the main cause of "economic stagnation". English, they argued, is the language of "business and technology". It is the engine driving the business processing industry since the late 1990s (Binay, 2018). *The Manila Times*, the country's longest-running daily newspaper, called the opposition "largely emotional and at times irrational". The editors thought it "absurd for anyone, more so those in academia, to make the Supreme Court the final arbiter of university education" (Supreme Court Ruling, 2018).

In a five-page resolution dated the following March 2019, but released in May, the Court unanimously and "with finality" denied a rehearing despite a mountain of documents submitted by the petitioners. In closing, the Court made clear that it would entertain "no further pleadings or motions" in the case (Council of Teachers and Staff of Colleges and Universities, 2019). The brevity and finality of the ruling reignited passionate emotions among the key stakeholders, with graphic images of a hard battle to be fought and won. In a posting on Facebook referencing the country's "long colonial past and neocolonial present", the petitioners accused the Commission and the Court of "kill[ing]" the nation's "soul" and the people's "capacity to think freely". Framing the issue as a "choice between our collective survival as a nation, and our collective death as a free country", they called upon the Commission, along with college and university administrators, to refrain from implementing the ruling pending a second motion for reconsideration (Tanggol Wika, 2019a). The Commission, taking the Court at its final word, issued a public statement advising the country's nearly 2000 higher education institutions to fully implement the plan while encouraging them to adopt "innovative reforms" including language proficiency in Filipino and other Philippine languages. The Commission agreed to provide professional educational assistance to Filipino language and

Panitikan literature teachers who might lose their jobs as a result of the changes ("CHED Clarifies GE Curriculum Policy", 2019).

Other groups peppered postings on Facebook and other social media with anticolonial references to gather public support. For the League of Filipino Students, fighting for the Filipino language was a way to assert the nation's identity "free from any form of colonial intrusion". The policy, the group charged, was "mold[ing] the schools to create a cheap and oppressive workforce that will serve foreign capitalists" (League of Filipino Students, 2019). The University of the Philippines Department of Filipino and Panitikan posted a petition on Change.org hailing literary languages as "weapons for the promotion of truth and righteousness, especially in times of falsehood, injustice, and social crisis". Within a week the petition had logged close to 29,000 signatures. By July 2021, the number had reached upwards of 37,000 and still counting (University of the Philippines Department of Filipino and Panitikan, 2021). The Commission on the Filipino Language warned that though the Order expressly allowed core courses to be taught in English or Filipino, because of the country's "colonial history" many administrators preferred English to Filipino. A number of colleges, it noted, had already closed their Filipino departments (Commission on the Filipino Language, 2019).

The Chairman of the Commission on Higher Education tried to dial down the rhetoric and allay fears that excluding Filipino and Panitikan from the core curriculum would erode a sense of nationalism among the younger generation. "Nationalism," he told the press, "is not created only by language" ("Nothing Stops Universities", 2019; Salomone, 2019). Left with no legal recourse, the Tanggol Wika petitioners filed a 20-page "letter of protest" with the Court. Calling the ruling "patently unjust" and "imminent cultural genocide", they asked the Court to "read and reflect" on the letter's contents as it raised "matters of public interest" (Tanggol Wika, 2019b). The letter proved of no consequence. As the Court had stated, its decision was final.

The concerns raised in the litigation said much about the power of language in preserving or threatening national identity, about the growing tension among global, national and regional interests, and about the turbulent state of Philippine politics. The changes, in fact, oddly defied the country's decided turn towards an extreme nationalism, mistakenly confused with patriotism, under a president who preferred to speak in neither Filipino nor English but in his own Philippine vernacular.

5 The Economics of English

Viewed from the outside, the debate over language in the Philippines, and its connection to reducing poverty and inequalities and promoting quality education, has many more facets than it readily reveals. It is integrally tied, first, to competing political and economic pressures, from widespread interest in tapping into new forms of capital to the effects of rapid developments in technology, and, second, to rising nationalism (Tupas, 2017, pp. 84–96). Amidst all the wrangling over English and vernacular languages in the schools, there are signs that the goal set out in the 1987 Constitution to make Filipino the "people's language" is showing progress. Filipino is increasingly used in films and TV and on radio. Almost all news and primetime programmes are in Filipino. There has been a proliferation of written materials, particularly comic and romance novels, in Filipino, though much more still needs to be done to bring it to the level of a modern national language. While these developments have helped bridge the communication gap among language communities, they have also provoked cries of "Imperial Manila" from hard core "regionalists" who believe that the government has given inadequate attention to supporting other native languages (Almario, 2014, pp. 60–61).

Neither the popular rise of Filipino nor deepening ties to local languages, however, negate the fact that English, though no longer essential to nationhood and democracy, is indeed essential to the Philippine economy. Filipinos across the social spectrum understand that reality. Despite nagging memories of the American occupation when English was used as a tool of cultural conditioning, English is still a status symbol and a source of economic benefits. It remains the language of the courts, business and all important social interactions and communications, as well as research and academic discourse.

Policy makers, business interests and the general public see English as the way to advance socio-economically, to continue the flow of remittances from English-speaking Filipino workers abroad, to support the call-centre industry and other business-outsourcing sectors, to grow tourism to the islands and to maintain the prestige afforded countries with high English literacy. For many Filipinos, English is the key to a successful immigrant journey to the anglophone world. It grants access to higher education not only in the United States, Great Britain, Canada and Australia but also in Europe, Asia and South America, where universities increasingly offer courses and entire programmes in English. It also opens the doors of Philippine universities to foreign students looking to improve their English.

As the country has imported jobs, it also has become the world's prime exporter of government-sponsored temporary contract workers, a programme designed to address unemployment and stabilize the economy. What began as a temporary solution during the Marcos dictatorship has since become a "core economic strategy" of every government. With over 12 million people or 12% of the population living abroad, including about 2.2 million overseas workers, the Philippines has generated one of the largest diasporas worldwide (Gonzales, 2020; Philippine Statistics Authority, 2020). Remittances from that diaspora, reaching a high of $35.2 billion in 2019, have lessened poverty and increased investment in the country (World Bank Group, 2020, p. 16). The long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on those gains remains to be seen.

This economic "dance," built largely on the market value of English, has undeniably boosted the economy and reduced poverty. Yet, on the darker side, it has inadvertently hijacked the country's "multilingual education" project and the well-documented benefits of sustained mother tongue instruction. It has motivated parents to put their children on the path to English from the first day of schooling, particularly in private schools. It has further created a culture of subjugation and a "class divide" of "unequal Englishes" seemingly ignored in the race towards economic stability and growth. Over past decades, educational policies promoting "worker-oriented" programmes in primary and secondary schools have reinforced that outcome. Good schools where English is taught well are costly and inaccessible to most students. A voucher programme offering partially needs-based financial aid to high school students to attend a private school reaches only a small percentage of the student population. Young people who have a high command of English are typically graduates of elite private schools or well-resourced public schools and they come from the higher socioeconomic classes (Duchêne & Heller, 2012, pp. 192–193). They go on to the universities and have opportunities at home or overseas as doctors and nurses or in the knowledge economy outsourced from abroad. Yet even here, what is considered "educated" or globally marketable Philippine English lies on the margins of standard American or British English, creating a sense of inferiority among some of those who might appear to be winners in the language lottery. Meanwhile, attuned to English in the media and in the larger society, many Filipinos reach adulthood with low proficiency in the national language, Filipino.

The large numbers of students with only basic English skills come from poorer communities and attend technical schools at best. On completing their education, some remain at home as unskilled or semi-skilled production workers. Others enter the overseas labour market as lower-level service providers like hotel maids, caregivers, health aides and porters, earning a bare-bones income (Tupas, 2008a, p. 98 . That is not to deny that their meagre remittances help bolster the country's economy. These disparities in opportunities and outcomes, however, point to an education system that has failed to distribute resources equitably across the economic spectrum and to take account of student needs across language groups.

6 Pushing Forward

In the end, while English greases the wheels of the Philippine economy, it also widens the gap between the haves and the have-nots. The primacy of English in the national consciousness – tied to global markets – effectively undercuts multilingual policies in the schools. It implicitly breeds negative attitudes towards vernacular languages and the children who speak them, just as it did among the American occupiers a century ago. The MTB-MLE policy attempts to counter that negativity by building on what students already know. Yet as the product of political compromise, it does not measure up to the 6 years of mother tongue instruction that research findings consistently support. Nor does it cover the full range of vernacular languages that children speak, nor guarantee the high-quality English instruction and well-trained teachers commonly provided in private schools. As the data shows, it falls short of providing the large and linguistically diverse population of less privileged children with the basic tools to participate as adults in the local, national and global economies, and particularly in local decision making, civic life and democratic government – all key factors in sustainable development.

The problem is how to expand, strengthen and move "mother-tongue-based multilingual education" forward despite the nationalistic pressures of Filipino while, at the same time, developing the linguistic capital that English offers to the valued labour flow in the global economy. That is the challenge now facing the Philippines as it struggles to meet the Sustainable Development Goals to reduce poverty, promote educational quality and reduce inequalities while trying to rebound from the economic strains of a world pandemic.

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Primary and Secondary Language Use in Peacekeeping and Stabilization Operations: A Preliminary to Sustainability

Kurt E. Müller

Abstract This chapter explores some unexpected (or at least unarticulated) benefits of bilingualism and multilingualism in conducting military operations. While its content is applicable across a range of circumstances, it highlights peacekeeping and stabilization operations as a necessary precondition for sustainability, and draws heavily on personal experience and observations to do so. From the environments the author describes, he will hypothesize a distinction between primary and secondary language uses. Primary uses include intelligence, where knowledge of local languages is essential, and operations, where lack of such knowledge can constitute a major impediment and where knowledge of the languages of co-operating forces is both practically and psychologically beneficial. But the advantages of language facility extend beyond military actors and their immediate civilian engagement. Above all, speaking the language or languages of the local inhabitants engenders trust, enhances the speaker's cultural understanding and helps create the circumstances necessary for post-conflict co-operation around sustainable development.

Keywords Confidence building · Institutional stabilization · Local languages · Military operations · Multilingualism · Peacekeeping

In the military, primary use of languages falls predominantly into two categories: intelligence and operations. The acquisition of information on adversary or enemy capabilities, plans, strategic intent and ongoing operations is the business of the

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intelligence community. Among military advocates of acquiring or building foreign-language capacity, this segment of the national-security apparatus has been both the most articulate and the broadest ranging. The intelligence community extends across a number of agencies, and even those whose orientation is primarily domestic have elements that assess threats emanating from abroad. On occasion in the United States, even municipal or state law enforcement authorities may create joint task forces with federal agencies. When the intelligence community suffers a catastrophic failure, such as with the 9/11 attacks, we typically read of a sudden need for personnel with facility in one or another language.

When I started looking at military requirements for language capacity, I was surprised to discover the second category: operations. If I had been a product of a society that was more aware of various language groups in its midst than the United States has been since the early twentieth century, it would have been less surprising. A visitor to the battlefield cemeteries at Antietam and Gettysburg is struck by the number of memorials inscribed in German, reflecting the language of command in various Union Army units during the American Civil War. But the national narrative that held sway in the United States through most of the last century concentrated on an assimilationist message rather than one celebrating linguistic diversity.

Although supporters of multilingualism in the anglophone world are pointedly aware of the consequences of attitudes suppressing minority languages, we are not alone in our experience of integrating linguistic minorities in armed forces. The military that is perhaps most notable for attempts to integrate linguistic minorities was the Austro-Hungarian. The Habsburg Empire required its officers to learn the languages of their subordinates, but its record on integrating linguistic minorities remains contentious and inconclusive. As some American historians of this experience saw it (Engle, 2011; Schindler, 2002), the Austro-Hungarian High Command's derision of its Slavic units fighting in Serbia "gradually estranged" a substantial segment of its fighting force, weakening its military effectiveness.[1]

[1] See Engle (2011) and Schindler (2002), who note that the Austrian High Command deflected blame for this disaster by labelling a Czech division disloyal. The history of distrusting ethnic minorities in a military force serving a multi-ethnic state is a theme worth more study. As a foreshadowing of the Austro-Hungarian blame game, we can look to Christopher Tozzi (2012), who points out that the French Revolutionary period had labelled some non-francophone units disloyal, disbanded "foreign" regiments, and ceased recruiting among linguistic minorities. See his "One army, many languages: Foreign troops and linguistic diversity in the eighteenth-century French military," *Languages and the military: Alliances, occupation, and peace building*, ed. Hilary Footitt and Michael Kelly (Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012: 12–24). In the United States during World War II, Nisei (Japanese-American) soldiers were always overseen by Caucasian officers out of fear that they might be disloyal. See Intelligence Division, War Department General Staff, "Training history of the military intelligence service language school," typescript 2-2B/AA (Washington, DC: Chief of Military History, 1949). See also James C. McNaughton, *Nisei linguists: Japanese Americans in the Military Intelligence Service during World War II* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2006: 130). For a review of the state of multilingual leadership in the armed forces of Belgium, Canada, Ireland and Switzerland, see Jeffrey de Fourestier, "Official languages in the armed forces of multilingual countries," *European Journal of Language Policy* 2.1 (2010): 91–110.

At the second in the series of conferences the Center for Research and Documentation on World Language Problems sponsored (or co-sponsored) in the 1980s and 1990s, I detailed the difficulties and losses the United Nations Command experienced during the Korean War that were attributable to the challenges of integrating into a coalition the military forces of a diverse set of nations, only some of which were members of a common alliance (Müller, 1983).[2] Some 18 nations participated in that UN Command.

In Cold War Europe, NATO and Warsaw Pact forces had lead-nation languages of command that reflected the two superpowers: English in the West, Russian in the East. With the numerical advantage the Warsaw Pact enjoyed, NATO faced a challenge it defined as needing to emphasize interoperability. One commander of US Army forces in Europe (known in US military jargon as a Service Component Commander) thought enough of the issue to publish a paper on "Language Interoperability" to address Alliance communications (Blanchard, 1978).

It would take until the 1991 Gulf War to next evaluate cross-cultural communication in wartime. In its final report to Congress on that war, the US Defence Department (DoD) noted that the coalition opted against designating a Supreme Commander and instead created parallel commands, with senior commanders from France, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom and the United States. DoD reported that a Coalition Coordination, Communication and Integration Center (C^3IC) ensured the successful coordination of operations, relying heavily on a combination of Arab military personnel with extensive US experience and US military personnel with qualifications in Arabic. The report noted as well the considerable shortage of qualified Arabic linguists in US forces in general and specifically among US special operators. Twenty-three nations contributed forces to eject Iraq from Kuwait, and the Army component of US Central Command sent an average of 35 staff to each of two Saudi-led Joint Force Commands as staff members (DoD, 1992, pp. 58, 325, J-27).[3]

1 Mapping Conflicts in Blue, Red and Green

Operations Orders follow a standard pattern in which the first paragraph discusses enemy and friendly forces. In accompanying maps, friendly forces are depicted in blue, enemy forces in red. In developing a standard plan, threat-based analyses drive the intelligence staff to identify the opponent's forces and capabilities as well as his likely objectives and approaches. The American approach to warfare has a history of ignoring the civilian environment in its pursuit of defeating the enemy. But the

[2] See also my more-extensive treatment, *Language competence: Implications for national security* (New York: Praeger, 1986).

[3] For language issues, see esp. 58, 325, and J-27.

civil sector and non-state actors form a significant part of the operational environment. These factors can threaten the outcome of an otherwise successful victory over an opponent. Elsewhere, I have provided examples, such as the failure to prevent looting after US interventions in Panama and Haiti (Müller, 1999). To this list, we should add delay in addressing the repercussions of removing Serbian police in Kosovo and failing to secure the Iraqi National Museum from looters although providing security to the Iraqi Oil Ministry.[4]

As the 2003 conflict in Iraq became protracted, some leaders in the intelligence community concluded that their staffs had been so focused on the Iraqi military that they missed the developing insurgency. But it was not just post-conflict opposition to occupation that could be under-appreciated; it was the entire human environment in societies that might be subject to outside intervention. A former director of the Defence Intelligence Agency noted that America's intelligence community lacks a strategic understanding of sociocultural analysis. He identified the need to understand societies and their politics well before tensions turn violent; as he and his collaborators phrase it, "left of bang" (Flynn et al., 2012).

Threat analysis requires more than assessing an adversary's capabilities and likely objectives. The Conflict Assessment Framework – originally developed by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and then adapted by interagency planners for tactical civil-military environments – requires response planners to identify both societal vulnerabilities and windows of opportunity for achieving stability in fragile states. This framework addresses primarily peacekeeping and stability operations, including restoring stability to post-conflict environments. But the analysis does not fit the paradigm of red and blue capabilities. If these civil factors hit the radar, analysts are likely to designate them with the colour green. Thus, the term "green on blue attacks" describes the participation of Afghan military or police – or insurgents dressed in their uniforms – in attacking members of the International Security Assistance Force (the coalition). Students of military practice should question the categorization of the various actors that have an impact on the outcome of an intervention, but for the moment we can accept that the designation of green actors usefully indicates that friendly (blue) forces are unsure of the impact of some actors. Undertaking such an analysis requires cultural familiarity, the ability to understand written documents that support the analysis and the capacity to elicit information orally from inhabitants of an area as well as from those in host-nation leadership.

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[4] See, for example, Matthew Bogdanos, "The casualties of war: The truth about the Iraq museum," *American Journal of Archaeology* 109.3 (2005): 477–526.

2 Transitions and Ministerial Advisors

Considering that the key to reducing the presence of US and coalition military forces from Afghanistan and Iraq was the restoration of order under indigenous police and military, and one indicator of growing capacity was the conduct of counter-insurgency operations often carried out by these local forces, communicating with them would place the language used in the realm of "language of command", and their integration into the coalition fits the earlier description of "language interoperability". The transition strategy of building indigenous security forces is a local adaptation of a national-security tenet noticeable across a number of less stable areas of the world that goes by the term "building partner capacity". One means of increasing a government's ability to field an effective security force is to provide training and equipment. But another, equally important, consideration requires creating conditions to develop various societal components that support security, from ensuring the forces we equip receive a training programme that promotes service to their society (rather than enabling them to oppress the citizenry) to introducing ministries to the effective use of taxation to support a transparent system of accountable public administration. Two programmes developed for Afghanistan deserve mention for their contribution to our understanding of developments in that society.

The Pentagon established the Af-Pak Hands programme as an effort to introduce military personnel and Defence civilians to a deeper level of familiarity with the culture in the region and with language competence to enable direct communication with counterparts. Its advocates expected those who entered the programme to remain engaged with the region, deploying to it multiple times, and thereby reducing the churn in personnel widely regarded as undermining opportunities to develop expertise in the region. Repeated deployments to a single region, paired with continuing attention to it when not deployed, entails the career risk of opportunity cost, but it also offers managers a justification for extensive pre-deployment training, including language acquisition, that is typically absent from most military deployments. Of course, similar reasoning applies to civilian government agencies: the organisation anticipates that some personnel need to communicate in a local language and defines a language-designated position. But in the absence of such designation, support for language acquisition is sporadic.

The second programme of interest is the Ministry of Defence Advisors (MoDA) programme. The concept of sending advisors to coalition or allied military forces is nothing new and has been used successfully by various nations. The US experience yields a few best practices for emulation and continuing development. During the Vietnam era, the US Army sent a number of officers to advise South Vietnamese counterparts, and before doing so, it sent them through a Military Assistance Training Advisors (MATA) course. There was a language component to this course, and an early evaluation of the advisor effort found that those "who attempted to speak Vietnamese more often were . . . more likely to receive . . . social invitations" and that the longer an advisor held his position, the more likely he was to build rapport with allies (Fiks & McCrary, 1963, p.14). Learning a language useful to a specific campaign requires considerable focus on the job at hand. It also demonstrates commitment to a relationship with that society.

In a December 2014 column, Walter Pincus (2014) writes in the *Washington Post* of a declassified oral-history interview in which former Director of Central Intelligence Richard Helms noted that Westerners did not approach the Vietnamese with the humility of admitting they did not understand them well, and that when he attempted to introduce courses in Vietnamese language and culture, his subordinate managers would not permit their staff to attend. Although the institutional reluctance to permit personnel to spend time in pre-deployment training persists to the present, there are successful practices as well. A senior mentor to the MoDA training programme, who had been a product of the MATA Course when he was a junior officer in the military, characterized the MoDA preparation as showing ten times the depth of the earlier course.[5]

The MoDA programme primarily prepares DoD civilians for assignments advising ministries of defence and interior. The rationale for sending civilian employees is that it is largely the defence ministry (as distinct from military units) that can benefit from attention to the governmental structure that supports training and fielding a nation's armed forces. Advisors should therefore have institutional experience in running a security bureaucracy. The pre-deployment training for this programme emphasizes that advisors need to approach their tasks with humility, that the advisor should not attempt to bring the solutions to the challenges of building an effective and responsive security force, but should seek to understand a counterpart's institutional environment and offer relevant observations that host-nation counterparts can use productively. For senior personnel who have attained their positions through effective problem solving, the admonition of humility is countercultural.

3 Examples of Military Language Use

Observations from the culminating phase of this pre-deployment training provide evidence of effective language instruction and its impact on rapport building. Several years ago, the Department of State initiated a pre-deployment training programme primarily for civilians who would be working in Provincial Reconstruction Teams. The programme included considerable exposure to Afghan expatriates playing roles of people these government personnel would be likely to encounter in Afghanistan. Moreover, it incorporated experience working with interpreters. Civilians from DoD's Civilian Expeditionary Workforce, those from any of the participating agencies in the Civilian Response Corps, and personnel that various federal agencies hired on term contracts attended this course, which DoD then incorporated into its MoDA training. I observed several MoDA students going

[5] CEW interview of a former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense and Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, April 14, 2014.

through this exercise and noted the impact of language on students and role players. A caveat is in order: experience in pre-deployment training does not constitute evidence of effectiveness on the job in the deployment environment; such a determination would require a separate analysis. But to address that gap I shall also provide evidence both from a set of interviews and from personal experience on deployments.

One iteration of a scenario I observed addressed a question of the possible misappropriation of health-care supplies. The trainees were three DoD employees (all women), who introduced themselves to Afghan role players in a simulated conference. Each one introduced herself in Dari. Though they had differing levels of proficiency and confidence in using the language, they all provided biographical information on their families and a description of their work sufficient to portray a commitment to communicating directly before turning to an interpreter to facilitate the remaining consultations. Their previous language training provided them with proficiency that did not exceed NATO level 2 (B, on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages),[6] which is a level below the standard target for diplomats and military personnel at the Foreign Service Institute and the Defense Language Institute. The post-scenario review revealed a highly positive reaction on the part of the Afghan role players. The attempt to connect on Afghan terms was at least as important to the role players as was the actual communication.

This reaction is of course no surprise to language professionals. But it is also notable that some military leaders recognize its value as well. As long ago as 1960, Colonel William P. Jones related in an Army War College paper an experience with a Joint Brazil–US Military Commission in which two US officers were discussing business in Portuguese that elicited a reaction from a Brazilian colleague, who perceived this use of his language as an indication of the value they placed on Brazil (Jones, 1960).

Any effort to acquire information about a country in which one is operating or to communicate with its residents is welcome, of course, but if it is not necessary to use a local language to complete a transaction, I tentatively categorize such use as secondary. Experience in NATO environments offers instructive anecdotes, for which I should like to first provide a theoretical construct. In a volume promoting the quasi-governmental, volunteer agency called the Peace Corps, Patricia Garamendi (1996) relates an early Peace Corps deployment in which the first group of 50 volunteers arrived in the new nation of Ghana and sang, in Twi, its national anthem. She reports that the performance "delighted the waiting delegation of Ghanaian dignitaries, who had never heard so many Americans speaking their language" (pp. v–vi). She goes on to tell a story that Nelson Mandela learned Afrikaans while in prison and cites his reasoning: "If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his own language, that goes to his heart" (v–vi). This apocryphal quotation appears frequently among Mandela citations but is actually a conflation of two remarks. In his autobiography,

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[6] I am basing the assumption of proficiency level on the speech samples the MoDA trainees offered, not on the established interview protocol that would describe actual proficiency.

Mandela (1994) offers several observations on language, including the perception that "Without language, one cannot talk to people and understand them; one cannot share their hopes and aspirations, grasp their history, appreciate their poetry or savour their songs" (p. 74). In a conversation with his editor, Mandela (Hatang & Venter, 2011:144) remarked, "Because when you speak a language, English, well many people understand you, including Afrikaners, but when you speak Afrikaans, you know you go straight to their hearts."[7]

Anecdotal evidence supports this hypothesis. In one of many NATO exercise deployments I participated in between 1988 and 1993, American officers came to me to complain that they were unable to exercise a particular feature of host-nation support (the provision of goods and services to a foreign military facilitated through the host nation, in this case, a member of NATO) because a German officer would simply refer them to printed procedures rather than provide personal facilitation. Although his argument was valid – i.e., if the American staff followed the procedures, they would receive the services they wanted – it presented a hurdle my interlocutors sought to overcome by having the German officer facilitate the transactions. And from the perspective of wanting to build a relationship with the German Territorial Army, the opportunity to interact through an allied officer offered additional dividends. I went to discuss the situation with this officer (a lieutenant colonel – the same rank as I held at the time) and the discussion proceeded with the German speaking English and the American speaking German. The outcome of the conversation was that the German officer provided the interface to connect American logisticians with the services they wanted.

My second example comes not from an exercise but from the serious circumstance of peacekeeping. As Civil Affairs advisor to NATO's Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR), for the implementation of the Dayton Peace Accords, I had the challenge of seeking NATO military support to the civil annexes of the General Framework Agreement. Although I had the full support of the chief strategic planner, a Dutch lieutenant general, I had difficulty getting the chief of his subordinate planning cell to provide copies of the campaign plan he was developing. I wanted to ensure that the guidance from SACEUR to the Implementation Force included facilitating the work of various civil-sector actors in achieving the goals of the Framework Agreement. But how to intrude on an established work flow from a new office that had yet to establish its relevance was a matter for which I had no guidance. The solution was serendipitous but understandable in retrospect. As a language professional, I was eager to work with my NATO counterparts. Because my second (and heritage) language is German, I sought opportunities to meet my German colleagues. The multinational military community at Supreme Headquarters, Allied Powers, Europe (SHAPE) had a number of nation-specific features. To address potential personal and work conflicts among staff of different nationalities,

[7] I am grateful to Sahm Venter of the Nelson Mandela Foundation for correcting this widespread mis-citation: e-mail exchange with Karen Cooper, National Defense University Library, May 18–19, 2015.

for example, each member state had an office of the National Military Representative. Each nation's delegation also provided links to home cultures. One of these links was that military chaplains conducted religious services for their flock in the home language. I attended German Protestant services and met the German National Military Representative, who then invited me (the only non-German) to a "hail and farewell", a periodic social event at which a command bids farewell to members about to leave and welcomes newcomers. Within the next few days, I was no longer an outsider from an office unconnected to the one I sought to influence.

A similar use of host-nation language underlies the integration of language training in the MoDA course. Its developers nested the MoDA programme under a larger DoD initiative, the Civilian Expeditionary Workforce. In the 4 years 2009–2013, CEW deployed about 6000 DoD employees, both career civil servants and persons hired specifically for a term assignment, typically 1 year. A colleague and I conducted 58 interviews of individuals who had an association with this programme. Although the broader CEW programme did not integrate language as an essential component, a standard question we asked concerned the use of other languages while deployed. Those we interviewed had jobs that ranged from supporting only US personnel and not coming into contact with the local populace to some who worked extensively with allied and coalition personnel to those who had significant interaction with higher level host-nation personnel (most of our interviews concerned Afghanistan).

Those who had learned Dari used their skill for a number of purposes. Some used it to gain knowledge of the operational environment: simply walking around markets and engaging in *shuras*.[8] Discussing local issues with businessmen, farmers and political figures helped increase their knowledge of a local area for some who would not otherwise engage in such discussions because their job did not demand it of them.[9] The utility of host-nation language facility is not limited to those with substantial knowledge (e.g., the presumed NATO level 2/ CEFR level B that describes MoDA training). Survival skills also helped. One interviewee credited his "Tarzan Turkish", learned from his Turkish wife, as comprehensible to Afghans he met.[10]

3.1 Unrecognized Languages and Unintentional Slights

Similarly to military organisations that deploy personnel anywhere they are needed, often with limited exposure to the languages in use and cultures prevailing at their destination, relief organizations may deploy staff anywhere. The larger organisations will likely have regional offices with staff conversant in regional languages

[8] CEW interview, April 10, 2014.

[9] CEW interview, May 16, 2014.

[10] CEW interview, March 14, 2014.

and will almost certainly employ locals to deliver their services. Non-governmental organisations that address specific functions may promote their work without connections to specific geographic regions. But initial attempts at language sensitivity can go awry. Thus, they may err in language choice, in ways reminiscent of the US Korean-War-era use of military personnel trained in Japanese to interact with Koreans, on the basis that Japanese was widely understood in Korea. It was, of course, because Japan had occupied Korea for a half century, but that made its use undesirable, particularly at higher, political levels. At a 2015 conference to mark International Mother Language Day, a participant offered an unexpected observation illustrating this issue. In an audience comment responding to a presentation, he spoke of an NGO offering a seminar to facilitate peacebuilding at which the NGO attempted to reach its audience by providing language services in a regional language. Unfortunately the NGO recognized only the locally dominant language, not that of minority-language participants.[11]

4 Lingua Franca as Secondary Use

Even in situations in which the languages used in the operational environment reflect neither friendly nor adversarial actors, the impact of these languages on the end-state objectives of an intervener is significant, though often underappreciated. There are other contributions that language facility can make that seldom attract attention, probably because they do not cause catastrophic failure when they are absent. This situation is akin to seeking language advocacy among organisational leaders: if they are aware of it, they appreciate it; if they have reached high levels of their careers without it, they do not necessarily see the contributions language facility offers.

First among potential categories of such use is probably languages present in the culture of coalition members: in military parlance, "troop-contributing nations". Although the language of command may have sufficient status as lingua franca with few difficulties across echelons in understanding guiding documents and commands, relying on a "language that speaks to the head" does little to develop relationships, build a team and consolidate a coalition. For such an effort, one needs to speak to the heart.

As we were assembling the Implementation Force for Bosnia, SHAPE developed a validation process to certify a unit as capable of integrating with coalition forces. I recall the Supreme Commander asking his staff to ensure that troop-contributing nations – particularly those with small contingents – be partnered with

[11] Cosponsored by the Alliance for Peacebuilding, the Center for Applied Linguistics, FHI360 International, the Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education Network, and SIL [originally the Summer Institute of Linguistics], Feb 23, 2015, Washington, DC.

larger contributors with whom they shared military culture, language, professional-education relationships and the like.

These relationships matter in numerous ways. Many nations have extensive professional-education systems for their military personnel. For nations that promote officers through a meritocratic process, rather than through familial or clan networks, these curricula qualify officers for higher level responsibilities in their nations. But they also have a feature that most in the education sector do not recognize. They have an extensive international-education component. Many foreign officers have attended US military institutions, usually in grades from captain to colonel, and the United States sends a good number of our officers to comparable institutions in other countries. These experiences do more than just leaven the academic environment with foreign perspectives. They also provide venues for sharing values, and they create alumni networks that reap dividends when crises erupt and when diplomats seek to field multilateral forces.

Of course, to attend these schools, the officers need proficiency in the language of instruction. Thus, the example of relying on Saudi officers with fluency in English to facilitate co-ordination in the first Gulf War is not unusual, even though such capabilities are in short supply. These language skills can pay dividends in coalition environments, an example of secondary-language use. In allied and coalition environments, which typify peacekeeping and stabilization, the language of command may be sufficiently widespread, but staff use another lingua franca. I hypothesize such use as secondary. I offer a few instances for consideration.

One example comes from a multinational military club in Sarajevo during my second deployment to deal with peacekeeping in Bosnia. In an after-hours social environment, four officers from four different countries are discussing progress in achieving the goals of the peace-agreement framework. As I recall, the nationalities were American, Belgian, French and Italian. A German officer walks by while bringing drinks to his friends, does a double-take, delivers the drinks and returns to the conversation. To his surprise, the conversation was in German, a language not usually associated with the other countries represented in this example. This case illustrates an opportunity for team building, informally discussing the goals of the international community behind the peace accords using a language other than the official one.

In my earlier deployment to address issues in the Balkans, I had two direct superiors, who alternated in one position and thereby kept up with their normal responsibilities while taking turns to supervise the staff overseeing the Implementation Force in Bosnia from NATO's military headquarters in Belgium. One was French, the other Norwegian. France at this point was not in the integrated NATO military structure, nor was Spain, but both filled staff positions at SHAPE in such a fashion that an observer would not suspect they were anything but full members of the team. The French general would occasionally reach a point in a discussion at which his English proved insufficient, but he was ably assisted by a quadrilingual Dutch colonel who could easily step in to facilitate communication. This unexpected benefit is another candidate for designation as secondary language use.

Our interviews of CEW volunteers uncovered similar, unexpected language dividends. One relatively senior woman working on rule-of-law issues found herself working with NATO allies, using French and German to establish a bond with various office partners and with her NATO deputies. This facility enabled her to successfully embed with several non-US Special Operations task forces, which was necessary to further her commander's objectives.[12] Another volunteer noted using German to socialize with allies on base.[13]

Although these examples illustrate an unanticipated use of a language, an acknowledgment of the composition of the force would certainly lead a staff planner to predict that skill in the languages of the troop-contributing nations could pay dividends.[14] But we even uncovered instances of secondary language use that would have required a deeper level of prognostication. One volunteer who served in Djibouti found his background in Hindi was helpful in communicating with third-country nationals working there. Another surprise came in a report that a volunteer in Afghanistan found his fluency in Russian was "a big hit" in dealing with Afghans because so many of them had learned Russian during the decade after 1979.[15] A volunteer in Iraq responded to our question about language use, not with a language example, but with a comment that a background in cultural anthropology facilitated her engaging both Iraqis and Eastern Europeans.

5 Conclusion

International environments offer far more opportunities to exploit language capabilities than are immediately evident by simply identifying where events take place and who one's adversaries may be. Multilingual forces of one nation have recognized the issues of integrating linguistic minorities to greater or lesser degree. For well over a half century, the NATO alliance has recognized challenges in the direction of armed forces at its disposal and developed opportunities to increase team building among its constituent member states. In contemporary interventions, multilateralism is a deliberate feature of negotiations determining participation in peacekeeping and stabilization as well as in hostilities themselves. Consequently, communicating in the language(s) of coalition partners contributes to the efficiency of the force. But relationship building does not end with the recognition of a lingua franca designated as the language of command. Not only does a deployed military

[12] CEW interview, of a senior advisor, April 1, 2014.

[13] CEW interview, April 18, 2014.

[14] Although recognizing English as the pragmatic choice "for military communications for many purposes" in Bosnia, Michael Kelly and Catherine Baker note the use of French and Russian in several contingents. See their *Interpreting the Peace: Peace Operations, Conflict and Language in Bosnia-Herzegovina* (Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, p.198).

[15] CEW interview of a political advisor, May 9, 2014.

force need to communicate with the inhabitants of an area in which it operates, it will inevitably find actors from third countries whose contribution to coalition objectives may be valuable, and it may find the experience of others offers yet more languages as means of communication. Speaking to the heart goes far in building rapport, achieving consensus and attaining common goals.

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The Connections Between Sociolinguistics and Economics, and Their Implications for Sustainability

François Grin

Abstract The connections between "language" and "economics" have unfolded along different and often disconnected lines of research. The link-up between the two raises complex questions, many of which are related to the issue of sustainability. This starts with the definition of key variables. On the "economics" side, the conceptualization of language does not always pay adequate attention to the ways in which it is enmeshed with complex societal goals. For example, linguistic diversity has often been misinterpreted as fragmentation; collective *multi*lingualism and individual *pluri*lingualism are not always clearly distinguished. Reciprocally, on the "sociolinguistics" side, the literature tends to mix up different economic constructs, thus often blurring their focus, for example, in the frequent shift from developmental issues in the standard sense to other types of issues belonging to "regional" or "urban economics", or leading us down faulty analogies that may hamper our ability to orient economic forces in the direction of important, long-term objectives. Following a general introduction to the history of the dialogue between economics and sociolinguistics, this chapter reviews some examples of inadequate mutual familiarity between the disciplines involved, whether in terms of variables or relationships between variables, highlighting cases where improved reciprocal knowledge could significantly improve the relevance of analyses on the linkages between linguistic and economic processes, which is a prerequisite for the fruitful application of language economics in the pursuit of sustainable development.

Keywords Economics · Fragmentation · Interdisciplinarity · Labour market · "Named" languages.

The economic analysis of language requires some degree of meeting between the discipline of economics, which supplies the approach and, sometimes, the variables

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featured in the analysis, and the language disciplines, which provide the independent or the dependent variables considered. This meeting of disciplines has given rise to a substantial literature, in which language policy issues are increasingly central (Gazzola et al., 2016). Because of the transversal nature of language and its ubiquity in human experience, many of these language policy issues are related to the challenges of sustainable development. This chapter is devoted to the identification and discussion of some points located at the intersection of sociolinguistics and economics that may throw additional light on questions of sustainability.

In the main, the confrontation of sociolinguistics and economics has been carried by economists who, for one reason or another, wanted to investigate the interplay between linguistic and economic variables; occasionally, however, it is linguists who have brought in some economic notions in order to flesh out their interpretation of the reasons (or, less frequently, the consequences) of a linguistic process that they were interested in.

Either way, as we shall see, this meeting of disciplines usually implies quite a bit of groping in the dark, since practitioners of both disciplines tend to have only limited familiarity with the concepts of the other discipline. This sometimes inadequate familiarity can cause misunderstandings, and it can even sidetrack well-intentioned research plans; sometimes, this can have an adverse effect on our ability to assess some of the challenges of sustainable development.

A critical look at the circulation of concepts between economics and the language disciplines can be developed in terms of different perspectives. In earlier work, I have proposed such a critical look, with a primary focus on epistemological aspects (Grin, 1994, 2005). In this chapter, I highlight some specific points that can hamper our capacity, in the context of analyses developed within one discipline by making reference to the other, to identify and study actual causal relationships. Many of them are directly relevant to matters of development, in particular of the sustainable kind. For example, the association sometimes made between linguistic diversity (conveniently relabelled as "fragmentation") and obstacles to economic efficiency (often on the grounds that communication "requires" a common language, as if effective communication could not happen through language learning, translation, interpreting and "intercomprehensive" approaches) needs to be questioned in order to get a better grasp of the processes that play out at the intersection of the linguistic and the economic.

After these introductory remarks, I briefly review the types of causal relationships studied in language economics. The following section comments on the somewhat unconvincing aspects of some core assumptions (and definitions) adopted in mainstream economic discourse on language. Then, we shall examine the symmetrical process whereby linguists import or adopt some economic notions and, in so doing, sometimes misinterpret the economic constructs. In a closing section, I propose taking a closer look at some technical problems that require solving in the particular case of the role of language in the process of sustainable economic development.

1 Language Economics and Causal Explanations

In the history of language economics (Grin, 2003, 2016; Grin & Vaillancourt, 1997; Vaillancourt, 1985), the nature of the questions addressed, and hence of the causal links examined, has progressively changed.

One way to describe this evolution is to think in terms of three sets of variables, namely set {E}, set {L} and set {X} (Grin, 1996). Set {E} contains traditional "economic" variables like prices, earnings, GDP, etc. These are the variables that economists are traditionally interested in. Set {L} contains "sociolinguistic" variables, such as the percentages of speakers of language *J* or language *K*, the frequency with which these languages are used, some indicator of their respective prestige in a given context, etc. Set {X}, finally, contains any variable that it would be odd to assign to either one of the preceding sets.

In its initial phases (conventionally associated with the publication of a paper by Marschak in 1965), language economics was primarily interested in whether the values taken by economic variables owed anything to "something linguistic". In other words, scholars' prime interest was in relationships of the type "{L} ⇒ {E}".

Putting a couple of exceptions aside, it was only in the 1990s, with the development of a European perspective on language economics (with a special interest in small languages), that the reverse causation, namely "{E} ⇒ {L}", started receiving more sustained attention. Early publications on minority language protection and promotion were rapidly joined by more work on language acquisition among immigrants, the dynamics of language spread and decline, etc.[1]

Finally, some of the most important developments in language economics in recent years have been in the area of language policy evaluation, where the economics-inspired instruments of policy analysis have been brought to bear on the ex-ante and ex-post evaluation of language policy (Gazzola, 2014; Grin & Vaillancourt, 2015). This line of work can be characterized as "explaining" language variables, which are the ultimate objects of language policy analysis, as a result of the interplay of various types of variables, but where the relationship between the independent and the dependent variables is structured by an economic perspective. This can be symbolized as:

$$\left(\{\mathrm{L,E,X}\} \Rightarrow \{\mathrm{L}\}\right)^{\mathrm{E}}$$

Across these three types of causal relationships, however, a question arises about their analytical robustness, particularly in light of the assumptions made to identify

[1] The aim of this chapter is not to provide a literature review, since several recent ones are available elsewhere. For an extensive history of the field of language economics, readers may turn to Grin (2016), of which a free online version is available. Readers interested in direct access to all the original sources may turn to the annotated bibliography by Gazzola et al. (2016), which is, to my knowledge, the most complete overview of literature in the field; this resource is also freely available online.

these relationships. These assumptions, in turn, necessarily reflect the analytical contents assigned to the variables that are thus put in relation with one another.

Before taking a closer look at a set of key assumptions, it may be useful to start with the most basic, even preliminary one, and to recall that research in language economics has usually been content with taking language as a relatively unequivocal construct. This does not mean that "language" itself is not approached as *potentially* problematic and worthy of analytical attention: as noted in the preceding section, a distinction can be made between economic approaches to language *per se*, which we subsume under "economics of language corpus", and the "economics of language status", which presupposes the presence of more than one language and focuses on the study of processes of which a key aspect is the position of one language *vis-à-vis* other languages.

A recent collection on language economics (Ginsburgh & Weber, 2016) includes contributions of the former type, whose contributors question what language actually *is*. However, most of the chapters in that volume (as, in fact, a majority of contributions in language economics in general; see Gazzola et al., 2020; Grin, 2003, 2016) belong to the latter type. In the following section, I refer to work stemming from this language economics mainstream, in which the concept of language is viewed as sufficiently unproblematic to allow for analytically valid reference to "language A", "language B", etc.

This assumption that language is unproblematic characterizes such inquiry not because language is viewed as *intrinsically* free of complications and unworthy of attention, but because *with respect to the issues examined in "language status-oriented" language economics*, the potentially problematic nature of language *per se* is not, with a few exceptions, considered to be of primary importance nor to have significant implications, whether for economic processes or for language policy selection and design.

2 The Conceptualization of Language in Economics: A Tendency to Oversimplify?

2.1 Named Languages

As just noted, economic approaches to language tend to refer to "named" languages. To accept the relevance of this notion, economists are usually happy with "named" languages such as "English", "French", "German", "Japanese", "Efik", "Guaraní", etc. The very notion of identifiable, "named" languages, however, has been questioned, or even rejected as naïve by some scholars in applied linguistics (see, e.g., Blommaert, 2010; Blommaert & Rampton, 2011; Makoni & Pennycook, 2007). For these authors, the generalization of hybridity in actors' linguistic biographies, as a result of globalization, implies that communicative practices cannot be appropriately described as taking place "in language *X*" or "in language *Y*", which are seen as mere constructs. Rather, people are assumed to draw on a multilingual repertoire in which the boundaries between languages fade. The interlinguistic porosity *inside* actors' repertoires is assumed to be projected into actual speech acts, to the point where the latter cannot be validly assigned to "this" or "that" language.

Therefore, the communicative process should no longer be characterized as "using language X" at a certain time *t*, and then "using language Y" at some other time *t* + *1*. Rather, in all cases, actors are supposed to be *languaging* and, in so doing, to combine languages in their repertoire. Continued reference to named languages would then amount to an ill-informed belief in the "bounded" nature of named languages, and an equally ill-informed refusal to acknowledge the "personal, open, free, dynamic" nature of language, which ignores the fact that "fixed boundaries […] are imposed on languages in terms of categorization with titles and names that are artificial, given the endless number of varieties, hybrids, mixes and fusions" (Shohamy, 2006, pp. 10, 11).

This deconstructionist approach to language, while influential in *applied linguistics*, is not without limits, and it has itself been convincingly deconstructed by authors like Edwards (2012), Cummins (2021) or May (2022), who point to its logical flaws and manifest empirical shortcomings. Despite the popularity of the concept of languaging in some quarters, linguists from other specialties in the discipline do not necessarily take it very seriously, and it is liable to create obfuscation when investigating the intersection between language and economics.

From the standpoint of language economics, the deconstructionist perspective also seems to be of limited utility, even drifting into irrelevance when it goes as far as to deny the existence of distinct languages (Grin, 2018). This implication of the languaging approach seems to deny the fact that across the social spectrum, interactional situations and idiolectal features, people *do* use, both in speech and in writing, *non-mutually-transparent* languages, which fall into identifiable and sensibly "name-able" categories. For example,

- This chapter is written in (perhaps not *fully* standard) English by a non-native speaker of English, who has French as a mother tongue and who often uses other languages receptively, sometimes productively; had this chapter been written in French, it would not be readily accessible to non-French-speaking Anglophones.
- Passengers on my bus ride back home in mainly French-speaking Geneva use a raft of different languages including (to the extent that I can tell) Albanian, Arabic, Farsi, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish, and many more that I can barely guess at. The crucial point, however, is that even if bus passengers are languaging, their respective languages are *not* mutually transparent. They speak *distinct* "named" (or name-able) languages, most of which are not readily understandable by persons who have not learned acquired these languages, formally or informally.
- Employers typically recruit staff with skills in identifiable named languages, chosen as a function of the type of work that a staff member will have to perform.

The criticism of named languages extends into a somewhat puzzling indictment of "monolingual views of multilingualism": in other words, one may speak several languages, and advocate the use and recognition of a large panoply of languages but still fall foul of the canon currently prevailing in those segments of applied linguistics. As to the precise substance of the sin thus committed, it remains unclear. Therefore, I shall retain the notion (which appears to be quite sensible to an overwhelming majority of users of language) that it does make sense to refer to "named" languages, if only for the purposes to which language economics is normally put to use. The implication for sustainable development is fairly direct, because it is difficult to envision a balanced development without at least one language that can be used for the production, sharing, storage and dissemination of information. These processes typically take place in *named* languages – and, what is more, in named languages that actors identify as such and with which they often identify too, as a facet of their individual and collective identity. Denying the existence of such languages or downplaying their importance for actors is liable to complicate, rather than facilitate, the realization of sustainable developmental goals.

2.2 Diversity as Fragmentation

Apart from a few marginal forays that can be traced back to the eighteenth century, economists only began to develop an interest in language issues in the 1960s. At the time, this interest primarily sprang from two sources:

- In Canada, it was inspired by concern over the possibility of language-based discrimination against Francophones, mainly in Quebec; in this case, language was primarily approached through the prism of ethnopolitics and the economic implications of ethnopolitical issues.
- In the United States, the development of applied microeconomics found, in labour economics, a choice area for its deployment; in this case, language was merely another potential explanatory variable in the determination of an equilibrium on the labour market.

It was only at a later stage that a European perspective in language economics started to emerge, with an interest in language *per se*.

However, in parallel with this development, the mainstream economic approach occasionally incorporated "language" in the study of additional issues, including development economics. The delays and setbacks experienced in economic development processes in developing countries required some kind of explanation, and a primary suspect, of course, was language. This point is particularly relevant to the examination of sustainable development and its conditions. Substantial circumstantial evidence suggests that *ignoring* the languages that the majority of residents normally use can detract from economic efficiency (that is, the optimal allocation of scarce resources, whether material or symbolic) in production, consumption and exchange. It can also be seriously detrimental to fairness – bearing in mind the specific sense in which "fairness" is approached in economic analysis. Economists do not presume to pass ethical judgement on what is fair and unfair. Rather, they emphasize the distributional implications of various states of affairs or of various policies. Depending on societal organization, including as the result of public policies, some actors stand to gain, and others to lose. Therefore, in the economic sense, "fairness" refers to a coincidence between the actual and the socially desirable distribution of scarce resources, whether material or symbolic.

Economists were generally astute enough to keep clear of the mistaken, though widespread, belief that some languages are "better" than others at fulfilling certain functions, including the functions associated with modernity, economic activity, etc. The myth of intrinsically better or inferior languages has long been debunked, and it is now widely understood that *any* language can perform *any* function; and if, *for example*, a particular lexeme is missing in a given language, it can easily be coined to fill the gap, whether as a direct import from another language, or by deliberate coinage of a new term, possibly drawing on the etymological stock of the language requiring the new word. Putting it differently, languages need to be "equipped", sometimes deliberately, in order to perform certain functions.

Some economists, however, seem to be inclined to cast language as a villain in a different way: it is not, they concede, that *this* or *that* language would be incapable of being a vehicle of modernity and development, nor even that the associated culture might be. Rather, it is the *diversity* of languages per se that is to blame, because it hampers communication (e.g., Easterly & Levine, 1997).[2] Much better, they argue, to have one common language – and then, it might as well be a language that already has the lexical resources needed to express the artifacts of development. The language of the erstwhile colonizer almost automatically becomes a serious contender for this role. Since "diversity" has a positive ring to it, it had to be replaced, in order for this type of narrative to make sense, by the rather negative-sounding term "fragmentation", hence the flurry of papers about the problems stemming from linguistic fragmentation.

However, this approach manifestly obfuscates the issue. While it is intuitively likely that having a *means* (e.g., a code, an idiom, a language) to understand each other *is* valuable, this condition can perfectly well be met in a multilingual context. All that is needed is some tool for ensuring communication between persons having a different first language. The obvious solution is (non-subtractive) second- or foreign-language acquisition; another is (human) translation and interpreting. Additional tools can play an auxiliary role, in the form of *intercomprehensive* approaches, or of well-targeted use of language technologies, including machine translation and interpreting – at least for specific purposes.

Causal relationships involving economics and language, therefore, need not assume that a plurality of languages reflects some kind of deleterious fragmentation. A plurality of languages in a given setting (a city, a province, a country, a group of countries, the world) reflects diversity, with its costs and its benefits. Getting a fair deal in terms of the costs and benefits one receives can, in turn, be used as an indicator of inclusion.

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[2] This negative assessment has been critically examined by some linguists; see Nettle (2000).

2.3 A Problem of Scale: "Multi" Vs. "Pluri"

It is easier to confuse diversity (which is compatible with inter-group communication) and fragmentation (which is viewed as hampering it) if one ignores the difference between "multilingualism" and "plurilingualism".

Traditionally, the English language only uses the word "multilingualism", while French only uses "plurilinguisme". However, French-language research has increasingly been using both *plurilinguisme* and *multilinguisme*, but not as synonyms. Rather, they refer to different planes of reality. "Plurilinguisme" stands for a person's *individual* portfolio of language skills (quite independently of the level of these skills), while "multilinguisme" refers to the presence of many languages in society, as used by permanent or at least long-term residents (tourists or persons from abroad on a brief business trip don't count). Though not systematically made in scientific publications, this distinction is now reasonably well-established in research carried out and published in French, and it is beginning to make inroads (as "plurilingualism" vs. "multilingualism") in English-language research as well. This distinction originated in the work of applied linguists, but its usefulness for scholars addressing language issues in any discipline seems plain enough. Bearing this distinction in mind frequently proves relevant, since analysis needs to have a macro-level concept applying to societies and polities (multilingualism, which may encompass two-language situations, as in "official Canadian bilingualism") *and* a micro-level concept applying to individuals (plurilingualism, as in "our daughters Fiona and Saskia are fluent in Spanish, Swedish and Dutch; they're wonderfully plurilingual").

Hence, causal relationships involving economics and language may concern multilingualism, plurilingualism or both (as in dynamic models of language spread and decline; see e.g. Civico, 2019; Templin, 2020), bearing in mind that they refer to two different planes of reality.

2.4 About Interlinguistic Distance

Economists' work on language often reveals a certain fondness for the notion of "distance" between languages, to which significant explanatory powers are frequently assigned (see e.g., Fearon, 2003). However, linguists have known for a long time that defining, let alone measuring, the distance between two "languages" (even assuming that they are clearly identifiable and duly *named*) can prove difficult. First, the distance between languages *in abstracto* may be of limited relevance, since language is typically used *in interaction* – quite obviously so orally, but also, ultimately, in written form, through which the writer and the reader are connected. Second, even if one is willing to accept an *in-abstracto* perspective, should distance be measured in terms of lexical distance, phonology, grammatical structure, or a combination of these and possibly additional factors? Third, even if we can measure and compare interlinguistic distance through a balanced, convincing system of measurement, it does not follow that that is always and everywhere relevant.

For example, it would be absurd to dispute the notion that the interlinguistic distance between French and Japanese is greater than between, say, French and Italian. And empirical analysis is likely to show that, all other things being equal, a native speaker of French will need more time, starting from scratch, to reach a relatively high level in Japanese as a foreign language than in Italian as a foreign language. Some policy inferences follow: for example, *if* an education system in the *francophonie* offering both Japanese and Italian as school subjects sets itself as a goal the attainment of a B2 level by learners, the difference in interlinguistic distance justifies a higher allocation of resources for the teaching of Japanese than Italian – again, all other things being equal.

But it does not necessarily work this way. Suppose that interlinguistic distance is proposed as a criterion for prioritizing support measures in favour of small, frequently threatened languages, of which there are many among the 6000–7000 languages (depending on definition) currently in use. Many of these languages are essential ingredients in the definition of policies concerned with the sustainability of development strategies, because it is often *through* these relatively small and threatened languages that some communities can fully participate in development projects. One objection might be, referring to the notion of interlinguistic distance, that more resources should be devoted to morphologically or lexically isolated languages (because the interlinguistic distance between them and any other language is greater) than to a minority language like Frisian, because the latter is very close to Dutch. Such a conclusion, however, could prove politically untenable, because it implies that Frisian has secondary importance and that preserving it is an objective that could, after all, be abandoned.

In short, causal relationships involving economics and language may invoke linguistic distance as a variable but must do so with extreme caution.

2.5 On the Uneasy (Dis-) entanglement of Language and Culture

Economic discourse on language tends to be quite ambivalent regarding the question of whether language can be disentangled from culture – and hence of the vast array of phenomena, whether developmental or not, that might be linked to culture. On the one hand, the notion that language is closely enmeshed with culture often seems to be taken for granted. It is not just that language is part and parcel of a culture (e.g., the Finnish language as an element of Finnish culture), and is considered key to accessing the culture, as some primers in marketing note (Schneider & Barsoux, 2003); it is also that language is often assumed to be the carrier of the culture of the country (or countries) with which this language is associated. This usually unspoken assumption is often instrumental to the notion that some linguistic environments are better suited than others to the process of economic development, because they involve fewer languages (Easterly & Levine, 1997), or international trade, because they incorporate dominant languages (Ku & Zussman, 2010).

At the same time, and somewhat contradictorily, many economists are prone to insist that language is only for communication, (where "communication" usually boils down to "information transfer"). Therefore, there is no serious justification for expressing some kind of attachment with a particular language, nor for resisting the spread of a dominant world language. Such a stance implies that, contrary to the common assumption just mentioned, language *can* be disentangled from culture. Many economists conclude, therefore, that the spread of the English language is unproblematic *because* it is largely a *res nullius*, unencumbered by any real cultural baggage. By way of consequence, on this view, the spread of English simply cannot be suspected of advancing the interests of the countries with which this language is primarily associated. Advocates of this position thus assume that English is *un*-problematic, whereas they consider all *other* languages as laden with potentially cumbersome cultural baggage.

Being quite clearly an example of double standards, this issue is one that deserves closer critical examination, possibly with reference to the concept of linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992, 2009). At this point, and leaving aside the well-known fact that language is *not* just for communication (something that since Roman Jakobson linguists are keenly aware of), what must be emphasized is that *if* language were only for communication, then languages would merely be interchangeable codes, and the choice of one or another should be exclusively guided by reasons of economy, expediency, cost, etc. One would then recommend dismantling the hegemony of English as fast as possible in favour of a cheaper, more easily acquired, and distributionally superior option such as Esperanto. With rare exceptions (e.g., Selten, 1997; Selten happens to be an economics Nobel Prize laureate), economists never highlight the economic virtues of this option (let alone advocate this solution). This suggests that other, possibly unstated, assumptions may be at play.

Summing up, causal relationships involving economics and language ought to be formulated in a particularly explicit and transparent manner regarding the assumptions made about the links between "language" and "culture": are they assumed to be associated? If so, how, and with what implications? This clarity is often absent from economists' work.

3 Which "Economic" Outcomes Are We Talking About?

3.1 Misunderstood Economics

In earlier work (particularly Grin, 2003) I have pointed out that many of the basic assumptions of economics are often misunderstood. Since this chapter's focus is on the links between economics and sociolinguistics, let me say a few words about some confusions that sometimes turn up in the sociolinguistic literature. Not wishing to belabour points made earlier, I shall again confine myself to vignettes devoted to key questions, starting with fundamental economic epistemology (on this, see, e.g., Mayer, 1993).

Contrary to what some commentators from outside economics often appear to assume, economics as a discipline is *not* about money and profits. It is about the scarcity of resources and how humans deal with it. The resources concerned may be material and financial, but they may also be symbolic. A person's sense of belonging in a network of individuals, or in a community living in a given geographical area, may constitute resources, because an interpersonal support network and a familiarity with the biophysical features of a given area can enhance people's capabilities and help them to achieve their goals.[3] All that matters for something to be considered a resource *in an economic sense* is that this resource be scarce and liable to be used for different purposes. This also goes for the non-material resources just mentioned: a support network cannot be expanded at will; in-depth knowledge of one's surroundings is not acquired without time and effort. Such resources are costly, because just like any other resources, they entail an opportunity cost. Let us recall that "opportunity cost" is a core concept of economic analysis. It refers to the value of the alternatives that must be *forgone* when the choice is made to use scarce resources for a certain purpose. All other things being equal, opportunity costs are less severe when resources are plentiful. However, the notion of sustainability alerts us to the fact that the availability of many resources should not be taken for granted. This reinforces the relevance of a careful approach to the multiple dimensions of benefits and costs.

The questions that arise, then, are the following:

- How should (scarce) resources be *allocated* to different pursuits (resource allocation)? Is this allocation *efficient*?
- Given the way in which scarce resources are used by actors (invested, bought, sold, consumed, etc.), how do we evaluate the resulting distribution of resources among persons or groups of persons (resource distribution)? Is this distribution *fair*?

In the study of resource allocation and resource distribution, economists make certain general assumptions about human behaviour, and these assumptions are frequently misunderstood too. The assumption of rationality is a case in point. Contrary to what some non-economist commentators believe, economic rationality does not imply that the choices actors can make are *per se* rational or irrational. Just about *any* course of action may be rational, depending on the actor's goals and constraints. Rationality resides not in the decisions made, but in the way in which alternatives are identified, and a choice among such alternatives ultimately made. What is rational is for actors to weigh the alternative courses of action available to them given the constraints they are facing (such as the level of their disposable income) and to pick the course of action which, given the information available to them at time t, may be

[3] On the notion of capability, see e.g. Sen (1985).

expected to maximize their well-being in the broadest sense. Transposing the decision-making unit from the micro level of the individual agent to the macro level of a state, and applying it to language policy, a rational course of action essentially means choosing, among *relevant* public policies (Gazzola, 2014), a policy that maximizes the difference between benefits and costs while also satisfying separate criteria of fairness.[4] A proper understanding of the meaning of rationality in economics, therefore, may help us to develop a deeper, more subtle approach to the goals that different human societies are liable to pursue, as well as a greater readiness to make allowance for sustainability as a necessary feature of the policies put in place in order to reach developmental goals.

3.2 The Language-as-Currency Fallacy

This plea for conceptual flexibility does not amount to a recommendation to relinquish logical rigour, and the "language-as-currency" fallacy is a case in point. Several papers have, over the decades, attempted to draw a parallel between "language" and "currency", arguing that they are essentially similar since both are "exchanged" (Calvet, 2002; Coulmas, 1992; Rossi-Landi, 1968). This parallel, alas, is misleading, since the *nature* of the exchange is quite different in the realm of economics and in the realm of linguistics.

The "exchange" between participants in a conversation or "interaction" is one in which two essential features of economic exchange are missing, namely *opportunity cost* and *presumed equivalence*.

First, opportunity cost (which we might also call "relative scarcity", where the qualifier "relative" simply introduces the notion that scarcity does not have to be acute) refers mainly to the point made in the preceding subsection: what matters is the exchange of goods and services that are not just *free for the taking* – that is, the goods and services traded have an *opportunity cost*. If I want a particular good or service, I will have to give something up in return. It may be money, or, in a barter economy, another good or service. There is no such thing in conversation, where the production of an utterance carries practically no cost.

Some utterances may be deemed to have *economic* value, with a price attached to them. This may be the case of an expert report or the predictions of a soothsayer. What is being purchased, however, is not the utterance itself, but the information (reliable or not) of which it is the vehicle. Other than that, utterances exchanged in conversation have no *economic* value, and the sense in which one may feel enriched by a conversation is generally a purely metaphorical one.

Second, presumed equivalence does not obtain in conversation. If I give up X to get Y in return, it means that I consider Y to be at least as valuable as X. If it were

[4] A related point is the myth of the "selfish" agent postulated by economists. Obviously, it is enough to include, in an agent's objective function (usually called "utility function"), the well-being of other agents, and thereby make room for altruistic motivations.

not the case, there would be no reason for me to engage in this exchange. Conversely, my trading partner must consider *X* to be at least as valuable as *Y*, otherwise she would have no reason to consent to this exchange. Hence, we can presume that there exists a certain *equivalence* between *X* and *Y* in a given context. But there is no such thing in linguistic exchange, where utterance U_1 made by speaker S_1 may elicit in response utterance U_2 by speaker S_2, but there are absolutely no grounds for presuming any form of "equivalence" between U_1 and U_2.

Likewise, the notion of "value" encountered in Saussurian linguistics holds that the semantic "value" of a lexeme emerges relationally, that is, in connection with other lexemes covering a distinct, but neighbouring semantic field (e.g., *rivière* and *fleuve* have a different "value" in French because their semantic fields are different, whereas English makes do for both with the single word *river*). But the notion of value emerging from the relatedness between these two lexemes has nothing to do with the *economic* concept of value.[5]

Thus, drawing a parallel between (linguistic) conversation and (economic) exchange makes little sense, and the equivalence between language and currency even less. Equally precarious is the notion that a parallel might be made between the "strength" of a language and the price (in terms of exchange rate) of the currency associated with the country where the language is spoken, itself deemed to reflect the "strength" of the country's economy (Calvet, 2002). Should such a relationship actually hold, we would all have been rushing to learn Norwegian, responding to the robustness of the Norwegian economy, itself manifested in the value of the Norwegian krone on currency markets.

3.3 Development Economics or Regional Economics?

A connection is often assumed to exist between development economics and regional economics, but this connection generally proves misleading. That this confusion has appeared at all is quite understandable, and it is linked with a perfectly honourable *ecological* approach to language use.

Concern over the ongoing decline of minority languages has spurred interest in the economic (as opposed to constitutional, educational or sociolinguistic) conditions of their survival. Typically, and well into the 1980s, the progressive attrition of minority languages in Western Europe was associated with a location at the "periphery", along with the attendant difficulties of regions considered under-*developed* economically, by contrast with capital regions (e.g., Welsh Wales vs. Cardiff or London; the Highlands vs. Glasgow and Edinburgh; the Gaeltacht vs. Dublin; etc.; see Haugen et al., 1981). Hence, there was much talk of the economic *development*

[5] For all practical purposes, contemporary economic theory defines exchange value as the monetary equivalent, at market equilibrium, of the utility value of a good or service. This definition lies at the heart of all non-Marxian microeconomics since the demise, with the publication in 1874 of Leon Walras's *Éléments d'économie politique pure*, of the competing "labour" theory of value.

problems of minority-language areas, which dovetailed with critiques of colonialism and interpretations of neo-colonial relationships between centre and periphery.

The problem is that the parallel is not very robust. Thus, the implication is that the calibration of language policies for small languages in the framework of post-colonial analyses only has limited applicability. This tradition has usefully evolved in two directions whose specific priorities are acknowledged, one stressing a structural analysis of economic development applicable within modern nation states (e.g., Williams, 2010), and the other more economically standard approaches rooted not in development, but in *regional* and *urban* economics (e.g., Chalmers, 2003; Sproull, 1996) with close links to economic geography (Pellenbarg, 1993). (For more recent considerations in this area, see Kirk et al., 2009; Lewis & McLeod, 2021).

3.4 The Limitations of Ethnographic Approaches to Language at Work

A somewhat idiosyncratic, yet highly visible, current within "critical sociolinguistics" claims to offer a "political economy of language". It is epitomized, for example, by work published in theme issue *17*(2) of *Language Policy* in May 2018, on "Policing for commodification: turning communicative resources into commodities". A few paragraphs must be devoted to setting the record straight, because this current, though it can animate stimulating discussions, delivers less than it purports to offer.

What it does offer is undoubtedly interesting, but it has practically nothing to do with anything economic, and barely more with political economy; and its connection with sustainable development is equally elusive. Rather, it can more accurately be described as an *ethnographically oriented political sociology of language*, or "EOPSL", an acronym used here for the needs of this discussion. Typically, the approach is deployed in the study of contexts that happen to have something about them that looks economic. A typical context is the workplace, and indeed, the workplace *is* a site of economic activity. However, this is not enough for making economically relevant what remains an ethnographic commentary on patterns of language use in this type of context.

For an overwhelming majority of economists (and as pointed out above), their discipline is essentially about the following question: how do people allocate scarce resources that have alternative uses in order to reach certain ends? This definition, which meshes with the *utility theory of value* (not to be confused with Marx's "use value"), can be applied to a host of questions, including choices and decisions that involve symbolic and non-market dimensions. Most economists apply it to the study of the production, consumption and exchange of goods and services that are traded on markets or quasi-markets, or to the analysis of macro-level phenomena that emerge from the aggregation of micro-level processes. Language economics fits into this general paradigm, but much of language economics offers applications that depart from mainstream economic research, in that it is often concerned with complex objects that present linguistic features. This is why, in language economics, reference is frequently made to symbolic or "non-market" value.

A few economists adhere to the paradigm of neo-Marxian economics, which proposes a profoundly different approach to the understanding of economic processes. The theory of production is at the heart of Marxian economics, which has relatively less to offer, by contrast, on consumption and exchange. My point here, however, is not to debate the respective strengths and weaknesses of mainstream vs. neo-Marxian economics, but to observe that even Marxian economists are concerned with explaining economic processes and variables (prices, aggregate income, investment flows, etc.) – issues that EOPSL eschews entirely.

As to political economy, it is a broad church, and some of it directly draws on the Marxian heritage. Other segments of political economy are anchored in mainstream economics but propose to enrich it. What makes political economy a bit different from most mainstream economics (and this is also what makes political economy intellectually so stimulating) is that it is much more attuned to the role that power relations, along with their societal implications, play in economic processes. For example, political economists will take into account traditional positions of influence and power, within a community, in their explanation of how different members of the community operate when buying and selling goods and services, selling their own workforce or hiring others', choosing to invest or not, etc. They then proceed to explain, in terms of cause-and-effect relationships, variables such as prices, earnings or investment. This attention to power, culture, gender roles, etc., is intended to lend, and in fact often does lend, far more realism to economic analysis.[6] In any case, political economy still focuses on explaining economic processes reflected in changes in the level of economic variables like prices, incomes, capital or interest rates.

Therefore, mainstream "economics" and "political economy" are not divorced from each other but, rather, they form a continuum, with more or less attention to the role of sociopolitical elements in the characterization of a process reflected in the value of economic variables. Research produced in the broad current known as "socioeconomics" eloquently exemplifies the fluidity and porosity between them. It is regrettably true that much of the economics profession is wary of approaches that include sociopolitical variables in the study of economic processes; economists can be very insular too, although there are signs of positive changes in this regard. The main point, however, is that both mainstream economics and political economy examine economic processes and variables.

Do the proponents of EOPSL ever come up with an analytical explanation of economic variables, such as the level of wage rates? Unfortunately, they do not. Of the level of labour income? Neither. Of the volume of investment flows? No. Of

[6] A well-known example of insightful political economy is work by Elinor Ostrom, who earned the Nobel Prize in economics in 2009 for her analysis of the "commons". She has provided an economic explanation of underinvestment in the maintenance of an economic resource, leading to its ultimate depletion in the absence of countervailing rules and measures.

price levels? Never. There is just about nothing pertaining to economics in EOPSL, even if we define economic processes as those that are typically studied in neo-Marxian approaches or if we propose to observe the processes at hand through the prism of "political economy" rather than "(mainstream) economics". Moreover, the reliance of much of the EOPSL literature on the discursive, rather than material, manifestations of some alleged "commodification" further lessens its relevance to the study of actual economic processes (Grin, 2021; Simpson & O'Regan, 2018). There is no doubt that it yields a wealth of interesting sociological results, which constitute useful contributions to an integrated, interdisciplinary perspective on multilingualism, but one struggles to come up with an example of one *economically* pertinent or novel result derived from an EOPSL approach, and its relevance to the realization of sustainable development objectives remains an open question.[7]

Economics can go much further than EOPSL in the explanation of the market *and* non-market *value* of some language *X*, and it offers analytically crisper results regarding the disadvantage associated with having some language *Y* in one's repertoire (as an L1 or not). Economics provides concepts for teasing apart the contributions of different variables to the value created – or the loss incurred – and relate them to an explanation, typically in terms of production processes. These tools can be used to give quantitative orders of magnitude, and to compute estimations resting on thousands of observations. EOPSL, by contrast, usually approaches such effects through predictable generalities about the fact that knowing certain languages confers more or less advantages than knowing other languages.[8] The potential implications of this fact for sustainable development are largely neglected. The references typically made, in the EOPSL literature, to "capital" and "devaluation" are mostly metaphorical. The notion of "commodification" that the EOPSL literature frequently invokes (in order to criticize the phenomenon thus described) is viewed as analytically mistaken by commentators hailing from Marxian analysis itself (see Petrovic and Yazan, 2021), and at the same time, the EOPSL's criticism of alleged commodification may backfire and prove politically regressive (Grin, 2018).

Summing up, EOPSL does not offer a "political economy of language". The obfuscation may be traced back to Bourdieu, whose work constitutes one of the foundational intellectual references of EOPSL advocates, who also appear to believe (something economists never do) that Bourdieu's approach to language deals with *economic* issues. Though sociologically crucial, Bourdieu's contributions do not

[7] Consider, for example, the fact that employees at call centres in, say, India operating in English are instructed to cover up the phonological markers of their usual way of speaking English so as to sound more "international" when answering customer calls. The EOPSL literature tries to eke a lot of mileage out of observations of this kind, talking of linguistic "capital" being "devalued" by the "commodification" of language in "late capitalism". However, such an observation is not just unsurprising *per se*; it is also one that can be explained more cogently with a mainstream economic approach combining human capital theory and production theory.

[8] Let us observe that this alleged proof of "commodification" is neither novel nor particularly surprising: people have always been learning languages for all kinds of reasons, including because the knowledge of additional languages conferred advantages of various types, some of which were market-related; on this, see also Block Allen (2018).

address, let alone answer, economic questions, nor do they, by the same token, advance political economy.

4 Conclusion: The Quest for Explanatory Perspectives

The foregoing discussion highlights some of the possible errors and misunderstandings that can arise when the disciplines of economics and language meet. Better mutual familiarity would be of immense benefit to scholars from both groups, and may offer a sounder basis for assessing how the mutual influence between linguistic and economic variables may affect developmental processes. Suggestions for the more fruitful treatment of issues combining economic and linguistic processes are often made in the literature quoted in at the beginning of this chapter, but for the sake of brevity, I should like to discuss one particular case, namely, that of the link between linguistic *diversity* (not *fragmentation*) and economic development in development contexts (in the standard economic interpretation of what a "development context" is, namely that of third-world countries, not that of less prosperous regions of developed economies).

Mainstream development economics has tended to ignore language issues, and when it has taken them into account at all, it has been mainly in order to stress that language, if anything, was a hindrance on the path to economic development. Not all economic development literature has taken this view, however (see, e.g., Arcand, 1996, for an early contrary example). But in the main, economists have taken a negative view of language diversity, the best-known example probably being Easterly and Levine (1997), quoted earlier.

The problem with the latter authors' approach, however, is that it is largely correlational and contents itself with a somewhat cursory interpretation of diversity. In essence, ethnolinguistic differences are supposed to erode trust and complicate information transfer between actors, both conspiring to make communication difficult, with detrimental effects on per-capita GDP or the growth of per-capita GDP. However, the fact that poor macroeconomic results occur *in parallel* with high linguistic diversity, and that the correlation is statistically robust, does not prove that these two variables are structurally correlated, let alone causally related. It is perfectly possible for both phenomena to occur because they result from the presence of *another* variable that influences them both. Conversely, we may detect a positive correlation between per-capita GDP and the spread of a common language (possibly that of a former colonizer), but if a *third* factor positively impacts on per-capita GDP and skills in that common language, these skills may well have no real influence on economic prosperity.

This point has been explored by Arcand and Grin (2013) who show, using econometric procedures designed to circumvent this methodological problem, that the standard *negative* correlation between ethnolinguistic diversity and macroeconomic performance in developing countries no longer holds once allowance is made for the presence of additional variables that could positively affect both. The presence of institutions, for example, and a relatively high proportion of European settlers at the time of colonization are both positively correlated to diversity *and* per-capita GDP, suggesting that any *negative* correlation between linguistic diversity and economic development only obtains when *other* relevant variables are omitted.

To the extent that we can generalize not just from this particular example, but also from the preceding sections of this chapter, it seems prudent to bear two conditions in mind when approaching the very complex maze of relationships connecting linguistic and economic processes, as well as the resulting implications for sustainable development.

The first is to submit our analytical claims to the scrutiny of other scholars. This starts with defining the variables that we use as clearly and transparently as possible along with the (often simplifying) assumptions made in the analysis. There is nothing wrong with simplification, or with using stylized facts and abstract models in which some of the flesh-and-bones reality is erased; this is a valid part of any analytical procedure aimed at generalization (for an application to language policy modelling, see e.g. Pool, 1991). But not all simplifications make sense, and the best safeguard against adopting damaging ones is to submit our definitions to discussion with practitioners of partner disciplines. The examples presented in the preceding sections of this chapter show how oversimplifications (e.g., the conflation of fragmentation with diversity or the flawed analogy between language and currency) can lead us astray.

The second condition concerns not just the variables themselves, but the relationships that connect them. *Prima facie* plausibility may dissolve when researchers apply appropriately careful empirical procedures. More subtle – and more complex – stories can usefully replace simplistic ones. There again, it takes a certain familiarity with the relevant processes to separate the grain from the chaff. For example, understanding the theory of value can warn us against some logically untenable theorizing about the "economic" value of languages.

Symmetrically, understanding communication as a process that does not require linguistic uniformity, but as one that can be successfully achieved through other strategies, including, of course, a widespread plurilingualism among members of a multilingual society, including very varied and fluid manifestations of plurilingualism, can prove useful. In particular, it can help us keep clear of all-too-frequent, but shallow and arguably supremacist views of language and diversity in which the hegemony of the dominant is construed as the natural and necessary condition for economic prosperity.

A sound understanding of the analytical issues that emerge at the intersection of linguistic and economic processes is especially important for sustainable development for two main reasons. First, a concern for the sustainability of the workings of human societies encourages us to acknowledge complexity. Second, the notion of sustainability draws our attention to the need to think in systemic terms. Sustained cooperation between linguistics and economics is a rewarding strategy with respect to both purposes.

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Afterword: A Dedication

> The history of conflict is littered with examples of military success that ultimately failed to achieve political aims. In exploiting victory, political and military leaders alike have sometimes failed to recognize justice and equity as necessary components of peaceful relations among states. If our intent is to avoid war, then at the end of a conflict we must create the conditions for peace, rather than for subsequent strife. If we are to overcome strategic myopia, we must address the civil sector.

These words, from an article that Kurt E. Müller wrote over 20 years ago,[1] reflect his thinking about the goal of righteous military conflict: if war is a necessity, its goal must be to build a better peace. All too often in warfare, these longer term goals are neglected, or recollected too late. Kurt died too soon to witness the collapse of the intervention in Afghanistan, but, here too, a failure to meet the local population on its own terms, and in its own languages, led to perhaps avoidable disaster.

Even the United Nations, under construction as World War II continued, gave insufficient attention to the diversity of the peoples it was supposedly designed to support: it settled for a linguistic and institutional regime that reflected victory rather than inclusion, and spent insufficient time reflecting on the long-term implications of its choice. The opening words of its founding charter, "We the Peoples", were a punning but emotionally fraught reference to the United States Constitution: a symbol of liberty to be sure, but leaving little doubt as to who aspired to be in charge, namely states (represented by governments) not people, and the victorious states above all.[2] Too much of the mindset of the old League of Nations, of the

[1] Kurt E. Müller, "Toward a Concept of Strategic Civil Affairs," *Parameters* 28, no. 4 (1998), https://press.armywarcollege.edu/parameters/vol28/iss4/8

[2] Virginia Gildersleeve, a member of the US delegation, proposed the allusion to the US Constitution, but her wording, "We, the People of the United Nations" was changed to "Peoples" in subsequent drafting. See Stephen C. Schlesinger, *Act of Creation: The Founding of the United*

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dominance of the great powers, carried over into the new post-war institutions: too few lessons were learned.

At the time of the UN's 40th anniversary in 1985, one of its founding staff members, Brian Urquhart, who died recently in his 101st year, reflected on the UN's origins: "No one in 1945 was thinking much about economic or social development or global problems like population or the environment or even human rights. They weren't yet even talking much about decolonization: the two great preoccupations were peace and security, and post-war reconstruction."[3] While much was achieved in the 3 or 4 years following the war's end, much remained unanticipated. The United Nations stumbled into the cold war as a result, and fought mightily for a process of inclusion through decolonization by means of structures that barely reflected such diffusion of power. If its presence has helped to defuse conflict over the past 75 or so years, it has yet to achieve that worldwide rule of law and that path to sustainable development to which it has long aspired.

Kurt Müller linked his passion for languages to a rare consciousness of the need to encounter the world on its own linguistic terms and to listen as well as speak. I first worked with him at the time of President Jimmy Carter's President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies, when he was assistant director for foreign language programmes at the Modern Language Association and I was coordinating international programmes at the University of Pennsylvania. We were both involved with the American Forum for Global Education, an NGO seeking to improve the international component in American schools and colleges. Kurt went on to become executive vice president of the National Council on Foreign Language and International Studies (NCFLIS) established as a result of the President's Commission and intended to guide the implementation of the Commission's recommendations. While the policies of the Reagan administration side-lined many of these recommendations, Kurt's convictions regarding the importance of foreign languages and of dealing with the world on its own linguistic terms remained unshaken.

In this regard, he was a particularly strong advocate for foreign language study among young children, believing that true internationalism is best acquired at the very beginning of learning. Such thinking was embodied in two of the American Forum's publications produced under Kurt's direction: *Children and Languages* (1988) and *Languages in Elementary Schools* (1989). He continued this advocacy in his work for the National Council.

When in the early 1980s the idea of an annual conference on language and communication emerged out of the academic community and the UN's language services (headed at the time by Françoise Cestac), Kurt was an early recruit to the organizing team led by the Centre for Research and Documentation on World Language Problems, of which I was director. The Centre's first conference took place in New York in 1983, and the series lasted into the late 1990s. Kurt edited one

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Nations (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2003), p. 237. The term "United Nations" was coined by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and dates officially from 1 January 1942, when 26 states at war with the Axis powers signed the "Declaration by United Nations".

[3] Brian Urquhart, "Brian Urquhart looks back," *Secretariat News 40* (19) [1985], 14–15.

of the annual volumes of conference papers and assisted with others. The series was succeeded by the Symposia on Language and the United Nations, initially at the University of Hartford and at Yale University, later in New York – a series which still continues. Again, Kurt was actively involved in the organisation, once more under the auspices of the Centre for Research and Documentation on World Language Problems.

When the conference series turned to the topic of sustainability, Kurt was the obvious candidate to edit its papers – which is where this current volume began.

Kurt did not live to see this editing project to its completion, but much of the preliminary work of organizing the conference and liaison with authors was undertaken under his direction. Kurt had planned to write an introductory chapter for the volume, to be entitled "The Foreign Policy Context of Development" and focused on language policy. He planned to write it when the rest of the volume was complete. In the event, the chapter remained unwritten. His chapter in the present volume, based on personal experience in a military context, serves as a stand-in for what would likely have been a broader consideration of language and sustainable development. The present paper is appropriate because it reflects Kurt's long experience in various senior military roles as an advocate for linguistic reciprocity and for conscious attention to issues of language – an interest reflected in what was at the time a path-breaking study on *Language Competence: Implications for National Security* (1986), which concentrated particularly on language use among the allies in the Korean War.

All told, Kurt served in the US Army Reserve, Civil Affairs, for 37 years, rising to the rank of colonel. His concern with language in the military began with his appointment as senior instructor at the First US Army Intelligence School in 1974 and his joining the Defense Language Institute as assistant professor of German in 1977. Later he served as commandant of the army's Civil Affairs Command Language School and as chief of the Civil Affairs Support Team at SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters, Allied Powers, Europe), where he worked on implementation of the Dayton Peace Accords. He went on to serve in several positions at the US Department of State. While, as a good military officer, he respected the chain of command, Kurt was never silent about his convictions nor willing to settle for platitudes in place of evidence-based research. Above all, he was always willing to think originally, and to bring disparate knowledge together to address a particular issue. In dedicating this volume to his memory, his friends and colleagues hope that Kurt's optimistic belief in rational dialogue and sober analysis will be long remembered, and applied in our ever more challenged and challenging world.

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